2021 Adaptive Management of Wakeless Recreation

March 10, 2021
Public Meetings on February 22 & 24
Ownership & management of the land and water as well as recreational use is a partnership.
Regional lake management specific to wakeless and/or motorized use
2010 Economic Impact Study aided the decision for the City of Durango to accept the responsibility of managing recreation at Lake Nighthorse.

- Study estimated significant benefit to La Plata County through tourism and local spending as well as job creation.

Lake Nighthorse revenue sources in 2020:

- 20% Contracted programs
- 80% Entrance pass sales
- Bureau of Reclamation and City cost share operational subsidy
5-Year Plan for Construction of Recreational Amenities

- **Year 1 = 2018**: Parking lot at swim beach; chip seal road; entrance station; resurface boat ramp parking lot; wave attenuation at boat ramp; docks
- **Year 2 = 2019**: ADA fishing dock and picnic pavilion
- **Year 3 = 2020**: Swim beach; wave attenuation; lifeguard station; additional parking
- **Year 4 = 2021**: Floating play structure; additional picnic tables
- **Year 5 = 2022**: Entrance station building; watercraft inspection station
Visitor Use Patterns

2020 Lake Nighthorse Visitor Use

- Swim: 12%
- Motorized: Ski/Wakeboard: 5%
- Motorized: Fishing: 1%
- Walk/Run/Dog Walk: 25%
- SUP/Kayak/Canoe/Row: 50%
- Fish by foot: 7%
- Fish by non-motor boat: <1%
- Sail Sport: <1%

Daily Visitation by Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018 Season:</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 Season:</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Season:</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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</table>

Total Visitation by Season

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018 Season:</td>
<td>48,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 Season:</td>
<td>63,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Season:</td>
<td>93,302</td>
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</table>
2018-2020 Adaptive management specific to wakeless recreation

- Designated No Motorized Craft area of 107 acres
- 38% of the lake surface is wakeless or non-motorized
- Wakeless Mondays & Wednesdays (2018 – 2020)
- Construction of swim beach and paddle craft rental & launch area
- Addition of wave attenuation at swim beach
Customer Feedback

- Feedback from Lake Nighthorse users in 2020
  - 92% rate their customer service experience as good to excellent
  - 85% rate their overall experience as good to excellent
  - 84% rate facility cleanliness as good to excellent
  - 68% would be in favor adding another wakeless day
  - Most favored adding Friday as a wakeless day
Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area is working

Need high cost recovery to achieve economic commitment to the community

Conditions of Lake Nighthorse:
- High, irregular wind activity
- Very popular / high activity
- Lake access limited to eastern shore

This is not a process for reconsidering uses

It is not necessary to exclude anyone

There will not be a vote about who gets their way, but a dialogue about how to meet the needs of all users

This is a conversation about adaptive management to balance wakeless use
Public input from the community at the 2/22 and 2/24 zoom meetings → Public comments sent to rec@durangogov.org through February 28 → Evaluate potential solutions:
• Inclusive of multiple uses
• Doesn't leave anyone out
• Financial viability → Feasibility and concurrence with Bureau of Reclamation and Animas La-Plata Operations, Maintenance and Replacement Association → Parks and Recreation Department staff will decide → Announcement to the community in March 2021 (Email to participants, City website, presentation to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and City Council)
Wakeless management public meetings engaged the following:

- 156 Registered participants for the 2/22 meeting
- 142 Registered participants for the 2/24 meeting
- 177 Total unique registered participants

The breakdown of types of users represented at the meetings:

- 88 Paddling
- 53 Wakeboard/Wakesurf/Waterski
- 9 Swimming
- 7 Fishing by boat
- 6 Sailing
- 5 Fishing (not specified by boat or foot)
- 1 Walk
- 8 Other (6 not marked; 2 BOR)
Themes Heard

Common themes with Community Support:
- Desire for additional convenient parking
- Need for separated launch and staging areas
- Desire for longer hours of operation
- Safety / Education / Enforcement

Themes Lacking Unified Community Support:
- Wakeless hours / days
- Wakeless zones
- Parking enforcement
### 2021 Adaptive Management Changes:

#### Longer Hours

#### 2021 Hours of Operation May Vary Due to COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2 - May 13</td>
<td>9 am - 4 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 14 - May 31</td>
<td>8 am - 6 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1 - Aug 31</td>
<td>6:30 am – 7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 1 - 30</td>
<td>7:30 am – 6:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1 - 17</td>
<td>9 am - 4 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 18 - Nov 14</td>
<td>9 am - 4 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Wildlife Closure</td>
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<td>Begins November 15</td>
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Returning to pre-COVID hours AND adding earlier & later hours from June through September.
2021 Adaptive Management Changes:

More Wakeless Zone

- Increase wakeless zone to 42% of total lake area
- Add 62 acres of wakeless area for a total of 625 acres
- Open use area now 865 acres of the total 1,490 surface acres
2021 Adaptive Management Changes:

Separate Launch

Separate, hard-surface paddle craft launch ramp at swim beach

- Loading/Unloading Parking
- Crusher fine gravel path directly to launch ramp
- Concrete launch ramp at no motorized craft zone
## 2021 Adaptive Management Changes:

### Inclusive Wakeless Schedule

Consistent, inclusive schedule that allows all recreational users to enjoy the lake every day of the week

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<td><strong>Wakeless &amp; Quiet until 10 a.m.</strong></td>
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- Wakeless & quiet Monday every week, including holidays
- Motorized boats allowed at all times with no wakes or loud distractions during Wakeless & Quiet hours
Next Steps

- Publicize adaptive management changes
- Recruit volunteers to help with education and boat ramp safety
- Construct new amenities:
  - No wake buoys for expanded zone
  - Separate paddle craft launch ramp & access path
  - Install additional safety & educational signs
- Open for the 2021 Season on Friday, April 2