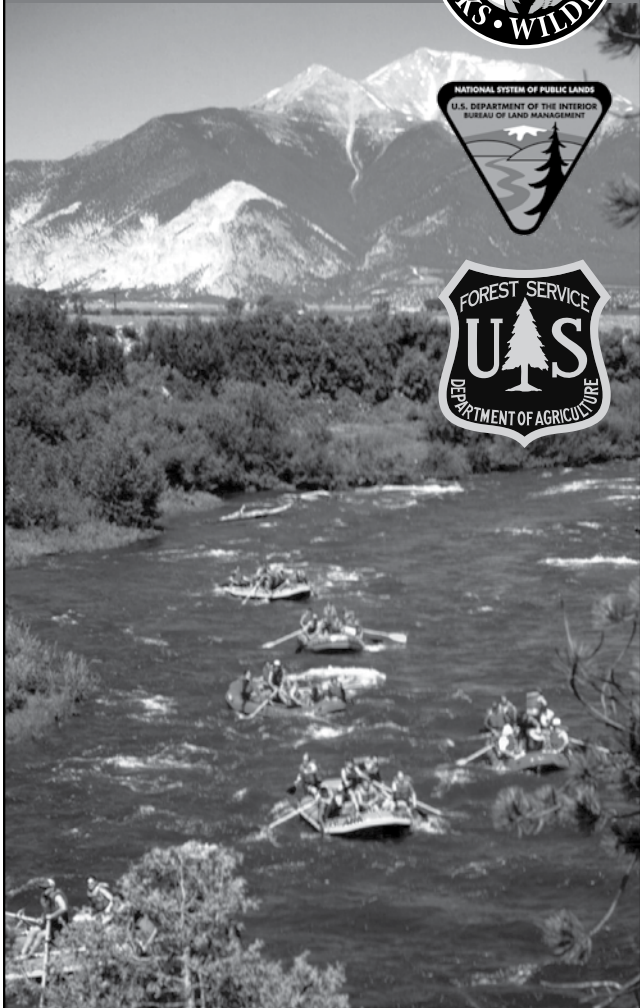


COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

# Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

ENJOY YOUR STATE PARKS





**T**he Upper Arkansas River Valley is a treasure trove of geology, history, wildlife, scenery and just plain good times. Whether you want to explore a ghost town, run a rapid, hook a trout, watch a bighorn sheep or stare into the depths of the Royal Gorge, chances for adventure are all around you. Below, you will find a community-by-community tour of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, featuring both river access sites and campgrounds. Please enjoy your visit.

## Leadville to Buena Vista

### River Access Sites

- Crystal Lakes (*Closed to commercial boaters.*)
- Hayden Meadows (*Closed to commercial boaters.*)
- Hayden Ranch (*Closed to commercial boaters.*)
- Arkansas River Ranch (*Closed to commercial boaters.*)
- Kobe (*Closed to commercial boaters.*)
- Granite
- Granite Rock
- Granite Boat Chute
- Clear Creek
- Stone Cabin
- Pine Creek
- Numbers
- Arkansas River Placer
- Rapid #4
- The Wall
- Rapid #5 1/2
- Boulderfield
- Rapid #6
- Riverside
- Railroad Bridge
- Elephant Rock
- Grassy Knoll
- Tunnel View
- Buena Vista Whitewater Park (*Managed by Buena Vista.*)

### Campgrounds

- Railroad Bridge

The river below Leadville formed when ancient glacial dams broke, scattering huge boulders across the river bottom. At first, this upper stretch flows fairly quietly between banks that are sometimes open and sometimes forested with Douglas fir and Englemann spruce. Below Granite, the river changes dramatically as it flows into a narrow canyon that is home to Pine Creek rapids (Class V-VI). Below Pine Creek, the Arkansas offers boaters technically challenging (Class III-V) water to Buena Vista.

