

Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Newsletter – March 2026

Weather: This winter has been very warm and dry, such that the ice didn't firm up until mid-January. The snowpack is currently below average at the Deadman SNOTEL measuring station, <https://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ftpref/nwcc/basin-rpt/> (select Colorado and the previous month for the latest data). The state climatology office is forecasting a low snowpack season. This means we'll need more than our usual late spring snows to give us sufficient water for our lakes. You can view current weather at www.redfeatherlakes.net. Here's to a very wet spring!

Fishing report: Overall, we experienced a good year of fishing with normal fish growth, moderate water levels except in Erie, normal water temperatures and good water quality test results. We would like to see more surveys completed at Nokomis and Shagwa. The surveys are very important for us to evaluate the perch impact on the forage in Nokomis which ultimately determines trout growth. The surveys from Shagwa provide us with data that we can compare fish growth of Donaldsons with rainbow growth at Nokomis. We would like to hear from members who specifically fish for the perch in Apache and/or Nokomis. If you could take the time to send an email to the office with information on your success the past 2-3 years catching perch. Specifically, we would like to know if the numbers have increased or decreased and if the size of the perch has changed.



Stocking Report 2025: Crystal Springs Trout Farm provided our normal stocking of rainbows and palominos. 80% catchable, 12-15" rainbows and 20% trophy, 16-20". Palominos account for 10% of the rainbows. Aquatics Associates supplied 12-15" Donaldson rainbows, for Shagwa. We stock lakes in April to May, June and September to October depending on weather and lake access conditions. We post a stocking report at the office and on our web page once the lakes have been stocked. In addition to our normal stocking process, we do supplemental stockings as necessary. For the past two years, we have stocked browns, 7-10" Apache, Erie and Nokomis. We also added tiger trout 7-10" in Nokomis as a mitigation effort to control the perch population. Hopefully, some of the browns and tigers will be 12-13" this season. The browns and tigers come at a cost of \$10-\$12 each, please handle them with care. In 2025 we purchased 600# of 12-16" rainbows and 150# of a Sportsman's mix from a new vendor. Occasionally, we purchase trout from a new vendor to evaluate what is available on the market. Crystal Springs had surplus trophy rainbows and palominos at the end of the season that they did not want to carry over through the winter, so we purchased 750#, splitting them between Apache and Ramona.

Lake and Fishing information: On our web page, at www.rfsi.org/lakes.html, we have considerable information about our lakes (history, contour maps, overview information) and fishing (management of the fisheries and the challenges we deal with).

Water: Last year proved to be a challenging water year. While Deadman had above average snowpack, the upper North Poudre was below average. We were able to store some initial runoff, but were called out for the month of May, and had to switch to our exchange water right in order to keep filling during our primary runoff period. In June we got an early monsoon which secured our ability to fill and maintain water levels well into the summer. Two of our more challenging fills were at Nokomis, which normally fills with local runoff, but we had to spill Apache to fill it. Another challenge was at Erie, where we couldn't fill it until late and by then the weeds were too established and in spite of several treatment, we had a large weed mat in the later summer. We want to especially thank Dan Spelts for his work filling the lakes, it's not easy running our exchange right! This spring, more than ever, we'll need several large wet snows to fill our lakes.

Dues: **There will be no dues increase for the 2026 season.** Fish costs will be +3% higher, with other items tracking the front range inflation rates of +2.3%. See the accompanying dues statement for membership options and costs. As a reminder, initiated members who do not plan to fish during the 2026 season are required to pay the \$230 inactive dues to keep their membership current.

Fall Project Work: We cleared trees and shrubs off the Letitia dam and willows off the Hiawatha dam. We cleaned the toe drains below the four dams that have these and cleaned the sediment trap above the Snake ditch. We buttoned up our upper pipeline for winter (cleaning the sediment traps and closing the headgate). We cleaned the diversion structure on the Elkhorn - it's amazing how much ash sediment from the Cameron Peak fire is still coming down the creek.

