

Memorandum

Date: June 5, 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 May 2026**

RUETER-HESS UPDATES

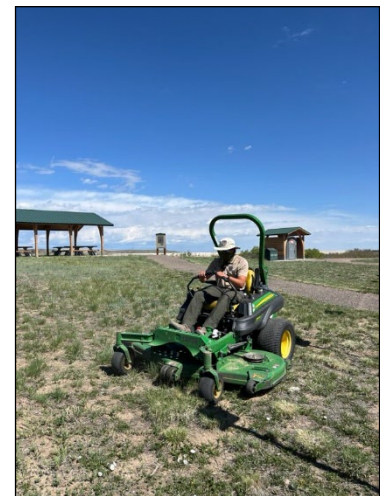
Rangers Sharpen Critical Boating Skills at BMOT

Rangers recently completed the Boating Motor Operation Training (BMOT) provided by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The three-day course at Chatfield State Park focused on essential on-water operational skills. Training covered -openwater boat handling, trailer backing, vessel towing, safety inspections, and proper launching and recovery techniques. These abilities are critical for the RueterHess Rangers as they conduct on-water fishing checks and respond to water-based emergencies. Because boating skills diminish without regular practice, ongoing training ensures rangers remain confident and capable. This training strengthens their ability to operate safely and effectively in unpredictable water conditions. Staff have committed to conducting all training when the reservoir is closed or empty. This approach protects visitors' peaceful experience while allowing rangers to train without disruption.



Trail Maintenance and Seasonal Preparation at Rueter-Hess Reservoir

This past week, Park Rangers at Rueter-Hess Reservoir spent time mowing trail corridors and weed-whipping around park signs, trailheads, and other public use areas in preparation for the busy Memorial Day weekend. Under the guidance of Park Ranger Supervisor Jason, the rangers also received hands-on training operating the John Deere zero-turn mower used for trail and grounds maintenance. Learning to safely operate this equipment helps build practical skills while supporting routine park operations. Each time the rangers maintain the trails, they gain more experience with equipment handling, property upkeep, and identifying areas needing attention. Mowing and trimming around signs improves visibility for visitors while keeping trail routes accessible and well-maintained. These efforts also help present a clean and welcoming environment as visitation increases for the holiday weekend. The ranger team has been working hard throughout the week to prepare the park for seasonal use and maintain safe recreational spaces for the public. Their continued work reflects both their growing field experience and their commitment to keeping the reservoir in excellent condition for all visitors.



May Fishing Update



Angler

As our weather begins to stabilize, so does our fishing! Current water temperatures are around 53 degrees. As of May 15th, the reservoir is approximately 100 feet deep and 33% full, holding nearly 24,580 acre-feet of water.

The recent cooler weather pushed walleye into deeper areas, but they have now returned to many of their usual locations. One notable spot is Anglers Draw, a wide cove on the south end of the reservoir, which features various depths and steep slopes. At the entrance station, the Rangers will be ready to share other tips and tricks to make your day fun. We have observed an increase in walleye activity there.



Angler

Rangers recommend using bright-colored lures such as crankbaits in white, orange, yellow, or green, jerk baits in similar color patterns, and soft-plastic swimbaits paired with heavy jig heads to reach greater depths. With warmer days approaching, we anticipate that fishing will continue to improve.

On average, around 20 anglers visit the property each day, and there is plenty of space available for everyone as well as ample fish in the reservoir.

