

Memorandum

Date: May 4, 2026
To: Douglas County Advisory Boards
From: Amy Knopp, Manager of Rueter-Hess Recreation
CC: Steven Shoultz, CPRE, Director of Parks and Recreation
Subject: Rueter-Hess Recreation Update for April 2026

RUETER-HESS UPDATES

Is Our Black Bear Family Back? Possible Cub Sighting!

It looks like our black bear family may have returned to the area. A guest recently shared a video that appears to show a young cub, recorded from a safe distance. Because the bear was far away, it was difficult to confirm if it was indeed a cub. Although sightings of yearlings were limited last season, their scat has been a consistent sign of their presence around both the Rueter-Hess Reservoir and the Incline. To learn more about bear scat, the North American Bear Center's website (<https://bear.org/bear-facts/scat-droppings/>) is a great source.



Black Bear <https://cpw.state.co.us/species/black-bear>

BearWise (bearwise.org) explains that the longer days and warmer temperatures in April draw bears out of their dens. When bears come out of hibernation, they are thirsty and hungry. After drinking some much-needed water from the reservoir, they begin foraging for ants, other insects, and leftover chokecherries and service berries.

The Rueter-Hess property continues to offer a safe environment where people and wildlife can coexist. We want to remind everyone that getting too close to wildlife is dangerous for humans and disruptive for animals. Protecting wildlife is a priority, and it's encouraging to know that, with awareness and respect, we can all enjoy and recreate safely in these shared spaces.

Eased Fishing Rules for Rueter-Hess Recreation

Parker Water and Sanitation District (Parker Water) updated the rules and regulations for recreational use at Rueter-Hess Reservoir. The revised regulations ease restrictions on Walleye and Yellow Perch fishing. The update increases the Walleye size limit by 1 inch, setting it at 16 to 21 inches, and doubles the Yellow Perch bag limit to 10 fish. The update became effective on May 1, 2026.

	2025	2026
Walleye (<i>Sander vitreus</i>)	Size Limit = 16 to 20 Inches Bag Limit = 2	Size Limit = 16 to 21 Inches Bag Limit = 2
Yellow Perch (<i>Perca flavescens</i>)	Size Limit = 6 Inches or Longer Bag Limit = 5	Size Limit = 6 Inches or Longer Bag Limit = 10

Improved Recreation Access



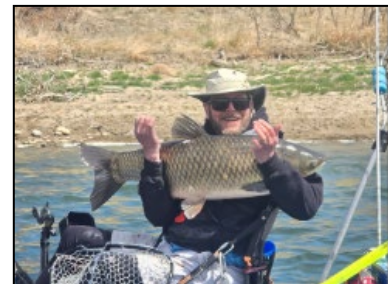
Entrance Station

With the completion of the entrance station, the two-year recreation access project is now complete. The combination of roadway improvements and the new entrance station will improve traffic flow and enhance events like Partner Days and Special events. The increased storage capacity will support watercraft inspections.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

Spring brought another month of weather-related challenges as staff continued preparations for the upcoming summer season. April at the reservoir was moderately chilly and breezy, with notable temperature swings. Daytime highs ranged from 44 to 83 degrees, while overnight lows dropped to 23 degrees.

Even though the weather fluctuated, visitation and angling activity continued to rise. Interest in the fishery remains strong, with many visitors reporting that they learned about it online or through word of mouth. Continued fishing check patrols are revealing great pictures of anglers catching fish!



Angler



Dock

Staff completed several operational and maintenance projects throughout the month. Work on the docks continued, including finalizing the boat ramp dock assembly, placement, and installation of all accessories. Weekly dock adjustments were performed to match changing water elevations. Staff harrowed the shoreline, parking area, and trails throughout April to promote quality experiences for visitors. Preparations at the entrance station also progressed, including caulking, installing commercial door handles, and organizing storage to support efficient inspections.

Staff also engaged in multiple training opportunities, including CPR and First Aid, as well as tractor box scraping. Picnic tables and benches were maintained. Additionally, the team met with Avid 4 Adventure to coordinate and plan a summer-long watercraft day camp for kids, ensuring a well-organized and successful partnership for the upcoming season.



