

SPECIAL REPORT | RIVER TOWNS



BANKING ON A NEW FUTURE

SKYLER BALLARD, THE GAZETTE

Rafters float down the Arkansas River in Cañon City. The Arkansas is one of the most popular whitewater destinations in the United States.

Cañon City transforms from industrial to recreational economy

BY MICHAEL KARLIK
Colorado Politics

Ask people in Cañon City about the early days of their residency, and there is a chance their origin stories will contain one common feature: the river.

“I arrived here in May 2004. I walked in the front office of Echo Canyon River Expeditions and on that day I met my future husband,” said Ashlee Sack, who would go on to spend six years as a whitewater rafting guide.

“We lived across the street from a

river in Wisconsin. We had a boat on the river,” said Rick Harrmann, a part-time Jeep tour guide when he and his wife moved in 2015, and is now the city’s economic development manager. “Our lives are really outdoor-related.”

For Loretta Bailey, who grew up in Cañon City more than 70 years ago, there were two things she remembered that children and their parents would regularly check: “the weather and what the river was doing.”

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ABOUT THE SERIES

In the arid West, water means life. Turn on your tap, and you’re part of the Colorado circulatory system.

The towns born along Colorado’s most iconic waterways — the Colorado, the Big Thompson and the Arkansas lead a list of 158 named rivers — live the same way yet differently along the banks. The staff of Colorado Politics with the journalists of the Denver and Colorado Springs Gazettes are fanning out this summer to tell the story of a state as reflected in its water, its people, and its future, with the past as prologue. Come along all summer long to learn more about the people and places that make us all a little bit more Coloradan.

More stories: We’ve been to Estes Park, Alamosa and Pueblo; follow this link as we continue our travels: bit.ly/RiverTowns

LET 'EM ROLL

Government officials need to get out of the way of truckers. **Insights, Page 2**

GOV. LAMM

The leader who turned a cold shoulder to hosting the Olympics dies. **Page 18**