



2023 YEAR END REPORT

COMMERCIAL RIVER USE
in the STATE of COLORADO

1988-2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY COMMERCIAL RIVER USE IN COLORADO 2023

Year End Report

In contrast to the drier conditions of the 2022 rafting season, the 2023 season had a much higher-than-normal snowpack. This led to a sustained and extended runoff which allowed most outfitters to enjoy a full rafting season on Colorado rivers. During runoff many reservoirs were replenished at higher levels which made water available for release in the late season. Knowing sufficient water was available for the season, outfitters staffed accordingly. Employing skilled labor was easier in 2023 than had been the case in the prior few years.

The 2023 river use in the State of Colorado totaled 542,511 user days, a reduction of 6,972 user days or a decline of 1.26% when compared to 549,483 user days in 2022. The highest year historically for river use was 2021. User days were 622,186 in 2021. Compared to 2021, there was a 12.8% reduction for 2023 user days. It may be some time before the industry achieves the 2021 numbers again. One river that benefited from the abundant snowfall was the Dolores. Because of the increased snowpack, the Dolores River ran for the first time in several years. Outfitters worked quickly to promote the river. Dolores user numbers were the highest since 2005. Other river sections that showed a surprising increase include the Ruby Horsethief section of the Colorado River, the Upper and Lower Eagle River, North Platte, Piedra, Rio Grande, Roaring Fork, and San Juan.

In reviewing why rafting user numbers showed a slight decrease, we attribute the decline to a few factors. Overall summer tourism to Colorado trended down in 2023 and rafting numbers reflected this trend. The first part of the season was quite rainy for many weeks, and many outfitters noticed a reduction in reservations during this part of the season. Additionally, the economy played a part in decreased user numbers. The industry depends on consumer discretionary spending and tighter spending patterns were reflected in the user numbers. Over the past three years, inflationary pressures have resulted in trip price increases. As inflation is easing currently, we are hopeful pressures on pricing will begin to moderate.

The total industry-wide economic impact for 2023 was \$214,715,634 and accounted for many full-time and seasonal jobs.

The Colorado River Outfitters Association (CROA) compiled this study. Copies are available by contacting David Costlow at dcostlow@croa.org or Caitlin Wyman at caitlin@croa.org. The report can also be downloaded from the web at: <https://www.croa.org/media.html>.

Members of CROA adhere to a Code of Ethics and offer quality trips on Colorado's rivers.

