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ACA PADDLE AMERICA CLUB

PLACES TO PADDLE

IN COLORADO AND AROUND THE COUNTRY

This is a list that was started long ago. Check all the details online before relying on any of the specifics it mentions.

Another helpful list of locations, with photos, may be found on the Poudre Paddlers website: https://www.poudrepaddlers.org/descriptions-and-maps.html Again, be sure to verify any details by rechecking the descriptions online.

The names of RMSKC members who may have specific information about these places have been added in blue. You can contact them using their email addresses on the Membership List.

Locations marked with an * have been written about by RMSKC paddlers. Those interesting and helpful articles can be found in the "Articles, Destinations" folder in the Publications section of our website.

Updated, but with specific details not reconfirmed, February 2023

COLORADO

*** ARAPAHOE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA:** The Arapahoe National Recreation Area contains five major reservoirs: Lake Granby, Shadow Mountain Lake, Monarch Lake, Willow Creek Reservoir and Meadow Creek Reservoir. The lakes and reservoirs are sometimes referred to as the "Great Lakes of Colorado".

> **Lake Granby:** Lake Granby is 7,256 acres in size when full, and is the largest of the five. It is the second largest body of water in Colorado, and offers dispersed camping opportunities along the northeast portion of the lake. Brian Hunter, Anna Troth, Gregg Goodrich
>
> **Shadow Mountain Reservoir** is 1,400 acres in size and connected by a canal to Grand Lake to allow kayak passage between the two.
>
> **Grand Lake**, adjacent to the ANRA, is the largest natural lake in Colorado.

*** BARR LAKE:** Located just southeast of Brighton, Barr Lake offers metro paddlers a place to escape most of the crowds and noise associated with many of the Denver area reservoirs. Barr Lake is 1,937 acres in size and limits motorized boating to 10hp or less. Parts of the lake are off limits to all boating, as it is a designated wildlife refuge. Barr Lake serves as a peaceful day paddling destination with great wildlife viewing possibilities. There is an 8-mile nature trail around the lake for non-paddling companions. Anne Fiore, Clark Strickland, Gregg Goodrich

*** BOYD LAKE:** Located east of Loveland, Boyd Lake State Park has 1,700 surface-acres open to all types of water recreation, including boating, sailing, water-skiing, fishing and swimming. Park amenities include: modern camping facilities, picnic areas, swim beach, boat ramps, showers, and a bicycle/walking trail. Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore

CARTER LAKE: Three miles long and about one mile wide, this beautiful 1,100-acre reservoir is administered by Larimer County Open Space. Jim Dlouhy, Sandy Carlsen

*** CHATFIELD RESERVOIR:** Chatfield Creek State Park has a reservoir in southwest Denver just out of the foothills with camping facilities, paddling areas (some out of the motorboats), and nice sandy beaches. Brian Hunter, Clark Strickland, Tim Fletcher, Sandy Carlsen

*** CHERRY CREEK RESERVOIR** offers 880 surface acres reservoir in southeast Denver in a natural prairie environment. Camping is available. Brian Hunter, Clark Strickland, Sue Hughes

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COLORADO RIVER:

Cisco to Hittle Bottom Is a spectacular Class I, 2-day trip through desert and canyons in Utah near Arches National Park. No permit required. Put-in is at Cisco landing, south of Cisco, Utah. First night is above the Dewey Bridge. Take out just short of the Class II rapids at Hittle Bottom.

* **Dotsero to Bair Ranch** is a good beginner run with 3 small rapids for those with previous moving water experience. Put in is near the Dotsero exit on I-70, takeout at the Bair Ranch Rest Area. Brian Curtiss, Marsha Dougherty

Glenwood Canyon: Grizzly Creek to Glenwood Springs: Brian Curtiss, Gary McIntosh

* **Fruita, Colorado to Westwater, Utah** offers spectacular kayaking through Horsethief and Ruby Canyons. This is a 30 mile; trip with Class I and class II water. A permit and campsite reservations are required to camp May through September. Anne Fiore, Gary Cage

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA: Located just west of Gunnison, this system of waterways actually consists of three reservoirs: Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal Lakes.

* **Blue Mesa** (9,000 acres) offers 96 miles of shoreline and is the largest body of water in Colorado. Paddlers can explore secluded canyons in various arms of the lake, and several boat-in campsites offer good places to camp. Jud Hurd, Julie Rekart, Marlene Pakish

Morrow Point and Crystal Lakes: Not as large as Blue Mesa, these two offer a completely different kind of kayaking experience. Lying deep within the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, they are limited to hand-carried craft, so there is a much greater chance for solitude. They are very narrow and have steep canyon walls rising up to 2,000 feet straight out of the water. Both of these lakes offer boat-in campsite. However, that unpredictable fluctuating dam releases from Morrow Point and Blue Mesa Dams can make paddling to the take-out spots difficult.