## Buena Vista to Salida

### River Access Sites

- Buena Vista Whitewater Park (*Managed by Buena Vista.*)
- Fisherman's Bridge
- Ruby Mountain
- Hecla Junction
- Stone Bridge
- Big Bend
- Slaughterhouse
- Salida Whitewater Park (*Managed by Salida.*)



### Campgrounds

- Ruby Mountain
- Hecla Junction

The Buena Vista Whitewater Park is located at the Buena Vista boat ramp. Beyond the river park, this stretch's outstanding feature is Browns Canyon, a brown granite gorge of whitewater rapids. The busiest stretch of river, Browns is a wild ride at high water, although at any water level it is a beautiful and challenging river trip. Ruby Mountain, the canyon's northern gateway, provides access to the Browns Canyon National Monument. Here, visitors can hike, backpack, camp, fish and view wildlife.

Below Browns Canyon, the valley widens and the river calms though spectacular views remain. This stretch, called Big Bend, offers prime trout fishing, and numerous Colorado Parks and Wildlife easements provide anglers with river access on private land.

## Salida to Vallie Bridge

### River Access Sites

- Salida Whitewater Park (*Managed by Salida.*)
- Salida East
- Wellsville
- Point Barr
- Rincon
- Vallie Bridge



### Campgrounds

- Salida East
- Point Barr
- Rincon
- Vallie Bridge (*Boat in/Walk in*)

The Salida Whitewater Park is located at the Salida Boat Ramp. Just below Salida, the river flows into Bighorn Sheep Canyon, a granite canyon dotted with stands of pinon pine, juniper and oak brush. Anglers especially enjoy this segment – it offers deep pools, rock banks and gravel bars. In addition to public land access along the river, Colorado Parks and Wildlife fishing easements also provide river access. Boaters will find Class II-IV rapids in this segment.

## Vallie Bridge to Parkdale

### River Access Sites

- Vallie Bridge
- Canyon Trading Post
- Loma Linda
- Lone Pine
- Fern Leaf Gulch
- Ford Crossing
- Texas Creek
- Lazy J
- Maytag
- Cottonwood
- Pinnacle Rock
- Salt Lick
- Five Points
- Five 1/2 Points
- Lower Floodplain
- Spikebuck
- Bootlegger
- Old Parkdale
- Parkdale

### Campgrounds

- Vallie Bridge (*Boat in/Walk in*)
- Five Points

The section between Vallie Bridge and Parkdale is teeming with wildlife. Herds of bighorn sheep and deer silently drink from the river banks while an abundance of birds soar overhead. This section is ideal for rafting and fishing alike, as well as for other recreational activities such as picnicking along the banks of the river. The rapids in this section range from Class II-V, and this diversity makes for a very popular stretch of river.

## Parkdale to Cañon City

### River Access Sites

- Parkdale
- Copper Gulch
- River Station
- Centennial Park (*Managed by Cañon City/Closed to commercial boaters.*)

Parkdale Recreation Site provides public access before the river enters the Royal Gorge. From this peaceful spot, the river plunges into the Royal Gorge, the Arkansas River's most famous achievement. Over millions of years, the river carved through the hard rock of the Royal Gorge Plateau, forming the 1,000-foot walls of the gorge.

Boaters who go to view the gorge from the bottom up should take note: within the gorge, the river gives you a wild ride, with Class IV-V (extremely difficult) rapids. In addition, scouting and portaging this section of the river is very difficult.

## Cañon City to Lake Pueblo

### River Access Sites

- Cañon City Whitewater Park (*Managed by Cañon City.*)
- Centennial Park (*Closed to commercial boaters.*)
- River Station (*Closed to private boaters.*)
- Raynolds
- MacKenzie Bridge
- Pathfinder Park (*Managed by Florence.*)
- Florence Whitewater Park (*Managed by Florence.*)
- Blue Heron
- Swallows

The Whitewater Kayak & Recreation Park (WKRK) is located at Centennial Park near the 4th Street Bridge. Below Cañon City, the Arkansas changes into a quiet, meandering great plains river with Class I-II water. Cottonwood, willow and water-loving plants along its banks create a "riparian zone" that is home to an abundance of wildlife. Therefore, this stretch of river offers fantastic wildlife viewing and great fishing.