COMMERCIAL USER DAYS IN THE STATE OF COLORADO 1999 - 2010

River	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Animas	45,000	29,000	42,000	12,000	34,500	35,470	52,700	42,500	44,322	42,250	41,921	41,000
Animas - Upper	989	700	721	300	690	658	872	167	598	533	500	411
Arkansas	243,709	250,861	252,213	139,178	214,555	203,840	228,091	237,160	239,887	214,234	205,876	211,150
Blue	2,100	2,347	14	0	264	788	1,212	760	2,038	2,906	3,089	1,181
Clear Creek	16,887	13,616	20,798	7,498	24,495	20,115	32,357	36,889	49,190	52,340	50,167	51,301
Colorado - Glenwood	60,191	57,265	55,829	42,581	56,876	58,751	57,712	62,652	65,502	52,738	52,737	61,890
Colorado - Upper	40,000	42,933	34,381	37,801	32,188	33,224	29,449	36,280	37,068	34,769	33,077	40,730
Colorado - Horsethief - Ruby	4,410	4,508	4,188	2,324	3,222	3,383	3,318	2,810	2,761	3,283	3,090	2,718
Colorado - Westwater	7,208	6,859	6,858	6,626	7,352	7,548	7,043	7,233	7,632	7,624	6,833	7,621
Dolores	439	921	0	0	214	174	936	81	195	868	536	194
Eagle - Upper	7,290	3,830	3,702	0	1,239	858	3,630	4,621	4,390	4,390	1,374	1,640
Eagle - Lower	2,500	2,167	594	446	1,153	820	1,419	1,441	1,369	1,369	1,369	1,710
Gore Creek - Vail											300	1,000
Green/Yampa	7,360	8,539	7,825	5,617	7,134	6,826	6,627	6,500	5,813	6,235	4,309	4,803
Gunnison Gorge	3,169	3,928	3,401	3,292	2,328	3,010	3,016	3,800	2,826	4,342	3,956	1,390
Gunnison - Upper (Town Run)	1,720	1,400	2,690	1,334	1,590	1,982	2,112	2,212	2,500	2,669	2,669	2,669
Gunnison - Escalante	1,011	1,884	1,887	1,044	2,113	2,988	3,363	2,265	3,272	2,106	2,549	1,784
Gunnison - Forks to Austin												
Gunnison - Lake Fork	1,848	1,310	1,543	0	160	177	195	165	126	369	203	149
North Platte	882	165	137	0	312	191	566	511	372	851	712	482
Piedra	305	50	650	0	210	454	725	400	500	547	547	190
Poudre	32,446	29,012	34,192	26,004	34,164	31,042	36,088	34,533	37,824	37,566	36,991	37,392
Rio Grande	3,100	1,950	3,300	92	1,300	2,800	3,246	1,605	1,402	2,345	2,313	1,229
Roaring Fork - Above Basalt	5,000	4,500	2,500	0	2,000	1,500	2,215	2,609	2,834	6,187	4,248	2,404
Roaring Fork - Below Basalt	2,000	1,500	1,000	0	500	500	10	79	100	2,500	1,263	1,366
San Juan - Pagosa	3,400	2,200	2,000	138	1,586	2,550	2,500	1,900	1,900	2,280	4,107	4,986
San Miguel	3,442	1,379	3,625	120	1,959	2,212	4,493	2,800	2,943	5,969	3,782	1,762
South Platte	1,306	2,035	2,055	453	935	836	901	655	690	1,150	750	383
Taylor	15,367	13,989	14,287	11,176	14,734	14,750	14,972	15,127	15,112	14,332	14,332	14,332
Total User Days	513,079	488,848	502,390	298,024	447,773	437,447	499,768	507,755	533,166	506,752	483,600	497,867
User Day Change From Previous Year	6,783	-24,231	13,542	-204,366	149,749	-10,326	62,321	7,987	25,411	-26,414	-23,152	14,267

Sources: National Park Service
US Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management
Local Outfitters
Colorado Parks & Wildlife

Colorado River Outfitters Assoc.
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COMMERCIAL USER DAYS IN THE STATE OF COLORADO 2011 - 2023

