TRAVEL

A tent camper tries out RVing for the first time and has a revelation

Testing out the RV life at Pinewood Reservoir in Larimer County.

By JOSHUA BERMAN | Special to The Denver Post
August 22, 2017 at 5:15 pm

LOVELAND — As a mostly tent and car camper who never paid much attention to the RV crowd — except when stuck behind them on mountain roads, or cursing their generators early in the morning — I felt a little in over my head as I stood in the parking lot, staring at the 31-foot, seven-ton Winnebago motorhome I was about to take out for a spin for a few days.
The rental manager at Lazydays RV explained that between its hallway bunks, queen-sized master bed, convertible dinette, sofa and over-cab bed, this Minnie Winnie can sleep up to 10. Plus it had big storage compartments, a toilet, shower, kitchen, slide-outs (which create extra space inside once parked) and electric awning.

That sounded “larger” to me. I’d been nervous when I read the warning on the Larimer County campground page: “SITE SIZE ALERT: Pinewood Reservoir is only accessible by a narrow 4-mile paved road with extreme, 8-10% grades. Most sites are small. NOT RECOMMENDED FOR LARGER RVs AND MOTORHOMES!” I called the Larimer County campground specialist who assured me I would be fine, and gave me some specific recommendations. Site No. 9, he said, was wide and long, and I’d have no trouble backing in.

Feeling better about our destination, I drove to Aurora, picked up our rig, buckled my kids in, and we were off. We headed into the hills — with a long line of drivers behind me, of course. The Minnie Winnie, which was built around a Ford E450 chassis, felt solid and secure as I drove, even as we flew along at just below the speed limit. It felt less boaty-floaty than I thought it would, and my children were staring intently through the big side windows at passing farms and ranches.

Backing into Site No. 9 was indeed no problem, even in the pouring rain. Then, instead of spending the next 30 minutes stringing the perfect kitchen tarp between the trees, I pressed a button and watched the awning extend from over the door. The kids spilled out, and I plugged into the electric and set up some chairs. My wife and I threw out a blanket with toys on it, grabbed two beers from the fridge, and voila, camp was made!

As the rain began to lighten, a light bulb went off as I thought about this RV thing: It was all about time. Instead of spending our first few hours at camp in stressed-out, rain-chilled, set-up mode, we’d just slipped straight into the good stuff — sitting down for a welcome beverage, then smiling as my family wandered off into the woods together, looking for rainbows and kindling.

Lazydays RV Rental has locations in Aurora, Loveland and Fort Collins (lazydays.com, 855-980-7101). They have a range of campers for rent, from pop-up teardrop trailers to massive motorhomes.

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources runs a number of lovely campgrounds under an hour’s drive from many Front Range cities. Call 970-679-4570 or go to larimercamping.com to find and reserve a site.
Joshua Berman
Joshua Berman is a freelance writer and travel expert. In addition to his monthly column, "Around Colorado," Joshua is the author of six books about travel. His most recent is Moon Colorado Camping: The Complete Guide to Tent and RV Camping. Joshua also works as a K-12 Spanish teacher in Boulder, where he lives with his wife and three daughters.

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View Devil's Backbone parking on webcam

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People interested in visiting the Devil's Backbone trailhead can see real-time parking conditions for the popular destination west of Loveland online at larimer.org/naturalresources/bbone-webcam.cfm.

The trailhead, located off of U.S. 34, is the main access point for Devil's Backbone Open Space, one of Larimer County's most visited open spaces.

With more than 100,000 visitors per year, it can be hard to find a parking space at the trailhead on weekends and holidays when weather conditions are good for hitting the trail.

Webcam images of the trailhead are refreshed every five minutes.
Relief in sight for Horsetooth Mountain Park congestion

The summit of Horsetooth Mountain — when the congestion of people and cars allows you to make it — provides perhaps the most iconic view of Fort Collins and its surrounding foothills.

And with a pair of unanimous votes and a suggestion of a celebratory toast, the city of Fort Collins and Larimer County are closer to adding access and easing congestion to the scenic areas west of the city.

Larimer County's Open Space Advisory gave its approval Thursday night to a $3.6 million purchase for almost 1,000 acres of open space along the southwest edge of Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. The vast majority of it will be under a conservation easement to protect the habitat, but about 100 acres will be used to expand public access to the open space, including new trail systems.

"We have hundreds of acres of open space that have never been open to the public, so this should be a big boon," Larimer County Land Agent Charlie Johnson said.

More: [Hike these trails instead of Horsetooth Rock](https://story/sports/outdoors/2016/08/18/hike-these-trails-instead-horsetooth-rock/88957078/)

He noted that the purchase should help ease congestion on the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space trails, as well.

"It's just ridiculously used by many people," Johnson said before the votes.

It will likely be years before any new trails are built, however. Those will go through a public review of the entire open space in coming years.

