

## Shorts

### Center graduation postponed till Aug. 1

**By TERESA L. BENNS**  
CENTER — Center High School Principal Kevin Jones announced Monday that Center Schools has postponed its 2020 graduation ceremony until Aug. 1 at 10 a.m., so “By then we can hopefully have a normal graduation ceremony.”

Center seniors voted unanimously to postpone the ceremony until August during a Google meeting. County restrictions would not allow them to consider other options, Jones noted.

Seniors worried that setting the graduation date even back to June or July might not allow enough time for social distancing restrictions to be sufficiently lifted, Jones added.

“The kids handled it very well,” he commented. “I’m proud of how we got out there and got in front of it.” Jones said it might be too hot in the gym by August but the ceremony could always be held at Community Park.

The Center School board has approved the seniors for graduation, and they will receive their diplomas in the mail.

### Haskin Elementary pre-K, kinder registration May 5

CENTER — Due to social distancing, Haskin Elementary will have pre-K and kindergarten registration for the 2020-2021 school year registration packets available for pick up from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Tuesday, May 5.

Those unable to come at that time can collect packets that will be left out by the elementary school door. Please bring back the completed packets on Wednesday, May 6, between 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Children enrolling must be three years old before June 1 to attend pre-K and five years old before June 1 to attend kindergarten.

Please bring original birth certificates, immunization records and court documents (if applicable) i.e., custody, shared parenting. Those who are enrolling children for kindergarten at this time, please note that children will not be required to attend CHAMP.

Those with any questions, please phone the elementary office at 754-3982.

## Saguache County adopts Safer-at-Home plan

SAGUACHE — Office of Emergency Management Director Bobby Woelz announced Monday that Saguache County’s Public Health Order is in effect through April 26, but April 27, the county will operate under the state’s Safer-at-Home executive order and public health orders.

### What does Safer-At-Home mean?

The goal of this phase is to maintain 60-65 percent physical distancing.

- Critical businesses will remain open with strict precautions (social distancing, masks for all employees, more frequent cleanings, etc.)

- Retail businesses may open for curbside delivery and phased-in public opening with strict precautions.

- Elective medical and dental procedures begin, with strict precautions to ensure adequate personal protective equipment and the ability to meet critical care needs.

- Personal services (salons,

- dog grooming, limited personal training, etc.) will open with strict precautions. (starting May 1)

- Telecommuting continues for offices. Starting May 4, up to 50 percent of staff can work in person (with social distancing in place).

- Nightclubs, gyms and spas will remain closed.

- No group gatherings of more than 10 people.

- K-12 schools remain online only for the 2019-2020 school year.

- Vulnerable populations and older adults must stay home unless absolutely necessary.



What does this mean?

Please see SAFER on Page 7A



Photo by Teresa L. Benns

Volunteers pack the yellow bus with goodies and lesson plans for Center students

## ‘Yellow bus’ brings hope to local families

**By TERESA L. BENNS**

CENTER — Center Schools Transportation Department is playing a major role in keeping

students connected, up-to-date on their lesson plans and well fed during the COVID-19 crisis, Center Schools teacher Susan Banning

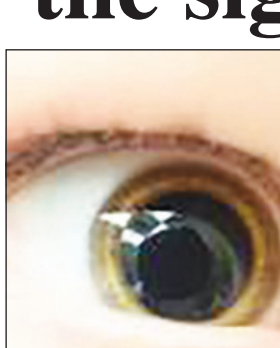
reported Monday.

“Center Transportation department has a delivery bus, Please see BUS on Page 8A

## Know the signs, symptoms of meth use

CENTER — The Center Police Department, headed by Police Chief Dale Meek, has provided the following information on drug use to better inform the community regarding the drug epidemic, which is most often the underlying cause of criminal activity.

“I would like to start with methamphetamine (meth) use,” Meek begins. “We have



Dilated pupils are just one of the signs methamphetamine use.

several known meth users in Center, but I want to make everyone aware of the effects of meth use so you may be able to identify these effects.”

### Forms of meth

Meth comes in different forms, and it can be used several different ways including snorting, injection, taking it orally or smoking it. Smoking

methamphetamine tends to be the most common way for people to abuse the drug. People smoking meth will typically possess small glass or steel pipes that are heated to extreme temperatures, so the meth becomes a vapor to be inhaled into the lungs.

When it’s injected or smoked it acts most quickly, and it creates an immediate rush. That rush lasts for only a few minutes, but users describe it as something that’s extremely pleasurable. When someone instead takes methamphetamine by snorting it or taking it orally, they get high, but it’s not usually as intense as it is

with other methods of taking the drug.

Because the euphoric effects of a crystal meth rush tend to dissipate quickly, it leads to the increased likelihood of people addicted to the drug. This means that they try to keep their high by taking more of the drug, and in some cases, they may binge to the extent that they avoid sleep or sleep for a period of several days. When people are on methamphetamine, it increases the amount of dopamine in their brain, and dopamine plays a key role in everything from reward to motivation and pleasure.

Please see METH on Page 8A

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# OBITUARIES

See more Obituaries on Page 3A

## Jonathan Joseph Hicks, 24

Jon died unexpectedly April 11, 2020, at his home in Mosca, Colorado. He was born in Denver, July 4, 1995. He started kindergarten at Centennial Elementary School, in Denver and attended schools in Austin, TX, Monte Vista, Colorado and Worcester, Massachusetts, where he graduated from Worcester Technical High School in 2014. President Barack Obama delivered the commencement speech to Jon's graduating class. Jon never forgot meeting the president and his presidential bear hug.

"He smelled AMAZING," Jonathan liked telling people.

Jon passionately followed the Colorado Rockies throughout his life.

Even when he was only 4 years old, Jon amazed family and friends with his ability to uncannily mimic the batting stance of every Colorado Rockies player on the starting roster, at that time.

Jon attended Anna Maria College, in Paxton, Massachusetts, where he also worked as an assistant football coach for the Am cats. During his years in Massachusetts, Jon kindly tolerated the sports allegiances of his Colorado family as he grew into a big booster of the New England Patriots and the Boston Red Sox.

He moved back to Monte Vista, in 2017, where he attended Trinidad State Junior College and earned an associate

degree in diesel mechanics. Jon worked for Tractor Supply and Napa Auto Parts in Alamosa, Colorado

Jon loved wearing a cowboy hat and boots along with any item of clothing adorned with the name of his favorite teams including hats, underwear, shoes, socks, T-shirts and jackets. He loved to hunt and play video games and listen to the Dave Matthews Band and John Prime and Josh Turner. He was outgoing and confident all his life and always carried joy — making everyone around him happy.

Jon is survived by his mother, Mary Hutchinson, Monte Vista, CO; his father, Rev. Warren Hicks and

stepmother, Rev. Lisa Green, Hampton, Virginia; and his stepsister, Mary Mitchell, Houston, Texas. He also is survived by five aunts, seven uncles and seven first cousins, all of whom adored him, and by his fiancée, Jessie Fraser and her children Lola, Lily and Logan, to whom Jon was bonded. He was preceded in death by his sister, Kathryn Blake Hicks, who died at age 7 in 1998; and his grandparents, Pat and Ed Hutchinson, Denver; and Sally and Donovan Hicks, Granby, Colorado

A celebration of Jon's bright life will be held at a safer time. Arrangements in care of Strohmayer's Funeral Home.



## Joan Rita (Latimer) Kukuk, 88

Joan Rita (Latimer) Kukuk passed away quietly Friday, April 24, 2020, with her daughter, Kaye, by her side. She was under hospice care at the Mesa Manor, in Grand Junction, Colorado. She was 88 years old. Joan was born in Oak Park, Illinois Jan. 31, 1932, to John and Hazel (Hunter) Latimer. She spent her childhood and teen years growing up with her older brother Kenneth in PawPaw, Illinois, and graduated from PawPaw High School in 1950. In June 1950 she married Coleman Kukuk of Earlville, Illinois. The newlyweds started their married life on a farm 2 miles west of Earlville followed by a move to a farm 5 miles south of Earlville. In 1952 the first of their four children, Ronald, was born. Their other three children came in quick succession, Robert in 1953, Kaye in 1955 and Scott in 1956. In 1963 the family moved to a farm east of Earlville. They were very involved in the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Earlville. Joan loved being a mom and farm wife, raising her children in a God-fearing home and helping Coleman on the farm and putting up food stores for the winter. She also worked part-time to help make ends meet, putting in some time at the Dairy Dip Drive-In when the children were younger and later at Mason's Department store in Ottawa, Illinois.

In 1981 Coleman and Joan sold their farm equipment, packed moving boxes and moved to Creede, Colorado where three of the four children were living. They moved in with their son Robert (Bob). Coleman started a trucking and excavating business and Joan started working at the Kentucky Belle Market. They loved Creede, especially jeeping in the mountains; autumn trips to get firewood were special memories for them. They were active members in the small Lutheran congregation that met in Creede. In 1985 they moved into a home a few miles outside of Creede and finally in 2000 built their dream home. After several years as a fixture at the Kentucky Belle Market, Joan started working at Wason Ranch. She enjoyed her time at the ranch and she and Coleman made many life-long

friends during her time there. Until her failing eyesight made it difficult, Joan was a prolific cross-stitcher and blessed several family members with heirloom quality gifts. Joan was a huge year-round sports fan. She watched her beloved Cubs and Rockies in the spring and summer, rarely missed a Broncos game and was an avid follower of the Nuggets.

In 2008 they made their final move to Grand Junction, Colorado, to be closer to their daughter, Kaye, and have better access to medical services. They really enjoyed taking in an afternoon matinee, an evening concert or a drive around town. Persistent health issues finally made it a necessity to move in with their daughter. In 2014, Coleman passed, taking a large piece of Joan's heart with him. Life just wasn't the same without him. A few months after Coleman's passing Joan moved into the Mesa Manor where she resided until her death.

Joan was preceded in death by her parents, Hazel and John Latimer, her brother and sister-in-law, Kenneth and Joyce Latimer and her husband, Coleman Kukuk. She is survived by her four children, Ron (Joy) Kukuk of Grand Junction, Colorado, Robert (Janelle) Kukuk of Creede, Colorado, Kaye Fairchild of Clifton, Colorado and Scott (Cindy) Kukuk of Winnemucca, Nevada. She is also survived by her seven grandchildren who she adored, Chad Fairchild, Aimee (Michael) Sorter, Margo (Bryan) Eubank, Kyle (Morgan) Fairchild, Janice (Brian) Lopeman, Michael Kukuk and Melanie (Andy) Dickey, 11 great-grandchildren and several nieces.

A memorial service will be held in the summer in Creede. Joan had a soft spot for the animals at the Roice-Hurst Humane Society in Grand Junction, www.rhhumanesociety.org. Both Coleman and Joan were thoughtfully and compassionately cared for by Hope West Hospice Care Center in Grand Junction, www.hopewestco.org. Memorial contributions can be made to either organization. Cards can be sent to the family in care of Kaye Fairchild, P.O. Box 188, Fruita, CO 81521.



## Veterans invited to call VSO office

**SAGUACHE** — The Saguache County Veterans Service Office (VSO) is here to counsel and assist all military veterans and/or their dependents in providing information on their entitlement to Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits. It also prepares and submits benefit claims to the appropriate agency.

This office has extensive information on current VA programs and stands ready to help veterans

with all services available. Our goal is to personally meet and assist all veterans of the area. Please feel free to call at any time (719-655-2680) during normal business hours 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday, to schedule an appointment.

The office mailing address is P.O. Box 325, Saguache, CO 81149. Saguache County is proud to provide the Veterans Service Office for its veterans.

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# OBITUARY

## Patricia Ann Davie, 93 Oct. 20, 1926 – April 21, 2020

Patricia Ann Dickerson/Nash/Davie, 'Pat', was born in Monte Vista, CO to Ethylan and Cleo Dickerson. Pat was full of energy, faith and love until the day she went to live her eternal life with the Lord.

Pat married her true love, Lyle Martin Nash, at the age of 18 and had four children, Larry, Chet, Peggy and Jacquie. While diligently raising her children, Pat worked as a cook for Del Norte Schools. After the unexpected death of Lyle, Pat went on to receive her bachelor's degree in education at Adams State College and became a teacher at Sargent School where she positively impacted the lives of so many for 23 years. Pat was one of the fortunate souls to find another love, Ross A. Davie, whom she was married to for 49 years until his death. Along with her life as an educator, Pat lived the life of a working ranch hand. She conducted cattle and sheep drives, harvested, sorted and sold potatoes, bucked hay, nurtured the bum lambs, tended to the horses, and anything else she could help with on the Flying F ranch.

Pat was an avid outdoorswoman, climbing 10 fourteeners, her last at the age of 72. She loved her home on the ranch, and even more so, loved sharing that life with her 10 grandchildren and 27 great grandchildren. Pat served many years on the Rio Grande Search and Rescue, as a member of the Val Alto Society, Red Hats Society, a member of Pioneer United Church as a Deaconess, Eastern Star where she was the longest standing member in the San Luis Valley as of 2019 and volunteered an unprecedented amount of hours to Del Norte Schools, 4-H, and Boys and Girls Club.

Patricia loved people, she loved her family, and her love for all those she encountered naturally made her a staple in so many lives. She was tough as nails; all would agree there is not a soul that is tougher. Patricia's hobbies included Line Dancing and Square Dancing, hiking, swimming, volunteering, riding horses, particularly bareback, attending the Creede Theatre and Saturday night dancing at Boogie's, the faster the dance the more she loved it. Her favorite past times were riding the back country, hiking fourteeners, trips to Las Vegas, competing in the Bolder Boulder, and *anything* that had to do with family. Pat's legacy is the love she passed on to any living being she came across. Her family was her focus, and she wanted nothing more than to just be with them, no matter the activity involved... she was simply happy to be with her family. She would gladly take the time to visit and visit with anyone, but if she were on the move, you had better be ready to keep up.

In the final years of her life, her favorite thing was to visit Antelope Springs, hike the ranch with her son Chet and enjoy the scenery with Chet, her daughter-in-law Frances and any who visited. Pat loved to ride the four wheeler, bask in the sun on the porch swing or in the sunroom, count the cars (or lack thereof) that would pass, rest by the fireplace, and watch the vast amounts of wildlife nearby.

Patricia is preceded in her journey to the Lord by her son

Larry (4), husband Lyle, sister Barbara, granddaughter Eve, brother Sonny, husband Ross and brother David. Those in the flesh to honor Pat's legacy are her three children Chet, Peggy and Jacquie, nine grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. She is also survived by many others who were important to her - many relatives, nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews, cousins, in-laws, the countless numbers of those lives she impacted, and her dog Cutie.

