



Press Release — For Immediate Release

## Colorado snowpack promises strong whitewater rafting season



**SALIDA, Colo.** — *May 1, 2017* — A snowy winter set Colorado’s whitewater rafting industry up for what river runners describe as the perfect boating season. Snow depths throughout the state are up to 120% of average, promising that warming temperatures will soon buoy whitewater rafting destinations such as the Arkansas River, which hosts 40% of the state industry’s marketshare.

“A slightly higher than average snowpack means an excellent rafting season,” said Mark Hammer, owner of The Adventure Company in Buena Vista. “We are already booking trips in anticipation of good water levels with minimum high-water closures. It’s really a perfect situation.”

Arkansas River outfitters started opening for the season in April. Snow levels will deliver a longer whitewater rafting season with “fun, crashing splashes,” Hammer said, or the experience

visitors expect when rafting during their Colorado vacations.

Colorado's snowpack is nearly identical to last year, when the state's whitewater rafting industry hosted a record 550,861 visitors, an 8.3% increase over the prior season, according to a report by the Colorado River Outfitters Association. Nearly 224,000 of those visitors rafted on the Arkansas River, from above Buena Vista through Salida to Cañon City in south-central Colorado.



Outfitters rely on the state-issued Water Supply Outlook Report published in April to make determinations about the boating season. This year's report concluded that Colorado's creeks and rivers would produce normal to above normal flows. January's wild winter storms delivered more than double the average monthly precipitation across Colorado, and late March snows also boosted the snow depth, the report said.

"The industry as a whole couldn't be happier about the snowpack we have right now. We are excited for another good year," said Brandon Slate, owner of Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center, where kayaking and SUP instruction as well as raft trips started April 15.

The mountain snowpack above the Arkansas River was 112% of average on May 1. The weather also contributed to healthy water storage in the state, which will bode well for late-season rafting in Colorado. Full reservoirs ensure water will be available in the Arkansas River if needed during the late season, allowing outfitters to offer the longest boating season in Colorado, Arkansas River Outfitters Association Executive Director Bob Hamel said.

The Arkansas River Voluntary Flow Management Program is a cooperative agreement among water users that includes recreation in water management decisions. The plan can allocate water to maintain river levels well into August.

"This plan is unique to our valley by recognizing that recreation is part of our lifestyle, and that its economic impact is important," Hamel said.

For information about Colorado's snowpack, river levels, and choosing the appropriate whitewater rafting trip and other outdoor adventures for your family or group, contact an Arkansas River outfitter at [www.ArkansasRiverOutfitters.org](http://www.ArkansasRiverOutfitters.org).

### **About Arkansas River Outfitters Association**

Arkansas River Outfitters Association (AROA) consists of knowledgeable, experienced and licensed professionals who are dedicated to offering world-class outdoor fun on one of the most popular rivers for rafting in United States, Colorado's Arkansas River. AROA's members offer a wide range of whitewater experiences for all ages and adrenaline levels, and are truly committed to providing exceptional service for a memorable adventure.