Ranger Support for the Run Uphill Racing Special Event

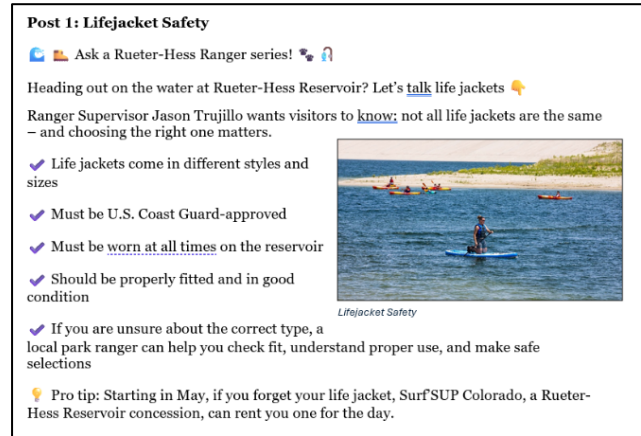
Rangers conducted comprehensive weekly trail maintenance throughout May to ensure safe and reliable conditions for the Run Uphill Racing event on Sunday, May 31, 2026. The 22 race starters utilized the maintained trails on Rosie Rueter and Coyote Loop, all of which received focused upkeep in advance of the race. Maintenance included vegetation trimming, debris removal, erosion checks, and signage inspection to maintain clear sightlines and reduce natural hazards. Rangers also monitored for seasonal wildlife activity, including rattlesnakes, ensuring trails remained visible and reducing the likelihood of unexpected encounters. These proactive measures help protect both visitors and wildlife by giving runners improved visibility and reaction time. At the trailhead, rangers continued year-round responsibilities such as mowing, litter removal, and weekly trash servicing. The event director supplemented these efforts by providing a finish area tent with drinks, snacks, and awards. Ranger support contributes directly to the safety, professionalism, and overall success of events held within the park.



Running Uphill Race at the Incline Trailhead

Community Engagement

This summer, Rueter-Hess Reservoir launched its “Ask a Rueter-Hess Ranger” social media series, connecting residents with expert tips on water safety, fishing, wildlife viewing, and outdoor recreation. By sharing ranger knowledge through engaging and accessible content, the series helped educate visitors while encouraging them to explore all the reservoir has to offer. The campaign showcased the expertise of our dedicated ranger staff and strengthened community connections through meaningful online engagement. Special thanks to the Communication and Community Engagement Team for their creativity, coordination, and hard work in bringing this successful outreach initiative to life.



Example of the Social Media Posts

All five social media posts are attached to the end of this report.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

Variable temperatures and intermittent precipitation contributed to a slight slowdown in visitation and operations throughout May. Water temperatures remained in the mid- to high-50s, limiting watercraft activity. Angling participation increased modestly; however, catch rates declined, likely due to walleye and largemouth bass entering their spawning periods.

Rangers completed the Basic Marine Operator’s Training, which provided instruction in boat operations, rescue techniques, and maintenance procedures. In late May, Rangers and the Surf SUP concession responded to a capsized kayaker. The individual’s family, who were nearby in another kayak, alerted responders by yelling and blowing their whistle. Though the kayaker was wearing a life jacket and attempted to self-rescue, she began losing fine and complex motor skills due to cold water exposure. Surf SUP arrived first, reaching her approximately 250 yards from the launch area. The individual was rescued, brought aboard, and warmed. Thanks to the rapid response, no injuries occurred. Additional staff training this month included employment law.

The patrol boat received a new protective deck coating similar to a truck bed liner. The previous aluminum surface was extremely slippery during rescues and became hot in warm weather. The new coating has significantly improved traction and temperature control, enhancing safety during rescues and routine dock maintenance.

Staff successfully navigated the first holiday period of the season. Over the four-day holiday week, 295 visitors were recorded—an increase from 160 in 2025. Angling participation rose as well; with 143 anglers this year compared to 83 during the same period last year. We anticipate continued growth in 2026.

We welcomed a new Seasonal Technician, Logan Wahlers. Additionally, Elisa Friedman accepted an offer to fill a vacant Ranger position and will begin on June 5.