It was Pat's wish not to conduct any Memorial or Funeral upon her death. We will fully respect her wishes with a Celebration of her Life. There will be two opportunities in the upcoming year to Celebrate the Life of Patricia Davie. More information will be announced on a virtual celebration as well as a gathering at Antelope Springs, later. It was Patricia's wishes to be cremated and have her ashes spread over her favorite place on Earth, Antelope Springs Ranch in Creede, Colorado



"Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well." – Henry Scott Holland

Arrangements in care of Strohmayer's Funeral Home.

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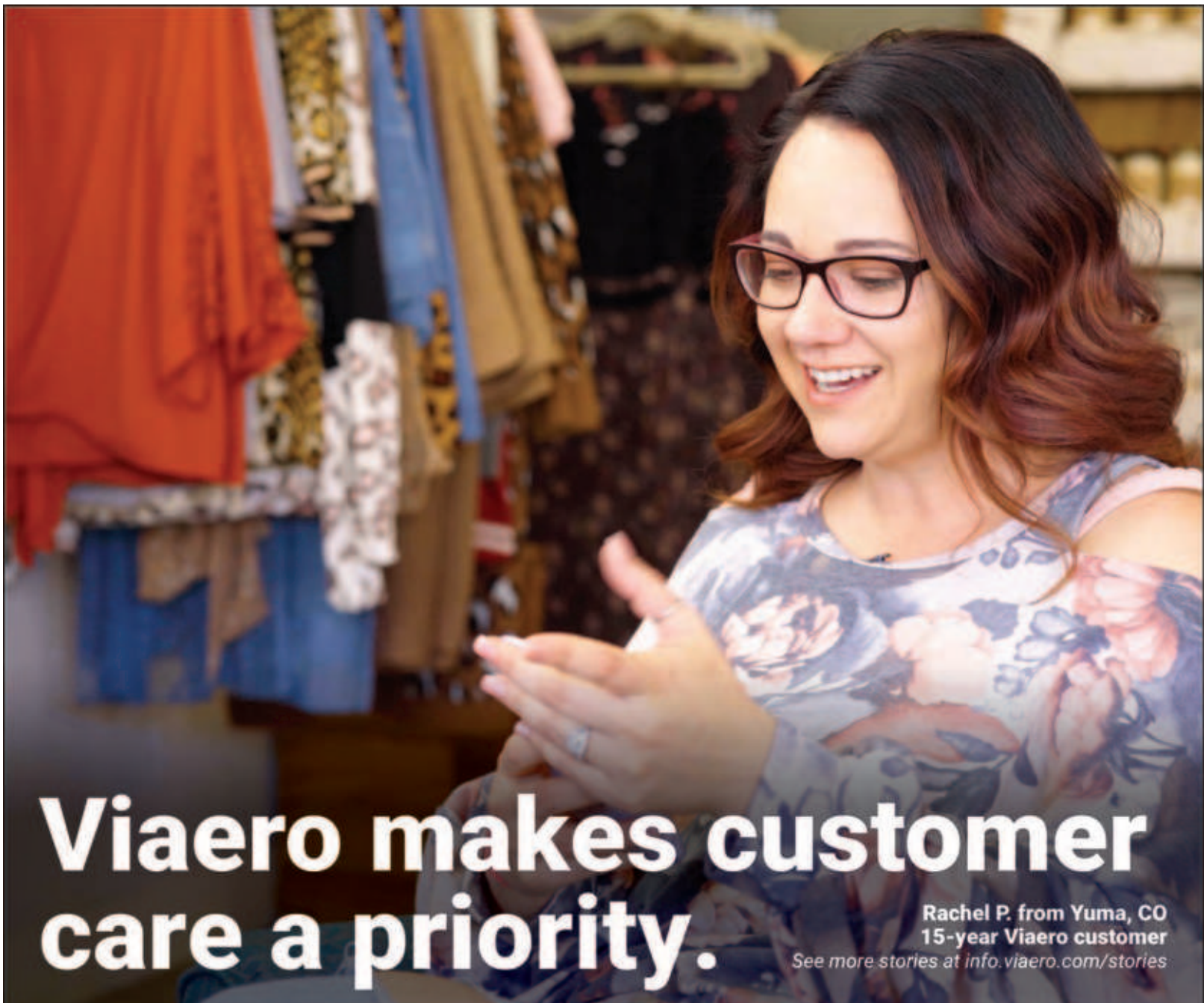
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# OPINION & EDITORIAL

## Brace yourself for an invasion

OI' Dutch is an avid reader of historical events and certain ones like the landing in Normandy on D-Day certainly is a favorite.

Firsthand accounts from American, French, British and German citizens and soldiers are fascinating to read even this far removed in history. They all have a mix of anxiety, anticipation, suspense and hope for victory.

Fast-forward to this week when there is news afoot of another soon-to-be invasion of the "mother country." OI' Dutch and Miss Trixie -- ever the insiders as far as good gossip and a nose for news, at least in our own minds -- have advanced knowledge that

Colorful Colorado will once again be inundated with tourists of every shape and size. Mostly size. Soon huge Conestoga wagons pulled by massive four wheel beasts of burden will descend upon our great state for another summer of fun and relaxation. Others with second homes will also arrive in copious numbers armed with enough toilet paper and canned goods to last out the season.

Lakes will be assaulted by old men and women intent on adding a rainbow trout to the skillet and bait jars will multiply and adorn our shores like seashells on a white sand beach.

Money brought from afar will be rung into cash registers after a long winter drought of non-use and gasoline pumps will spin like some slot machine in a Las Vegas casino. Noisy ATV's will go roaring down mountain roads scattering wildlife and Sunday drivers alike with dust settling on every car and in every nook and cranny that it can find.

Long gone will be the quiet respite of winter and nature will brace itself for another onslaught of human activity -- hopefully all clad with masks over their mouths and nose and with hand sanitizers in their pockets.

OI' Dutch will soon be returning home so he and Miss Trixie can quarantine for 15 days as a part of Governor Polis' Safer-at-Home measures and out of respect for our fellow residents already there.

After that, we are planning a great summer of social distancing in nature with a lot of fishing and hiking -- 6 feet apart from all of you (but, thankfully, not from each other.) I do not ask Miss Trixie to wear a mask around me but there are times a good swatch of duct tape across her mouth would improve our lives immensely.



**Trout Republic**  
by Kevin Kirkpatrick

OI' Dutch will miss the many social gatherings that I normally participate in but feel like care must be taken until such time as this virus passes us like the plagues of Egypt once did the Children of Israel. For lack of a Moses to lead us out of bondage, we will have to do the best we can with what we have: each other.

I read this past week that 85 million odd tourists visit the great state of Colorado each year and generate over \$1.5 billion to the local economies. And that's just the odd tourists. I am sure a few normal ones also come to our state although I am beginning to wonder more and more about that statement.

I am reminded of the old Monkees song, "here we come." For sure as an apple hit Isaac Newton on the head, Ma and Pa and their kettle will soon arrive for a fun-filled summer of cool air, hot food and erratic driving.

All we can do is hope that locals and tourists alike heed the instructions of the elected county officials, state government leaders and medical professionals so that we end up with a successful summer of safe conduct.

This is certainly a time for the history books since the last time people wore masks when making a withdrawal from the local banks, Bob Ford walked among us. This time, however, you can do it without legal repercussions and maybe even get a few cheers from our fellow citizens.

*Kevin Kirkpatrick and his Yorkie, Cooper, fish, hunt, ATV or hike daily. His email is Kevin@TroutRepublic.com. Additional news can be found at www.troutrepublic.com or on Twitter at TroutRepublic.*



### LETTERS

## 2020 appeal announcement for real property values in Colorado

To the editor,

**COLORADO-** May 1, 2020, real property valuation appeals begin with the county assessor's offices in Colorado. Real property value in Colorado is determined on a two-year cycle and 2020 real property value reflects market data as of June 30, 2018. Property owners will only receive a Notice of Value this May if their property value changed due to the creation of a new lot or subdivision, new construction, an addition or remodel or other physical changes to an existing property.

By Colorado law, the 2020 real property value is based on June 30, 2018, market data.

"Unfortunately, unless there is a change in our State Constitution or statutes, our hands are tied this year," said Libby Lamb, Mineral County Assessor. "We cannot accept appeals based on taxes or effects on property value due to the present pandemic crisis. As it stands now, the economic impacts of the current pandemic will be addressed in the 2021 revaluation of all real property," Lamb added.

Real property values for the 2021 reappraisal will be based on market data as of June 30, 2020, absent legislative change.

County Assessors in the state recognize the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the Colorado

economy this year; however assessors do not have the authority to adjust the current (2020) market value. The Colorado Assessor's Association is currently working with Colorado public officials to help find a way to address these issues. The Assessor's office urges you to contact your local state representatives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The local House Representative is Don Valdez (719)-588-5565, email donald.valdez.house@state.co.us ; and our Senator is Larry Crowder (303) 866-4875, email larry.crowder.senate@state.co.us .

*Libby Lamb,  
Mineral County Assessor*

## Creede Elks Lodge #506 receives grant

**CREEDE -** The Creede Elks Lodge # 506 applied and received a \$2,000.00 Gratitude Grant from the Elks National Foundation.

The Elks National Foundation wants us to help people in need during this COVID-19 virus situation.

Secretary, Henry Hosselkus has reached out to pastor Dave of the Creede Baptist Church and Lori Dooley of the Ladies Aid Society to help distribute the Funds and to help as many people as possible.

Our local Creede Elks Lodge #506 has also purchased twenty

\$50.00 Gift Certificates from the Kentucky Belle Market and have given them out.

Henry on behalf of the Creede Elks Lodge #506, would like to thank Pastor Dave and Lori for their help and also thank the Elks National Foundation for the Grant.

Online:

[www.centerpostdispatch.com](http://www.centerpostdispatch.com)

# CENTER POST-DISPATCH

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# Burglaries, police service calls increase in Center

## Arrests also on the rise

By TERESA L. BENNS

**CENTER** — Center Police Chief Dale Meek provided statistical data and a police report via email from March through mid-April Tuesday showing that within a six-week span, this department has received 348 calls for service.

“This is a 27 percent increase from 274 calls for service during the same time period of 2019,” Meek said. “We had 10 burglaries during this timeframe. That is a high number but seven occurred all in one night by the same person.”

That person, Pedro Portillo, was arrested on two of the incidents with charges being forwarded by criminal summons on the other five, Meek continued. He reported that the Center Police Department has been providing assistance at many civil issues (23 in the time period) and these range from parents needing assistance with their children to couples needing help separating.

“These are non-criminal matters in which our officers try to mediate and calm the situation,” Meek explained. “We have additionally responded to several motor vehicle collisions.” These include one DUI, two hit and runs, three traffic collisions involving property damage and one traffic collision with injuries.

“Even though traffic is lighter due to CoVid restrictions, our town’s drivers are finding each other while driving,” Meek remarked.

The burglaries for which Portillo was arrested are legally classified as felony trespass with theft in a motor vehicle. All seven vehicles were unlocked. The suspect entered each vehicle through the passenger door, ransacked the glove compartment and with the use of only one arm, only small items were taken. Meek asks residents to please lock their vehicles.

“Our ‘Person of the Week’ has several warrants for his arrest,” Meek announced. “Frank Maldonado frequents the Central Avenue area and Casa de Cortez. A couple of weeks ago he ran from a truck to avoid apprehension.”

Maldonado is believed to be a heavy user of meth. Anyone who sees him is urged to call the Center Police Dispatch at 719-754-2442. He is 5 feet, 7 inches tall, medium to slim build with short brown hair and blue eyes. Maldonado will be seen in the Central Avenue area near the apartments or in Alamosa.

He is wanted for parole violation and a few failure to appear (FTA) warrants. Maldonado ran from officers after being seen driving a brown 2001 Chevy truck earlier this month. The truck had a broken window on the passenger side. His girlfriend, Bonnie Gollihugh, was arrested after Maldonado fled. She also had a warrant for her arrest for not appearing in court.

“Our last person of the week, Jason DeHerrera, only lasted two days before your calls led to his arrest,” Meek noted. “Please be as vigilant in locating Maldonado.”

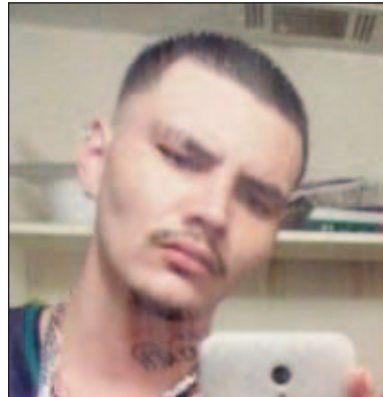
DeHerrera was arrested in the checkout line of K&J for his warrants, Meek said. He is being additionally charged with possession of a controlled substance “after dropping a loaded syringe of heroin on the floor while being handcuffed.” He is currently being held in the Saguache County Jail.

Below is an additional list of subjects who are wanted for felony offenses in Center. Residents are asked to call the dispatch number if they see these individuals:

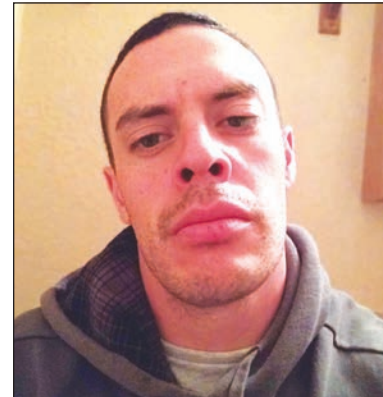
• Gabriel Kain Sandoval, 31, is 5

feet, 7 inches tall, medium to slim build with short brown hair and blue eyes. Sandoval will be seen in the Central Avenue area near the apartments or in Alamosa. He is wanted for parole violation.

• Joshua Sisneros, 23, is 6 feet, 2 inches tall, slim build with short black hair and brown/hazel eyes. He has a visible tattoo on his neck. Sisneros is wanted for several failure to appear warrants. He will be found at Casa de Cortez and is a person of interest in some recent thefts.



Joshua Sisneros



Gabriel Sandoval



Frank Maldonado

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# Governor Polis outlines 'Safer at home' guidelines for state

**BY TREY SPAULDING**  
**COLORADO** - During his April 27 COVID-19 state address, Governor Jared Polis outlined more specifically what the "Safer at home" executive order entailed. Prior to the specifics, he stated that the percentage of case increases had dramatically decreased from the first COVID-19 positive case in Colorado on March 5. He stated in the early stages we were doubling the number of COVID-19 positive cases every 2-3 days. He stated now the number of COVID-19 cases growth rate has dropped to 3.8 percent. The problem with this analysis is basic statistics and the fact that testing was, and still is, very limited across the state and especially in the San Luis Valley. As of April 27, Colorado has 13,879 cases of COVID-19. At a growth rate of 3.8 percent this equates to 527 new cases per day.