*** DILLON RESERVOIR:** Beautiful mountain backdrops and only a little over an hour away from Denver, this is a popular place to paddle. Sea kayaks can even rented on the Frisco side of the reservoir. Dillon Reservoir is 3,300 acres in size, and jet skiers and water skiers are not allowed on the lake. A favorite launch site is near the Heaton Bay day use area, and a short paddle from there will take you to an island oasis with its own sheltered cove—a great place on a sunny day to picnic and snooze in the sun. Stan White

*** ELEVEN MILE RESERVOIR:** Eleven Mile Reservoir and State Park is located 38 miles west of Colorado Springs. Anne Fiore

GREEN MOUNTAIN RESERVOIR is located in north central Colorado, in the Lower Blue River Valley, approximately 70 miles west of Denver and 20 miles north of I-70 at exit 205 (Silverthorne).

*** GROSS RESERVOIR:** Gross Reservoir lies in the foothills above of Boulder. There are changes planned for this reservoir; check to make sure it is still open to kayaking. David Hustvedt, Rich Webber, Sandy Carlsen

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GUNNISON RIVER: From Delta to Grand Junction, this 28 mile stretch of river goes through Escalante and Dominguez Canyons. Hiking opportunities reveal petroglyphs, waterfalls, and swimming holes. The water is rated Class I-II, but is almost entirely Class I.

*** HORSETOOTH RESERVOIR:** Located in the foothills west of Fort Collins, Horsetooth Reservoir is one of the largest paddling locations in the Front Range. There is a daily car/boat fee but if you are willing to walk a bit, it can also be accessed from Lory State Park. Jud Hurd, Leslie Taylor

*** JACKSON RESERVOIR**: This 2,700 acre lake is located about 70 miles northeast of Denver. Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore

*** JOHN MARTIN RESERVOIR**: Sometimes called a sapphire on the plains, John Martin is a peaceful paradise in which people play, birds flock and wildlife roams. The park is close to historic landmarks, yet remote enough to attract year-round nature and recreation lovers to stay and explore. Check to verify the current water level. Jud Hurd

*** LAGERMAN RESERVOIR**: On the plains southwest of Longmont is Lagerman Reservoir, a nice before or after work paddling destination. This man-made reservoir has a seasonal osprey nest, wetlands, and a picnic site and restroom; it is also free! Anne Fiore

LAKE ESTES: Lake Estes spreads across 185 surface acres to the east of downtown Estes Park. Here, at the Lake Estes Marina, visitors can rent canoes, lake kayaks, motorized fishing boats, pontoon boats and paddle boats from roughly May 1 to the middle of September (depending on the weather). Once on the water, the views offer a unique perspective of the surrounding mountains and landscape. Bring a picnic to enjoy on shore or in the boat, or fish, read, paddle or simply relax. Explore inlets as the sun warms your back; you'll feel a million miles away from civilization even though you're in the heart of it.

LON HAGLER RESERVOIR: At 300 acres, Lon Hagler Reservoir is located in the Lon Hagler SWA. To get there from Loveland, go west on 14th St., SW to County Road 21, then 3/4 miles south (left) to County Road 16E ,then 1 1/2 miles west (left) to the entrance. From the town of Campion, go 3 1/4 miles west on County Road 14, then 1 1/2 miles north (right) on County Road 21 then 1 1/2 miles west (left) to the entrance.

*** LONETREE RESERVOIR:** At 476 acres, Lonetree Reservoir is located in the Lonetree SWA. To get there from Berthoud, go north on HWY 287 approximately 2 1/2 miles to Campion, turn west (left) on County Road 14 to County Road 21 (Lone tree Drive) and then one mile south (left) to the entrance. *As of early 2018, the Wildlife Area no longer controls the surface rights of this reservoir; verify if paddling is permitted before you go.* Anne Fiore, Sue Hughes

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*** MCINTOSH LAKE:** Lake McIntosh is on the northwest side of Longmont. Only carry-on, non-motorized boats are allowed. It is a great place for observing birds and a favorite RMSKC destination. There are two boat ramps, one on the north and another on the south side. There is a restroom at the north side ramp which is only open in the summer. It is free and open to the public as long as there is no ice on the water. Sue Hughes, Anne Fiore

MCPHEE RESERVOIR: Just outside of Dolores, this 4,470 acre reservoir is approximately nine miles long with several side inlets. High speed boating is restricted to the main channel. The Beaver Creek inlet is almost eight miles in length and looks like it offers peaceful paddling.