SPECIAL USE CALENDAR

Calendar of Events 2026		
Date	Special Event	Location
5/31/2026	Runuphill Racing	Incline
6/1/2026 to 8/14/2026	Avid4 Adventure Summer Season Day Camp	Reservoir
6/4/2026	South Metro Fire Department S211 "Portable Pumps and Water Use" class	Reservoir
6/6/2026	Colorado Gun Dog Association	Hess Rd. Access
6/26-29/2026	Amateur Radio Emergency Service	Pavilion
07/13-17/2026	Girl Scouts of Colorado Camp Days	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
8/21/2026	Douglas County Sheriff's Office	Reservoir
RAB /Partner Days		
7/18/2026	Lone Tree Partner Day	Reservoir
8/9/2026	Castle Pines Partner Day	Reservoir
8/15/2026	Parker Partner Day	Reservoir
8/16/2026	Castle Rock Partner Day	Reservoir
TBD	PWSD Family Day 3-6 pm	Reservoir
TBD	DC Partner Day	Reservoir
Partner Programing		
6/19-20/2026	Dash Across the Dam - Parker 5K	Reservoir
Surf'SUP Vendor Programing		Reservoir
June 12, 15, 19, 22, 29	Colorado Academy Day Camps June	Reservoir
July 6, 13, 20, 24, 27, 31	Colorado Academy Day Camps July	Reservoir
6/15-19/2026	Colorado Academy Week Camps	Reservoir
6/22-29/26	Colorado Academy Week Camps	Reservoir
7/6-10/26	Colorado Academy Week Camps	Reservoir
7/27-31/26	Colorado Academy Week Camps	Reservoir
7/21/26	Foothills Day Camp	Reservoir
6/6/26	Sunset Paddle	Reservoir
6/20/26	Sunset Paddle	Reservoir

7/4/26	Sunset Paddle	Reservoir
7/18/26	Sunset Paddle	Reservoir
8/1/26	Sunset Paddle	Reservoir
5/31/26	Worship on the Water	Reservoir
6/28/26	Worship on the Water	Reservoir
7/26/26	Worship on the Water	Reservoir
8/30/26	Worship on the Water	Reservoir
9/27/26	Worship on the Water	Reservoir

RECREATION STATS (UPDATED 5/31/26)

Visitation	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	2026 Total
Reservations Made	30	44	218	206	459	957
Reservoir Visitors	66	102	393	376	845	1,782
RHR Incline (Reported Monthly)	4520	5580	5883	6660	6817	29,460
RHR Coyote Run Loop (Reported Monthly)	668	904	1027	1034	1136	4,769
RHR Newlin Gold Trail (Reported Monthly)	28	59	76	63	102	328
Trails Visitors	5216	6543	6986	7757	8055	34,557
Visitors	5282	6645	7379	8133	8900	36,339

Special Use	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	2026
Special Activities/Events	0	0	2	1	0	3
People Attending Special Activities/Events	0	0	5	0	0	5

Fishing	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	2026
Adult Anglers	27	18	218	209	327	799
Youth Anglers	3	6	60	63	84	216
Total Anglers	30	24	278	272	411	1015

Watercraft Inspections	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	2026
Watercraft Inspections	0	0	16	74	449	539

Public Safety	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	2026
Trail Assist	0	0	0	1	0	1
Trail Rescue	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Trail Assist/Rescue	0	0	0	1	0	1

Water Assists (Needed Help)	0	0	2	3	4	9
Water Rescues	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Water Assist/Rescue	0	0	2	3	5	10

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Post 1: Lifejacket Safety

🗣️ 🛖 Ask a Rueter-Hess Ranger series! 🐾 🧑🏻
Heading out on the water at Rueter-Hess

Reservoir? Let's talk life jackets 🙌
Ranger Supervisor Jason Trujillo wants visitors to know: not all life jackets are the same – and choosing the right one matters.

✔️ Life jackets come in different styles and sizes

✔️ Must be U.S. Coast Guard-approved

✔️ Must be worn at all times on the reservoir

✔️ Should be properly fitted and in good condition

✔️ If you are unsure about the correct type, a local park ranger can help you check fit, understand proper use, and make safe selections

💡 Pro tip: Starting in May, if you forget your life jacket, Surf SUP Colorado, a Rueter-Hess Reservoir concession, can rent you one for the day.



Lifejacket Safety

Post 2: Fishing Spots

🗣️ 🛖 Ask a Rueter-Hess Ranger series! 🐾 🧑🏻
Looking for the perfect fishing spot at Rueter-Hess Reservoir?

Ranger Fred Hays shares a few local favorites:

📍 Windsock Point – Great for shore fishing with access to deeper water (where the big ones are 🧐)

📍 Angler's Draw – A quieter cove and a hotspot for largemouth bass

📍 Fishing Dock – Get past shallow snags and into deeper water without a boat

💡 Bonus: Shoreline trails are great as the water warms up!