The total cost of two connected parcels is being shared by Larimer County, the city of Fort Collins and a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado. Larimer County is footing about $865,000 of the bill, with Fort Collins picking up about $1.1 million of it. The state-funded grant is covering the remaining about $57 million.

Johnson described the land as having "tremendous wild life habitat," and "just a spectacular piece of property.

More: [Here are the main reasons people get tickets at NoCo trails, open spaces](https://story/news/2017/07/22/top-reasons-people-get-tickets-noco-trails-and-open-spaces/495823001/)

The advisory committee's vote doesn't obligate any money. The Larimer County commissioners still need to OK the county's part of the deal.

The proposal comes on the heels of Larimer County commissioners in April approving a $2.6 million conservation easement [story/news/2017/04/18/2-million-view-horsetooth-rock-gets-extra-space/100605848] for about 350 acres west of the property. That cost was similarly shared, with a Great Outdoors Colorado grant for $1.6 million and the remainder being split between the county and city governments.

More: [Get free stuff for exploring Larimer County's open spaces](https://story/sports/outdoors/2017/06/14/get-free-stuff-exploring-larimer-county感情/open-spaces/397178001/)

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Broomfield, Larimer landmark water deal gets final OK

By Jennifer Rios
Staff Writer
Broomfield Enterprise

A water-sharing agreement between Broomfield and Larimer counties was completely finalized Tuesday, a move that is expected keep a working farm in production while helping fill municipal water needs.

The final nod was received by Northern Water last week, following earlier approvals by Broomfield and Larimer counties. The agreement includes Broomfield buying 115 Colorado-Big Thompson water units for $25,550 each from Larimer, which would save Broomfield $109,250 if bought at open-market value. It also includes an “Alternate Transfer Mechanism,” or ATM, that would give Broomfield the right to use 80 C-BT units a minimum of three out of 10 years, while paying an additional fee to use the water in those years to add to the farm’s viability.

The effort is a drought-protection effort that could be increased to five out of 10 years in extreme drought years. That period would be a rolling 10 years, meaning once Broomfield pulls water, the clock starts.

In 2016, Larimer County purchased a farm, southwest of Berthoud, and its associated water rights with the goal of keeping the farm in active production while offsetting the cost through a water-sharing agreement.

Larimer officials spoke to several groups, including Broomfield, about entering an agreement where some of the unneeded water would be purchased and a portion would be shared by the two counties in drought years. The ATM is the first of its kind in Colorado where water is shared from agricultural to municipal use in perpetuity.

This type of agreement became an option after Gov. John Hickenlooper approved the Colorado Water Plan. The plan promotes collaborative solutions to Colorado’s major water challenges, including agricultural land drying up because of the transfer of water to municipalities.

“By piecing this agreement, we’ve demonstrated that, by working together and sharing valuable resources, it’s possible to conserve fast-disappearing farmland at a reduced cost while securing a source of water for Colorado’s growing cities,” Kerri Rollins, Open Lands program manager for Larimer County, said in a Larimer Department of Natural Resources news release this week. “Hopefully, this creates a model for farmers and municipalities to work together and avoid simple ‘buy and dry’ of farmland.”

Through the agreement, Larimer County was able to conserve 211 acres of productive farmland, along with the farm’s agricultural, historic, scenic, community buffer and educational values, the release states, while reducing the cost of buying the farm and its water by 46 percent.

“Broomfield values a partnership approach to both water conservation and securing future water resources,” David Allen, director of Public Works for Broomfield, said. “We were pleased to work with Larimer County to bring this innovative Alternative Transfer Method to both of our communities.”

Larimer County retained 45 units of C-BT water unencumbered, along with native Handy Ditch water.

According to studies funded by the Colorado Water Conservation Board’s Alternative Agricultural Water Transfer Methods Grant Program, the water that will remain on the farm will be enough to keep it profitable and productive, according to the release. It will grow corn or sugar beets in wet years and water-efficient crops in dry years. In very dry years, when the farm might normally struggle to grow a profitable crop, the farm may now be better off financially with the ATM in place because it will bring in revenue from the ATM payment associated with the sharing of the water, the release states.

Jennifer Rios: 303-473-1361, rios@broomfieldenterprise.com or Twitter.com/Jennifer_Rios
BUSINESS

Tiny mussel larvae in Green Mountain Reservoir signals big threat to all Colorado water

Water managers worry invasive species will foul recreation and gum the works of drinking water statewide

Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post
Cyclists race around Green Mountain Reservoir in this 2011 file photo.

By JASON BLEVINS | jblevins@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
PUBLISHED: August 29, 2017 at 8:59 pm | UPDATED: August 30, 2017 at 8:53 am
After scientists concluded the microscopic squiggles in samples of Green Mountain Reservoir water were dangerous mussel larvae, Colorado bumped up its war against a worst-case scenario that threatens fisheries, power generation, water quality, water distribution, access and recreation across the state.

If those little bugs become mussels, reservoirs and lakes will close to boats. Colorado's water-based recreation economies will suffer. Water prices will skyrocket. Countless users downstream from Colorado — and the entire West is downstream — will be impacted.