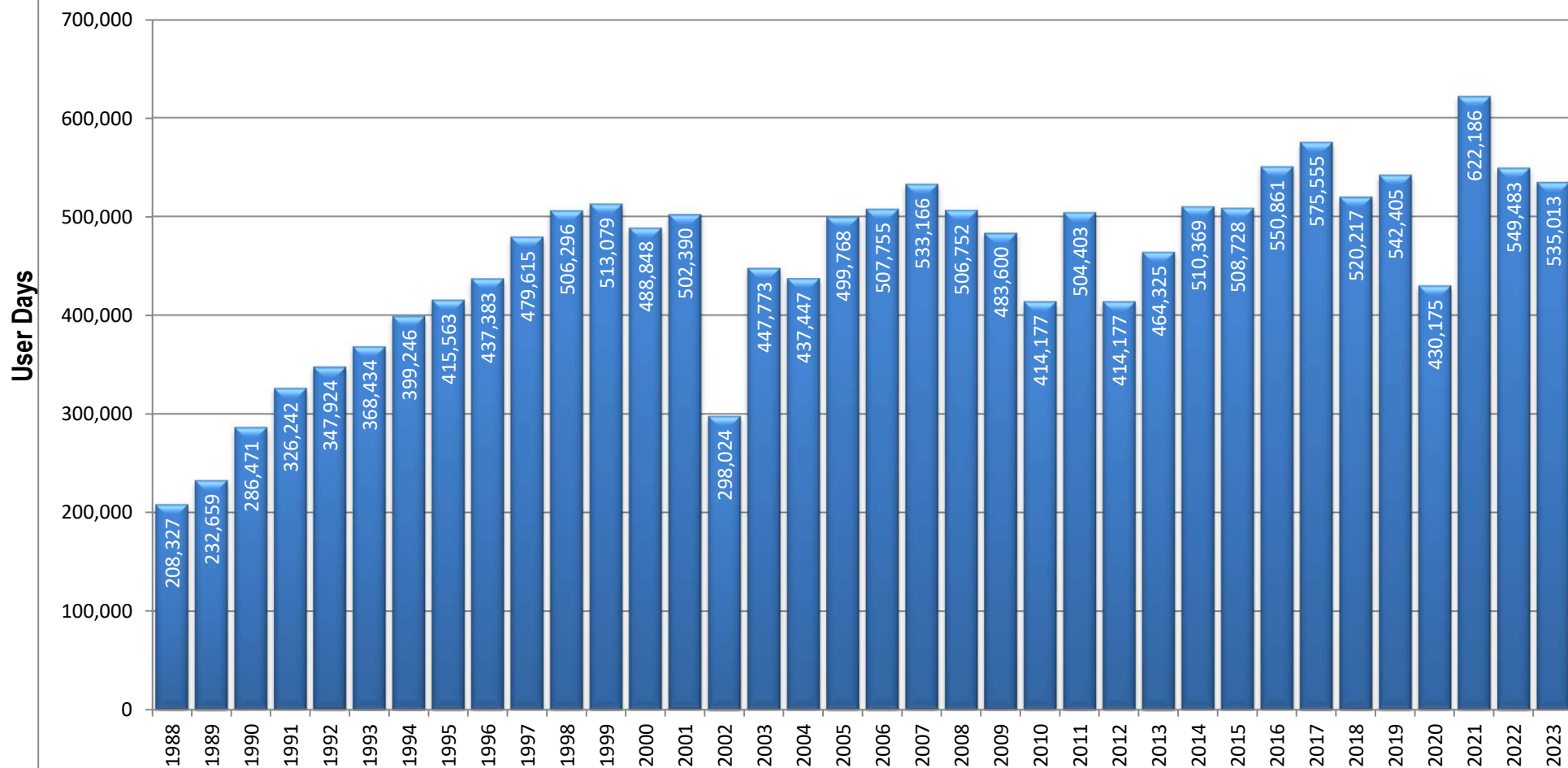
River	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Animas	45,000	38,000	33,659	37,000	34,117	35,991	34,069	28,495	37,553	33,120	52,967	36,132	37,139
Animas - Upper	411	603	600	678	No report	615	536	71	326	12	387	286	227
Arkansas	208,329	169,486	179,535	191,307	196,998	223,878	223,271	218,120	190,246	182,005	256,650	247,721	224,700
Blue	6,580	0	0	6,571	6,651	5,301	2,771	1,086	11,006	636	0		1,856
Clear Creek	60,644	35,422	61,172	72,224	65,617	77,783	87,077	66,174	95,063	52,044	100,203	80,364	81,674
Colorado - Glenwood	44,007	64,086	60,757	56,857	57,785	61,880	64,208	62,181	65,302	55,228	70,753	63,222	64,940
Colorado - Upper	39,012	41,811	40,420	40,337	41,352	37,071	47,915	50,681	35,777	46,375	45,433	33,866	32,866
Colorado - Horsethief - Ruby	2,907	3,099	754	3,535	2,787	1,112	3,978	993	1,122	1,268	820	943	1,158
Colorado - Westwater	6,069	5,623	6,992	6,432	6,522	6,478	6,522	6,654	7,324	4,190	6,369	5,299	3550
Dolores	515	35	0	58	26	74	558	0	350	0		75	940
Eagle - Upper (Dowd Chutes)	1,286	13	359	1,134	570	606	745	428	399	1,076	266	88	669
Eagle (Below Edwards)	4,362	227	2,032	5,174	4,971	6,443	6,088	3,549	8,851	4,129	5,233	7,507	8,776
Gore Creek - Vail	2,500	900	900	500	404	601	500	0	324	98	0		0
Green/Yampa	4,218	7,983	9,694	11,581	11,476	10,196	13,917	15,645	No Report	3,755	5,132	3,085	5,846
Gunnison Gorge	2,148	1,579	3,431	2,152	3,205	3,584	3,861	4,787	4,039	4,553	6,110	6,096	5,054