Polis cautioned that as more tests become available the number of COVID-19 positive cases will increase. He also warned during this speech that if we do not adhere to the guidelines of the "safer at home" order that we would have an increase in the number of cases and would have to revert to a "stay at home" order again.

He stated that ideally if everyone can telecommute they should do so or as many employees as possible should telecommute if their job allows them to do so. Masks and gloves are to be worn in the workplaces, while shopping, serving customers, etc. in public settings. Disturbing for this day in age, he stated that people of color who were wearing masks were being treated suspiciously and that we needed to treat everyone equally despite the tone of their skin.

Polis went on to say, "Together, Coloradans have been effective in leveling and flattening the curve, but life will remain much more dangerous than usual these next few months and we should all wear masks when in public. Safer at Home is by no means a free-for-all. My administration has acted boldly in the face of this pandemic and is focused on ensuring our state can endure on the trail ahead. We all have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of the virus and must find a way of living that is psychologically and economically sustainable for Coloradans," said Governor Jared Polis.

The Safer at Home Executive Order D 2020044 outlines a new level in Colorado's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a more sustainable way of living for Coloradans while slowing the spread of the virus and allowing more Coloradans to return to work. The Executive Order is tentatively set to expire 30 days from April 27, 2020 but can be amended or extended at any time.

Coloradans should continue staying home as much as possible, and the Executive Order directs vulnerable populations, including seniors, to continue staying home, only leaving when absolutely necessary.

Changes happening during Safer at Home will be phased in, with different changes going into effect April 27, May 1, and May 4.

**Monday, April 27** - Retail businesses can open for curbside delivery. Real estate home showings can resume. Voluntary or elective medical, dental, and veterinary surgeries and procedures may resume if facilities are following required safety protocols.

**Friday, May 1** - Retail businesses can phase-in a public opening if they are implementing best practices. Personal services can open if they are implementing best practices.

**Monday, May 4** - Offices can reopen at 50% reduced in-person staffing capacity, if best practices are being implemented to protect the health and safety of employees. Businesses are encouraged to allow employees to continue telecommuting at higher levels if possible. Childcare facilities can also expand or reopen if they are following Safer at Home requirements.

Colorado is a diverse state and the Governor knows each community will have different needs. The Safer at Home order outlines the options local governments will have when it comes to slowing the spread of the virus and protecting their communities.

Local governments can implement the guidelines of Safer at Home to match the State.

Local governments can go further than the State, including but not limited to stay-

at-home orders or additional protective measures.

Local governments can relax guidelines more than the State. To do so, local governments will need to demonstrate proof of 14 consecutive days of decline of infection of COVID-19 in the county. They also must submit an application to CDPHE that includes a written COVID-19 suppression plan approved by the appropriate local public health authority, all hospitals within the jurisdiction, and elected leadership.

**Elective Medical services** - The Governor also signed Executive Order D 2020 045, which will allow medical, dental, and veterinary voluntary or elective surgeries and procedures to resume as long as the health care facility or other setting is following the required safety protocols as set out in the Executive Order. This goes into effect Monday, April 27, 2020. Under this Executive Order, facilities performing these procedures must establish a plan to reduce or stop voluntary or elective surgeries and procedures if there is a surge of COVID-19 infections in the county or municipality in which they are located. CDPHE will determine the conditions that constitute a surge.

**TO PROTECT CUSTOMERS**

- Create special hours for people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- Encourage and facilitate 6-foot distancing inside of the business for all patrons.
- Encourage use of protection like gloves, masks, and face coverings.
- Provide hand sanitizer at entrance.
- Install shields or barriers where possible between customers and employees.
- Use contactless payment solutions, no touch trash cans, etc. whenever possible.
- Provide estimates, invoices, and other documentation electronically (no paper)
- Seek contactless payment options (whenever possible)
- Use face coverings or masks
- For transportation network companies, limo services and call-and-demand transportation riders, only request for necessary travel and wash hands before and after ride.

**GENERAL BUSINESS PRACTICES FOR WORKSPACES**

- Ensure a minimum of 6 feet of space between all desks/workspaces
- Modify flow of people traffic to minimize contacts (e.g. doors for entry or exit only)
- Conduct office cleaning with increased frequency and supplement with high-frequency sanitization of high-touch areas (e.g. doors, stairwell handles, books, light switches, elevator switches and buttons, etc.) (Additional Guidance)
- Ensure proper ventilation
- Provide employees with sanitization products and guidance on daily workspace cleaning routines
- Post signage for employees and customers on good hygiene and new office practices, and make regular announcements to remind employees and/or customers to follow distancing guidelines
- Encourage the use of digital files rather than paper formats (e.g., documentation, invoices, inspections, forms, agendas)
- Ensure clear planning, preparedness and organization in the workplace. This includes assigning a COVID coordinator to facilitate planning and communication, developing a planform resources like cleaning supplies and internal regular (daily or weekly) communication, planning for employees to be out of the office for quarantine or caring for others, and considering how new precautions will impact workflow, etc.
- Maintain in-office occupancy at no more than 50% of total at one time by maximizing use of telecommuting and developing in-office rotation
- Allow for flexible work schedules, where possible, to lessen the need to be in the office during normal business hours. This could include allowing employees to work evenings or weekends when the office is traditionally less crowded or closed schedules.
- Conduct daily temperature checks and monitor symptoms in employees, for businesses with 25 employees or greater. Smaller businesses ask employees to do self-temperature and symptom check at home daily before coming in to work. Refer symptomatic employees to the

CDPHE Symptom Tracker. (Additional Guidance)

- Minimize the number of in-person meetings and maintain adequate 6-foot distancing in those meetings. Use online conferencing, email, or the phone instead of in-person meetings, even when people are in the same building, whenever possible
- Provide flexible or remote scheduling for employees who need to continue to observe Stay-at-Home, who may have child or elder care obligations, or who live with a person who still needs to observe Stay-at-Home due to underlying condition, age, or other factors
- Provide guidance and encouragement on maintaining 6 foot distancing and taking breaks to wash hands
- Require gloves and face coverings or masks for any interactions with other individuals (e.g. customers-workers, vendors) (Additional Guidance)
- Implement 6-foot distancing measures (e.g., marked space in checkout lines)
- Strongly encourage or require use of face coverings or masks.
- Provide hand sanitizer at entrances and other high-traffic locations
- Implement hours where service is only provided to people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, if possible. Enhance precautions during these hours.
- Deputize workplace coordinator(s) charged with addressing COVID-19 issues.
- Maintain 6-foot distancing when possible and discourage shared spaces and breakrooms.
- Frequently sanitize all high-touch areas. Cleaning refers to the removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection. Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.
- Post signage for employees and customers on good hygiene.
- Ensure proper ventilation.
- Avoid gatherings (meetings, waiting rooms, etc.) of more than 10 people.
- Implement symptom monitoring protocols (including workplace temperature monitoring and symptom screening questions) where possible. During Colorado's Safer-at-Home Phase, many more business will open. It's important for these businesses to follow recommendations to keep employees and customers safe. This includes an at-the-door symptom check for all employees, vendors, and visitors before entering the business. Set up equipment on the tables so that the temperature takers screen first. The data entry personnel will be at the opposite end of the tables. Clean all surfaces and equipment with bleach wipes or disinfectant wipes. Remind all persons in the queue line to maintain a 6 foot spacing distance. (Note: On cold days, have them rub their temple to warm up the skin. Cold skin interferes with temperature taking.)
- Require employees showing any symptoms or signs of sickness, or who has been in contact with known positive cases to stay home.
- Connect employees to company or state benefits providers.
- Provide flexible or remote scheduling for employees who need to continue to observe Stay-at-Home, who may have child or elder care obligations, or who live with a person who still needs to observe Stay-at-Home due to underlying condition, age, or other factors.
- Encourage and enable remote work whenever possible.
- Minimize all in-person meetings.
- Provide hand washing facilities/stations and hand sanitizer.
- Encourage breaks to wash hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Phase shifts and breaks to reduce employee density.
- Wear appropriate protective gear like gloves, masks, and face coverings and encourage appropriate use.

**LIMITED HEALTH CARE SETTINGS**

- Employ strict hygiene guidelines and

- sanitization procedures for all contact surfaces and tools
- Ensure a minimum of 6 feet of separation between clients/customers when not directly performing service
- Post signage for employees and customers on good hygiene and safety measures being taken
- Sanitize all financial transaction equipment after each use (Additional Guidance)
- Minimize in-home services with remote alternatives where possible (e.g. drive-by, virtual meetings)
- Conduct symptom and temperature checks and refer symptomatic employees or families to the CDPHE Symptom Tracker (Additional Guidance)
- Wear medical grade mask and gloves
- Change gloves between customers and wash hands
- Clean and sanitize workspace between each appointment
- Continue to conduct telehealth appointments whenever possible
- Provide service by appointment only (no walk-ins or waiting)
- Require patients to wear face coverings or masks
- Conduct symptoms check for customers of high contact services before they enter frothier appointment and do not serve symptomatic clients
- Provide contactless payment options whenever possible
- Provide virtual waiting rooms - patients wait in their vehicle until their appointment begins.

**EMPLOYEES GUIDELINES**

- Adhere to all general rules or guidance on social gathering limitations when working in the field, including in someone's

- business or personal home.
- No meetings, showings, appraisals, consultations or gatherings of more than 10 people; these should be conducted remotely.
- Implement procedures for field-based employees to monitor for symptoms and report to management daily on health status. Refer symptomatic employees to the Colorado Department of Health and environment.
- Maintain 6 foot distancing from other employees and customers.
- Require gloves and face coverings or masks for any in-person interactions or work being done in third-party homes or office spaces.
- Change gloves between customers.
- Inquire whether third-party homes have symptomatic individuals or individuals who have contact with known positive cases and, if they do, cease any in-person interaction and limit any in-home activities to only those which are critical and can be done without risk to service provider.
- Maintain detailed log of customer interactions to enable contact tracing (if ever needed)
- Prioritize remote work and/or personal protective equipment for people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- Sanitize high-touch surfaces and tools or equipment after each customer visit.
- Provide guidance and encouragement on personal sanitation including frequently washing hands.
- Require service providers to stay home if showing any symptoms or signs of sickness or if they have had contact with a known positive case
- For real estate: no open houses and no food or beverage offered during showings

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**Phone - call 844-330-2020**  
 (en español 844-468-2020)

**Mail** - If you do not respond online or by phone, you may receive a paper questionnaire. Households that receive mail at a PO Box will not receive a questionnaire by mail, but may have one delivered to their home by a census worker after June 13, 2020.



## SAGUACHE SHERIFF REPORT

The following information was provided by the Saguache County Sheriff's Office for the weeks of April 20-26, 2020

**Arrests**

- Joshua Sisneros, 23, Center, three counts of failure to appear
- Victor Najera, 37, Center, harassment, domestic violence

- Jason DeHerrera, 33, Center, second-degree burglary, theft, crimes against at-risk adults and juveniles
- Andrew Martin, 52, Appleton City, Missouri, criminal mischief, domestic violence, contempt of court
- Brian Jones, 34, Moffat, fugitive of justice
- Angelina Madison, 30, Moffat,

- fugitive of justice
- Venessa Stonebraker, 36, Moffat, three counts fugitive of justice, criminal impersonation, criminal possession of an identification document

**Citations**

- Cooper Goodhart, 19, Crestone, speeding 39 in a 35 MPH zone



# Citizens now have limited access to county buildings

**SAGUACHE COUNTY** — Starting Monday, April 27, Saguache County will allow limited access into government buildings. Currently, Saguache County is providing essential services via phone and online avenues.

You are “Safer at Home.” Please conduct business with the county virtually, when possible.

To enter a government building, citizens must make an appointment with the department they need to meet with. They must wear a mask and gloves. And maintain a six-foot social distance.

Only one family member in the building at a time. (Exceptions made for interpreters).

If someone is running late for a scheduled appointment, please reschedule. Staff are limited and they thank you for your patience. These restrictions are until further notice and are subject to change.

Saguache County departments and telephone numbers:

- Saguache County Administration – 719-655-2231
- Saguache County Assessor – 719-655-2521
- Saguache County Clerk and Recorder – 719-655-2512
- Saguache County Court System is open to the public, operating as usual – 719-655-2522

- Saguache County Emergency Management – 719-588-0197
- Saguache County Housing Authority – 719-655-2804
- Saguache County Land Use – 719-655-2321
- Saguache County Land Fill – 719-221-1956
- Saguache County Public Health – 719-655-2533
- Saguache County Road and Bridge – 719-655-2554
- Saguache County Sheriff’s Office, Jail and Coroner is open to the public, operating as usual – 719-655-2544
- Saguache County Social Services, is open to the public, operating as usual – 719-655-2537
- Saguache County Treasurer – 719-655-2656
- Saguache County Veteran’s Service – 719-655-2680

The county has one goal in mind – to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and avoid long-term risk to our community. Saguache County is asking your cooperation in proactively implementing these measures.

Citizens have a personal responsibility to minimize social gatherings, to wear a mask when out in public, and to stay at home as much as possible. These short-term measures will significantly reduce the long-term impacts on the community.

## SAFER

Continued from Page 1A for the general public?

- Follow Safer at Home guidelines
- Strongly advised face coverings and staying 6ft apart in public
- No gatherings over 10 people
- Sick people may not go to work
- Limit nonessential travel

What does This mean for older adults and vulnerable populations?

- Continue to Stay at Home except when absolutely necessary
- Utilize special industry hours for vulnerable populations

What does this mean for seeing friends and family?

- People should still limit interactions except with immediate household

If you do see limited family or friends outside of your household, be extra cautious to stay 6 ft apart, wear face covering and limit contact

- Stick to solo and non-contact recreation activities like running, walking, or hiking in your local community. Do not travel outside of your local community for recreation. Avoid contact sports or equipment.

What are next steps for the Safer-at-Home phase?

The state is working to develop best practices and specific guidance for different industries during the Safer-at-Home phase and will have more details in the coming days.

This includes:

- Retail
- Offices
- Elective Medical and Dental Services
- Child care
- Personal Services
- Real Estate

How will local governments be affected?

Under the Safer-at-Home phase, local governments will have a variety of options.

Operates under the state’s Safer-at-Home executive order and public health orders.