"One could argue there is not a Coloradan who escapes from the implication of infestation, if it occurs," said Brad Wind, the deputy manager at Northern Water, which counts Green Mountain Reservoir as a critical Western Slope component of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project that waters 925,000 people in northeast Colorado.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife, counties, municipal water managers and the Forest Service have waged a statewide battle against zebra and quagga mussels for a decade. The agencies and water guardians inspect boats entering every lake and reservoir, even cleaning boats with scalding water if there are signs of mussels. This season, inspection teams have checked 373,293 boats and decontaminated more than 10,100 vessels.

Samples of quagga mussels embedded on a salt cedar root found at the shoreline of Lake Havasu in 2007 photographed at The Bureau of Reclamation's Engineering and Research Laboratory in Lakewood Tuesday morning, July 20, 2010. Researchers at the lab believe that they may be able to help stop the invasive spread of quagga and zebra mussels, which are costing hydropower and water providers millions.
And Colorado is winning the war. Biologists have never found an adult zebra or quagga mussel in any Colorado lake or reservoir.

But they have found tiny mussel larvae, known as veligers. Lake Pueblo tested positive for veligers in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011, but, after several years of clean reports, it was delisted from so-called containment protocol in January. Blue Mesa, Granby, Shadow Mountain, Willow Creek, Tarryall and Jumbo reservoirs and Grand Lake tested positive for zebra or quagga veligers in 2008, but all were delisted in 2014 and are now considered free of the invasive species.

“We are the first and only state in the U.S. that has moved from being positive to entirely negative status,” said Doug Krieger, aquatics section chief for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

An infestation, such as the one discovered in early 2016 in Utah's sprawling Lake Powell, can spread rapidly and blanket lake beds and infrastructure. It can spread to other lakes, too. Wildlife officials estimate that boaters haul 3,000 boats a year to Colorado from Lake Powell.

The Dolores Water Conservancy District, citing the threat of a mussel infestation, in March closed the boat ramps to Totten Lake in southwestern Colorado. Another nearby water district closed trailered boat access to Narraguinnep Reservoir. Neither of the bodies have Colorado Parks and Wildlife boat inspections. The Dolores district is helping to fund inspections at its McPhee Reservoir and has limited access to only two boat ramps to funnel all boats and trailers through inspection points.

“They have never cured a lake from mussels. If one of these lakes gets infected, it’s over and you are stuck with mussels and eventually you will lose the fishery and they will coat all kinds of grates and pipes and clog up all your delivery facilities,” said the Dolores district manager Mike Preston. “So yes, this prevention work is costly and there are restrictions, but if you lose the battle, it becomes exponentially more costly and exponentially more restrictive.”

Water managers out West fear the costs of maintaining structures and infrastructure — bridges, dams, gates, pipelines, power plants — following in infestation. Millions have to be spent to scrape the super-clingy critters and recoat underwater equipment and structures. Pipelines, conduits and canals can choke with the fast-spreading mussels, pinching delivery systems.

Mussels also can threaten hydroelectric power plants. The power plant at the base of Green Mountain Dam is one of six plants in the Colorado-Big Thompson network that generates enough electricity to power 68,000 homes.
“Our water users understand the implications if in fact we do get contaminated with mussels and the costs they would ultimately bear,” Northern Water’s Wind said, noting that water districts continue to support legislation that would make boat owners to carry more of the inspection cost through increased licensing fees.

Beyond infrastructure impacts, layers of bottom-dwelling, filter feeder mussels suck up nutrients that support healthy fisheries and habitat. Enough mussels can sterilize a lake. And there’s access issues for non-boaters as well, as swimmers find once-sandy shorelines lined with razor-sharp shells.

Since mussels native to the cold-water seas and rivers of Eastern Europe were first discovered in the Great Lakes in the late 1980s, zebra and quagga mussels have spread to 27 states, most of which are east of the Mississippi River. The move out West probably came on trailered boats, showing up first in 2007 in Nevada’s Lake Mead. Colorado Park and Wildlife officials suspect the veligers in Green Mountain Reservoir traveled the same way, on a boat that had been in out-of-state waters and slipped into the Summit County reservoir on an illegal boat ramp, avoiding inspection.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife funds its boat-inspection program with severance taxes collected from the state’s oil and gas companies. When the state Supreme Court last year ruled that Colorado had to refund millions in severance taxes, that funding went away. As the agency cut its inspection program to only the busiest lakes and reservoirs, municipal water managers across the state stepped up to help.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife sought legislative support this spring for the ability to increase fees for residential hunting, fishing and boating licenses. The bill did not pass through committee. The division, facing declining revenues and climbing costs, is again talking about seeking legislative approval to increase its hunting and fishing fees.

Without revenues to offset a looming $22 million shortfall in funding by 2023, the agency has warned it will cut access and slash services such as inspecting for invasive aquatic species. This year, the agency might separate a funding request for aquatic invasive species inspections from the fee-increase bill.