Gunnison - Upper (Town Run)	2,669	1,150	3,387	3,387	3,083	3,276	3,548	3,276	2,129		4,170	2,883	827
Gunnison - Escalante	2,749	3,028	1,434	1,936	1,154	868	1,088	187	149	27	144	241	376
Gunnison - Forks to Austin		1,100	303	302	484	305	731	991	1,254	1,617	2,326	2,276	2,162
Gunnison - Lake Fork	284	1,123	221	193	304	259	318	267	245	425	348	169	217
North Platte	850	143	265	230	336	179	305	No Report	34	5			301
Piedra	190	54	25	285	No report	337	318	17	249	41	173	36	438
Poudre	37,869	22,780	37,214	37,225	37,934	41,192	38,134	38,741	37,707	21,481	39,877	33,008	29,921
Rio Grande	1,589	2,103	596	3,691	2,511	2,387	2,694	131	No Report	156	221	1,469	2,415
Roaring Fork - Above Basalt	6,672	112	1,696	5,210	5,038	4,377	4,420	560	6,751	1,045	948	1,541	2,639
Roaring Fork - Below Basalt	912	736	458	1,070	895	410	869	831	7,245	338	221	655	3,691
San Juan - Pagosa	6,171	778	3,475	3,764	4,949	4,850	3,948	1,012	5,517	0		4,000	9,340
San Miguel	1,900	1,828	1,235	3,921	5,438	5,064	8,097	2,061	9,778	4,899	8,201	5,547	7,173
South Platte	430	484	713	371	473	788	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report	No Report
Taylor	14,130	9,891	12,998	13,244	13,648	14,956	15,069	13,279	13,665	11,652	15,234	12,974	13,616
Total User Days	504,403	414,177	464,325	510,369	508,728	550,861	575,555	520,217	542,405	430,175	622,186	549,483	542,511
User Day Change From Previous Year	6,536	-90,226	50,148	46,044	-1,641	42,133	24,694	-55,338	22,188	-112,230	192,011	-72,703	-6,972