*** NAVAJO RESERVOIR:** Located near Arboles, on the southwest border of Colorado, most of this reservoir actually lies in New Mexico. It is 15,600 acres in size, is 35 miles long, and lies in a sparsely populated area. It is larger than any body of water in Colorado. Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore

*** NORTH STERLING RESERVOIR:** North Sterling Reservoir is a boater's paradise with 3,000 acres of pristine waters to explore and two boat ramps. Although winds are often an issue, paddlers discover that this large reservoir has miles of wide-open space to enjoy. Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore

*** PUEBLO RESERVOIR:** At Lake Pueblo State Park, Pueblo Reservoir provides over 4,600 surface acres of water, 60 miles of shoreline and almost 10,000 acres of land. Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore, Jay Bailey, Chris Davenport, Jay Gingrich, Jane Lewis

RAMPART RESERVOIR: The area is located 4.2 miles east of Woodland Park on Rampart Range Road, FDR 300.

RUEDI RESERVOIR: Ruedi Reservoir is on the Fryingpan River about 15 miles east of Basalt, Colorado; the dam has a crest length of 1,042 feet.

*** SOUTH PLATTE RIVER:** Starting in the Rockies, this river flows through Denver and then heads off to join the North Platte in the northeastern corner of the state. Once it reaches the plains, the flow is quite slow and placid. The river flows though industrial areas of Denver and then transitions to a more agricultural setting. From the put-in at Veteran's Park in Brighton to the take-out at the ball fields in Ft. Lupton, previous moving water experience is recommended and there is one portage. The run from Evans to Kersey is more relaxed though it has two portages. The sections from Kersey to Kuner is a good first-time experience for moving water. Anne Fiore

*** STEAMBOAT LAKE:** Located near Steamboat, Hahn's Peak offers a stunning background to boating at Steamboat Lake State Park. Anna Troth, Sandy Carlsen

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*** TWIN LAKES:** Twin Lakes (about 1,500 acres) is located near Leadville, CO at about 9,500' in elevation. Jay Gingrich, Jane Lewis

*** TURQUOISE LAKE:** Turquoise Lake (about 3,000 acres) is located near Leadville, CO at about 9,500' in elevation

*** UNION RESERVOIR:** Union Reservoir is a 736 acre lake that is open to fishing, swimming, dog training, wake-less boating, camping, windsurfing and picnicking. Originally called Calkins Lake, the reservoir was carved out during the last glacial age and is one of only a few natural lakes in Colorado. In 1903, the Union Ditch Company began drilling a tunnel to release water into the St Vrain River, which according to Colorado water law, made Union a reservoir. It is located east of Longmont approximately seven miles west of I-25. It is open for boating from March to early November. Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore, Sue Hughes

*** UNION CHUTES:** "Union Chutes" is a portion of very active water within the Denver city limits ideal for practicing river paddling skills.

WHITE RIVER: Starting from near Meeker, you can select various trip lengths ranging up to almost 100 miles in length that will lead you to the confluence with the Green River, near Ouray, Utah. The river is rated Class I-II. Meadows, ranch land, canyons, and even a few arches can be seen in various stretches. One particularly popular hike from the river goes to Goblin City, so named because of the intriguing rock formations.

YAMPA RIVER: Between Craig and Juniper Hot Springs is a 38 mile trip with easy Class I water meandering through ranch land and canyons.

ALASKA

*** GLACIER BAY:** Covering 3.3 million acres of rugged mountains, dynamic glaciers, temperate rainforest, wild coastlines, and deep sheltered fjords, Glacier Bay National Park is a highlight of Alaska's Inside Passage and part of a 25-million acre World Heritage Site – one of the world's largest international protected areas. From summit to sea, Glacier Bay offers limitless opportunities for adventure and inspiration. David Hustvedt, Jud Hurd

*** OTHER LOCATIONS IN ALASKA:** It's a huge state with lots of cold water paddling. Dave Hustvedt, Jud Hurd, Marsha Dougherty

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CONNECTICUT

*** CONNECTICUT COAST**: Thames River, Poquetanuck River, Thimble Islands. Clark Strickland

FLORIDA

*** 10,000 ISLANDS IN EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK:** Miles of choices with sugar-white sand beaches. Jud Hurd

*** OTHER LOCATIONS IN FLORIDA:** See articles written by members from years past in the "Older Published Articles" section on our website.