In February, as severance tax revenue dried up, Northern Water and Larimer County pitched in $100,000 each to fund boat inspections at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir.
That multiagency and municipal funding mechanism might linger if permanent funding for boat inspections isn’t established with a legislative fix to replace the severance-tax stream. This year, the state’s largest municipal water providers — in Denver, Colorado Springs, Northern Colorado, Aurora and Pueblo — have stepped up funding. The Forest Service used to inspect boats at Green Mountain Reservoir from 2010 through 2014, but when federal funds dried up, Colorado Parks and Wildlife took over for 2015 and 2016. The two agencies split the cost this year.

A clear example of how city water managers are ready to join the fight against mussels is found at Twin Lakes and Turquoise Lake above Leadville. Water utility managers in Aurora, Colorado Springs and Pueblo are sharing costs for boat inspections at the remote mountain lakes, just below the peaks where snowmelt starts its journey to city water supply.

“These guys are really focused on their headwaters,” Parks and Wildlife’s Krieger said. “There is definitely some legitimate paranoia going on.”

TAGS: BOATING, CLIMBING, COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE, COLORADO WATER, FISHING, GREEN MOUNTAIN, HORSETOOTH RESERVOIR, HUNTING, INFRASTRUCTURE, OIL AND GAS, PARKS, TAXES, WATER, WILDLIFE

Jason Blevins
Jason Blevins covers tourism, mountain business, skiing and outdoor adventure sports for both the business and sports sections at The Denver Post, which he joined in 1997. He skis, pedals, paddles and occasionally boogies in the hills and is just as inspired by the lively entrepreneurial spirit that permeates Colorado's high country communities as he is by the views.

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DENVER - Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials are implementing aggressive decontamination policies in response to recently discovered invasive quagga mussel larvae in the Green Mountain Reservoir in central Colorado.

The Denver Post reports (http://www.denverpost.com/2017/08/29/invasive-mussel-larvae-green-mountain-reservoir-decontamination-boats/) specialists from the Bureau of Reclamation located the larvae earlier this month through a microscopic examinations and DNA testing. A team of scuba scientists did not find any larvae in the portion of the reservoir between Silverthorne and Kremmling last week.

Officials will continue to require all boats heading to the reservoir undergo an inspection for invasive mussels and are adding a second inspection for all boats leaving to prevent the growth and spread of the species. Officials will delist the reservoir if three years of biweekly tests of the reservoir show no presence of quagga mussel larvae.

Boating hours to change at Larimer County reservoirs

loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Thu Aug 31 22:11:50 MDT 2017

LOVELAND — Boat ramp hours at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir will change starting Thursday, Sept. 7.

At Carter Lake, the North Ramp will be open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week and the North Pines ramp will be open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

The ramp at South Shore will close for the season starting Sept. 10 to accommodate renovation of the campground and is expected to remain closed until early next summer.

At Horsetooth Reservoir, both the South Bay and Inlet Bay ramps will be open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. At Satalina, the ramp will be closed Monday through Wednesday, open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursdays and Sundays, and 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

At Pinewood Reservoir, ramps will be open 6 a.m.-10 p.m. seven days a week throughout September.

Pinewood works on a boat seal system where vessels need to be inspected before coming to Pinewood Reservoir. A boat can be pre-inspected at nearby Carter Lake or other boat ramps in Colorado, where the boater will receive a boat seal and seal receipt, which are required to launch at Pinewood.

Boat ramps may close earlier than scheduled due to low water levels. For the full schedule of boat ramp hours, visit larimer.org/naturalresources.
60,000 tires later: Roberts Ranch reaching restoration normalcy

The signs on the prairie are subtle.

Native plants are a little too straight, a little too short, a little too meticulously spaced apart. All told, the scene is far cry from the piles and stacks of old car tires that previously stood in their place.

"Everything is coming in the way it should," Roberts Ranch manager Zach Thode said on a recent walk-through with members of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

That particular site, on the rolling prairies of northern Larimer County, had just a year earlier been a staging area for removal of thousands of tires. Larimer County to clean up tires at Roberts Ranch.

Larimer County accepted a $495,000 grant from the state last summer to clean up the thousands of tires dumped on the property. The property is under a conservation easement to protect it from development. Not all of the money was needed because the estimated amount of tires was a fraction of early estimates — only about 60,000 instead of the 200,000 early estimates.

The recent walk-through made sure work done by contractors, particularly in restoration, didn’t mar the beauty of the property. Re-seeded prairie plants were taking well, officials on the walk-through said. The staging area was initially left a barren dirt patch when the equipment and tire stacks were moved; now some of the plants are even flowering.

Thode said there were a lot of "hostile discussions" about whether the tires should even be removed due to risk to the environment. But on a sunny August afternoon, as officials with the state and county governments struggled to make out former roads and patrolled through the gullies that previously overflowed with tires, Thode was confident.

