

FRIENDS OF RIDGWAY STATE PARK

2019 NEWSLETTER

The State of the Park ***By Kirstin Copland – Park Manager***

They say the only constant is change. I would say the park follows that truism. Changes in staff, water levels, recreational demands, visitation, fees, and budgets have been in high gear the last two years here at Ridgway State Park. The good news is, the park thrives with change. Visitors, staff, and volunteers, all strive for the success of the park through change.

Looking back from 2018 when there was NO WATER when we experienced a record drought to now in 2019 with abundant water, we have gone from one extreme to the other. In 2019, visitation dramatically increased with full parking lots in some day use areas, and a full campground every weekend, and most weekdays, Memorial Day past Labor Day. Thankfully, the visitors were overall very respectful of each other and the park. In addition, the fantastic staff and volunteers helped inform, manage, and assist all the visitors and protect the park's resources.

Changes in recreational demands, not only from when I started in 1998, but even in the last 2-4 years have produced dramatic shifts in demands and expectations. For instance, 30 amp electric in the campground is not considered acceptable to the visitors in Pa Co Chu Puk anymore, so we have slowly (as budget allows) added 50 amp service. Another change in camping is the increase in hammock camping, so the hosts now have loaner hammock stands for campers to use instead of the trees. On the water, there's been a dramatic increase in paddle boarding on the lake. We have added more information, loaner life jackets, and new on-site paddle rental options. In the next twelve months, we will be adding a paddle trail and paddle storage facility. It sounds like a broken record with public institutions that we are perpetually under-funded. However, real cost increases in minimum wages, in utility costs and fleet costs as well as the need for more of everything from toilet paper, trash service, to electricity due to increases in visitation have made for tight budgets. In response, statewide, most fees went up in 2019. In conjunction, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Leadership has added to our budgets just to get us to the new minimum wages, but has not been able to add more. There are efforts afoot to see if Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) can help with more operating costs in addition to the current funding for education and volunteers. And of course the staff is great at coming up with efficiencies to help us compensate.

A key component to our success is our partnership with the Friends to meet many aspects of our mission, including education and stewardship efforts, staff support, amenities like the shade shelter, and much more. Thank you to the Friends of Ridgway State Park for the ongoing support and partnership in the ever-changing world of Ridgway State Park.

A Happy Journey to Thirty ***By Jeff Riddle-FRSP Board Member***

Birthdays. Anniversaries. Moon Landings. Oh, how I love to celebrate our special occasions and accomplishments. Individual achievements honor our fellow citizens for the creativity, generosity, and empathy that help make all our journeys more enjoyable and productive. Team milestones, be it a married couple or

championship football team, demonstrate our ability to embrace a common goal and persevere through the tough times. Celebrate the good times. And the moon landing? Was that *really* 50 years ago!?

State park openings. The year 2019 marks the **30th** anniversary of the opening of Ridgway State Park (RSP). As I reflect upon the park's founding and growing popularity, I realize what a happy journey this has been for park visitors, staff, and friends. I'm grateful for the ongoing partnership of two government agencies: the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. From day one, these agencies have worked in partnership to ensure the protection of natural resources, while enhancing the quality and diversity of recreational activities in the park. I'm very proud of the dedication and professionalism of the park staff that serve here. Make no mistake, they realize RSP is a very special state park, and they offer nothing less than their best efforts to ensure the finest possible experience for visitors.

Park visitors. I think everyone associated with park operations; staff and volunteers alike are amazed at the popularity of RSP. Visitation and park revenues have soared to a level that places RSP among the top five most popular *state parks* in Colorado. The park collects about \$1.6 million annually from over 400,000 visitors. In these days of limited tax funding, it's comforting to recognize our park earning enough revenue to help offset the ever-increasing operating costs. Bravo! And THANK YOU park visitors!!

In September 1962, President John F. Kennedy challenged America to achieve a national goal by way of an ambitious space mission: land men on the moon and return them safely to earth. The mission of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) reads: “. . . **to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state park system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources.**”

Thank you, President Kennedy. And thank you, CPW. Let's do this!

Revitalizing the Memorial Grove

By Kathy See – FRSP Board President

The Memorial Grove is a collection of trees planted in memory of loved ones, located near the shade structure in Dakota Terraces, Loop C. The first trees were planted in 2009 and numerous trees were subsequently planted over the next 6 years.