GEORGIA

*** CUMBERLAND ISLAND:** There is an article written by a former member in the "Older Published Articles" section on our website. A current members, Brookie Gallagher and Lindsay Meeks, have contributed several articles about paddling in *Georgia to Canoeing and Kayaking Georgia*, by Welander and Sehlinger Brookie Gallagher, Lindsay Meeks

MAINE

*** COASTAL PADDLING:** Miles of choices with islands to explore and lobster to enjoy. Clark Strickland, Matt Lutkus, Jud Hurd

MISSOURI

*** CURRENT RIVER:** RMSKC instructor Ray Van Dusen paddled and wrote about this Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

MONTANA

*** MISSOURI BREAKS SECTION OF THE MISSOURI RIVER:** Anne Fiore, Jud Hurd

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*** BIG HORN RESERVOIR:** RMSKC has done two trips to the reservoir that straddles the Montana-Wyoming border: Jud Hurd

NEBRASKA

DISMAL RIVER: Brian Curtiss

*** LAKE MCCONAUGHY:** At twenty-two miles long, 35,000 acres, and with 105 miles of shoreline, this is Nebraska's biggest reservoir. This lake lies eight miles northeast of Ogallala in southwestern Nebraska. In the past it was a popular annual trip with the sea kayak club. Clark Strickland

*** MERRITT RESERVOIR:** Merritt Reservoir is on the Snake River 14 miles upstream from the confluence of the Snake and Niobrara Rivers. Recreation is managed by Nebraska Game and Parks. The reservoir has 2,906 water surface acres, and 44 miles of shoreline. Clark Strickland, Andy McKenna

*** NIOBRARA RIVER:** Seventy miles of this river has been designated by Congress as a National Scenic River. It slices through the Nebraska Sandhills, and has been referred to as "the prettiest prairie river in the United States". Several put-ins and take-outs are available but the most popular run starts just outside Valentine and runs 25 miles to Rocky Ford. There is one Class II rapid at Rocky Ford, and the rest of the river has no white water at all. Anne Fiore

NEVADA

*** LAKE MEAD:** Lake Mead is a lake on the Colorado River, about 24 miles southeast of the city of Las Vegas, Nevada, in the states of Nevada and Arizona. It is the largest reservoir in the United States in terms of water capacity. Jud Hurd

NEW MEXICO

*** FT. SUMNER LAKE:** Desert reservoir paddling in northern New Mexico. Marsha Dougherty

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NEW YORK

*** ERIE CANAL:** RMSKC has taken two trips to this historical area. Clark Strickland, Paul Comstock

*** HUDSON RIVER VALLEY:** Clark Strickland

NORTH CAROLINA

CEDAR POINT: Coastal paddling through salt marshes with modest tidal influences or practice with rougher waves and surf landing. Brian Curtiss

TEXAS

*** SOUTH PADRE ISLAND:** Lots to explore with friends and a local guide. Jud Hurd

*** WATERS AROUND HOUSTON:** The local paddling club, HASK, has guided RMSKC paddlers on fun explorations of this area. Jud Hurd, Leslie Taylor, Carl Kuhnen, Chris Arceneaux, Willie Younger

UTAH

*** COLORADO RIVER:** The section from Moab to the confluence with the Green is similar to the Green River description below. Being brought back to the put-in by jet boat is part of the adventure. Tim Fletcher

*** GREEN RIVER:** From the town of Green River to the confluence with the Colorado River 120 miles downriver, the Green snakes its way through red sandstone canyons, with 70 miles of its path going through Canyonlands National Park. This is one of the classic flat water trips in the West. It is all Class I water, with several put-in and take-out possibilities to accommodate different lengths. Tim Fletcher

*** LAKE POWELL:** The premier reservoir in the entire western United States, Lake Powell is 140 miles long, with over 100 side canyons. Lake Powell has more shoreline (over 1 ,900 miles) than does all of California, Oregon, and Washington combined. RMSKC members have enjoyed paddling from a houseboat rented with friends or on self-supported camping trips. Sue Hughes, Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore, Gary Cage, Marsha Dougherty, Dave Hustvedt

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*** RED FLEET RESERVOIR:** Located ten miles from Vernal, Utah, in the northeast corner of the state, the park has dinosaur tracks and interpretation trails for kids and adults. Brian Hunter

*** SAN JUAN RIVER:** This is another great trip running through canyons, with some of the most dramatic canyon backdrops the West has to offer. A great trip is a 57 mile adventure from Mexican Hat to Clay Hills Crossing. The water is Class I-II.