Sources: National Park Service
US Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management
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Colorado Parks & Wildlife

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COMMERCIAL USER DAYS IN COLORADO 1988-2023



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2023 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COMMERCIAL RIVER RAFTING IN COLORADO

YEAR	TOTAL USER DAYS	INFLATION RATE (CPI)	EXPENDITURES- INFLATION ADJUSTED	DIRECT EXPENDETURES	ECONOMIC IMPACT	% CHANGE
1988	208,327		rt	\$14,166,236	\$36,265,564	
1989	232,659	4.6%	\$66.73	\$15,526,325	\$39,747,392	9.6%
1990	286,471	6.1%	\$70.81	\$20,283,592	\$51,925,995	30.6%
1991	326,242	3.1%	\$73.00	\$23,815,666	\$60,968,105	17.4%
1992	347,924	2.9%	\$75.12	\$26,135,007	\$66,905,618	9.7%
1993	368,434	2.7%	\$77.15	\$28,422,900	\$72,762,623	8.8%
1994	399,246	2.7%	\$79.23	\$31,631,493	\$80,976,623	11.3%
1995	415,563	2.5%	\$81.21	\$33,747,364	\$86,393,253	6.7%
1996	437,383	3.3%	\$83.89	\$36,691,478	\$93,930,184	8.7%
1997	479,615	1.7%	\$85.31	\$40,918,247	\$104,750,712	11.5%
1998	506,296	1.7%	\$86.77	\$43,928,838	\$112,457,824	7.4%
1999	513,079	2.7%	\$89.11	\$45,719,334	\$117,041,496	4.1%
2000	488,848	3.4%	\$92.14	\$45,041,209	\$115,305,495	-1.5%
2001	502,390	1.9%	\$93.89	\$47,168,424	\$120,751,166	4.7%
2002	298,024	2.2%	\$95.95	\$28,596,476	\$73,206,978	-39.4%
2003	447,773	1.9%	\$97.78	\$43,781,775	\$112,081,344	53.1%
2004	437,447	3.3%	\$101.00	\$44,183,613	\$113,110,049	0.9%
2005	499,768	3.4%	\$104.44	\$52,194,503	\$133,617,928	18.1%
2006	507,755	2.0%	\$106.53	\$54,089,218	\$138,468,398	3.6%
2007	533,166	4.1%	\$110.89	\$59,124,798	\$151,359,483	9.3%
2008	506,752	0.1%	\$111.00	\$56,251,845	\$144,004,723	-4.9%
2009	483,600	2.7%	\$114.00	\$55,131,275	\$141,136,064	-2.0%
2010	414,177	1.5%	\$115.71	\$47,925,181	\$122,688,464	-13.1%
2011	504,403	3.0%	\$119.18	\$60,116,359	\$153,897,880	25.4%
2012	414,177	1.7%	\$121.21	\$50,202,107	\$128,517,393	-16.5%
2013	464,325	1.5%	\$123.03	\$57,124,719	\$146,239,279	13.8%
2014	510,369	0.8%	\$124.01	\$63,291,709	\$162,026,776	10.8%
2015	508,728	0.7%	\$124.88	\$63,529,824	\$162,636,349	0.4%
2016	550,861	2.1%	\$127.50	\$70,236,001	\$179,804,163	10.6%
2017	575,555	2.1%	\$130.18	\$74,925,616	\$191,809,578	6.7%
2018	520,217	1.9%	\$132.65	\$69,008,441	\$176,661,609	-7.9%
2019	542,405	2.3%	\$133.17	\$72,234,191	\$184,919,528	4.7%
2020	430,175	1.4%	\$135.04	\$58,090,117	\$148,710,699	-19.6%
2021	622,186	7.5%	\$145.17	\$90,320,385	\$231,220,186	55.5%
2022	549,483	6.5%	\$154.60	\$84,951,180	\$217,475,020	-5.9%
2023	535,013	3.4%	\$159.86	\$85,526,367	\$218,947,501	0.7%

See glossary for above economic impact formulas and sources

Sources: National Park Service
US Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management
Local Outfitters
Colorado Parks & Wildlife

