

Memorandum

Date: April 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 March 2026**

RUETER-HESS UPDATES

Winter Hiking at Rueter-Hess

After a largely dry winter, seasonal snowfall arrived just before spring. The wintry conditions did not deter trail users. The incline continues to offer a distinctive, conveniently located recreational opportunity that does not require extensive travel. Visitation in February increased by 37 percent, as community members and guests utilized 6.5 miles of scenic trails and the 132-step incline, which provides a 232-foot elevation gain.



Winter Hiking at Rueter-Hess

Pronghorn Wildlife Sighting at Rueter-Hess Reservoir

On Wednesday, March 4th, a herd of 11 Pronghorn was spotted along the Percy-Hess trail at Rueter-Hess Reservoir. The herd was seen moving across open grassland habitat adjacent to the trail before continuing through the surrounding prairie landscape. These sightings highlight the importance of the reservoir property as an open habitat that supports native wildlife species.



Pronghorn Herd at Rueter-Hess

Similar ungulate species, including Elk and Mule Deer, have also been documented within the reservoir property in previous seasons. The presence of these large herbivores demonstrates the ecological value of the protected open space surrounding the reservoir. Ungulates can provide ecological benefits by naturally grazing vegetation, thereby helping maintain grassland health and plant diversity. Their movement across the landscape can also aid in seed dispersal and contribute to natural ecosystem processes. Continued wildlife observations help park staff document wildlife presence and better understand how ungulate species utilize the reservoir property.

Angler Success

Anglers are having great success fishing for Walleye at Rueter-Hess Reservoir. They have been using Yellow Perch and crawfish paddle tail lures to land 21- to 24-inch Walleye. Under present reservoir conditions, mid-weight jigs in the 1/4- to 3/8-ounce range are proving effective due to their ability to reach bottom quickly while maintaining sensitivity to the subtle strikes typical of Walleye. These jig weights also support longer casting distances, which can be advantageous when covering shoreline structure. Heavier jig options may be necessary when fishing through dense aquatic vegetation

commonly encountered from shore. Monitoring lure performance in relation to forage activity and habitat conditions continues to provide useful insights for angler success.



Walleye 24 Inches



Yellow Perch Paddle Tail Lure

Improvements to the Incline Trailhead

Teamwork makes recreation improvements at the Rueter-Hess Incline trailhead possible. In early March, Parker Water, along with Douglas County's Departments of Parks and Recreation and Public Works, worked together to plan improvements to the Rueter-Hess Incline Challenge trailhead parking lot and access driveway. On March 30th and 31st, Public Works improved the 800-foot driveway with millings and repaired the one-acre parking lot.



Before Dirt Driveway



After Paved Driveway

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

March brought its share of weather-related challenges as Rueter-Hess staff prepared for an early opening to watercraft. With temperature swings of more than 30 degrees, Rangers made the most of the mild days and worked diligently to set up amenities that will enhance the experience for water recreationists this season.



Dock Installation at Rueter-Hess

Two of the largest docks were placed in the water for anglers and recreational watercraft users. Additional dock sections were installed to extend fishing access farther into the water and to expand the boating dock, providing more shared space for both the public and the concessionaire during watercraft launching.



Buoy Placement

Rangers are also deploying navigational buoys to clearly mark areas that watercraft must avoid. These zones help protect visitors from potential hazards and safeguard Parker Water and Sanitation District infrastructure.

With word spreading quickly about the growing fishery at Rueter-Hess, activity on the water is already increasing. Rangers have prepared and launched the Safety Boat and are conducting regular fishing checks. More importantly, they continue to emphasize visitor safety by ensuring all boaters are properly wearing life jackets.