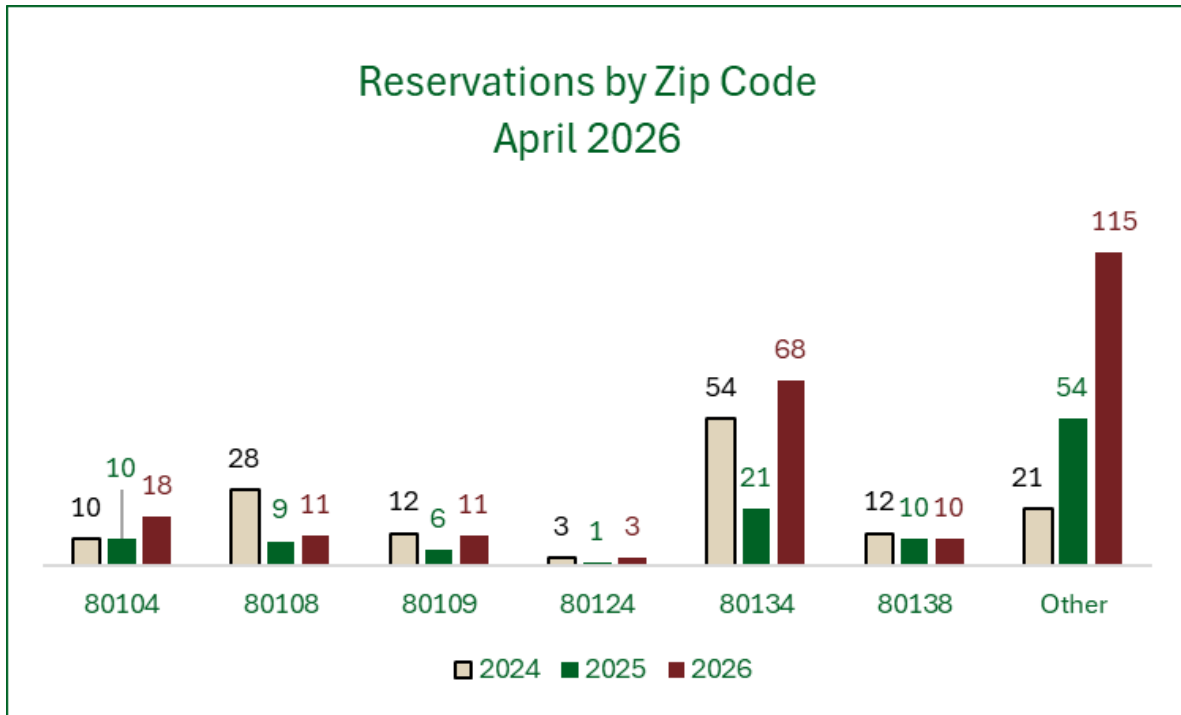
Tractor

SPECIAL USE CALENDAR

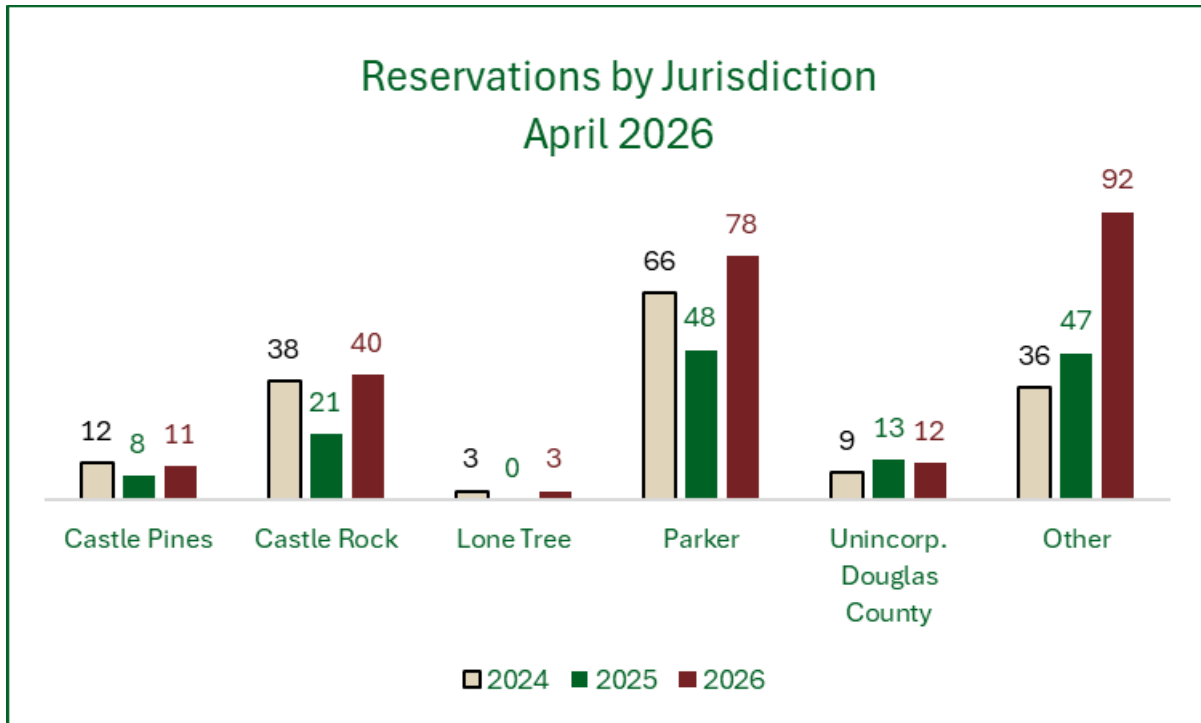
Calendar of Events 2026		
Date	Special Event	Location
5/31/2026	Runuphill Racing	Incline
6/6/2026	Colorado Gun Dog Association	Hess Rd. Access
6/1/2026 to 8/14/2026	Avid4 Adventure Summer Season Day Camp	Reservoir
6/26-29/2026	Amateur Radio Emergency Service	Pavilion
07/13-17/2026	Girl Scouts of Colorado Camp Days	Reservoir
8/21/2026	Douglas County Sheriff's Office	Reservoir
7/20/2026	South Metro Fire Department Dive Rescue Training	Reservoir
7/22/2026	South Metro Fire Department Dive Rescue Training	Reservoir
7/24/2026	South Metro Fire Department Dive Rescue Training	Reservoir
RAB /Partner Days		
7/18/2026	Lone Tree Partner Day	Reservoir
8/16/2026	Castle Rock Partner Day	Reservoir
TBD	PWSD Family Day 3-6 pm	Reservoir
8/9/2026	Castle Pines Partner Day	Reservoir
8/15/2026	Parker Partner Day	Reservoir
Partner Progaming		
6/19-20/2026	Dash Across the Dam - Parker 5K	Reservoir
Volunteer Days		
6/12/2026	Shoreline Cleanup	Reservoir
8/7/2026	Shoreline Cleanup	Reservoir
9/25/2026	Ranch View Middle School 70 kids in 6-8th grade	Reservoir

RECREATION STATS (UPDATED 5/04/26)

Visitation	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2026 Total