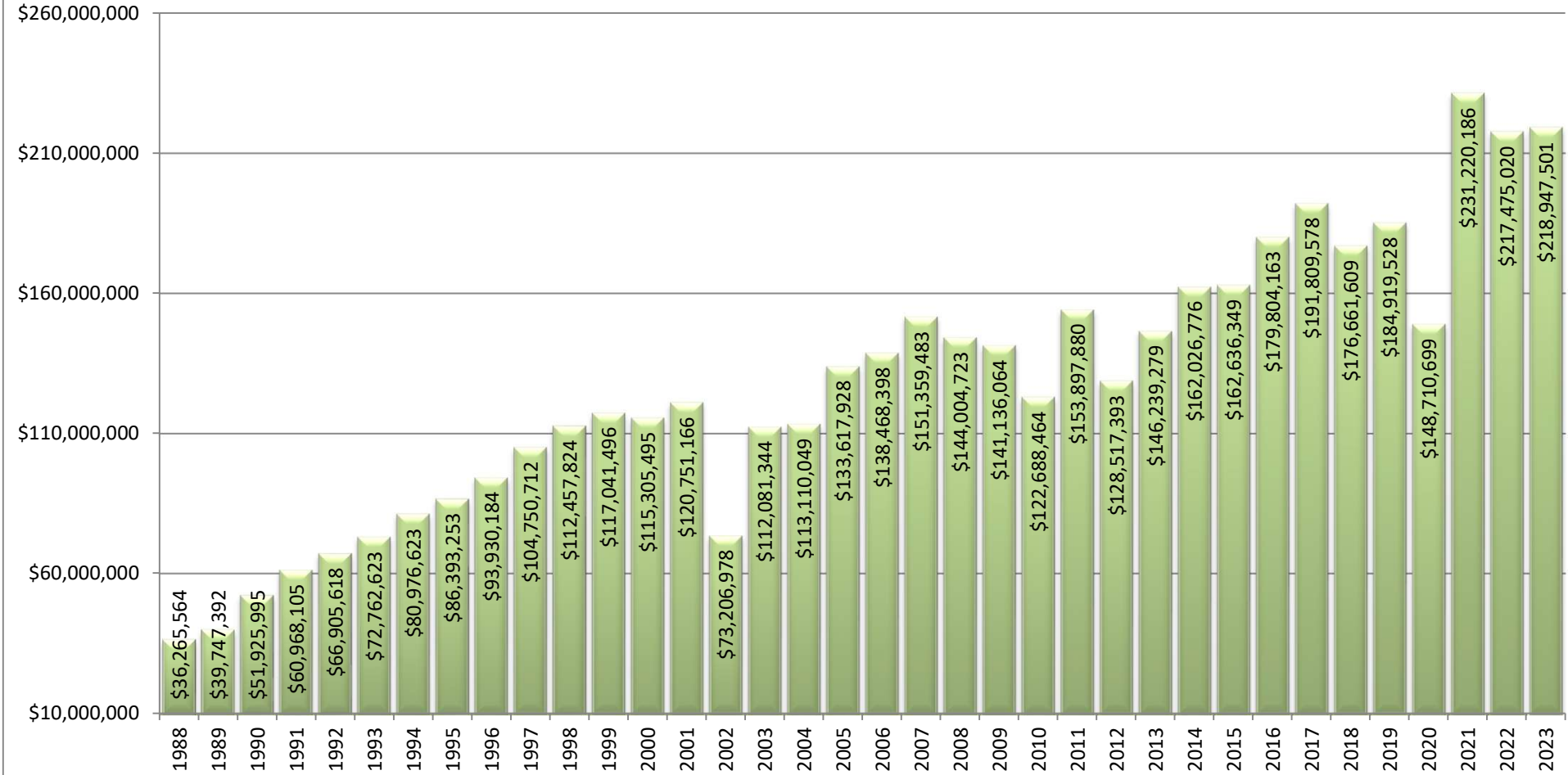
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ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COMMERCIAL RIVER RAFTING IN COLORADO

1988-2023

Economic Impact



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2023 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COMMERCIAL RIVER RAFTING IN COLORADO

RIVER	USER DAYS	DIRECT EXPENDITURES	ECONOMIC IMPACT
Animas	37,139	\$5,741,764	\$14,698,917
Animas - Upper	227	\$35,095	\$89,842
Arkansas	224,700	\$34,739,073	\$88,932,027
Blue	1,856	\$286,941	\$734,570
Clear Creek	81,674	\$12,626,965	\$32,325,031
Colorado - Glenwood	64,940	\$10,039,855	\$25,702,029
Colorado - Upper	32,866	\$5,081,150	\$13,007,744
Colorado - Horsethief - Ruby	1,158	\$179,029	\$458,315
Colorado - Westwater	3,550	\$548,837	\$1,405,023
Dolores	940	\$145,326	\$372,034
Eagle - Upper	669	\$103,429	\$264,778
Eagle - Lower	8,776	\$1,356,787	\$3,473,375
Gore Creek - Vail	0	\$0	\$0
Green/Yampa	5,846	\$903,803	\$2,313,737
Gunnison Gorge	5,054	\$781,359	\$2,000,278
Gunnison - Upper (Town Run)	827	\$127,856	\$327,311
Gunnison - Escalante	376	\$58,130	\$148,814
Gunnison - Forks to Austin	2,162	\$334,250	\$855,679
Gunnison - Lake Fork	217	\$33,549	\$85,885
North Platte	301	\$46,535	\$119,130
Piedra	438	\$67,716	\$173,352
Poudre	29,921	\$4,625,847	\$11,842,168
Rio Grande	2,415	\$373,364	\$955,812
Roaring Fork - Above Basalt	2,639	\$407,995	\$1,044,466
Roaring Fork - Below Basalt	3,691	\$570,636	\$1,460,828
San Juan - Pagosa	9,340	\$1,443,983	\$3,696,596
San Miguel	7,173	\$1,108,960	\$2,838,938
South Platte	No Report	Not Available	Not Available
Taylor	13,616	\$2,105,061	\$5,388,956
Totals	542,511	\$83,873,294	\$214,715,634