Lake Patrol – Rules & Violations: Patrol staff returning in 2026 includes Don, Dave M, Adam, Derek, and Dan. Allison also fills in, as necessary. We had no tickets issued last year, thanks! There were a few verbal warnings issued to fishing members mostly around filling out passes correctly and not having a life jacket (PFD) while in a boat. One of our patrol issues is people not visibly wearing badges and guest passes – please help us out! All watercraft users must wear a PFD when on the water. Please remember to leave a note on your dashboard or windshield with your name, any guests' names and guest pass numbers.

Ice Fishing: Ice fishing once again had a very unusual start this winter, in that Ramona and Apache didn't safely freeze until mid-January. Since then, ice fishing has been great. Member fees: adult season pass - \$90, child season pass - \$20, adult day pass - \$25, and child day pass - \$15. Guest passes: escorted adult - \$35, escorted child - \$15, self-escorted adult guests are not allowed. Due to limited winter office hours, please buy your passes before Oct 31, or well in advance by mail. Please put your name(s) and mobile phone number on a piece of paper and place it on your car dashboard when you're out on the ice.



Office: Our office manager, Allison Harrell, did an excellent job managing the office again this past year, thanks!

- For 2026, we'll issue 2026 stickers to place on your green badges. Paying your dues early allows us to get your stickers to you well before the season opens and streamlines our office workload. We appreciate receiving your dues transactions by mail (PO Box 527, RFL, 80545). And as always, if you need to reach us, email us at rfsico@yahoo.com
- Similarly, it's a huge help to both you and us if you transact guest pass requests well ahead of time. They do not expire, so you can always keep a couple extra on hand.
- We accept credit cards. Note, a service charge will be added to cover credit card fees.
- Office hours; our summer office hours begin May 1 and our fall office hours start the Wednesday after Labor Day. See the days and times we're open on page 4.
- Lost and Found; please be courteous to all our members by turning in lost items to the office with the date and lake where the items were found. If you lost an item, please check with the office.

Fall Boat removal: Last fall we removed 7 boats from our five boating lakes. Only two of the boats were properly registered. If you want to store your boat at a lake this summer (and get a reminder letter in the fall), get it registered for \$5. The stickers are valid until we can't read them anymore. We'll remove any boats left at the various storage areas after October 31, upon which you'll need to pay \$150 to bail it out of our boat yard.



Pelicans: The pelicans returned to the area as expected in May this last year. They hung around all the way into August when they migrated out. The staff spent many days chasing the pelicans off the lakes with the Pelicanator. The goal is to imprint on the pelicans that there is a predator in the area. After a few weeks of chasing them, we deployed three floating decoys on Letitia and Snake Lakes. We plan to repeat our efforts in 2026 and expand the decoy fleet if necessary. As a reminder, we have obtained permission from the Federal Migratory Bird Permit Office (FMBPO) to haze these birds. We do not have plans to use lethal take of these birds unless we have no other options. If that becomes necessary, we will need a written permit from the FMBPO and coordination with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Office.

Last summer there were some members who took it on themselves to haze these birds without permission. This caused the staff to do a lot of work answering questions from citizens/members and talking with the Division Wildlife Manager. Please do not haze the pelicans as you can be ticketed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Our intent is to keep them off our lakes as a pelican can eat about 4 pounds of fish a day and with the number of pelicans on our lakes, this can cost the company over \$24,000 per season. Feel free to leave us a message on the office phone with information on their behavior, i.e. which lakes they are on, time of day you are seeing them, etc. This will help us target our efforts.

2026 Calendar:

May 9	Member fishing season opens!
May 23	Guest Fishing opens
July 2 – July 4	Ramona is closed to fishing until 2:00 PM on Saturday, July 4 th
October 31	Fishing season closes, boats must be removed from the lakes
Winter	Ice fishing on Ramona and Apache is open from mid-December through early March, safe ice permitting

Office Information:

Phone: 970-881-2175
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E-mail: rfsico@yahoo.com
Web: www.rfsi.org
Hours: May 1 through September 7
8 AM to noon – Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday
4 PM to 8 PM – Friday
September 9 through October 31
8 AM to noon – Wednesday and Saturday
November through April – by appointment only

Board of Directors:

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The Board thanks you for your continuing support and will do everything possible to make this an enjoyable summer.

Greg Pickerel
President, Red Feather Storage & Irrigation Company