They can go farther than the state, including but not limited to stay at home orders or additional protective measures.

They can apply for a variance from the state. To do so, they will need to demonstrate proof of very low case counts of COVID 19 and/ or 14 consecutive days of decline of infection of COVID-19 in the county. They also must submit an application that includes a written COVID-19 suppression plan approved by the appropriate local public health authority. All local hospitals and elected officials must sign off on the plan.

What is the timeline for the Safer-at-Home phase?

**Sunday, April 26:**

- Last day of Stay at Home Order
- Safer at Home Order Issued

**Monday, April 27:**

Public Health Order and guidance to be issued:

- Retail - Curbside can begin
- Real Estate - showings can resume

**Friday, May 1**

- Retail and Personal Services can open if implementing best practices

**Monday, May 4**


- Offices can reopen at 50 percent reduced capacity, if best practices are being implemented.

Note: if you can continue telecommuting at higher levels, you are encouraged to do so.

\*Saguache County can implement stricter restrictions than the State restrictions at any time, if necessary. If County and State orders differ, the more restrictive order will take precedence. Saguache County will continue to review data and models to inform future policy decisions.


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Tony Garcia is sworn in as Center's new mayor last Tuesday.



Peggy Martinez, a former Center trustee, was sworn in last Tuesday as a newly elected town trustee.

**BUS**

Continued from Page 1A — but this isn't the usual bus service picking up and dropping off students," Banning explained. "This yellow delivery bus drops off iPads, paper assignments, lunches from the cafeteria and food for students."

Each Tuesday the delivery bus, driven by JoAnne Clutter and Penny Reider, actually delivers hope to families, she pointed out. The school also has provided internet to over 100 families with students in the district.

Transportation director Tony Garcia and Gerald Hammer load the bus with lunches carefully prepared by the cafeteria staff, lessons and other supplies. Last week, the bus delivered lunches, food and hygiene kits.

This week it is snacks, homework, lunches and meals. "They have added the country students onto the routes because their parents are working and are unable to make it Monday to the lunch deliveries," Banning said. "This means driving over 120 miles in one morning. What is on the schedule for next week? Did someone say dish soap and toilet paper?"

According to Banning, who has been teaching children how to read over the phone, the current home learning situation is "very frustrating" for both teachers and students because it is so impersonal.

"I never want to do this again," she said. Banning believes being able to teach face-to-face is an indispensable part of the learning process and looks forward to resuming school later this year.

**METH**

Continued from Page 1A —

**Behavioral signs of meth**

- Being very alert or physically active
- Reduced appetite and weight loss
- Outbursts or mood swings
- Paranoia or hallucinations
- High blood pressure
- Elevated body temperature and heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Grinding of teeth

**Some more visible meth symptoms**

- Picking at skin or hair (easily seen on face and arms)
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Dilated pupils
- Rapid eye movement

**Odd sleeping patterns, unusual wakefulness**

- Twitching, facial tics, jerky movements, exaggerated mannerisms
  - Talking constantly
  - Outbursts or mood swings
  - Paranoia or hallucinations
- (Some of the visible symptoms that are more common in Center have been highlighted.)

The next part of this series will address heroin use.

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**2017 Ram 1500**



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# Lifestyles

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Supplement to The Monte Vista Journal, Center Post-Dispatch, The Conejos County Citizen, The Mineral County Miner, The South Fork Times, and The Del Norte Prospector.

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## Most spring road closures are open to foot traffic

BY LYNSIE FERRELL

**RIO GRANDE FOREST-** It has been a beautiful spring here in the San Luis Valley and though many roads remain closed to vehicles throughout the Rio Grande National Forest. Many residents do not know that though the road says closed, it is open for foot traffic.

As an avid hiker, spring is one of my favorite times to head out into the forest to get a sense of life reawakening. The air is crisp and fresh with an underlying scent of regrowth. Trees sway in the formidable San Luis Valley springtime wind, animals that have spent the winter hunkered down in a warm and cozy hole are starting to emerge and little streams begin to trickle through thick forest settings as the snow from the higher peaks begin to melt.

The main purpose for spring road closures is to ensure that the roads remain intact during the spring runoff and mud season and though there are other areas that may be closed to foot traffic as well while out for a day hike, it is always important to pay attention to signage.

Some of my more favorite spots to venture to include Beaver Creek Reservoir which is located on Forest road 20 just west of South Fork. This area has a diverse landscape and several foot trails that lead

**Please see FOREST on Page 6**

*The Rio Grande National Forest is coming alive with springtime flowers, budding trees and seasonal spring runoff creeks. It is a great time to get outside and enjoy the backcountry while continuing to practice social distancing.*

## Governor Polis issues outlines for 'Safer at Home' order

*Retail open with stipulations, car dealerships open, real estate showings resume*

**COLORADO** - Gov. Polis today issued Executive Orders on Safer at Home, the New Normal Advisory Board, and Voluntary or Elective Surgeries and Procedures.

"Together, Coloradans have been effective in leveling and flattening the curve, but life will remain much more dangerous than usual these next few months and we should all wear masks when in public. Safer at Home is by no means a free-for-all. My administration has acted boldly in the face of this pandemic and is focused on ensuring our state can endure on the trail ahead. We all have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of the virus and must find a way of living that is psychologically and economically sustainable for Coloradans," said Governor Jared Polis.

The Safer at Home Executive Order D 2020 044 outlines a new level in Colorado's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a more sustainable way of living for Coloradans while slowing the spread of the virus and allowing more Coloradans to return to work. The Executive Order is tentatively set to expire 30 days from April 27, 2020, but can be amended or extended at any time.

Coloradans should continue staying home as much as possible, and the Executive Order directs vulnerable populations, including seniors, to con-

tinue staying home, only leaving when absolutely necessary.

Changes happening during Safer at Home will be phased in, with different changes going into effect April 27, May 1, and May 4.

### Monday, April 27

Retail businesses can open for curbside delivery. Real estate home showings can resume. Voluntary or elective medical, dental, and veterinary surgeries and procedures may resume if facilities are following required safety protocols.

### Friday, May 1

Retail businesses can phase-in a public opening if they are implementing best practices.

Personal services can open if they are implementing best practices

### Monday, May 4

Offices can reopen at 50% reduced in-person staffing capacity, if best practices are being implemented to protect the health and safety of employees. Businesses are encouraged to allow employees to continue telecommuting at higher levels if possible. Child care facilities can also expand or reopen if they are following Safer at Home requirements.

Colorado is a diverse state and the Governor knows each community will

have different needs. The Safer at Home order outlines the options local governments will have when it comes to slowing the spread of the virus and protecting their communities.

Local governments can implement the guidelines of Safer at Home to match the State.

Local governments can go further than the State, including but not limited to stay-at-home orders or additional protective measures.

Local governments can relax guidelines more than the State. To do so, local governments will need to demonstrate proof of 14 consecutive days of decline of infection of COVID-19 in the county.



**COLORADO**  
Governor Jared Polis

CDPHE that includes a written COVID-19 suppression plan approved by the appropriate local public health authority, all hospitals within the jurisdiction, and elected leadership.

**Elective Medical services** - The Governor also signed Executive Order D 2020 045, which will allow medical, dental, and veterinary voluntary or elective surgeries and procedures to resume as long as the health care facility or other setting is following the required safety protocols as set out in the Executive Order. This goes into effect Monday, April 27, 2020. Under this Executive Order,

**Please see POLIS on Page 3**

## Nature Films

"Here we are friends, on the Serengeti Plains in the wilds of Serengeti." As the crowd leans in closer to the television we see the swaying Boab trees... an endless sea of grass waving off into the horizon. We hear the quiet buzz of Tsetse flies humming strains of 'Baby Elephant Walk'. Just as we are becoming mesmerized into the peaceful surroundings on the screen, a lone gazelle suddenly bursts on the scene!

It leaps and dives, with graceful arcs, nimble footwork, and darting back and forth like a cockroach wearing cleats. Then, out of the savannah, like a big shoe, streaks the jungle's answer to James LeBron; Charlie the Cheetah. Charlie pounces on the gazelle and drags him to the ground.

Another example of nature's survival of the fittest. But did you ever wonder how the film crew happened to be there at that exact moment? As you may have heard, nature programs are always under close scrutiny. The



film makers are accused of staging scenes, of using tame animals or zoo animals and of staking out 'prey' for the predators to pounce on.

But may I point out to those who are shocked by this revelation that this is television. Movies. Show Business! The media of

revisionist history, docu-drama, infomercials and reality shows. A business where the facts are altered and endings changed to make a more entertaining program.

Wanton acts of animal cruelty should be avoided. But filming an anteater licking the inside of a termite mound from the termite's point of view takes a little more planning. I mean, how long can a camera man wait inside a termite's living room? Anybody that's ever tried to get a dog or kid to repeat a trick while you run and get the camera knows how hard it is to film spontaneous acts.

I've always assumed nature films were staged. I figured the crew gathered after breakfast and drove to a carefully selected spot. They arrive when the lighting is just right. From the back of a used stock truck (with Nairobi plates) they unload an old antelope, a gnu with footrot and six crippled rabbits. The director points to the truck driver and the prey limps out. Then the director points

to the animal trainer. He releases his leopard. Cameras roll... the leopard bounds toward the hobbling gnu, leaps for his throat and throws him to the ground.

"Cut!" Cries the director.

The leopard helps the gnu up, dusts him off and they go back to the truck. Everybody packs up and gets back to the hotel by cocktail time.

Isn't that how they filmed Jurassic Park?

*Baxter Black, former large animal veterinarian and irregular commentator on National Public Radio, is America's best-selling cowboy poet. He is a frequent performer at national stock shows and rodeos as well as in many smaller local events. He is author of several books, including Cactus Tracks, Croutons on a Cow Pie, Hey, Cowboy, Wanna Get Lucky? and Dunny and the Duck. Baxter Black can be contacted via e-mail at: vikki@baxterblack.com*

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# Rio Grande NF makes adjustments to operations in response to COVID-19 outbreak

**RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST** - This is an unprecedented time we are experiencing, and yet, while still very dynamic in nature, the situation is not changing as rapidly as it did in March. This is not an indicator that our pace has slowed, however. As the RGNF leans into providing increased virtual services, we are contributing to the greater effort in the San Luis Valley, the state of Colorado and, in fact, the nation by reducing and possibly eliminating potential transfer mechanisms for the virus. Through this, we are supporting an extensive effort to minimize the impacts and spread of COVID-19.

As we work through this situation, the health and safety of our employees and the public is our No. 1 priority. Our mission critical work, such as improving the condition of the forest, suppressing wildfires and other public service responsibilities, continues uninterrupted. We are providing virtual information services through our office phone systems and online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rio-grande>. Our front-line attendants are still answering phones, directing callers to specialists as needed, and continuing to provide information services. While the RGNF may have to conduct business a bit differently than in the past, continuing our service during this time is very important. I encourage visitors to continue to contact our offices as normal.

As you may know, other operational changes have occurred within the past month. First, the RGNF has temporarily closed all developed recreation sites and is asking visitors to maintain group sizes no greater than 10 individuals and to stay at least 6 feet away from other users. While all trails, trailheads and parking facilities remain open, trail users must adhere

to social distancing and COVID-19 prevention orders and guidelines issued by local, state and federal authorities. Currently, many road access points to the national forest are closed during the "mud-season." Please be aware of current forest limitations and follow Leave No Trace guidelines. Overall, trails and roads remain open for use on the National Forest, but visitors should come prepared for very limited services. Law enforcement and/or search and rescue operations may be delayed due to limited staffing. High risk or backcountry activities that may increase your chance of injury or distress should be avoided.

Second, fire restrictions are now in place in the entire Rocky Mountain Region, of which the RGNF is a part. USDA Forest Service officials are providing recreation opportunities where possible. Protecting and keeping employees, the public, and our communities safe from the virus and unwanted human-caused wildfires is our No. 1 priority. These fire restrictions will prevent the drawdown of fire and medical resources to unwanted human-caused wildfires. Efforts are in place to ensure firefighter safety while maintaining quick response to wildfires and efficient management of incidents.

You've heard it so many times before, this truly is a difficult time we are experiencing, and while it might take a little longer, we will get through this. For now, let's remember all the positive attributes the San Luis Valley and the RGNF offer us and our visitors.

I know I speak for many of my employees when I say, we are proud to be a part of these amazing communities. I think we'll find that when this is over, we'll be stronger and more connected to each other and our Rio Grande National Forest.

*Dan Dallas has been the Rio Grande National Forest Supervisor since 2007.*

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We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of the Upper Rio Grande Animal Society by contributions, donations, volunteering and general support at Conour Animal Shelter.

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This is Frosty, she is lab/shepherd mix around 6 years old. She is very shy with people so she would need to get to know you. She is a sweet dog once she adjusts to you, and she does well with dogs.



This is Wiley, he is a 4 year old medium mix about years old. He can be a little stand-offish at times with new people, but he is a sweet dog and loves attention and belly-rubs.



This is Drools, he is a 4 year old pit bull mix. He is friendly to most people, but he would need to be the only dog in the house as he does not like other dogs very much.



This is Bella, she is a 3 year old female pitbull mix. She is very friendly with people and does well with most other dogs. She loves to go on walks, but has a little problem with biting at the leash.



This is Valentino, he is a 5 year old male pitbull mix. He seems to do well with most people and dogs, he might just need a little time to get to know you. He likes to go on walks.