The slower pace of the river also makes for excellent canoeing; however, caution and skill are still necessary to avoid low-head dams and overhanging/fallen trees. Most of the river here is bordered by private land. Please respect landowners and do not trespass.



Photos by the Numbers.

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area ends at Lake Pueblo State Park.



**W**elcome to the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA), one of the nation's most popular locations for whitewater rafting and kayaking and home to the most commercially rafted river in the United States, the Arkansas River! Tumbling 4,650' in 152 miles, boaters can find anything from roaring Class IV and V rapids, to milder Class II and III sections, which are ideal for beginner and family trips. AHRA also offers a world-class trout fishery and sightseeing within the Upper Arkansas River Valley as well as abundant opportunities for camping, picnicking, hiking, wildlife watching, horseback riding, mountain biking and OHV travel.

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area is a landmark cooperative effort between Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW), the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service (USFS).

Through this partnership, the agencies provide visitors with outstanding recreation opportunities and care for the nationally significant natural resources of the Upper Arkansas River Valley.

The Arkansas River begins its 1,400-mile journey to the Mississippi among the loftiest peaks in the Rockies, including 14,433-foot Mt. Elbert, the highest mountain in Colorado. In 152 miles, the river tumbles 4,650 vertical feet through open valleys, boulder-strewn canyons, and the depths of the Royal Gorge.

Evidence of the first humans in the Upper Arkansas River Valley dates to at least 10,000 years ago. Attracted to the water, wildlife, and climate of the area, these prehistoric people most likely used the valley to travel between the mountains and the plains. Later, the Apaches, Utes, Arapahoes, Cheyennes, and Kiowas followed many of these same migration routes.

In 1706, the Spaniard Juan de Ulibarri explored the region, followed a century later by Zebulon Pike. Trappers and traders explored and lived in relative solitude within the valley until 1859 when gold was discovered and prospectors poured into the area.

Leadville's silver boom in the late 1870s led to a race between the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad and the Santa Fe Railroad for the lucrative Upper Arkansas River Valley railroad route. The Denver and Rio Grande won, and to this day the rails follow this same route along the river.

***From the peaks to  
the prairies, the  
Arkansas River is a  
powerful influence,  
shaping lives and  
landscapes...***

## Camping

Camping is allowed in designated sites by reservation only at all AHRA campgrounds. Reservations may be made the day of arrival or up to six months in advance. Advance reservations are recommended due to demand and spotty cellular/data service throughout the AHRA.

Dispersed camping is also available along the Arkansas River. Campers in these areas must provide their own portable toilet device that is designed to carry human waste and they must have their own fire container. Rock fire rings are prohibited.

To book a site:

By phone: 1-800-244-5613

Online: [www.cpwshop.com](http://www.cpwshop.com)

## Browns Canyon National Monument

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) includes portions of Browns Canyon National Monument, which was designated in February 2015 and encompasses a rugged landscape of stunning beauty and rich biodiversity. Browns Canyon is notable because of its abundant wildlife such as elk, deer, mountain lions, black bears, golden and bald eagles, and bighorn sheep. Access the monument through the Ruby Mountain or Hecla Junction Recreation Sites, float through the National Monument with a group of friends, or use one of AHRA's whitewater outfitters.



## Picnicking

Picnicking is permitted throughout the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area except in designated campsites. There are tables and grills available at select developed sites or one can enjoy an impromptu picnic near the river. Picnic areas do not have potable water or trash services. Please take trash with you when you leave. Please park in designated parking areas. A daily park pass is required to picnic in fee sites.

## Passes, Permits, Fees

Fee sites within the recreation area have improvements and services, and either a daily or annual Colorado State Parks pass is required to use them. Developed campsites require an additional fee for a camping permit. All fees collected are returned to the area for its operation, maintenance and improvement.

Daily park passes can be purchased at self-service dispensers at fee sites or at the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area Visitor Center in Salida.