Fishing Spot

Post 3: Fishing Lures

🗨️ 🧥 Ask a Rueter-Hess Ranger series! 🐾 🎣
Have you been fishing at Rueter-Hess and having no luck? It might be your lure...

👁️ We got the insider scoop from rangers on the best lures to use.

🌟 For walleye and bass at the Reservoir, think: shiny + bright = better bites. Top colors include silver, chartreuse, neon green.

🎣 For larger catches, try crank and jerk baits, which are staples for Rueter-Hess regulars.

🎣 Aiming for largemouth bass? Try out soft bodied lures paired with a jig head. (💡 This will work for walleye, too!)



Fishing Lures

Post 4: Birdwatching

🗨️ 🧥 Ask a Rueter-Hess Ranger series! 🐾 🎣
Be sure to bring your binoculars to your next visit to Rueter-Hess—you're going to want them. Ranger Bernadette Ortiz recommends the best bird watching spots at the Reservoir:

📍 Scenic Overlook – Wide-open, calm, and perfect for spotting birds across the water

📍 Coyote Loop (early morning) – Best for birding by ear and spotting white pelicans in the early morning.

Take advantage of one of the best ways to slow down and take in the reservoir!



Birdwatching

Post 5: Wildlife

🗨️ 🧥 Ask a Rueter-Hess Ranger series! 🐾 🎣
What wildlife might you see at Rueter-Hess Reservoir?

Ranger Matt Aiguier says animals are everywhere—you just have to look.

🐃 Mule deer & pronghorn

🦅 Raptors (red-tailed hawks, even bald eagles!)