The tree of choice at the time was the blue spruce, an evergreen popular because of its uniform conical shape and blue-green color. Unfortunately, many of these spruce have not survived on the chosen site. The Friends Board has been monitoring the Memorial Grove as these trees declined and has decided to take steps to revitalize this commemorative spot.

This past summer, the Board sent out letters to the original sponsors of the dead trees to inform them of the plan to rejuvenate the Memorial Grove. The dead trees were removed and a couple that were dying were also cut down. An improved irrigation system was installed to enable more consistent watering.

In late spring of 2020, new evergreen trees will be planted and their memorial plaques replaced. These trees will be species that are better adapted to the site and the Park's ecosystem, including piñon and junipers which are native to the region. All the individual trees will be fenced to minimize deer browsing.

The new trees will obviously be smaller than the remaining trees but the addition of new species will give the Memorial Grove both age and species diversity, insuring longevity to this special place.

Summary for Education, Spring through Fall

By Carrie Krickbaum – RSP Naturalist

Starting in May, our spring PIE brought in 1-3rd graders. I also attended the 4th grade resource festival in Montrose. So, for the month of May, we had 234 adults participating and 704 kids attending. We also had some new education volunteers join us this year which was a great addition.

For the Summer Program Series we included Take Me Fishing, Nature Detectives, Hunger Games Archery, Generation Wild Wednesdays, Reading in the Park, Touch Tables, and Riverfest. We also had some additional field trips with Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, The Wright Stuff Foundation and Voyager youth program. The totals for the summer were 1006 adults and 937 kids.

Our fall programs included Bird Banding and fall field trips, “My Time for Fishing” events (special needs) and the Birds of Prey Program at the park’s overlook and at Ouray School. I also hosted a Halloween night hike which brought in 9 kids and 24 adults. So the totals for fall programs were 1016 kids and 293 adults attending or participating. So, it looks like the totals for this year are 1953 kids and 1299 adults participating.

Later this fall and winter, we plan on doing some more full moon hikes and, Winter Ecology field trips, and our Fresh Air Friday hikes (Black Friday) as well as First Day Hikes on January 1. I appreciate so much what the Friends of Ridgway State Park does to support education and carry on our mission of sparking interest in young minds and sharing this beautiful park!

FRSP SCHOLARSHIPS 2018

By Glenda Young- Scholarship Coordinator

Seven applicants applied for the two \$2000 scholarship awards sponsored by the FRSP. Two applicants were selected by the board using a blind grid.

Dakotah Matarozzo is a previous scholarship winner. She is a graduate of Plateau Valley High School. She is currently enrolled at Colorado Mesa University with a major in Biology. Dakotah’s career goal is to work in ecological restoration to help restore and manage damaged ecosystems.

Ryan Nadiak is a graduate of Montrose High School in Montrose, Colorado. He is currently enrolled at Utah State University majoring in Forest Ecology and Management. Ryan’s career goal is to contribute to forest conservation with the U.S. Forest Service.

Congratulations to Dakotah and Ryan.

Application acceptance for the 2020 scholarships begins again in January.

2019 BLUEBIRD REPORT

By Joan Moyer – FRSP Board Member

We had lots of winter and spring moisture which brought an abundance of birds to my birdfeeders – Orioles, Finches, Grosbeaks, Tanagers and Hummingbirds to name a few. Most of Dennis’s bluebird boxes were occupied by bluebirds or tree swallows. I had very few second nesting of bluebirds this year for unknown reasons and had a few problems with wrens overtaking some boxes. Western bluebird count was 14, Mountain bluebirds were 131, and Tree Swallows were 55 with a total bird count of 200.

It was with sadness that we learned of Terry Ryan’s passing. He had previously spoken to me to have the Friends take over his 22 bluebird houses at RSP which I am working on at this time. We were so inspired by Terry and will work diligently to maintain his legacy at RSP.

Join the Friends of Ridgway State Park

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City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Annual Membeships

- ◇ Individual \$25.00
- ◇ Family \$40.00
- ◇ Supporting \$60.00
- ◇ Contributing \$100.00
(including schools, churches and civic organizations)

Business and Corporate

- ◇ up to 5 employees \$50.00
- ◇ 6-25 employees \$100.00
- ◇ 26 or more employees \$250.00

Lifetime Membership

- ◇ Lifetime \$1000.00

Make check payable to:
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See you at the Park!