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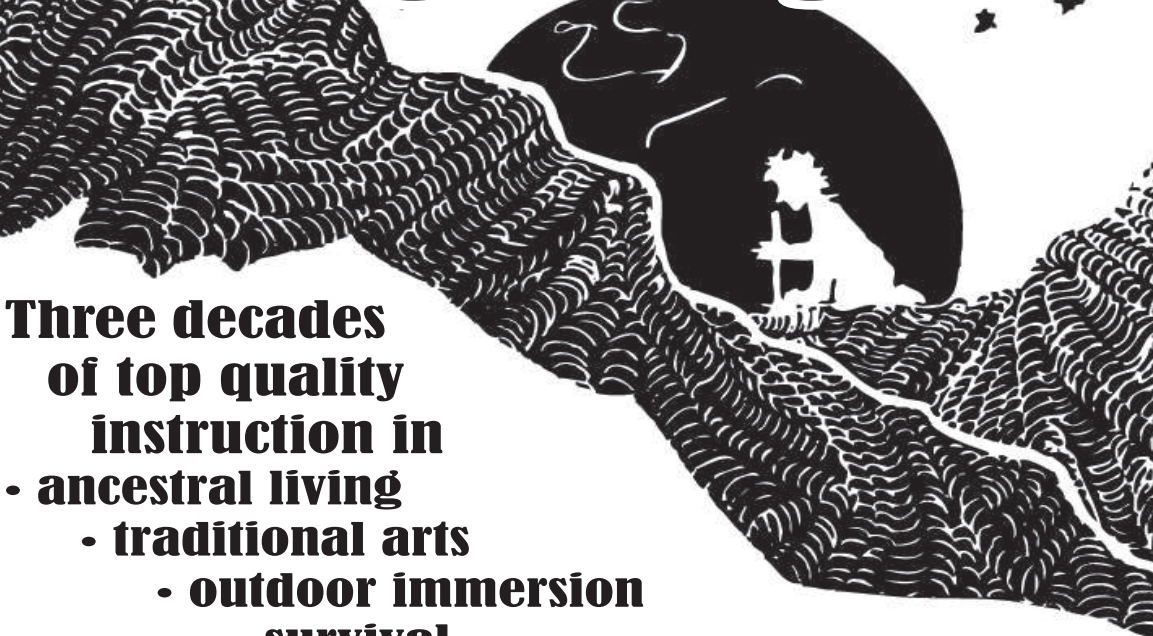
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# Final 2020 Census Mailings to Arrive This Month

*Respond online, by phone or mail*

**ALAMOSA** - Households in the San Luis Valley that received a 2020 Census invitation in the mail and have yet to respond should expect a paper questionnaire in the mail by April 30. Those households can still respond online, by telephone, or they can return the questionnaire by mail in the enclosed envelope.

The rate of households in the San Luis Valley to respond to the 2020 Census is far below Colorado's response rate of 54.5 percent, and the national rate of 50.7 percent. Colorado has the 11<sup>th</sup> highest response rate in the country.

As of April 19, no county in the San Luis Valley had a response rate above 50 percent. Alamosa County had the highest response rate at 43.7 percent. Next was Rio Grande County with 38.3 percent, followed by Conejos County, 19 percent; Saguache County, 15.4 percent; Mineral County, 15 percent; and Costilla County, 8.7 percent.

It has never been easier to respond to the 2020 Census. San Luis Valley households are encouraged to respond on their

own as soon as possible – as the U.S. Census Bureau notes “all without having to meet a census taker.” Residents are able to respond online at [www.my2020census.gov](http://www.my2020census.gov), or by phone at 1 (844) 330-2020. Responses can also be done by simply returning a census questionnaire in the mail.

The 2020 Census is a short questionnaire of 10 questions about who lives in a household as of April 1, 2020. Data from the census is used to determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, and how billions of dollars in federal funding is distributed to states and communities across the country for the next decade. Individual responses to the census are confidential and protected by law.

Households that have not responded should expect to receive a final reminder invitation (postcard) in the mail in early May. The Census Bureau is taking steps to reactivate field data collection operations after June 1, 2020, after when, census takers will be sent to visit households that have not yet responded to the 2020 Census to help them complete questionnaires.

The deadline to respond to the 2020 Census is Aug. 13, 2020.

# San Luis Valley ‘Acequia Initiative’ Projects Receive National Funding

**COLORADO** - Colorado Open Lands (COL) announced April 16 that its Acequia Initiative Phase II has been awarded \$1,948,052 in funding from the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The money will advance the permanent conservation of privately owned farm and ranchland along the Rio Culebra River in Costilla County, as well as providing targeted Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds specifically allotted for use across 29 states through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Partners are making nearly \$300 million in contributions.

“I’m excited to announce the first RCPP awards under the 2018 Farm Bill,” said NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr. “Through collaboration and aligning our resources toward a common goal, we’re making an impact for natural resource conservation that could never have been realized on our own.”

The NRCS Award came through the agency’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. In this funding round, NRCS is investing \$206 million in 48 partner-driven conservation projects

across 29 states through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Partners are making nearly \$300 million in contributions. “I’m excited to announce the first RCPP awards under the 2018 Farm Bill,” said NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr. “Through collaboration and aligning our resources toward a common goal, we’re making an impact for natural resource conservation that could never have been realized on our own.”

The Acequia Initiative aims to strategically protect private land irrigated by acequias – shared irrigation canals and ditches – along the Culebra watershed. The acequias often represent the oldest water rights in Colorado, and their protection is critical to preserving our heritage and way of life in the San Luis Valley. Communal water use is critical in the area – without these historic water-sharing agreements, the region’s

agricultural way of life would not be possible. Many acequia properties have been in the same families since the mid-1800s, and the acequias form the agricultural, social, and ecological foundation of the communities. In Phase II of the Initiative, Colorado Open Lands is able to expand the Initiative to include more landowners, conserving even more land and water rights.

The land included in this conservation initiative also features several miles of Culebra Creek, providing important habitat to several sensitive species including the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, and Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. The properties lie at a narrow point in the Culebra floodplain, funneling wildlife onto the lands.



## POLICY

Continued from Page 1

facilities performing these procedures must establish a plan to reduce or stop voluntary or elective surgeries and procedures if there is a surge of COVID-19 infections in the county or municipality in which they are located. CDPHE will determine the conditions that constitute a surge.

Earlier this week, Gov. Polis announced the New Normal Advisory Board. The Board will advise

the Governor and CDPHE on coordinating and harmonizing policies and rules designed to maximize social distancing during the Safer at Home phase. The Board shall focus particularly on how local jurisdictions and local public health agencies can coordinate with the State on public education efforts that aim to maximize compliance and enforcement efforts for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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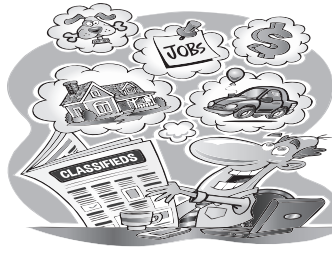
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### 05 Notices

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**Elementary Teacher needed at Del Norte Elementary School for the 2020/2021 school year.** We are seeking a hardworking and enthusiastic teaching professional to join our dynamic, vibrant and fun-loving team. Please submit your application, resume and cover letter to: Amy Duda, Principal, at [aduda@urtigers.co](mailto:aduda@urtigers.co) or contact Amy at 719-657-4030. Applications can be retrieved online at: [dncsd.org](http://dncsd.org)(05/13)

**The Upper Rio Grande (previously Del Norte) School District is seeking applications for a Jr/Sr High School Principal for the 2020/2021 school year.** Applicants must hold a current Colorado Principal license. Previous experience as a Principal or Asst. Principal is preferred. Applications may be obtained online at [www.dncsd.org](http://www.dncsd.org). Please submit your application, resume, and cover letter to: Chris Burr, Superintendent, [cburr@urtigers.co](mailto:cburr@urtigers.co), 719-657-4040. (4/29)

**Rio Grande Savings & Loan is seeking a Mortgage and Consumer Loan Officer to join our team in the Monte Vista office.** The Loan Officer is responsible for promotion of RGSLA products and services, including, but not limited to home purchase loans, home refinances, con-

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### 17 Real Estate For Sale

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3				1	5		7	8	
	1					4			
9							2		
	7	3			2				
5	8				1			7	9
	4				8	9		3	
				6					
		7							1

Level: Advanced

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Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

### Solution to last week's puzzle

	P	B	S		D	A	B		E	S	C						
	O	A	T		E	R			N	T	H						
T	H	O	L	E		B	A	I		T	R	I	P	E			
S	O	L	A	R	I	A			D	R	E	A	D	E	D		
K	E	E	N	E	S	T			G	A	B	F	E	S	T		
P	A	R	E	S	E	S			S	E	E	D	B	E	D		
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# Sit... Stay... at Home: Pet-friendly quarantine activities

Social distancing has created a new sense of normal for many of us, including our pets. Dogs are probably excited that we are staying in our slippers all day, while some cats may be less than enthusiastic that we're disturbing their outrageously long naps. Though social distancing presents some benefits, many may be finding the abundance of free time to be challenging. Courtney Markley, a veterinary student ambassador at the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, offers some ideas to change up the monotony of the day.

"Pet owners can introduce new activities in their normal daily schedule to help pets adjust to all of these changes," Markley said. "Pets will still expect an early breakfast and may need time to relax alone, either in their crate or a room by themselves, if they're not used to constant excitement during the day."

When your pets are ready to come out and play, Markley recommends some shelter-in-place-friendly activities that can occupy both pet and owner.

"Owners of a feisty feline probably already know cats frequently enjoy the package a store-bought toy comes in more than the actual toy, which is great news now that we're staying home," she said.

Along these lines, a few budget-friendly ideas to spice up your cat's day can include:

- Cutting little holes in cardboard toilet paper rolls or adding some fringe along the edges before tossing it on the floor. Children can even deco-

## FOREST

Continued from Page 1

to wooded areas plentiful with small streams, large meadows and picnic areas, though some may be closed due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements.

There is still some snow to contend with in the high country but it is mostly gone in lower elevations. Right now is a great time to go out and see early spring flowers including small daisies, bluebells and some cactuses are just now beginning to bloom.

Trees are beginning to bud, turning a soft green near the edges of their branches and these offer a great opportunity to see spring in its finest form. Chipmunks, ground squirrels, small mice and a series of springtime birds like Rocky Mountain Bluebirds can be seen throughout the area and only add to the beauty of the landscape.

Another place that can be fun for the entire family is the Penitente Canyons located northeast of Del Norte. The rolling landscape is covered in large, rounded boulders and has several easy walking trails that can be enjoyed. This area offers a different view as it is mostly desert landscape and anyone hiking in the area needs to be cautious of Rattle Snakes. It is always a good practice to know the wildlife of an area before heading out to hike.

The canyon is located on County Road G and is a great place to go for a hike or technical rock climbing if that is your thing. I for one love the overlying landscape that is covered in Pinion and Juniper Trees, blooming cactuses and views that stretch far and wide to the Sand dunes.

There is plenty to see throughout the Valley while continuing to practice social distancing and complying with all state and county regulations. Grab a camera, your phone and head out to enjoy some springtime sunshine!

rate them with non-toxic markers.

- Cutting a cat-sized hole in the side of a box or covering an open box with a T-shirt so that the neck hole creates a "door" to give the cat a place to hide. Cutting multiple holes of various sizes creates opportunities for sneak-attacks during playtime!

- Using laser pointers can be fun for cats to burn some energy. Always give them a treat at the end of the game to make their "hunt" successful. If not, they may become frustrated.

- Tying wine corks (boiled for sanitation) to a string, adding some feathers, or just tossing it to your cat can also make a good toy.

Dogs can get in on the fun, too, Markley says, noting that the free time many people have found in quarantine is perfect to brush up on their training.

"There is a wealth of dog training information available online; positive reinforcement training is a great place to begin your search," she said.

If the usual activities like fetch, walks, and training begin to get old, Markley recommends trying the following ideas:

- Creating rope/tug toys out of a cut-up T-shirt (or old fleece jacket if you need a stronger toy). Simply cut three strands of fabric of decent length, then tie them in a knot at one end, braid the strands just like you braid hair, and finish it with a knot before play time begins.

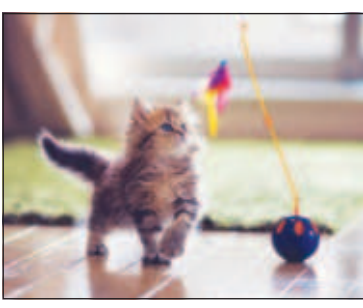
- Blowing some bubbles! Dogs enjoy bubbles just as much as children, so this idea is a double-win.

- Playing a game of hide-and-seek. Either tell the dog to stay and go hide somewhere before calling them, or send the children to go hide somewhere with a squeaky toy while you help Fido count to 10. Once everyone is in position, call your dog's name or squeak the toy to help them find you.

- Practicing "nose work." Put a few treats in a muffin tin and cover them with tennis balls. Dogs will have to use their noses to determine which

tennis balls are covering treats and then figure out how to remove the tennis ball.

- Offering self-entertainment. Some toys can be filled with store-bought treats or snacks from the fridge if your pooch needs to entertain themselves for a while. Freezing the toy before you give it to them can increase the time it takes to get all of the snacks out.



When filling toys with treats, it is important to stay away from toxic foods like raisins and other dried fruits, onions, garlic, chocolate, fatty foods, and foods that contain an artificial sweetener called Xylitol, which is sometimes found in peanut butter.

"Fruits and veggies make great snacks for dogs and even your cat, if they're an adventurous eater," Markley said. "My go-to treat recipe includes peanut butter or nonfat plain

yogurt, kibble, and a fruit like frozen blueberries or bananas."

If you choose to give some extra snacks, especially peanut butter, remember to decrease the amount of kibble your pet receives for breakfast or dinner, so they don't consume extra calories.

When making homemade toys, Markley points out a few potential hazards pet owners should avoid.

"Some dogs love water bottles, but the cap and any plastic pieces they chew up can become choking hazards, so stay away from those," she said. "When making toys for cats, be careful using string because they might try to eat that, too."

Quarantine has many of us chasing our own tails. Though current circumstances may be stressful, pet owners can use this time to reconnect with their furry friends and make the best of their time at home.

*Pet Talk is a service of the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Texas A&M University.*

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# Shed antler hunting opens May 1

**COLORADO** - Because of the increasing popularity of antler hunting, Colorado Parks and Wildlife has enacted a regulation that prohibits antler and horn collection from Jan. 1 to April 30.

The regulation, in effect on public lands west of Interstate 25, intends to protect wintering deer and elk. It takes effect on March 2, and violators face a fine of \$68.

Deer, elk and moose shed their antlers in winter, but when collectors search for them in winter, it puts stress on the animals, said Joe Lewandowski, a spokesman for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

“The ban was enacted to protect deer and elk from disturbance during the winter when they are weakest and most vulnerable,” he said. “Fleeing from humans adds stress, leads to injury or mortality and can cause weaker newborns.”

In addition, to further protect the Gunnison sage grouse, the new regulations include a time-of-day closure in the Gunnison Basin May 1-15 from sunset to 10 a.m.

A permit is not required to collect shed antlers in Colorado.

Although shed collection is not a new activity in the state, its popularity has rapidly increased in the past 10 years, prompting the Parks and Wildlife Commission to enact the winter ban during its Jan. 11 meeting.

“Once considered a recreational activity for families, or a source for a unique medium for artisans, shed collection is now a major business,” according to a CPW press release.

Freshly shed elk antlers with their brown hue are more desirable and go for \$13 to \$15 per pound. Freshly shed deer antlers go for \$8 to \$10 per pound. Older, sun-bleached antlers and horns sell for about half as much.

