

PLAY IT SAFE ON THE POUDBRE

“The partnership between the Poudre Heritage Alliance and the Poudre Fire Authority is focused on creating an atmosphere of respect and safety for the public’s use of the Poudre River.”

– Poudre Fire Authority Fire Chief Tom DeMint

OVERVIEW

The Cache la Poudre River offers abundant opportunities for a broad spectrum of river users. The scenic river runs from wild to mild, attracting people from around the country. A day of recreation along the Poudre River is a quintessential summer fun in Fort Collins – especially during the hottest days of summer.

However, most people do not understand the power of moving water. Although it may appear to be moving slowly, water moves deceptively fast and can exert great amounts of pressure. Melting snow packs in spring increase water flows. Exposure to cold water can quickly lead to hypothermia, an extremely dangerous condition involving the lowering of the body’s “core” temperature that can be lethal.

The increasing population and visitation to Northern Colorado has sparked a rise in river users, and a corresponding rise in river-related assists, rescues and fatalities. The swift-water rescue teams within the Poudre Fire Authority and Larimer County have their work cut out for them and Play It Safe on the Poudre is designed to support their efforts in keeping river users safe and secure.

The lower section of the Cache la Poudre River runs through the Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area (CALA) and is the “working” section of the river. It is along this river stretch that water is diverted for use by city residents in Fort Collins and Greeley, and a variety of industries such as agriculture, technology, brewing, manufacturing and more. And, it is also along this stretch that you will find the highest number of river users, waders, kayakers, and tubers. Play It Safe on the Poudre will concentrate its community outreach efforts on the 45 miles of river within CALA to make river recreation safer and potentially prevent incidents through education and knowledge.

The managing entity of CALA, the Poudre Heritage Alliance, is partnering with the City of Fort Collins, Poudre Fire Authority, and Larimer County to develop suggested river access areas for on-water recreation in the CALA.



OVERVIEW

The multi-pronged Play It Safe on the Poudre program will raise awareness about approaches to recreating on the river in safe and sustainable ways, and help build capacity of the Poudre Fire Authority and Larimer County's rescue teams to meet increasing search and rescue demands. The program will also call attention to the history of in-river structures that represent hazards to recreation. Swift-water rescue is one of the most dangerous of all technical rescue operations and is not to be entered into lightly. Too little training or using equipment that may not be up to industry standards can have devastating consequences.

Elements of Play It Safe On The Poudre include:

- Teach locals and visitors safety strategies on the river (educational events, brochures, etc.)
- Install signs along the Poudre River from Gateway Natural Area to College Avenue to inform river users about recommended river access areas and warn of upcoming river hazards
- Develop a loaner lifejacket distribution program
- Acquire new, state-of-the-art equipment for the Larimer County Dive Rescue Team

PARTNERS

- Poudre Fire Authority
- City of Fort Collins
- Larimer County

GOAL & OUTCOMES

Goal:

Expand opportunities for safer and more sustainable recreational usage of the Poudre River, while raising awareness about river heritage.

Outcomes:

- Reduce river fatalities
- Search & rescue teams fully prepared to effectively assist people in distress
- Instill understanding of river safety skills
- Increase awareness of routes that are better options for river safety
- Increase awareness about CALA/PHA and Poudre River heritage
- Improve understanding about why river diversion structures exist

BUDGET: \$159,000

Each contribution makes an impact:

- \$100 – 1 personal flotation device
- \$500 – installation of one dam hazard or informational sign
- \$10,000 – education events and materials
- \$50,000 – rescue equipment and communication materials