"We’ve proven we did it right," he said, noting that cooperative weather definitely helped with restoration efforts.

Which isn’t to say the property is completely free of rubber. Spots of black still jut out of the verdant country or rust-red dirt in places. Those tires will likely never be removed, or at least not without skilled effort. Officials opted not to remove the half-buried tires because of how much it would disturb the dirt and grasses of the property. But already, the environment itself is making its will known; one growing season in after the major removal efforts and some tires look like a DIY project for rustic pots, with tufts of grass sprouting out.

And with luck, those tufts will keep going and the tires will become hidden pieces of history.

"Hopefully the grass grows up," Thode said. "And we don’t see any tires."

Related: Larimer County considers plan to make foothills more resilient.
Devil’s Backbone Open Space offers September events

© September 3, 2017  ▶ Sally Roth  ☢ Events  ☐ 0

Devil’s Backbone Open Space (http://larimer.org/parks/bbone.cfm), located just west of Loveland off Hwy. 34, will be offering a selection of guided hikes and events in September, including a program on
September 14 offered in both English and Spanish. Programs are free, but registration is required; go to https://offerolarimer.org/ to sign up. Dress appropriately, and bring water. Contact Andy Grinstead, Education and Volunteer Programs, at (970) 619-4565 with questions.

**Wednesday, September 6, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., “Geology Hike at the Devil’s Backbone.”** Join Larimer County naturalists to learn about this local landmark as well as the geology of the northern Front Range. Hike rating: Easy.

**Tuesday, September 12, 10 a.m.-11 a.m., “Tiny Trekkers.”** Crafts and stories for you and your 2- to 5-year-old. A parent or guardian must accompany the child.

**Thursday, September 14, 5 p.m.-7 p.m., “Art of Nature/El Arte de la Naturaleza.”** Join Berthoud watercolor artist Joyanna Rose Gittings to explore basic artistic techniques and create an artwork on location. Hike rating: Easy. Offered bilingually in English and Spanish. Supplies are provided.

**Saturday, September 16, 8 a.m.-10 a.m. “Wonderful Wild Plants of the Devil’s Backbone.”** Join botanist Kathy Keeler to see late bloomers, look at seeds and fruits, and hear folklore of the plants in northern Colorado’s foothills. Hike rating: Easy.

**Saturday, September 23, 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. “Stargazing with the Northern Colorado Astronomical Society.”** Telescopes will be available at the parking lot for viewing stars, galaxies, planets and more. Dress warmly for evening temperatures, and bring binoculars if you have them.

$850.00

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Larimer County officially secured property abutting Horsetooth Mountain Open Space on Tuesday.

The Larimer County Commission gave its stamp of approval for a purchase of almost 200 acres for $612,260 from the county's open lands sales tax, with the city of Fort Collins chipping in the rest of the $1.13 million price tag.

An additional 837 acres were put under a conservation easement, with the city, county and Great Outdoors Colorado sharing the $2.4 million cost. The conservation easement keeps that property, which serves as a ranch, from being developed in the future.

The outright purchase of the almost 200 acres could lead to expanded access to the open spaces near Horsetooth Mountain, including new trails. Those decisions will be handled as part of an upcoming review of the parks and open spaces master plan.

"The fee simple purchase will hopefully benefit the public by providing additional access to our open lands and parks," Larimer County land agent Charlie Johnson said Tuesday morning.

More: '$2 million view' from Horsetooth Rock gets extra space

Commissioners Tom Donnelly and Steve Johnson both supported the purchase. Commissioner Lew Gaiter was absent and on vacation.

"Being able to protect those outstanding views from neighborhood development is huge," Johnson said. "... Think about all the future generations of Larimer County residents and kids that will benefit from this."

Larimer County had been working specifically on this project for the better part of a decade. It's part of a joint effort by Larimer County and the city of Fort Collins to expand and protect natural areas around Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.
Firefighters perform rope rescue of man injured in fall near Horsetooth Reservoir

Firefighters had trained for a rescue in the location

Reporter-Herald Staff
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Wed Sep 13 15:33:20 MDT 2017

Rescuers used a high-angle system with ropes and a basket to transport a man who fell about 40 feet while climbing Duncan's Ridge near Horsetooth Reservoir around 5 p.m. Tuesday evening.

The man, who is in his mid-20s, was spotted by a crew in a UCHealth LifeLine air ambulance helicopter, according to a Poudre Fire Authority media release.

Although the helicopter crew was in the area in case its assistance was required, the patient was not airlifted after he was brought to safety. He was taken to a local hospital by ambulance with significant injuries, said PFA spokeswoman Madeline Noblett.

The rescue crew was able to take a faster route to the ambulance because PFA's Engine 4 crews had practiced for a rescue in the location, the release said.