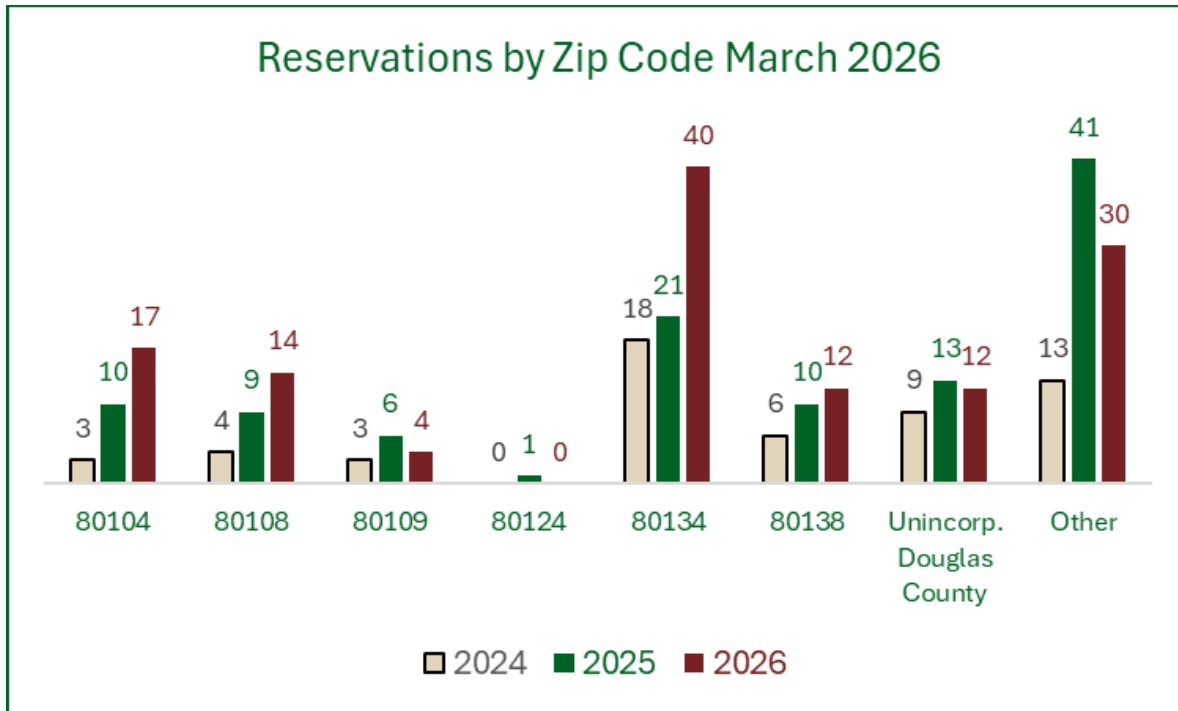
Angler at Rueter-Hess Reservoir March 2026