They are used for wall displays, and to make folk art, chandeliers, furniture, coat racks and knife handles.

Ten years ago, casual collectors, usually hunters, visited winter range areas to look for freshly shed antlers, hopefully finding a matching pair that can be mounted on a wall.

But wildlife officers are seeing a more aggressive approach in the past few years, said Matt Thorpe, area wildlife area manager for Southwest Colorado.

He cites reports of people illegally chasing deer and elk into the trees so they will knock their antlers off. Sometimes ATVs and snowmobiles are used for the chase. An illegal trap involving bait and chicken wire has also been seen.

“The wire catches the antler and pulls them off,” Thorpe said. “It is all illegal harassment of wildlife.”

The Parks and Wildlife commission was also concerned about the grid-search tactic used by collectors, which puts them in elk and deer winter habitat longer.

The Gunnison area has long had

a antler-collection closure between Jan. 1 and March 14 to protect a large winter range depended on by deer and elk.

Randy Clark, owner of Traders Rendezvous, depends on antler collecting for part of his business. He and other local collectors have respected the Gunnison seasonal ban, but he fears the larger area of the new closure will be hard to enforce.

“What’ll happen is more people breaking the rules to get to the fresh antlers,” he said.

Clark said the new regulation unfairly singles out shed hunters.

“Hikers with their dogs and horseback riders can still go to those areas in winter, and that disturbs the elk and deer also,” he says.

Clark and other collectors would like to see more flexibility in the rule, such as opening up the shed antler season early during light winters such as this year when deer and elk are less vulnerable.

Competition for shed antlers is picking up. Gunnison is used to seeing vehicles lining up along roads in the days before the seasonal ban is lifted. Now that will

be happening everywhere west of I-25 beginning May 1.

“The first year, we are working to inform the public of the new regulation and reaching out to shed antler hunters about it,” Lewandowski said. “Information and public responses will be gathered and reported back to the wildlife commission.”

Hikers or others traveling in an area closed to shed antler hunting are advised to not pick up antlers or horns, because it is difficult for a CPW officer to differentiate between them and someone who entered the area for the purpose of shed collecting.

When Utah enacted a shed antler closure in 2017, Nevada reported an uptick in antler collection.

But this winter, the Utah Division of Wildlife dropped its winter closure on antler collection. However to collect between Feb. 1 and April 15, Utahans must take a free online Antler Gathering Ethics course. Now that Colorado has a winter closure, observers wonder if Utah will see increased pressure as collectors here go across the border for antlers.



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# Spring turkey season open until May 31

**COLORADO** – The San Luis Valley has both Rio Grande and Merriam turkeys. In the San Luis Valley, Game Management Units 80 and 81 are limited draw only units but all the other units offer over-the-counter tags.

Named in honor of the first chief of the U.S. Biological Service, C. Hart Merriam, the Merriam's wild turkey is primarily found in the higher elevations of Colorado, along the higher foothills and west of I-25. The distribution map shows the general range of the Merriam's in green. If you were to overlay this distribution on a topographical map of the state, you will quickly discover the home of the Merriam's in Colorado is in the higher elevations in the conifer and aspen parks of the Rocky Mountains and the higher elevations of the Western Slope. The variety of habitat which exists for Merriam's in Colorado makes considerations of how to hunt them a critical piece of the equation. This article speaks to some of the habitat considerations but finding the birds on the east side of the Continental Divide will be a bit different than those who call the Western Slope home.

Merriam's are most clearly distinguished from their Rio Grande cousins by their pure white tail margins and the nearly white feathers on their lower back. The Merriam's adult male beard is generally not as full or long as the Rio Grande and their spurs are generally shorter due to the constant wear from the rocky ledges and trails they travel in the mountains and foothills. Merriam's will migrate from the lower elevations of the foothills where they spend the winter to the higher elevations in summer where they will breed and nest. The travel to breeding and nesting grounds for Merriam's typically guides the spring turkey hunter with respect to where to scout and where the calling game gets started.

## Scouting for Merriam's

As with all turkey hunting, finding the birds is the first real challenge. As the weather warms and the snow melts to reveal the grasses and forbs of the mountain meadows, the birds will begin to move up the slopes to breeding and nesting areas. Until the snow depths allow the birds to begin this movement, they will remain in the lower elevations and depending on the spring snows, may begin the breeding cycle in the foothills. There is no exact science to determining where the birds will be, but understanding their need for food, water and shelter will help guide your scouting trips. Look at a map and find the meadows which will yield bugs and forbs, consider the snow line and the depth of the snow, then get out your hiking boots and binoculars to cover a lot of ground before the hunting season begins. For those who hunt the Rockies for elk and deer, hunting Spring Merriam's can seem very familiar to those early fall scouting trips. A good place to start is to find water sources and travel corridors. Roost sites in the foothills may be cottonwood stands but as the spring warms, the roost sites may turn to conifer and open stands. Preseason scouting will require covering a lot of territory, both by vehicle and on foot. Driving to high vantage points and glassing the bottoms, open ridges and meadows will help you locate birds. Walking the passable US Forest Service roads and trails will help you find tracks, dropping and feathers to indicate the presences of birds. But remember this "spot and stalk" technique of preseason scouting will help you know where the birds are today, they may not be in the same location or altitude in a couple of weeks as the snow retreats up the mountain.

Finally, do not be in a hurry to hit the mountains the opening day of turkey season if you are looking for Merriam's. Generally, the spring turkey season arrives in Colorado in mid-April and the spring weather will dictate much of the hunter's success. March snows can come in significant volume and force the birds to remain at lower elevations and in their typical winter flocks until late in the month of April or early May. Many seasoned Colorado turkey hunters look to chase Rio gobblers in April if they can draw a limited license and head to the hills the last three weeks of the spring season to find a Merriam's gobbler who is on the prowl for new lady friends.

## Gearing Up

Turkey hunting gear for Merriam's may sound very similar to the gear used to hunt the Eastern and Rio Grande subspecies. The calls, camouflage and decoys are similar and they are used in a similar manner, but when you think of Merriam's, you need to think mobile and big country.

When hunting Rios or Easterns, I typically hunt using a turkey vest; I have a pocket in it for everything and can carry a great deal of gear in one. But a daypack with a foam seat hooked to it is a better idea when I head to the mountains. I can still carry all my gear in it; stuff several folding decoys and a full body decoy in the pack and even have room for lunch, snacks, a small backpack stove for a cup of coffee and other items to make a long day in the field more pleasurable.

My choice in calls changes as well. I use a mouth diaphragm and slate call most of the time when I am hunting the flat ground birds, but big country and wind makes using a loud box call or friction call a necessity when working high country birds. I still keep a call in my mouth but it is there for that last 150 yards of confidence calling, not for the early part of the game. While I am talking about calls, now is a proper time to mention patience. While one of the fundamental skills we all learn about hunting spring turkeys, patience to a Merriam's hunter is a true virtue. Remember that even if a bird responds to your call, he may be a mile away and have to cross a valley, ridge or even a canyon to get to you. That will take time. Listen, work with the bird if he continues to gobble, but also realize that Merriam's are not as vocal as the other subspecies and the tom may be coming to you without

much of a discussion. Be patient, listen and look.

From a bit of research and personal experience, I find Merriam's toms to be a bit more aggressive than Easterns or Rios. Decoys can be the difference between a successful harvest and just a good conversation with a tom. But there again, if you are planning to walk a few miles to locate your birds, you may need to choose the right decoys by weight and by "attractiveness" to the responding bird. A strutting Jake decoy with a couple of feeding or breeding posture hens can be the right balance between weight and visibility. A visible tail fan and some aggressive hen clucks may be the right ticket to send your gobbler into a sprint to your decoy spread to defend his territory or steal a new girlfriend for his flock.

Finally, consider some changes to other "turkey gear" as well. I trade good hiking boots for the typical waterproof rubber boots I use for hunting the riparian areas of Rios and low marsh zones of Eastern wild turkey. A pair of knee pads and elbow pads will help soften the rocks that always seem to be present at the exact spot I decide to kneel down. A good GPS and map will help mark the locations of roost sites, dusting fields and find-

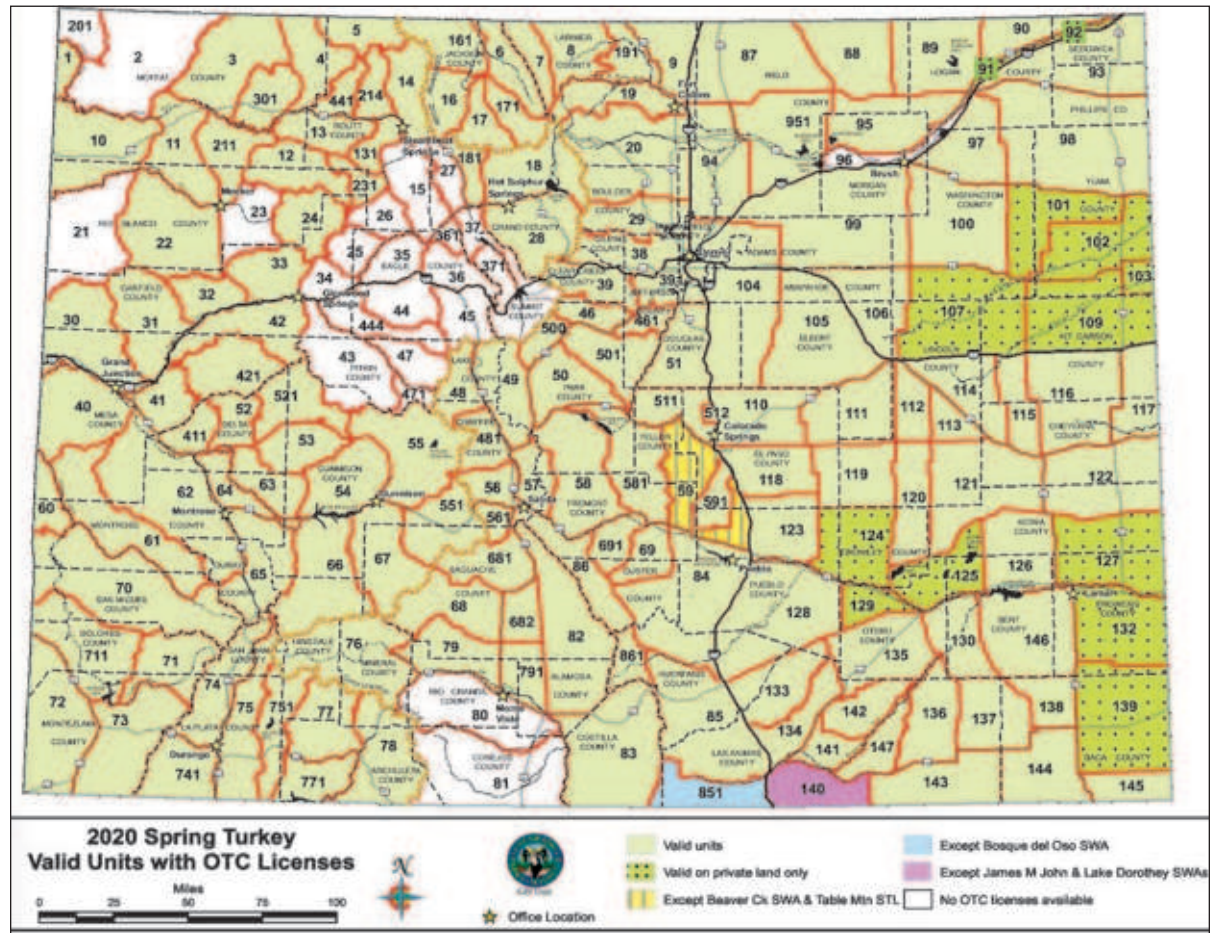


ing the way back to the truck in the dark. Extra socks, a change of undershirts and a windproof jacket will help take the damp chill off the day or add some warmth as the sun sets.

## Heading to Roost

I looked for some additional articles about hunting our Colorado Merriam's both in text print and on-line and found little which specifically talked about the subject. If you look for information on hunting wild turkey, you

will find most of the information concerns hunting Eastern or Rio Grande turkeys. The basics such as finding birds, using camouflage and being still remain the same. BUT, I believe the challenges of scouting, learning to call in high winds, decoy sets and mobile hunting techniques makes this "bird of a different feather" a most worthy opponent for the hunter. Read the articles, look at the map, remember safety, and good luck in the woods this spring. It will be Remarkable!



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# Spring Agriculture in the San Luis Valley

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# Home gardens taking root due to COVID-19

By REBECCA COPLEY

**SANLUISVALLEY**—Vegetable seeds are quickly becoming the new shortage due to COVID-19. The high demands for seeds, and gardening materials are stemming from more and more Americans planting their own gardens this year. Even local stores have seen the rise in demand with MV Coop, Tractor Supply, Big R, and others reporting higher sales in their gardening supplies compared to last year. Some people are also purchasing more livestock. The Monte Vista Coop shared that they sold out of their chickens, ducks, and geese in only four hours this year.

Many are fearful that there will be food shortages due to the coronavirus pandemic and are looking for ways to become more self-sufficient. One Valley resident sharing that she will be planting a garden this year so her family won't be so dependent on grocery stores saying, "When you see those bare shelves in the grocery store, you kind of worry."

Some report that farms all over the world have had trouble getting labor to harvest their crops due to border closures and domestic lock-downs. Without a workforce to harvest the ripening plants the produce will be left rotting

in fields. Many farms are also taking hits financially due to the closures of restaurants and schools. Grocery hoarders have also been contributing to shortages by buying far more than they can eat before it expires.

As many Americans look into growing their own food some will be doing so for the first time. There are tons of helpful tips out there to ensure that your plants thrive. One important tip is to do your research and make sure what you plant will be able to grow in your climate. For colder climates like the San Luis Valley you may have to start your plants inside a month or two before it's warm enough for them to be put in the ground. Make sure to check the instructions on your seed package and see how long it will take the plant to mature and if it will have time with your climate's growing season. If you've run out of time to plant them inside you can try purchasing some plants that have been started in a greenhouse.

Perhaps you are someone who doesn't have the space for a huge garden. Some people may only have a deck or patio but there are plenty of vegetables that will flourish in pots on your porch or can be grown vertically. Leaf lettuce, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, peas, and herbs are perfect



for your porch garden. And if you are looking for a highly prolific plant, zucchini is always a great choice.

Another option for those without garden space is to get involved with a local community garden. The Jessie May Olson Community Garden in Monte Vista is getting ready for their growing season

this year. They are trying to make sure that proper social distancing guidelines are practiced. If you would like more information on how you can get involved with the garden you can visit their Facebook page by Googling "Jessie May Olson Community Garden, of Monte Vista Colorado."