Respondents from Larimer County Sheriff's Office, UCHealth Emergency Medical Services and Larimer County Park Rangers assisted in the retrieval of the man.
Guided hikes on Larimer County Open Spaces

From the Department of Natural Resources

Guided hikes and events

Stargazing with the Northern Colorado Astronomical Society
Saturday, Sept. 23, 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Join members of the Northern Colorado Astronomical Society (NCAS) for an up-close look at the night sky over the Rockies. Telescopes will be available for viewing stars, galaxies, planets and more. This open house-style program is located at the Devil's Backbone Open Space parking lot, located just west of Loveland off Highway 34. Dress warmly for evening temperatures and bring binoculars if you have them. For up-to-date weather information, visit the NCAS website at www.nocaoastro.org. Program is free, but registration is required. Go to offero.larimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Andy at (970) 619-4565.

Hike with Commissioner Donnelly
Thursday, Oct. 6, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
Take a hike with Commissioner Donnelly and Open Lands Program Manager Kerri Rollins at Devil's Backbone Open Space, located west of Loveland off Highway 34, and work toward completing your open space passport. Larimer County launched a passport program for its open spaces in 2016. Posts are located on eight Larimer County open spaces. Each post has a plaque affixed to it with a unique image. Obtain a passport from open space trailhead kiosks (or on this hike), place your passport over the plaque and make a rubbing of the image to "stamp" your passport. Collect rubbings to win cool prizes! Approximately 2-hour program. Hike rating: Easy. Dress appropriately for the weather, wear appropriate footwear and bring water, snacks and binoculars for the trail. Program is free, but registration is required. Go to offero.larimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Andy at (970) 619-4565.

Birding tour of Three Bell conservation easement
Saturday, Oct. 7, 8 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
Join Larimer County naturalists for a special tour of the Three Bell conservation easement, a private property located just north of River Bluffs Open Space near Windsor. This beautiful area boasts a lovely section of the Cache la Poudre River and is home to many different bird species, including great egret, bald eagle and yellow-headed blackbird. Participants will meet at River Bluffs Open Space, located just west of the I-25/Windsor interchange off County Road 32E. Approximately 2.5-hour program. Hike rating: Easy. Dress appropriately for the weather, wear appropriate footwear and bring water, snacks and binoculars for the trail. Program is free, but registration is required. Go to offero.larimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Andy at (970) 619-4565.

Tiny Trekkers
Tuesday, Oct. 10, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Join Larimer County naturalists for a program designed for your 2- to 5-year-old and you. This program at Devil's Backbone Open Space, located just west of Loveland off Highway 34, will be a morning filled with crafts, stories and fun facts! A parent or guardian must accompany the child for this hour-long program. After the program, feel free to explore the open space with your child! Program is free, but registration is required. Go to offero.larimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Andy at (970) 619-4565.

Little Thompson Farm public tour
Wednesday, Oct. 11, 10 a.m. - noon
Larimer County Department of Natural Resources invites you on a behind-the-scenes tour of its new open space farm in Berthoud. Discover how water in the West impacts landscapes and livelihoods in northern Colorado, as well as the history of the farm and how it ties in to Larimer County's mission. Hike rating: Easy. Dress appropriately for the weather and bring water. Meet at Grace Place, located at 375 Meadowlark Dr., Berthoud, CO 80513 and carpool to the farm. Program is free, but registration is required as space is limited. Visit offero.larimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Heather at hyoung@larimer.org or (970) 619-4489.

Stargazing with the Northern Colorado Astronomical Society
Friday, Oct. 13, 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Join members of the Northern Colorado Astronomical Society (NCAS) for an up-close look at the night sky over the Rockies. Telescopes will be available for viewing stars, galaxies, planets and more. This open house-style program is located at the Devil's Backbone Open Space parking lot, located just west of Loveland off Highway 34. Dress warmly for evening temperatures and bring binoculars if you have them. For up-to-date weather information, visit the NCAS website at www.nocaoastro.org. Program is free, but registration is required. Go to offero.larimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Andy at (970) 619-4565.

Little Thompson Farm public tour
Saturday, Oct. 14, 10 a.m. - noon
Larimer County Department of Natural Resources invites you on a behind-the-scenes tour of its new open space farm in Berthoud. Discover how water in the West impacts landscapes and livelihoods in northern Colorado, as well as the history of the farm and how it ties in to Larimer County's mission. Hike rating: Easy. Dress appropriately for the weather and bring water. Meet at Grace Place, located at 375 Meadowlark Dr., Berthoud, CO 80513 and carpool to the farm. Program is free, but registration is required as space is limited. Visit offero.larimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Heather at hyoung@larimer.org or (970) 619-4489.

History of the Devil's Backbone
Wednesday, Oct. 18, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Join local author and tour guide Ken Jossan for a hike through the history of Devil's Backbone Open Space, located just west of Loveland off Highway 34. Explore the story of the gypsum mine and plaster mill started in the late 1800s by enterprising Industrialist
Alfred Wild, the remains of which are still visible to Backbone visitors today. Approximately 2-hour program. Hike rating: Easy. Dress appropriately for the weather, wear appropriate footwear and pack plenty of water for the trail. Program is free, but registration is required. Go to offerslarimer.org to sign up. Direct questions to Andy at (970) 619-4565.
Boat ramp hours at Horsetooth and Carter Lake to change October 1

PHOTO COURTESY OF LARIMER COUNTY
On Sunday, October 1, hours of operation will change at the boat ramps at Horsetooth Reservoir, Fort Collins, and Carter Lake, Loveland, and more ramps will close for the season.