SPECIAL USE CALENDAR

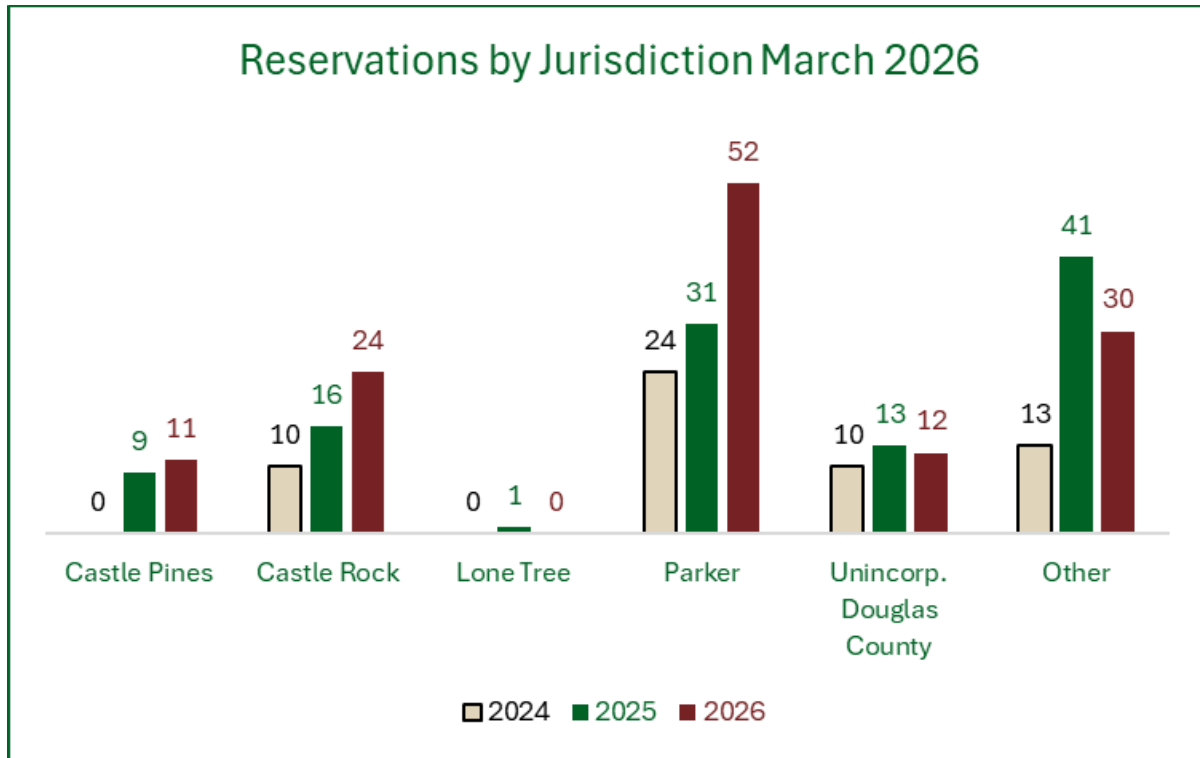
Calendar of Events 2026		
Date	Special Event	Location
5/31/2026	Runuphill Racing	Incline
6/6/2026	Colorado Gun Dog Association	Hess Rd. Access
6/1/2026 to 8/14/2026	Avid4 Adventure Summer Season Day Camp	Reservoir
6/26-29/2026	Amateur Radio Emergency Service	Pavilion
07/13-17/2026	Girl Scouts of Colorado 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 Programing		
6/19-20/2026	Dash Across the Dam - Parker 5K	Reservoir

RECREATION STATS (UPDATED 3/31/26)

Visitation	Jan	Feb	Mar	2026 Total
Reservations Made	30	44	218	292
Total Visitors At Reservoir	66	102	393	561
RHR Incline (Reported Monthly)	4520	5385	5845	15750
RHR Coyote Run Loop (Reported Monthly)	668	789	837	2294
RHR Newlin Gold Trail (Reported Monthly)	28	53	56	137
Total Trails Visitors	5216	6227	6738	18181
Total Visitors	5282	6329	7131	18742
Special Use	Jan	Feb	Mar	2026
Total Special Activities/Events	0	0	2	3
Total People Attending Special Activities/Events	0	0	5	5
Fishing	Jan	Feb	Mar	2026
Adult Anglers	27	18	218	263
Youth Anglers	3	6	60	69
Total Anglers	30	24	278	332
Watercraft Inspections	Jan	Feb	Mar	2026
Total Watercraft Inspections	0	0	16	16
Public Safety	Jan	Feb	Mar	2026
Trail Assist	0	0	0	0
Trail Rescue	0	0	0	0
Trail Assist/Rescue Total	0	0	0	0
Water Assist (Just Needed Some Help)	0	0	2	2
Water Rescue (Dangerous Or Distressed Situation)	0	0	0	0
Water Assist/Rescue Total	0	0	2	2
Total Assists (Individuals)	0	0	2	2
Total Rescues (individuals)	0	0	0	0
Total Number Of People Helped (Assists/Rescues)	0	0	2	2
EMS Requested	0	0	0	0
Number Of People Helped By EMS	0	0	0	0
Overdue Groups	1	1	3	5
Number Of People Overdue	2	2	9	13



Rueter-Hess Usage by Zip Code	Number of Reservations		
	2024	2025	2026
80104	3	10	17
80108	4	9	14
80109	3	6	4
80124	0	1	0
80134	18	21	40
80138	6	10	12
Unincorporated Douglas County	9	13	12
Other	13	41	30



Usage By Jurisdiction March			
Jurisdiction	2024	2025	2026
Castle Pines	0	9	11
Castle Rock	10	16	24
Lone Tree	0	1	0
Parker	24	31	52
Unincorporated Douglas County	10	13	12
Other	13	41	30