Many are already comparing the

boom in home gardens to the war gardens and victory gardens planted during the World Wars. During these times Americans were able to become more self-reliant and help each other get through some bleak periods]. Today during this global pandemic it is encouraging to see that this same spirit of making do is still alive and well. Americans proving we can roll up our sleeves and get through this together.

## Why do we want to create the Colorado Soil Health Program?

**COLORADO** - Natural Resources Conservation Service, healthy soil high in organic matter can hold six times its weight in water. As drought and climate variability throw us more curveballs, agriculture must be able to adapt to those changes. Multiple years of applied soil health practices helps to improve water use efficiency and resilience to extreme weather events.

Improving soil health is a risk-management tool that not only helps producers improve their bottom line, but also helps strategically position farmers and ranchers to participate in nutrient trading, ecosystem services markets, and other private methods to capture market opportunities for conservation. With drier conditions becoming the new "normal" in Colorado, it is more important than ever to help producers increase their resilience to drier conditions. Practices such as no-till and reduced till, cover cropping, crop rotation, continuous cropping, managed livestock grazing, and the addition of mulch, biochar, and compost can all help improve soil health.

Consumer preferences are changing and many companies are sourcing food that is grown through recognized sustainable practices. New markets around ecosystem services are also emerging. CDA is committed to helping Colorado producers take advantage of these and other market trends. Creating a framework that supports producers' ability to capitalize on market-based solutions that coincide with soil health practices is one of the top priorities of the soil health program. Many soil health practices have been linked with reduced input costs, increased drought resilience, and better pest resistance by providing habitat for beneficial organisms. Improved surface water infiltration reduces sedimentation in water storage structures, and shaded soil stays cooler, reducing evaporation. Finally, soil health practices can

improve a producer's bottom-line while advancing both production and conservation.

With Colorado's growing population and increasing demands on limited water resources, it is important to encourage practices that improve soil health and benefit water quality. In some cases, soil health improvements have actually decreased crop irrigation requirements and increased crop production over time.

To maximize the capacity of this program, CDA will work with partners such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado State University, and local Conservation Districts to assist with researching, creating and implement-

ing the program. CDA is requesting \$166,491 from the General Fund which includes funding for a full-time employee. The funding request was included in Governor Polis' budget request for fiscal year 20/21. The total request

includes monies for soil health initiative grants and technical assistance through the program. At this time, CDA plans to proceed with developing the program under existing statutory authority. If it is determined that legislation is needed to implement additional elements of the program, legislation may be sought in future years. Farmers, ranchers, service providers and others are meeting across the state to

help CDA build out this important program. Groups such as the Colorado Collaborative for Healthy Soils, which includes farmer and rancher organizations and members of the Ag Council, have been providing their input. The Colorado State Conservation Board voted in support of the department moving forward with soil health work. We are building a broad coalition to ensure this effort remains farmer- and rancher-led and will lean on this growing coalition in anticipation of bringing this concept to the legislature.

Please contact Cindy Lair (info below) for more information about how to engage with the stakeholder process.

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# Green Acre Hemp Farm stays steady

By LYNDIE FERRELL

**SAN LUIS VALLEY** — With plans to begin planting April 27, Jim and Lisa Strang, owners of Green Acres Hemp Farm are happy to report that their business is surviving the impacts of COVID-19 and the future is looking bright. “We were a little concerned when the virus first hit. Our sales dropped to almost nothing the first week of the economic shutdown, which was a first for us. But as soon as people settled down, orders began to come in and we are holding steady for now,” said Jim Strang.

The farm has been producing locally grown hemp for six years and business is continuing on as normal for the family owned company. “We are getting the field ready to plant 2 acres of hemp this year which is pretty much the perfect amount. Last season, a lot of new growers out there tried to grow these massive crops and found out that the market for hemp just couldn’t support mass production at this point. You really do not want to

plant more than what you can dispose of right now.”

“We saw a lot of people selling fake product over the last year and people looking to buy hemp were having to weed through the sellers to find those who know the industry as well as we do. We were recently contacted by the Better Business Bureau and were awarded the A+ rating. It was a huge thing for us after being in business for so long. Our clients were calling the BBB to give positive feedback and it paid off. It is so important to know where your product comes from. I say it all the time and I will say it again; know your grower.”

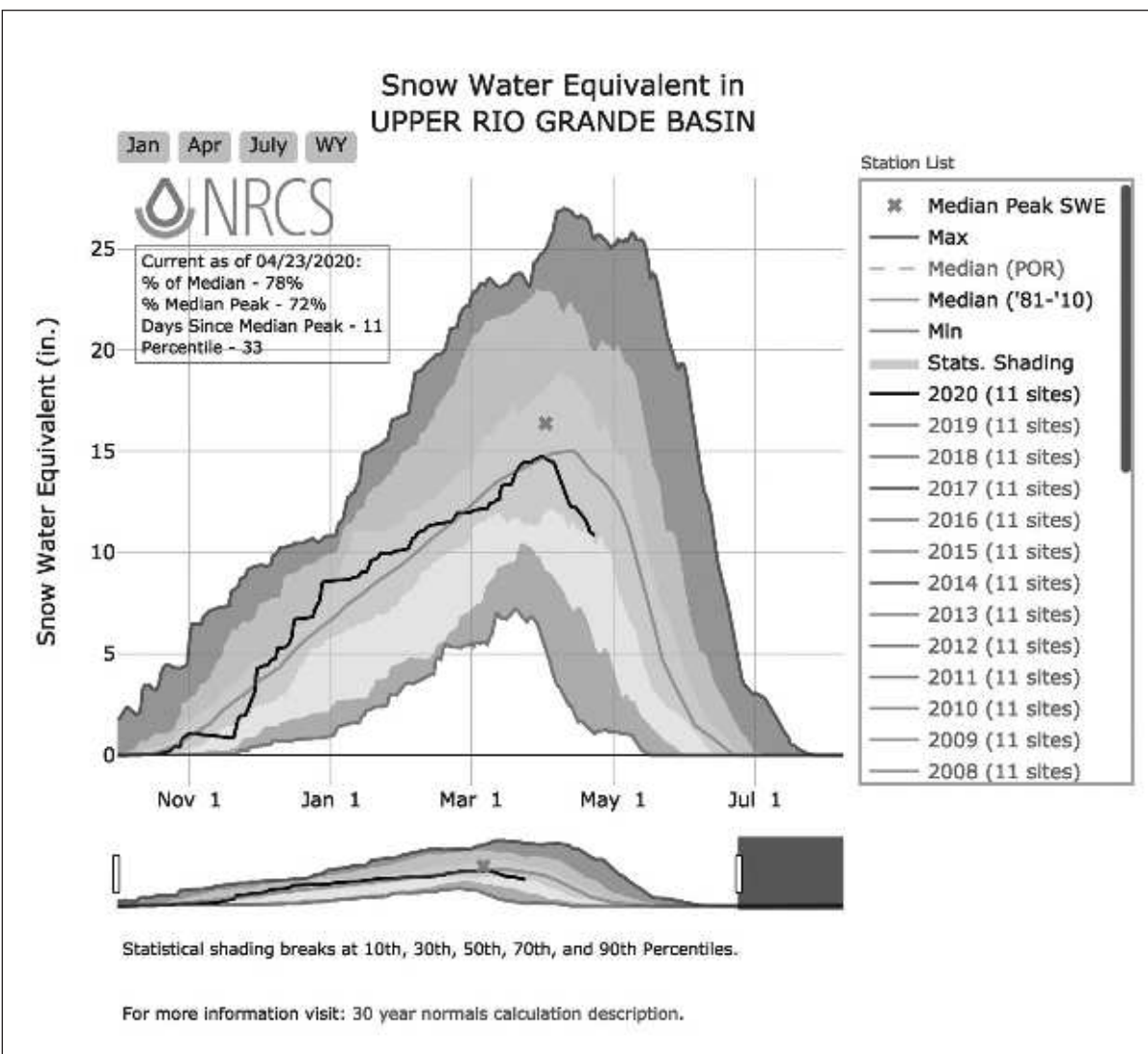
Strang is planning to stick with his T1 cross bred product for the coming year. “We will stick with our T1. We have been receiving calls from companies selling seeds and clones and it’s easy to see that the market is being overwhelmed. The variety of options is drowning the market.”

Strang is also waiting to hear

whether or not the local farmer markets will be allowed to take place this summer but isn’t too worried about it affecting business this year as it once might have. “People will be so excited to get out and travel that farmer markets should do amazing this summer if we can have them, but our online business is running steady right now, so we are not too concerned.”

Some communities are launching virtual farmer markets where vendors can list locally sourced products and offer them to the public through an online database. One of the first virtual farmer markets launched about three weeks ago in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

For now, Strang plans to focus on growing this season’s crop and will continue to offer products to those in need with no plan to change anything. “we have clients across the U.S. coming to us for CBDs and we will continue to do what we do best; help those who need it.”



# Local agricultural industry moves forward regardless of COVID-19

By LYNDIE FERRELL

**SAN LUIS VALLEY**- Farmers across the Valley continue to work through the current crisis and most are doing so without blinking an eye. “We get up and get our work done just like any other day. You have to feed the cows and sheep and you have to plant your crops. Nothing has really changed with everything else that is going on,” said local farmer and rancher Dick Ramstettler out of Center.

The Valley’s agricultural industry is, for the time being, stronger than ever even though it is too early in the season to predict how the rest of the year will go, especially considering how fast things change when it comes to COVID-19. Local agricultural farmers and ranchers are persevering as they have for hundreds of years, working the fields, planting their crops and moving on with life.

Rio Grande Commissioner Chair-

man John Noffske had pretty much the same thing to say in regard to his ranch. “We are moving right along. Not much has really changed. We have had no issues getting feed or seed and commerce seems to be holding steady.”

Social distancing is not a problem for most people in this industry as they typically work from vehicles and large farm equipment while completing their daily tasks. Weather has been decent for the planting season, though many commented on the lack of precipitation this spring with hopes that more moisture will come before it starts to get hot.

According to reports the cooler weather has caused a late spring runoff in the higher elevations and the Rio Grande is running about 400 CFS below average and that is far below what was recorded during last season.

In addition to the agricultural in-

dustry’s ranchers and farmers in the Valley the migrant worker program is looking at the COVID-19 situation in an entirely new light. In recent news, President Donald Trump signed an executive order limiting immigrant travel to the United States for the next two months, which will be reevaluated after that period of time. Though the executive order does allow for temporary work Visas to be filed for agricultural workers in the U.S..

Several local ranches and farms hire migrant workers to come in and assist with planting as well as harvest and were struggling with low numbers before the COVID-19 situation even started. Local migrant worker program volunteer Karen Miller stated that as of right now, the local migrant worker programs will be put on hold at least until fall unless something else changes. “We are not preparing hygiene kits right now and may not do so until this fall.”

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# Extreme distancing



By Trey Spaulding

A lone farmer prepares his fields for spring crops north of Del Norte. Agriculture is considered a critical workplace and exempt from Governor Polis' stay at home order.

## Alfalfa, barley and potatoes are off to an early start

By LYNDISIE FERRELL

**SAN LUIS VALLEY-** According to reports coming from Crop Consultant Maya ter-Kulie Miller, crops around the Valley are off to an early start. Though most farmers are out working their fields at this time, predictions for the year point toward steady markets and healthy crops. Ter-Kulie Miller stated that Alfalfa crops are just now beginning to grow and that market prices have not varied much in recent years.


Ter-Kulie Miller also explained that growers will have to cut the volume of crops this year and will most likely have to decide to control them. "Alfalfa is hard to move right now, especially with dairy farmers struggling with lower than average markets and large supplies of product. I am not sure why this is."

According to reports from several news articles, dairy farmers are struggling with too much product due to the closures of restaurants and schools across the nation. In one article by The Associated Press, milk and dairy prices have plummeted for the first time since 1939 when dairy farmers across the nation dumped milk on the side of the road in order to deplete volume and protest the low price markets during that time.

"While overall demand has climbed, with appetites for items like cheese and milk growing, consumers continue to drink less milk. That trend is adding to the oversupply pain. According to Dean Foods, since 1975, annual fluid milk consumption has dropped 11 gallons per person. That's as the U.S. dairy industry continues to pump out more milk. It's that combination that has been lethal to the dairy industry, hitting farmers in the form of suffering milk prices."

Ter-Kulie Miller also stated that Barley in the Valley suffered some frost damage early in the season at the beginning of April. "Some crops were slightly frost damaged last week but it is too early in the season right now to assess the damage completely. Time will tell how bad the damage is, if it is bad at all."

Potato crops in the Valley are already being planted as well and ter-Kulie Miller stated that predictions are for a good year as long as the Valley receives more springtime moisture. "Right now, the water in the Valley is lower than average. We have had a very dry spring and we need more moisture. It is still very early in the season to tell for sure how the rest of the year will go but markets are pretty steady right now."

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# Valley crop outlook for 2020

By TERESA L. BENNS

**SAN LUIS VALLEY** — Potato growers are not the only farmers affected by the mandated shutdowns ordered by state and federal officials to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A survey of local growers indicates all of them have been affected by measures that have been taken to deal with the virus in some way.

We are hoping to have full crews for weeding, thinning and harvest of the iceberg, Romaine lettuce, kale, beets and carrots.

“We could have over 200 people here, at the peak of the season, if all goes well. This is a difficult time for people everywhere, and the most important thing is that everyone is safe and healthy.”



milk, Saguache County farmer Dick Ramstetter says he has no idea what the alfalfa market will be like this year.

“The crop survived the winter and that’s a plus,” he commented. “And we expect to have an average water year.” Alfalfa, once planted, is usually left in the ground for five to seven years.

### Barley

Ramstetter also raises barley for Coors Brewing Company and one other local buyer and says the market looks fair so far. Oats, which he also grows for seed, appear to be a fair



market this year as well, he added.

Barley must meet very strict testing standards to qualify for purchase by Coors. Testing measures include moisture content and protein, and checks for damaged and broken kernels with detections for mold. Barley not meeting these standards is then sold for feed barley, but at a much lower price.

### Wheat

According to Marvin Reynolds, Colorado State University Extension Service agent and director, not a lot of wheat is raised in the San Luis

Valley. Only 2,000 to 3,000 acres of durum or spring wheat is grown in parts of Rio Grande, Saguache and Alamosa counties, with some also grown in rotation years (instead of potatoes) in Conejos and Costilla counties.