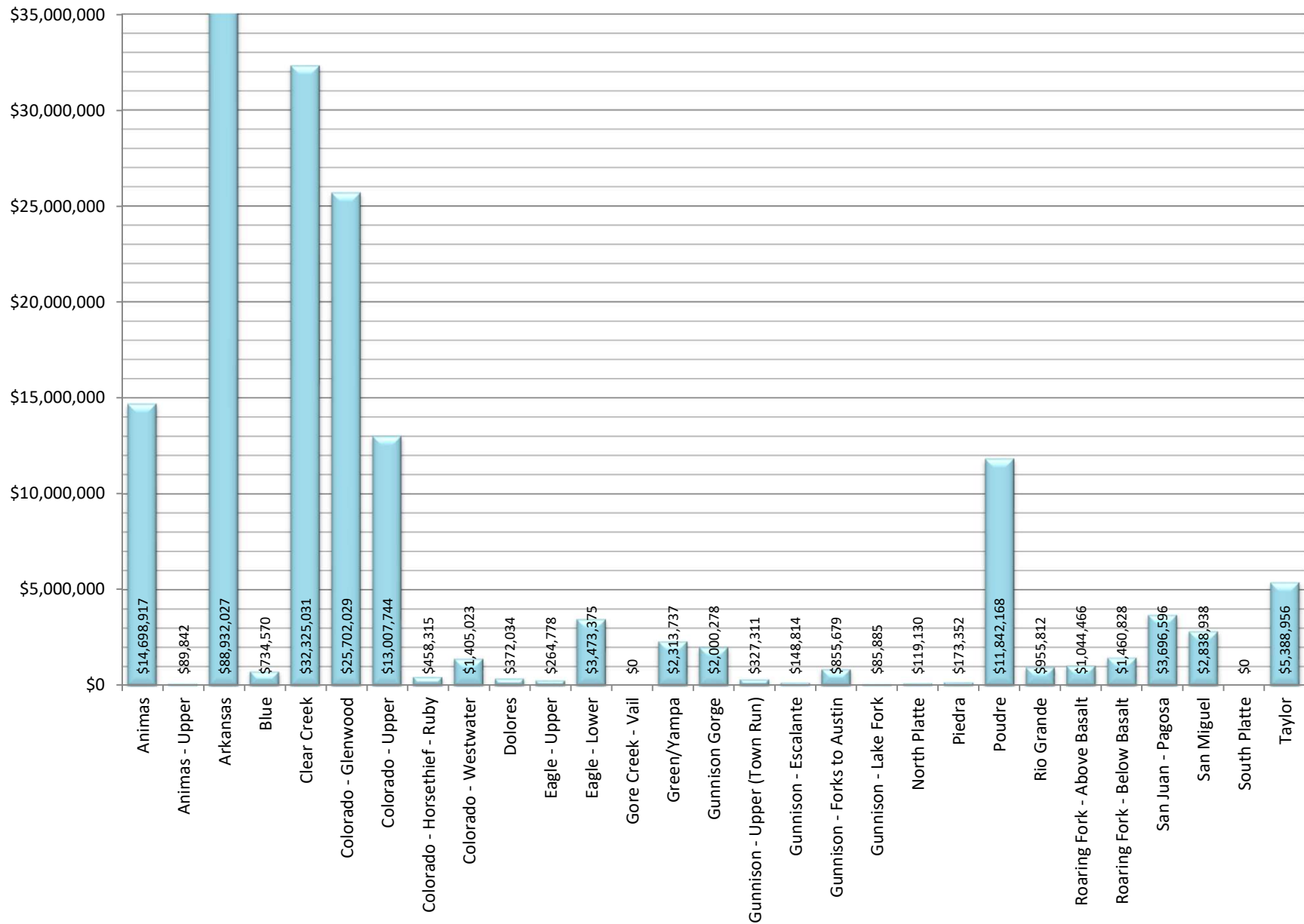
See glossary for above economic impact formulas and sources

