

# Colorado Parks and Wildlife Director's Report



September 2025 CWCB Board Meeting

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## Free Access to State Parks for Colorado Ute Tribes

On August 5, 2025, CPW implemented HB 25-1163 which gave enrolled members of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe free access to Colorado's 43 state parks. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe have deep cultural, spiritual, ancestral, and historical ties to the majority of the land within Colorado, including much of the land that is now designated as state parks.

## Voluntary Fishing Closures

Extreme low flow and high water temperature conditions prompted CPW on August 15, 2025 to implement partial-day voluntary fishing closures on three sections of the White River and a full day voluntary fishing closure on the Crystal River until further notice. Water temperatures and river flows fluctuate over the summer, at times creating dangerous conditions for trout and other fish. When water temperatures reach 71°F or above, or when flows drop below 50% of average, it becomes more difficult for fish to recover following being caught by anglers. CPW appreciates continued cooperation from the angling community during these voluntary fishing closures to help conserve these fish populations into the future. Anglers are encouraged to visit CPW's [website](#) or call [local CPW offices](#) to learn about destination water conditions before traveling.

## CPW Wildfire Response

### Participation in the Emergency Management Response to the Lee and Elk Fires

CPW dedicated over 2,400 staff hours to the Lee and Elk Fire response efforts, with dozens of personnel contributing. The initial response included Area 6 staff assisting with community evacuations under chaotic and stressful conditions, with many of CPW's own personnel also being evacuated from their homes. Furthermore, CPW fulfilled formal requests for critical law enforcement support, with CPW officers providing 24-hour coverage for roadblocks and patrolling evacuated areas in grueling 14-hour shifts. This significant effort was emblematic of CPW's statewide support during a demanding fire season, which also saw staff assisting with incidents like the Crosho and Lone Pine fires.

## **Rescue of the Unique Lineage Uncompahgre Cutthroat Trout**

In August, CPW partnered with the San Juan National Forest and Stoner Mesa Fire Incident personnel to relocate 266 Uncompahgre cutthroat trout from Wildcat Creek. This native "green lineage" trout population is critically important, possessing rare genetic markers that make it unique to the genetic diversity of the entire Upper Dolores River basin. This emergency action was taken to protect the fish from the fire's aftermath. While the fire itself posed a risk, the primary threat was potential post-fire flooding, which occurs when fire destroys bank-stabilizing vegetation. These floods can choke the stream with fine sediment and ash, which suffocates fish by coating their gills and covering spawning gravels. The rescued trout will be safely housed at the Roaring Judy Fish Hatchery until their native habitat recovers and water quality is no longer a threat to their survival.

## **ANS Update - Zebra Mussels in the Colorado River**

At the beginning of August, CPW announced a plan in partnership with a private landowner to contain and treat invasive zebra mussels in a privately owned body of water in western Eagle County. CPW is grateful for the continued collaboration with the private landowner. CPW completed the first application of EarthTec QZ, an EPA-registered copper-based molluscicide to the lake on 08/25. Staff will routinely monitor the water to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment throughout the month of September. In addition to the planned treatment of the privately owned body of water, CPW staff continue increased sampling efforts on the Colorado River and its tributaries above and below the infested body of water. Eradicating invasive mussels is extremely difficult, which is why CPW focuses so heavily on preventing their introduction. That being said, the more confident CPW can be in our understanding of their current distribution, the better chance we have of effectively managing them. That is why CPW will continue daily sampling efforts from the headwaters to the stateline.

Since sampling efforts began in mid-April, CPW has collected 395 water samples from various locations in the Colorado River. Of those samples, CPW has confirmed five samples to contain zebra mussel veligers. ANS staff has also collected 82 samples from the Eagle River and 38 samples from the Roaring Fork River. There have been no detections of zebra mussel veligers in the samples from the Eagle and Roaring Fork rivers. To date, no adult zebra mussels have been detected in the Colorado, Eagle, or Roaring Fork rivers.