Annual passes allowing unlimited visits to all Colorado State Parks and hunting and fishing licenses are also available at the AHRA Visitor Center. Colorado residents 64 years of age or older qualify for a discounted Aspen Leaf Pass.

Several other state, federal and local agencies manage a variety of recreation sites in the Upper Arkansas Valley. Please note and abide by the requirements for use of these areas.

## Safety

Do not underestimate the power of the Arkansas River - enjoy it safely. Follow these tips for an enjoyable and safe experience:

- Water from the river and streams may look clear and clean but that does not mean it is safe to drink. Bring your own drinking water.
- Even in calm water sections, the river has powerful currents and it is very cold.
- When on the water, wear a properly-sized personal flotation device (PFD) designed for whitewater use.
- Closely supervise children near the river.
- All persons under the age of 13 swimming in the Arkansas River must wear a PFD (lifejacket) as required by regulation.
- The river's side canyons are subject to flash flooding. Avoid camping inside canyons, even those that seem very dry. If you anticipate a flash flood hazard, climb high to safety.
- On the highway, be alert for other vehicles slowing and turning into pull-outs and recreation sites located along the river.

# The Finer Points of Enjoying Your Visit to the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

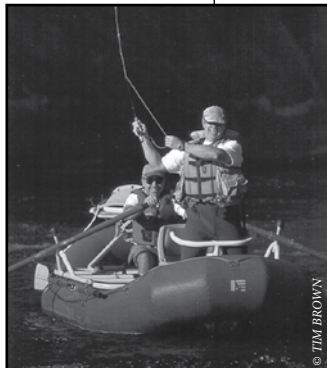
## Fishing

Eddies, ripples, deep pools ... the Arkansas River within the AHRA is noted as a world-class fishery and provides an excellent opportunity for anglers to test their skills at catching brown and rainbow trout. Both browns and rainbows average 12 to 14 inches with the possibility of an occasional trophy catch. As a testament to the excellent fishery, in 2014, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) designated over 100 miles of the Arkansas River, from the confluence with the Lake Fork to Parkdale as a Gold Medal Trout Fishery.

Public fishing access is available on public lands and on fishing easements crossing private lands. Signs mark all public fishing access points along the river. Refer to the map in this brochure for more information about fishing easements, AHRA recreation sites and state wildlife areas.

Regulations vary along the river, so please be certain you know the rules that apply to the areas you will be fishing. Fishing regulations and licenses are available at the AHRA Visitor Center, Colorado Parks and Wildlife offices and at numerous sporting goods stores throughout the area.

Boaters and anglers share the river, with some sections of the river being more heavily boated than others. Most whitewater boating takes place from mid-morning to mid-afternoon and therefore the best fishing is typically early and late in the day. High water in the late spring and early to mid-summer brings the most intense boating use, while fishing use peaks both before and after high water.



## Wildlife Viewing

As the Arkansas River flows from the alpine highlands to the prairie lowlands, it attracts and sustains a variety of wildlife species. Many animals, such as mule deer, pronghorn antelope and bighorn sheep live year-round in the valley. Other species, such as elk, or even moose are also found in the valley. In addition, elusive bobcats and mountain lions are year-round residents, but are seen only occasionally. Many different species of birds also inhabit and migrate through the valley – including the peregrine falcon and bald eagles.

Watch for Colorado's state mammal, the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, on the rocky slopes along the river in Bighorn Sheep Canyon along U.S. Highway 50 and in Browns Canyon. Mid-morning and late afternoon are prime times for bighorn sheep viewing. When you see wildlife – keep voices down, give the animals plenty of space and allow them to go about their business undisturbed.

To find out more about the wildlife of the Upper Arkansas River Valley, stop by the Watchable Wildlife exhibits located at Arkansas River Ranch, Canyon Trading Post, Collegiate Peaks, Crystal Lakes, Fisherman's Bridge, Five Points, Hayden Meadows, Hayden Ranch, Hecla Junction, Kobe, or Ruby Mountain.

Bighorn sheep.



## Whitewater Boating

The Arkansas is one of the world's most popular whitewater rivers for kayaking and rafting – with good reason. Clear water, dramatic scenery and rapids rated from beginner to expert lure boaters from around the world.