Sources: National Park Service
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ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COMMERCIAL RIVER RAFTING IN COLORADO - 2023



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INDIVIDUAL RIVER COMMERCIAL RAFTING STATISTICS - 4 YR RANGE

RIVER	2021 USER DAYS	2022 USER DAYS	2023 USER DAYS	% CHANGE '20 - '21	% CHANGE '21 - 22	% CHANGE '22 - 23	2021 % MARKET SHARE	2022 % MARKET SHARE	2023 % MARKET SHARE
Animas	52,967	36,132	37,139	59.9%	-31.8%	2.8%	8.5%	6.6%	7.0%
Animas - Upper	387	286	227	N/A	-26.1%	-20.6%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Arkansas	256,650	247,721	224,700	41.0%	-3.5%	-9.3%	41.2%	45.1%	42.4%
Blue	0	0	1,856	-100.0%	N/A	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Clear Creek	100,203	80,364	81,674	92.5%	-19.8%	1.6%	16.1%	14.6%	15.4%
Colorado - Glenwood	70,753	63,222	52,914	28.1%	-10.6%	-16.3%	11.4%	11.5%	10.0%
Colorado - Upper	45,433	33,866	32,866	-2.0%	-25.5%	-3.0%	7.3%	6.2%	6.2%
Colorado - Horsethief - Ruby	820	943	1,158	-35.3%	15.0%	22.8%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Colorado - Westwater	6,369	5,299	3550	52.0%	-16.8%	-33.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.7%
Dolores	0	75	940	N/A	N/A	1153.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Eagle - Upper	266	88	669	-75.3%	-66.9%	660.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Eagle - Lower	5,233	7,507	8,776	26.7%	43.5%	16.9%	0.8%	1.4%	1.7%
Gore Creek - Vail	0	0	0	-100.0%	N/A	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Green/Yampa	5,132	3,085	5,846	36.7%	-39.9%	89.5%	0.8%	0.6%	1.1%
Gunnison Gorge	6,110	6,096	5,054	34.2%	-0.2%	-17.1%	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%
Gunnison - Upper (Town Run)	4,170	2,883	827	N/A	-30.9%	N/A	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%
Gunnison - Escalante	144	241	376	433.3%	67.4%	56.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Gunnison - Forks to Austin	2,326	2,276	2,162	43.8%	-2.1%	-5.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Gunnison - Lake Fork	348	169	217	-18.1%	-51.4%	28.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
North Platte	0	0	273	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Piedra	173	36	438	N/A	-79.2%	1116.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Poudre	39,877	33,008	29,921	85.6%	-17.2%	-9.4%	6.4%	6.0%	5.6%
Rio Grande	221	1,469	2,415	41.7%	564.7%	64.4%	0.0%	0.3%	0.5%
Roaring Fork - Above Basalt	948	1,541	2,639	-9.3%	62.6%	71.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%
Roaring Fork - Below Basalt	221	655	3,691	-34.6%	196.4%	463.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.7%
San Juan - Pagosa	0	4,000	9,340	N/A	N/A	133.5%	0.0%	0.7%	1.8%
San Miguel	8,201	5,547	7,173	67.4%	-32.4%	29.3%	1.3%	1.0%	1.4%
South Platte	No Report	No Report	No Report	N/A	N/A	N/A	No Report	No Report	No Report
Taylor	15,234	12,974	13,616	30.7%	-14.8%	4.9%	2.4%	2.4%	2.6%
Totals	622,186	549,483	530,457	44.6%	-11.7%	-3.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Sources: National Park Service
US Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management
Local Outfitters
Colorado Parks & Wildlife

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