

Friends of Mueller State Park,

It is with both excitement and trepidation that I will be retiring on June 30, 2018. I have been with State Parks and now CPW for nearly 34 years and during that time have held various jobs. I started out as a Ranger at Vega State Recreation Area on the Grand Mesa. Then along the road I worked at Lake Pueblo, Mueller, the trails program, on the Arkansas River and as the Regional Manager for State Parks SE Region. In fact, I was the first Ranger at Mueller back in 1991 and helped build this park from the ground up. By far the most fulfilling position I have had throughout my career is as the Manager of Mueller State Park. I returned to Mueller as the Manager in late 2012. I hope you have seen the difference in the park, as the park staff and I have worked diligently to bring about positive change over the last 6 years.

I have seen a lot of changes these last 30+ years including the merger with the Division of Wildlife, the closing down of Bonny Reservoir and the addition of several new state parks. Everyone I started with and worked closely with is long gone, so it is only this dinosaur that remains from the 1980's. It is time to step aside and bring in fresh blood (they will not fill the manager position until after I leave and I have no clue who that person will be).

Gene Pask and I reinvigorated the Friends of Mueller State Park program about 3 years ago. Gene did a lot of the leg work on this project and for that I am eternally grateful. Then the park went about putting together a Board and the Board went about seeking members. The last I heard there were about 42 members and the program is still growing. The Friends have been essential to the park, especially the park education programs and special events. They are able to fund things that take the state a long time to get through a formal budget process. They contribute to outdoor skills day and Mueller in gold – events that bring in hundreds of new people and generate revenue for the park. They have paid to bring school kids out to the park so that we can build the next generation of stewards for this special place. And one of the most exciting things they recently funded is the addition of two new touch screens in the Visitor Center. They are currently working on a new plan for future projects – most that I have had input into and some that a new manager will have to take the lead on.

I especially want to thank Gretchen and Paul Darlington, Sophie and Hans Klossner, Barb Berger, Ron Moore, and Sue Hearon for their hard work, willingness to listen to ideas and their long time support. I will miss you guys. Keep up the excellent work and continue to good things for this precious resource in the future.

I will still be around hiking, fishing and taking photography up again. One of the greatest pleasures in life is watching the success of my three children - my son is on Pike Hot Shots, I have a daughter who is the fuels lead and a wildland firefighter on the Washakie Ranger District in Lander, Wyoming and my youngest daughter is one hell of a police officer in Federal Heights. And I have two beautiful grandchildren to spend time with to teach the way of the outdoors.

John