Within the recreation area, the river changes character several times as it travels through the varied geologic features, making for a variety of boating experiences. With native flows peaking in early June, and the Voluntary Flow Management Program providing supplemental water during the summer months, the Arkansas has an extended boating season, reaching well into mid to late August.

### Private Boaters

The Arkansas can present tremendous challenges to both novice and experienced boaters. Be certain to get specific information about the section of river you are interested in. Consult others who have boated there, know your abilities – and carry and use safety equipment. All boats (canoes, kayaks and rafts) must have the owner's name and current address written legibly and clearly visible somewhere on the craft. In addition, it is also recommended that a telephone number be clearly displayed on the boat.

### Commercial Outfitters

Many commercial boating companies operate within the recreation area and offer visitors the chance to experience the "wet side" of the river with experienced guides. AHRA encourages you to explore the Arkansas River first hand, be it a wet and wild ride through Class III+ rapids, a relaxing float trip through calm water, spending time enjoying one of the whitewater parks located in Buena Vista, Salida, Cañon City, Florence or a walk and wade or float fishing trip in world-class trout waters.

## River Ethics

With such spectacular surroundings and unlimited recreational opportunities, the Arkansas River draws over 1 million visitors annually to the recreation area.

Please treat the AHRA, your fellow visitors, and local residents with courtesy. Follow these basic rules:

- Respect the rights and property of landowners and residents – do not trespass on private land and keep noise down near homes.
- Boaters, if possible, move to the other side of the river, away from anglers and avoid playing in fishing holes.
- Dispose of trash and waste properly. If you pack it in, please pack it out. Trash pickup costs time and money that could be much better spent on other efforts.
- Keep pets on a leash no longer than six feet.
- Fires must be built within a permanent constructed fire grate or a portable fire container elevated off the ground with a two inch+ rigid side (as required by regulation). Tend fires constantly and extinguish them when no longer needed.
- All campers camping outside of established campgrounds, and all commercial boating trips must provide and use a portable toilet device capable of carrying human waste out of the AHRA (as required by regulation).
- Keep vehicles on existing roads and parking areas, unless otherwise posted.
- Follow specific regulations posted at individual locations.



## SUCCESS STORY

Located within a three-hour drive of Colorado Springs, Denver and other Front Range cities, the Upper Arkansas River Valley is the “backyard” to millions of Colorado residents. In addition, international and national recognition of the area’s outstanding recreation opportunities and resources draws visitors here from across the U.S. and around the world.

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area is managed through a unique, cooperative partnership between Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Forest Service. Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the BLM provide the primary management for the intensive recreation use as well as the area’s many resources. The partners have acquired important river access for the public and developed recreational facilities such as campgrounds, picnic areas, boat ramps, wildlife viewing areas, fishing access sites and OHV trails. The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, National Forest Land, BLM managed public lands, Bureau of Reclamation projects, State Wildlife Areas and various easements together provide many of the outstanding resources and recreational opportunities found in the Upper Arkansas River Valley. State and federal agencies, local governments, private organizations and individuals responsible for managing the land and resources of the Upper Arkansas River Valley work together in a partnership.

The goal: to balance increasing recreation use and other demands with resource protection – for what would the Upper Arkansas River Valley be without water, wildlife and wilderness?



## Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

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Funded in part by Great Outdoors Colorado through Colorado Lottery proceeds.





# Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

Welcome to the Upper Arkansas River Valley, famous for its 14ers, whitewater, wilderness and wildlife. The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area offers many fun and exciting activities.

