



2/18/2011 8:48:00 AM [Email this article](#) • [Print this article](#) **Commercial rafting volume increases**

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Commercial rafting numbers increased 3.4 percent from 2009 to 2010 according to the Colorado River Outfitters Association annual report to the state released earlier this month.

The Commercial River Use in the State of Colorado report said the number takes into account all commercial user days on each of 17 commercially rafted rivers in Colorado.

The increase is more than the 2.5 percent increase reported by Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area in its preliminary December count.

Recreation area numbers, however, included commercial river guides and safety kayakers while the Colorado outfitters total didn't.

Neither report represents private river users. The outfitters association report refers to a user-day as the number of paying guests on a river for any part of a day during the rafting season.

The Arkansas River from Buena Vista to Pueblo accounts for more than 40 percent of all commercial traffic in Colorado. Adjusted association figures reported a jump from 205,876 in 2009 to 211,150 in 2010.

The increase of 5,274 user days is comparable to the approximate 2.5 percent increase.

The outfitters' report showed the number of commercial user days throughout Colorado was up from 490,795 in 2009 to 507,392 in 2010.

Within that count, commercial rafting companies in Colorado realized a 16,500 user-day increase accounting for the 3.4 percent jump from 2009.

Information showed the Colorado and Arkansas rivers experienced the largest increases from 2009 to 2010 and demonstrate excess capacity to allow for more visitors.

Many other rivers in the state have limits on increased use and the report indicated those numbers stabilized.

The report estimated combined economic impact of commercial-river rafting in 2010 at \$150.3 million, up 4.9 percent or about \$7 million from the 2009 season.

Economic impact figures were the second-highest total recorded by the outfitters association since it began calculating impact in 1988.

The \$150.3 million recorded in 2010 was behind the record \$154.5 million year in 2007.

Association chairman Johnny Cantamessa said, "Rafting has always been a cost-effective way for outdoor enthusiasts to indulge themselves in nature and for families to vacation together.

"(And it's) a great venue for team-building outings by everyone from corporate groups to scout troops. When times and budgets are tight, the thrill-per-dollar ratio becomes more important, as evidenced by the industry in 2010."

Commercial rafting figures exceeded 500,000 user-days for four years from 2005-08 before taking a temporary dip in 2009.

Cantamessa said diversity offered by Colorado rivers means most state residents and many from neighboring states are within an easy day-drive of a rafting location.