🦢 Pelicans, herons, ducks & other waterfowl

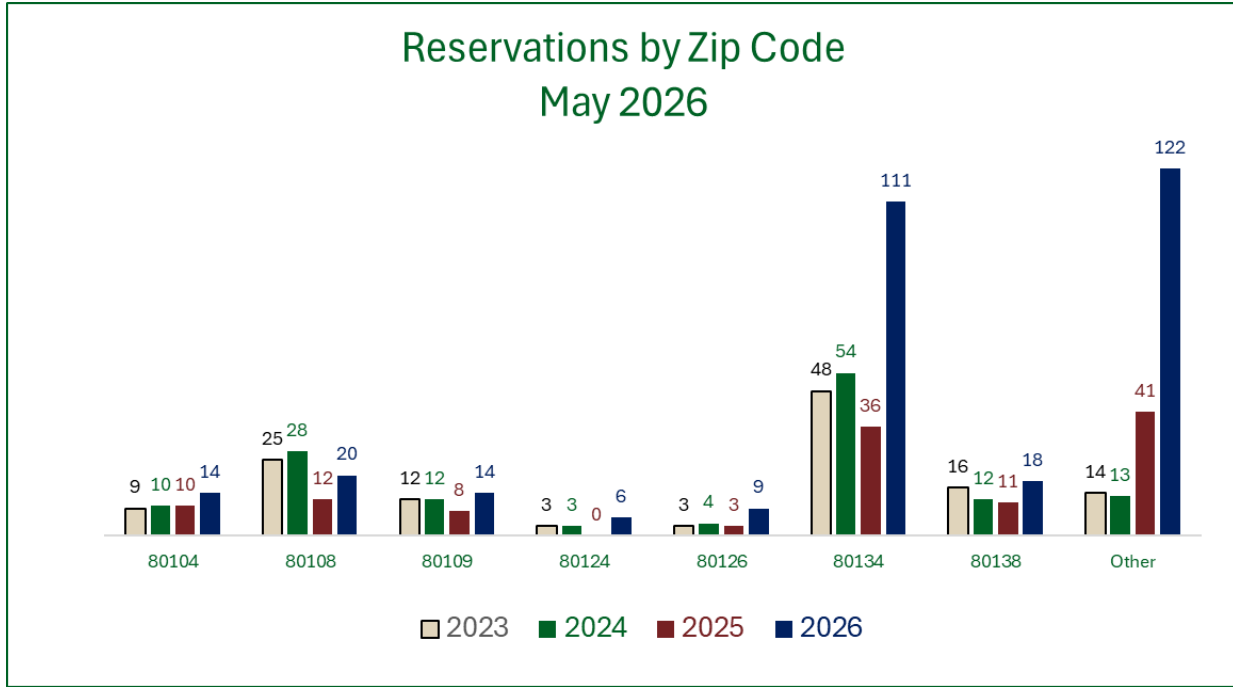
🐾 Coyotes & foxes

🐰 Rabbits & small mammals

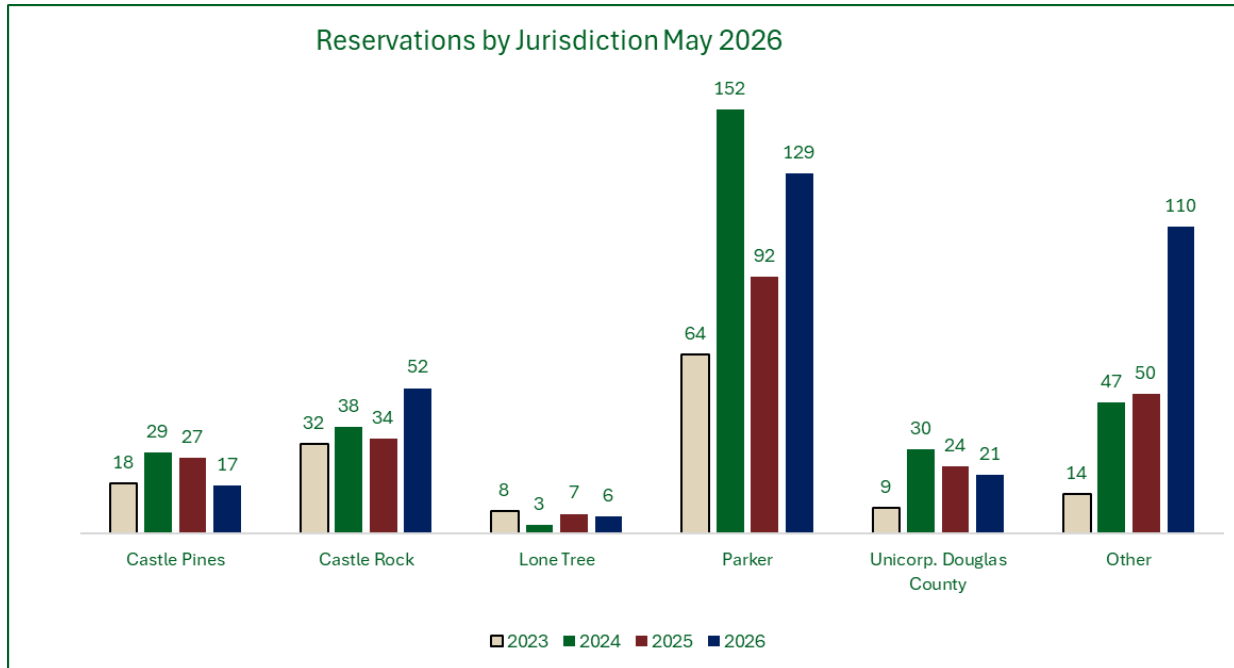
⚠️ Reminder: Rattlesnakes may be present in warmer months—stay on trail and stay aware.



Wildlife



Rueter-Hess Usage by Zip Code May 2026				
Zip Code	2023	2024	2025	2026
80104	9	10	10	14
80108	25	28	12	20
80109	12	12	8	14
80124	0	3	0	6
80126	3	4	3	9
80134	48	54	36	111
80138	16	12	11	18
Other	14	13	41	14



Usage By Jurisdiction May 2025				
City	2023	2024	2025	2026
Castle Pines	18	12	8	17
Castle Rock	32	38	21	52
Lone Tree	8	3	0	6
Parker	64	66	48	129
Unincorporated Douglas County	9	9	13	21
Other	14	36	47	110