Please:

- know your skill level
- be aware of risks involved in an activity
- be familiar with safety practices
- equip yourself properly

## Visitor Etiquette

Hundreds of thousands of visitors boat on the river each year, and close to a million people enjoy the recreation area. Courtesy and respect for others will make everyone's experience more enjoyable. You can minimize your impact and help us protect this valuable resource by observing the following guidelines:

- respect private property and don't trespass
- keep noise down
- if you are boating, travel on opposite side of the river from anglers and avoid fishing holes
- learn and practice Leave No Trace backcountry ethics, including pack it in/pack it out
- use existing restroom facilities, or a portable toilet (groover), required by regulation
- stop only at well-established, well-used sites and avoid trampling streamside vegetation
- build fires only in grills and fire pans, required by regulation

## Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area Visitor Center

- Annual passes, regulations, and guide books are available at the AHRA Visitor Center.
- The AHRA Visitor Center is located on the corner of G Street and Sackett Avenue in downtown Salida, one block North of Highway 291.



For campground reservations, please call 1-800-244-5613 or online at [www.cpwshop.com](http://www.cpwshop.com)

Recreation Site Facilities	AHRA Member	Boat Ramp/Slide	Camping	Challenging Routes	Day Use/Overnight	Public Access	Mining	North Fork	OHV	Parking	Picnic Area	Roadside Trail	Restrooms	River Access	Swimming	Trail	Whitewater	Viewing
Arkansas River Placer																		
Arkansas River Ranch																		
Big Bend																		
Blue Heron																		
Bootlegger																		
Boulderfield																		
Buena Vista Whitewater Park																		
Canyon Trading Post																		
Cañon City Whitewater Park																		
Centennial Park																		
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Collegiate Peaks Overlook																		
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Stone Cabin																		
Swallows																		
Texas Creek																		
The Wall																		
Tunnel View																		
Valle Bridge																		
Wellsville																		



- State Wildlife Areas/Fishing Easements**
- 1 Paddock SWA
  - 2 Crystal Lake STL Fishing Easement
  - 3 Reddy SWA Fishing Easement
  - 4 Box Creek STL
  - 5 Hardeman SWA Fishing Easement
  - 6 Granite SWA
  - 7 Clear Creek Reservoir SWA
  - 8 Tiger Lily STL Fishing/Portage Easement
  - 9 Heckendorf SWA
  - 10 Buena Vista SWA
  - 11 Harmon SWA
  - 12 Chubb Park Ranch STL
  - 13 Chubb Park Ranch SWA
  - 14 Johnson Village SWA
  - 15 Champion SWA
  - 16 Bighorn Springs
  - 17 Ruby Mountain
  - 18 Wright's Lake SWA
  - 19 Pridemore Fishing Easement
  - 20 Big Bend SWA
  - 21 Mt. Ouray Fishing Easement
  - 22 Mt. Ouray SWA
  - 23 Frantz Lake SWA
  - 24 Mount Shavano SWA
  - 25 Sands Lake SWA
  - 26 Ogden/Treat SWA
  - 27 Skaguay Reservoir SWA
  - 28 Beaver Creek SWA
  - 29 Brush Hollow SWA
  - 30 Swallows/Pueblo SWA

### LEGEND

Arkansas River (Jointly managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service)	Private/State Lands (no public access)
AHRA Visitor Center	Colorado Parks and Wildlife Lands
AHRA Recreation Site (See chart for activities available at each site.)	Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Public Land
Boat Ramp/Slide Site (See chart for activities available at each site.)	BLM Wilderness Study Area
Fishing easements crossing private lands. Look for signs marking easements.	US Forest Service Land
Whitewater Park	US Forest Service Wilderness Area
Public Campground	Communities
Recreation Site	US Highway and Interstate
Visitor Information	Paved Road
Wildlife Viewing Information	Dirt Road
	Continental Divide
	Trail
	National Monument Border

## Accessibility Information

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area has fully accessible restroom facilities and at least one fully accessible campsite at each developed campground, except for Point Barr and Valle Bridge (walk-in/boat-in only access). Select river access sites have fully accessible restroom facilities, complete with accessible parking spots. Please call 719-539-7289 or visit [www.cpw.state.co.us](http://www.cpw.state.co.us) for more information.



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Any person who is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program of Colorado Parks and Wildlife on the grounds of race, creed, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, should contact the park manager, the nearest local regional office, the Division Headquarters in Denver, Colorado - telephone (303) 695-5437 - or the National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-1127.