WASHINGTON

*** SAN JUAN ISLANDS:** Fabulous Pacific Northwest scenery, and technical ocean paddling with tides and fearsome currents which need to be researched and prepared for carefully. Jud Hurd, Stan White, Ted Wang

WISCONSIN

*** APOSTLE ISLANDS:** Cold water paddling with big-water considerations and lots to see. Jud Hurd, Clark Strickland

WYOMING

*** BIG HORN RESERVOIR:** RMSKC has done two trips to the reservoir that straddles the Montana-Wyoming border: Jud Hurd

*** FLAMING GORGE RESERVOIR:** This twisting reservoir is 91 miles long, and lies in both Wyoming and Utah. Some people feel the best paddling lies in the southern part of the reservoir, with strong winds possible in the northern section. It takes its name from the beautiful red sandstone gorge it flows through. Jud Hurd, Anne Fiore, Gary Cage

*** GLENDO RESERVOIR:** This body of water covers 12,500 acres and has 78 miles of shoreline. On the east side of the reservoir is a series of sand dunes. The hills on either side of the reservoir are studded with pines and rock outcroppings.

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* GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK:

***Jackson Lake:** 17 miles long and up to 9 miles wide, Jackson Lake lies in the heart of Grand Teton National Park. Breathtaking mountain views abound, and wildlife is plentiful and varied. Backcountry campsites are well spaced, and each contains a fire ring and a bear-proof storage box. Group campsites make taking a large group with differing paddling abilities convenient. Reservations and a Wyoming invasive species sticker are required. Sue Hughes

***Jenny Lake, Leigh Lake, String Lake, Two Oceans Lake**: Other small lakes within Grand Teton National Park

***Snake River** from below the Jackson Lake Dam: The river winds through the Oxbow section of switchbacks for about ten miles. Tim Fletcher, Marsha Dougherty, Anne Fiore

*** GUERNSEY RESERVOIR:** Guernsey State Park is home to Guernsey Reservoir located on the North Platte River. Approaching the park from the east, high bluffs surrounding the park offer the first hint of the mountains to come. The bluffs block the wind from the park area. There is a fine collection of historic 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps buildings. Anne Fiore, Gary Cage

*** LEWIS AND SHOSHONE LAKES, YELLOWSTONE NP** Julie Rekart, Marlene Pakish, Jud Hurd, Tim Fletcher

*** NORTH PLATTE RIVER:** From Saratoga to Glendo State Park, the North Platte flows 195 miles lazily through ranch land, bluffs, and open meadows. Several different trips of varying lengths are possible, and the water is rated mostly Class I.

*Saratoga to I-80 Brian Curtiss

*Glendo to Guernsey Anne Fiore

*** PATHFINDER RESERVOIR:** Over 24 miles long, with a 117-mile shoreline and 22,012 total acres, this is another one of the large reservoirs in Wyoming. It's popular with large RV rigs; plan a mid-week trip if possible. Weiss Campground has a handful of sites on the shore, but several only have a flat spot large enough for one tent (but they're cheap). Most have sun shelters with picnic tables; the campground has two pit toilets but no running water. Jud Hurd, Marsha Dougherty, Tim Fletcher, George Ottenhoff

*** SEMINOE RESERVOIR:** A long, twisting reservoir, Seminoe covers 20,000 acres, and stretches about 30 miles. Sand dunes, high desert vegetation, and some pine and juniper trees are the rule for scenery here. Pit toilets but no running water; bring a tarp for shade. Jud Hurd

*** YELLOWSTONE LAKE:** Covering 136 square miles, with 110 miles of shoreline, 20 miles north to south and 14 miles east to west, this is North America's largest mountain lake over 7,000 feet. The three more remote southern arms of the lake are open to only self-propelled craft and give you a good chance for solitude, even in the middle of summer. Marlene Pakish, Julie Rekart

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TRIP ORGANIZERS TO CONSULT

- Jay Bailey
- Gary Cage
- Sandy Carlsen
- Paul Comstock
- Brian Curtiss
- Chris Davenport
- Jim Dlouhy
- Marsha Dougherty
- Anne Fiore
- Tim Fletcher
- Jay Gingrich
- Gregg Goodrich
- Sue Hughes
- Brian Hunter
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- Anna Troth

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