Reservations Made	30	44	218	206	555
Reservoir Visitors	66	102	393	376	1033
Trails Visitors	5216	6227	6738	8066	26247
Visitors	5282	6329	7131	8442	27280
Special Use					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2026 Total
Special Activities/Events	0	0	2	1	3
People Attending Special Activities/Events	0	0	5	0	5
Fishing					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2026 Total
Adult Anglers	27	18	218	209	525
Youth Anglers	3	6	60	63	148
Total Anglers	30	24	278	272	673
Watercraft Inspections					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2026 Total
Watercraft Inspections	0	0	16	74	107
Public Safety					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	2026 Total
Trail Assist	0	0	0	1	1
Trail Rescue	0	0	0	0	0
Total Trail Assist/Rescue	0	0	0	1	1
Water Assists (Needed Help)	0	0	2	3	5
Water Rescues	0	0	0	0	0
Total Water Assist/Rescue	0	0	2	3	5



Rueter-Hess Usage by Zip Code	Number of Reservations April 2026		
Zip Code	2024	2025	2026
80104	10	10	18
80108	28	9	11
80109	12	6	11
80124	3	1	3
80134	54	21	68
80138	12	10	10
Other	21	54	115



Usage By Jurisdiction April 2026			
Jurisdiction	2024	2025	2026
Castle Pines	12	8	11
Castle Rock	38	21	40
Lone Tree	3	0	3
Parker	66	48	78
Unincorporated Douglas County	9	13	12
Other	36	47	92