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## **COLORADO'S RIVER OUTFITTERS EXPECTING EXCEPTIONAL SEASON**

***– Rafting Pros Stress Smart Preparation and Safety, Especially in the Spring –***

DENVER – May 23, 2011 – As skis are stored following a record snowfall season on the slopes, outdoors enthusiasts from and visiting Colorado look to the state's waters for their next set of thrills. In light of an extremely healthy winter snowpack, the Colorado River Outfitters Association (CROA) expects flourishing rivers and another successful rafting season.

“Colorado's rivers attracted more than a half million visitors and over \$150 million in economic activity in 2010, despite a generally sluggish economy. We are confident we can improve on both of those numbers this year,” said CROA chairman Johnny Cantamessa. “As always, water conditions in the spring should be ideal for the adrenaline-junkie whitewater fans, while throughout the season the dozens of river segments we raft across the state will offer adventures of all speeds.”

Cantamessa acknowledged that stronger flows in the early part of the season can generate negative attention and intimidate those who prefer their water a little mellower. Drawing an analogy to skiing, he noted that conditions can vary across the state and that anyone looking to hit the river should prepare accordingly and choose a destination that best suits their abilities.

Among CROA's safety tips for aspiring rafters:

- *Scout Around:* Skiers evaluate snow conditions before selecting a resort; rafting enthusiasts should perform similar due diligence. Even if there is flooding in one part of the state or official advisories on particular stretches of river, other stretches may have normal water conditions and be accessible to rafters of all abilities. Similarly, when some rivers are too low to be run, others may have sufficient water flow for rafting.
- *Ask An Agency:* Authority over different river segments in Colorado sits with different regulatory entities – typically, Colorado State Parks, the U.S. Forest Service or the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Know which agency oversees the river you want to raft and contact it for conditions and other guidance. Contact information for the governing agencies on raftable Colorado rivers can be found at <http://www.croa.org/site/plan-your-adventure/river-management-agencies.html>.
- *Ask An Outfitter:* Nobody is more attuned to the rhythms of the rivers than the professional outfitters who navigate them every day. Even if you plan to raft without a professional guide, don't hesitate to call a river outfitter to check on water conditions. If they're not running a particular stretch of water, you probably shouldn't either.

- *Choose A Capable Captain:* Absent the guidance of a professional outfitter, private boaters should venture out only with a trip leader who has adequate rafting experience, good sense, a healthy respect for Mother Nature and the proper equipment (see below).
- *Know Your Limitations:* Rafting isn't an inherently passive activity, whether you go with a professional outfitter or not. A reasonable level of fitness, strong swimming skills and the capacity to remain calm during emergencies, for example, are key qualifications. Gauge every trip's difficulty using the least-experienced person's abilities and plan from there.
- *Gear Up:* A professional outfitter will provide guests with fundamental equipment such as personal flotation devices and paddles, as well as a thorough list of "bring-along" items such as quick-drying clothing, securable footwear, sunglasses, sunscreen and lip balm. Private boaters should be sure their own expeditions are similarly well equipped for the conditions at hand with proper medical and safety equipment.
- *Hydrate:* Elevation is sneaky and spiteful; drink plenty of water to avoid illness.

"These tips apply throughout the Colorado rafting season, which can run from April through September," said Cantamessa. "But they are particularly important during the spring runoff, when people are eager to hit the river and may not take the time to check conditions and prepare themselves as fully as possible. Safety is the top priority for all CROA outfitters – not only the safety of our guests but that of everyone who enjoys the waters of Colorado."

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### **About CROA**

The Colorado River Outfitters Association (CROA) is a non-profit trade association representing over 50 licensed professional whitewater rafting outfitters across the state of Colorado. CROA's mission is to: (1) promote Colorado as the premier river rafting destination in the United States, (2) support members' efforts to attract visitors to Colorado and (3) provide a reasoned voice on industry developments and matters of policy affecting commercial boating and Colorado's tourism economy as a whole. In 2010, Colorado's river outfitters hosted 507,392 visitors and contributed \$150.3 million to the state's economy. For more information on arranging a river adventure, please visit [www.croa.org](http://www.croa.org).