At Horsetooth Reservoir County Park: South Bay ramp: 6 a.m.-10 p.m., 7 days a week; Inlet Bay and Satanka ramp, closed for season. (Beginning October 19: South Bay ramp, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., 7 days a week.)

At Carter Lake County Park: North ramp: 6 a.m.-10 p.m., 7 days a week; South Shore and North Pines ramps, closed for season. (Beginning October 19: North ramp, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.)

Boat ramp hours for Pinewood Reservoir, Loveland, follow those for Carter Lake. Boats need to be inspected before coming to Pinewood Reservoir. A boat can be pre-inspected at nearby Carter Lake or other boat ramps in Colorado, where the boater will receive a boat seal and seal receipt, which are required to launch at Pinewood.

Water levels have been dropping rapidly at Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake, and ramps may close earlier than scheduled. For the most up-to-date schedule of boat ramp hours, go to https://larimer.org/naturalresources/parks/boating
POLITICS > COLORADO POLITICS

We need help fighting invasive mussels in Green Mountain Reservoir, Colorado’s congressional delegation tells Trump administration

News broke last month that the quagga mussel larvae were discovered in the Summit County reservoir

By JESSE PAUL | jpaul@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
PUBLISHED: September 28, 2017 at 3:58 pm | UPDATED: September 29, 2017 at 9:55 am

Nearly every member of Colorado’s congressional delegation has signed a letter to the Trump administration asking for help with the emerging crisis of tiny invasive mussel larvae found in Green Mountain Reservoir.

News broke last month that the quagga mussel larvae were discovered in the Summit County body of water. The mussels, when grown, can clog pipes, harm fish and hamper hydroelectric power generation.

Once an outbreak begins, it often spreads quickly and can be hard — if not impossible — to stop.

Other Western states have been affected by quagga and zebra mussels, but so far Colorado — which has been working hard to prevent their contamination and spread — has been spared.
“We urge you to respond rapidly, deploy available resources and work with the state and local communities to prevent this initial detection from growing into a full infestation,” the delegation wrote to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. “A rapid response is critical during the window of opportunity immediately after the detection of invasive species.”

The letter, dated Thursday, was signed by Sens. Cory Gardner and Michael Bennet, as well as Reps. Diana DeGette, Scott Tipton, Doug Lamborn, Jared Polis, Ed Perlmutter and Mike Coffman.

Rep. Ken Buck, a Weld County Republican, did not sign the letter.

“As a headwater state that is currently free of adult invasive mussels, the detection of invasive mussel larva poses a tangible threat to our economy,” the letter said. “The Department of Interior has recognized the importance of preventing invasive mussel infestations in western headwater states, such as Montana where larva was identified in late 2016 and resources were deployed to the Columbia River Basin.”

Zinke is from Montana.

Green Mountain Reservoir, which stores water from the Blue River north of Silverthorne, is part of the Colorado-Big Thompson network that sends water under the Continental Divide to northeast Colorado.

A hydroelectric power plant at the base of the reservoir’s towering dam is one of six in the C-BT network. It generates enough electricity to power 68,000 homes.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife spokesman Mike Porras said his agency has drawn more than 100 samples from Green Mountain Reservoir since the larvae were detected. “All of these samples have come back negative for all aquatic nuisance species including quagga mussels.”
Green Mountain Reservoir will close for the boating season on Saturday. CPW plans to continue to taking samples through the fall.

Tiny mussel larvae, known as veligers, have been found in Colorado before. Lake Pueblo, for instance, tested positive for them in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011.

Biologists, however, have never found an adult zebra or quagga mussel in any Colorado lake or reservoir.

Lake Powell, which straddles Utah and Arizona, has been ravaged by a mussel infestation since veligers were detected in late 2012 and four adult mussels were found on a boat that had been pulled for service in March 2013.

Boats and other watercraft can quickly spread the invasive species. Colorado wildlife officials have said the veligers found in Green Mountain Reservoir likely hitched in on a boat that had been in water outside the state.

State lawmakers during the past legislative session cited the threat of invasive mussels as one reason why they voted down a proposal to allow sea planes on Colorado’s bodies of water, saying they could act as long-range vehicles for the species.

“A swift response now will limit future costs that would result from the long-term management of an invasive mussel infestation in Colorado,” the letter ended.
Rains delay trail connecting Loveland, Fort Collins

Front Range Trail expected to be complete in late October

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Wed Oct 04 19:00:24 MDT 2017

Recent rainy weather has delayed completion of the Front Range Trail, the first paved trail to connect Loveland and Fort Collins.

