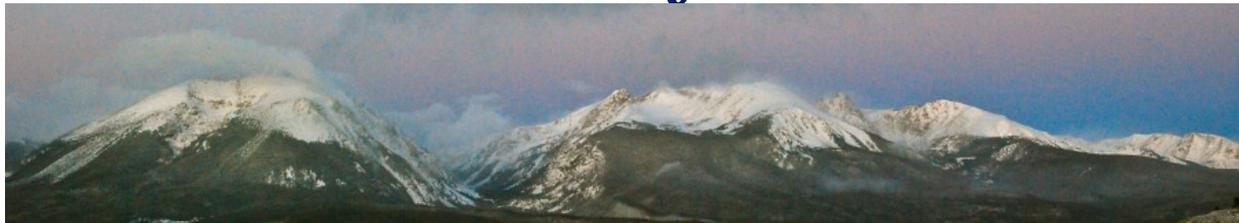


# The Summit County Citizens Voice



## Colorado Rafting Industry Rides High in 2010

Posted on February 12, 2011 by Bob Berwyn



**Whitewater rafting on the Arkansas River is fun, and it's also a big economic factor, valued at about \$62 million in 2010. PHOTO COURTESY COLORADO STATE PARKS.**

SUMMIT COUNTY — Colorado's rafting industry bounced back from a down year in 2009 to near-record levels, hosting more than a half-million user days between April and September, according to the [Colorado River Outfitters Association](#).

The trade group recently held its annual meeting in Grand Junction, releasing a [report](#) that valued the economic impact of rafting at about \$150 million in 2010, up about 4.9 percent from the previous year. That was the second-highest total since CROA began tracking these statistics in 1988, trailing only the banner year of 2007 (544,000 rafters).

“Rafting has always been a cost-effective way for outdoors enthusiasts to indulge themselves in nature and for families to vacation together, not to mention a great venue for team-building outings by everyone from corporate groups to scout troops,” said Johnny Cantamessa, newly elected as chair of the rafting group. “When times and budgets are tight, the thrill-per-dollar ratio becomes that much more important, as evidenced by our industry’s strong 2010.”

According to the annual report on commercial river use, rafting companies in the state hosted 507,392 user days during the 2010 season, up 16,500 user days, or 3.4 percent, from 2009. (A “user day” is defined as a paying guest on a river for any part of a day.) The visitor figures exceed a half-million for four straight years from 2005-2008 before taking a temporary dip in 2009 during the heart of the national downturn. The rebound was warmly welcomed.

The state’s outfitters collectively raft more than 20 rivers across eight major basins. The Colorado and Arkansas rivers saw the largest increases from 2009 to 2010 and still have excess capacity to allow for more visitors.

Many other rivers in the state have limits to increased use and therefore have seen their numbers stabilize. Overall, notes Cantamessa, the diversity of opportunity means that most Coloradans – and many in neighboring states – are within an easy day’s drive of a rafting vacation that suits their tastes.

The Arkansas River is by far the most heavily used river, with more than 211,000 rafters riding its rapids. The Colorado River in the Glenwood Springs section ranked second, with about 61,000 rafters, and Clear Creek was third, with about 51,000 rafters in 2010.

<http://summitcountyvoice.com/2011/02/12/colorado-rafting-industry-rides-high-in-2010/>