When construction began in June, trail planners expected that it would be complete and open by the beginning of October. That has been pushed back to the end of the month.

"It’s been the rain," said Zac Wiebe, trails coordinator for Larimer County.

Loveland alone has received 0.57 inches of rain during the first four days of October, which is half of the average amount for the entire month, while September saw just less than 2 inches of rain, which was about a half inch above average for that month.

And more precipitation is forecast for the rest of this week and into early next week.

Crews have been working every day that it does not rain and completing the tasks that they can on these overcast days, according to Wiebe. Now, they are looking at adding some possible Saturday work to complete the trail.

The bulk of construction is finished, but there are some small sections with cement still to be poured and some finishing touches to complete.

The $1.2 million project is a collaboration between Larimer County, Fort Collins and Loveland and will connect existing trail systems in Fort Collins and Loveland. The idea is to provide a paved, non-street link between the two cities for recreation and, perhaps, as an option for commuters.

"It’s exciting," said Wiebe "People are excited about it."

Two grants, $450,000 from the Colorado Department of Transportation and $350,000 from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, are covering two-thirds of the cost of the trail. The remaining $400,000 will be split by Larimer County, Loveland and Fort Collins in proportionate amounts to the length of trail that is being built in each jurisdiction.

About a half-mile falls in Loveland, 130 feet in Fort Collins and the remainder of the two miles in unincorporated Larimer County.

The paved trail connects with the city of Loveland Recreation Trail near Boyd Lake on County Road 11C, which is Madison Avenue in Loveland. It extends north on 11C to County Road 30, then jogs a short distance west to a new crossing on County Road 30.

From there, the trail extends through a field and neighborhood, essentially along the path of a power line, and at Carpenter Road, just east of Lemay, ties into Fossil Creek Trail, which winds through Fort Collins.

Ultimately, this will be part of a larger trail that someday will run throughout the Front Range from Wyoming to New Mexico.

Construction on a second trail that will connect Loveland and Fort Collins, this one on the west side of town, likely will begin next month.

The Longview Corridor Trail will connect Loveland’s Sunset Vista Natural Area near the southwest corner of Taft Avenue and 57th Street to the Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area in Fort Collins, where it will link to another piece of the Fossil Creek Trail. The 4.5-mile stretch of trail will include a new trailhead in Loveland.

This project, also a collaboration between the three entities, is expected to cost $4 million and is defrayed by a $1 million Great Outdoors Colorado grant.

The Longview trail project is currently out for bids for construction, which could begin in mid-November and will take about a year to complete.

Pamela Johnson: 970-699-5405, johnsonp@reporter-herald.com, www.twitter.com/RHPamelaJ.
Tours of new Larimer County open space planned

By Reporter-Herald Staff
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Wed Oct 04 17:36:52 MDT 2017

Staff from Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will give tours of the department's new open space farm southwest of Berthoud at 10 a.m.-noon Wednesday, Oct. 11, and Saturday, Oct. 14.

Participants will get a behind-the-scenes look at the farm's operation, discover how water in the West impacts landscapes and livelihoods in Northern Colorado, and learn the intriguing history of the farm, which has several historic buildings and sites, some which date back to the early 1900s.

The farm is not typically open to the public, so these tours offer a way to visit and learn about this new open space.

Participants will meet at Grace Place, located at 375 Meadowlark Drive in Berthoud, and carpool to the farm.

The tours are free, but registration is required. To sign up, go to offero.larimer.org and look for the Little Thompson Farm Public Tours.

For details, contact Heather at 619-4489 or hyoung@larimer.org.
Hikers find body near Pinewood Reservoir

Cassa Niedringhaus cniedringhaus@coloradoan.com  Published: 2:30 p.m. MT Oct. 8, 2017 | Updated: 3:35 p.m. MT Oct. 8, 2017

Hikers near Pinewood Reservoir discovered a body Sunday morning.

They reported the body about 9:30 a.m. Larimer County Department of Natural Resources park rangers confirmed the person was dead, at which point Larimer County Search and Rescue personnel assisted in carrying the body to the parking lot on the northwest end of the reservoir.

The Larimer County Coroner's Office will identify the person, notify their family and determine their cause and manner of death.

At this time, there is no indication of foul play, according to a news release by the Larimer County Sheriff's Office.

More: One person dead after Fort Collins house fire (/story/news/local/2017/10/08/one-person-dead-after-fort-collins-house-fire/744500001/)


The parking lot was temporarily closed Sunday morning to accommodate the emergency response.

Pinewood Reservoir is nestled in the foothills, west of both Loveland and Carter Lake Reservoir.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the Larimer County Sheriff’s Office at 970-416-1985. People can also call Larimer County Crime Stoppers at 970-221-6668, where they can remain anonymous and possibly be eligible for a cash reward.

Reporter Cassa Niedringhaus covers breaking news for the Coloradoan. Follow her on Twitter: @CassaMN.