Wheat is either just now being planted or is sprouting, he said. The market for wheat this year should be strong, Reynolds estimated, because other crops are in less demand. He noted that overall, however, without schools and restaurants in operation the demand for commodities is “way down.”

### Lettuce

According to its website, “Southern Colorado Farms was founded in 1977 to focus on key specialty crops for regional eastern markets. Major crops grown are lettuce, romaine, organic kale, organic beets and organic carrots,” with Gerber Baby Foods being one of the farm’s biggest organic carrot customers of our organic carrots.

General manager for the farm, Amy Kunugi said in a recent email that, “Acres are not finalized, but in general, acreage is down from 2019, in large part due to COVID-19.

“We are hoping to have adequate labor for the lettuce and vegetables this summer. It remains to be seen how COVID-19 restrictions will affect the labor supply and the industry.

### Carrots

Clinton Kerrick, farm manager for Grimmway Farms in Monte Vista, said growing conditions for carrots are warmer this year than last year. The farm, headquartered in California, plans to plant about 1,200 acres of carrots in the Valley.

This will include 120 acres of organic carrots. The only concern at this moment, he said, is that the wind will blow the tiny carrot seed out of the ground. The plant is following CDC guidelines for production during the Covid-19 outbreak.

### Alfalfa

Given the fact that many farmers may not be able to afford to feed their cows owing to the COVID-19 crisis and are currently dumping



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# State tanks USDA , DOJ and DEA advancing national hemp regulatory framework

The State of Colorado thanks the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) for their efforts to advance the first national industrial hemp (industrial hemp or hemp) regulatory framework in generations and for the opportunity to comment on the IFR. Colorado has operated a robust and highly successful industrial hemp program for the past five years under the regulatory system enabled by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill). As an early mover state in hemp, we understand the pivotal role a workable regulatory structure plays in allowing a new industry to flourish and we appreciate the hard work your staff has undertaken to construct a framework for states to operate their own hemp programs. However, the State of Colorado has identified key issues in the IFR that require significant modification. The State of Colorado therefore submits the following comments to improve the proposed regulatory system

for hemp under the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (the 2018 Farm Bill). In particular, and as the nation's leading hemp-producing state, Colorado has identified the following critical and important IFR improvements that will allow our state and the national hemp industry to expand and thrive:

- Sampling Periods and Coverage;
- Lab Certification Requirements;
- Thresholds for Destruction and Negligence;
- Innovation;
- Disposal Protocols;
- Application Periods;
- Systemic Small/Disadvantaged Farmer Bias; and
- Banking and Insurance.

We understand that establishing a regulatory framework is a difficult task and we appreciate your willingness to consider the alternative approaches to regulating hemp as well as the legal issues set forth in this document. As a background, Colorado was one of the first states to implement a hemp program, which has expanded to over 87,000 registered acres in 2019, with 5,539 unique registrations 2014-2019. We are confident

Colorado can provide a unique and successful perspective on developing a regulatory environment that allows the industry to flourish. To address requirements set forth in the 2018 Farm Bill and the IFR, the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) partnered with leading state, local, and tribal agencies, as well as industry experts in cultivation, testing, research, manufacturing, banking, and marketing to establish a statewide initiative known as the Colorado Hemp Advancement and Management Plan (CHAMP). Through the CHAMP Initiative, about 150 stakeholders gathered for a public meeting on December 10, 2019, to share reactions and comments on the IFR. This meeting included hemp industry representatives, farmers, universities, local and state government agencies, law enforcement, and farming associations. Our comments and recommendations reflect the overarching themes expressed by these Colorado stakeholders. Moreover, our comments aim to make the IFR more

workable, producer-friendly, and better-suited to address the needs of this nascent industry. We have seen the emergence of a robust industrial hemp industry located throughout Colorado, including processing and manufacturing facilities, because our regulatory approach balances strict oversight with sensible economic and market considerations. We are enthusiastic about promoting the economic potential of this newly legal crop in both urban and rural communities. To ensure continued growth, it is critical that the IFR establishes a workable regulatory framework that allows farmers and other stakeholders to succeed. While the IFR provides a starting place for such a regulatory framework, several provisions are unnecessary, burdensome, and may potentially have a devastating impact on the Colorado hemp industry.

Importantly, the IFR does not recognize instability in hemp genetics and significant trait variations, including  $\Delta$ -9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentrations. Despite such

trait variations, the IFR includes rigid requirements for THC compliance, with steep penalties for growing noncompliant hemp, including crop destruction. The negative effects of regulatory incongruence in the IFR disproportionately affect farmers—especially new farmers and smaller farming operations. It is farmers whose investment is at risk, farmers who will be fined, farmers who may be criminally liable, and farmers who will pay the ultimate cost of propelling hemp genetics to stability. Colorado's comments are intended to protect: (1) the significant investment our citizens and businesses have already made in hemp cultivation and laboratory operations; (2) our government and taxpayer investment in a well-serving regulatory system; and (3) our smaller or otherwise disadvantaged hemp farmers who will face additional risks if the IFR is implemented as written. The following comments set forth our key concerns and proposed amendments to the IFR.

## The role of technology in agriculture

Modern industry is driven by technology. Advancements in technology have changed how business is conducted, with some industries undergoing dramatic changes since the dawn of the 21st century.

While agriculture might not be the first industry people think of when reflecting on the changing nature of industry, The National Institute of Food and Agriculture notes that modern farms are vastly different than those from a few decades ago.

Farmers have long relied on technology to make their operations as efficient, productive and profitable as possible. Precision agriculture, which refers to technological advances designed to propel agriculture into the modern, computerized and information-based world, is helping the agricultural sector become more profitable and efficient while also improving safety and making agriculture more eco-friendly. In addition, the NIFA notes that the modern agricultural industry employs technology such as robots, temperature

and moisture sensors, aerial images, and global positioning systems.

If it sounds complicated, that's because it is. For example, modern sensors can detect soil conditions, potentially producing hundreds of readings per second. These sensors help farmers know the best possible time to plant seeds so they can reach

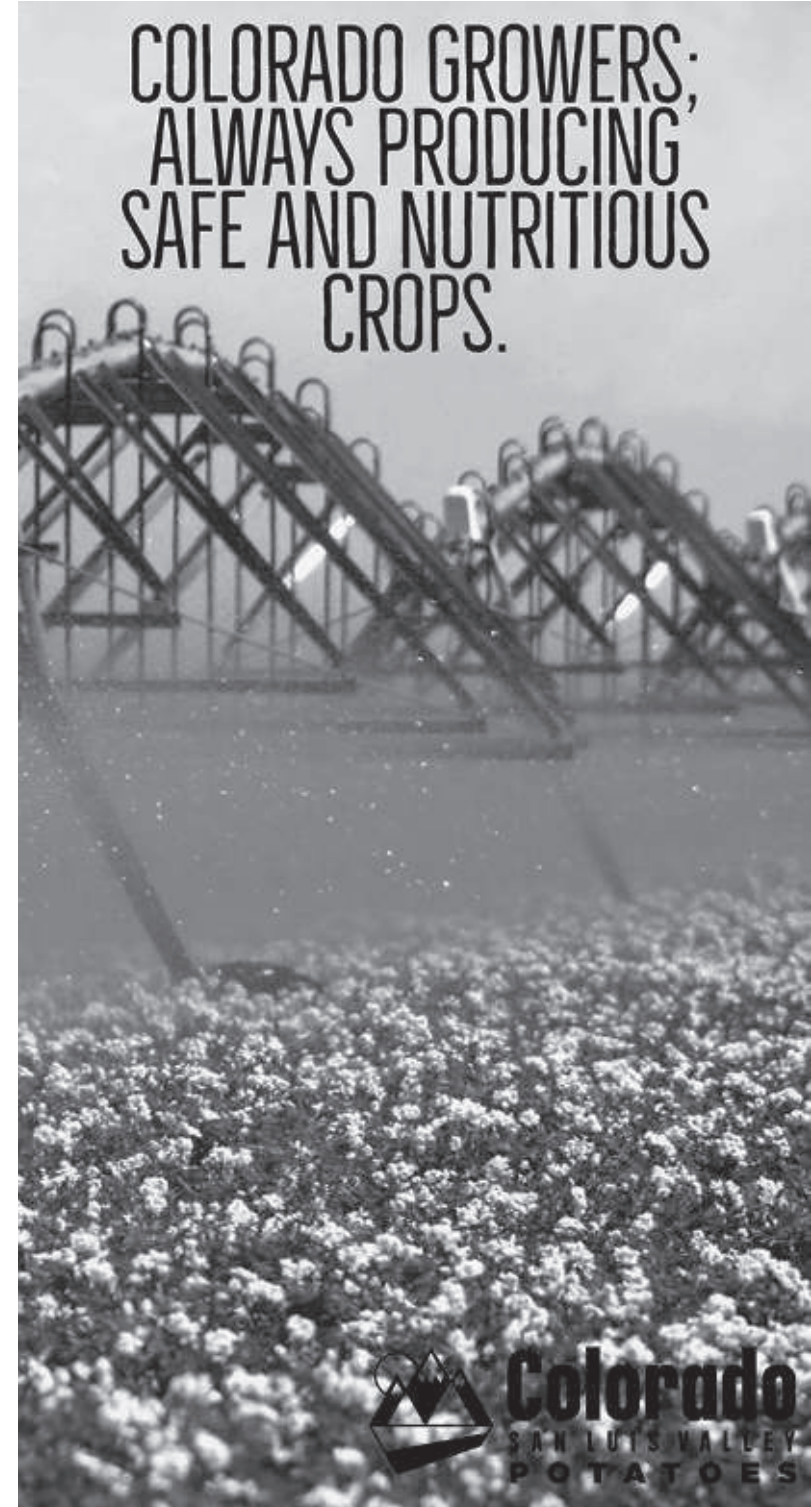
their full potential. That improves both the efficiency of modern farms as well as their output.

The NIFA also notes that agricultural technology has reduced waste. For instance, thanks to agricultural technology, farmers no longer have to apply water, fertilizers and pesticides uniformly across entire fields. Tech-

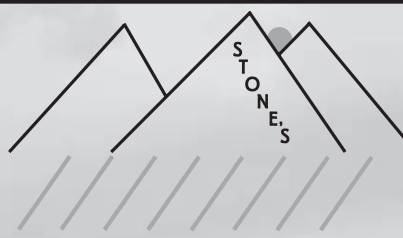
nology has shown that farmers can simply target specific areas or even treat individual plants differently. That saves time and allows farmers to use only minimal quantities of water, fertilizer and pesticides. In addition, according to the NIFA, employing agricultural technology in this fashion leads to higher crop productiv-

ity and reduces runoff of chemicals into rivers and groundwater, thereby reducing the farm's impact on local ecosystems.

Modern farms are technological marvels where various technologies are being employed to produce crops more efficiently and safely than ever before. TF203778



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# CFB sends letter urging usda disaster declaration for western slope fruit growers

COLORADO - Colorado Farm Bureau sent a letter to USDA Secretary Sonny Purdue, urging for a disaster declaration for counties on Colorado's Western Slope facing devastation to fruit crops because of a recent freeze. "While the impact is still being calculated, and real losses might not be known for weeks, initial numbers indicate that 90%, or more, of the fruit crop will be lost for these farmers. This is a loss they couldn't afford in a good year, let alone a year where we are fighting a global health pandemic and a downturn in the economy," wrote Don Shawcroft, Colorado Farm Bureau president, in the letter. Colorado grows approximately 17,000 tons of peaches each year and is worth \$40 million. Temperatures dropped to a record low of 19 degrees on Mon., April 13 devastating tree buds for the fall's fruit crop. A disaster declaration for the area would allow farmers and ranchers to access aid not normally available, helping them weather the storm and hopefully continue operating. "A disaster declaration will also lend itself to the further expansion of other relief programming, such as, but not limited to WHIP Plus. Access to extra support for these farmers could be the tipping point for their businesses helping them survive this difficult time," continued Shawcroft. Evaluation of the total loss in crops continues as farmers monitor their crops in wake of the freeze. As Senators Bennet and Gardner noted in a recent letter to USDA, "Colorado's climate and high elevation contribute to a thriving specialty crop sector that accounts for nearly \$485 million of the state's agriculture revenue." Palisade peaches are one of those specialty crops and a loss to this unique industry will have lasting effects on the local and regional economy.



## How farmers are using drones

The farmers of yesteryear might not be too familiar with their surroundings if they were to visit a modern farm. While the men and women who made their livings as farmers decades ago would no doubt still recognize certain farm features that have withstood the test of time, they might not understand the inner workings of the modern farm, particularly in regard to the role technology now plays within the agricultural sector. Technology has changed agriculture in myriad ways. The methods farmers employ to produce food and improve the efficiency of their operations has changed as technology has evolved. One of the more noticeable changes that's hard to miss on modern farms is the use of agricultural drones. Drones have been around for decades. Sometimes referred to as "unmanned aerial vehicles," or "UAVs," drones can be utilized in ways that

can save farmers money and protect the planet.

- **Monitor crops:** According to senseFly, the commercial drone subsidiary of Parrot Group, drones can help farmers effectively monitor their crops. With a drone flying overhead, farmers can spot and quickly identify issues affecting their crops before those issues escalate into something larger.
- **Soil analysis:** Another potential benefit of agricultural drones highlights their role in analyzing soil. Agricultural drones utilize complex mapping functions to gather data about the soil, including areas where it might be stressed. That enables farmers to develop accurate soil samples that can be used to guide decisions in regard to irrigation and fertilization.
- **Reduce waste:** SenseFly notes that data gathered by drones can help farmers determine the vigor

of their crops at various stages of growth. Such information can prevent overfertilization and overwatering, thereby reducing waste and runoff, benefitting the planet as a result.

- **Planning:** Drones can be used

to collect data on crop growth and health at various times throughout the growing season. That can help farmers develop accurate predictions regarding harvest quality and crop yield, making it easier for them to

plan ahead. Agricultural drones are one of the many examples that illustrate how technology has changed and will continue to change the ways modern farmers conduct business. TF203780





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# COVID-19 impact on potato crop substantial

By TERESA L. BENNS

**SAN LUIS VALLEY —** COVID-19 is dramatically affecting the agricultural industry and consumers could see fluctuations in available commodities for months to come, Colorado Potato administrative director Jim Ehrlich said Tuesday.

Ehrlich cites water concerns and the growing market uncertainty following the COVID-19 mandated shutdowns as the primary reasons Valley farmers may be reducing crop size or not growing at all this year. Potato processors in Idaho, Washington, North Dakota and Wisconsin have canceled contracts with farmers because schools and restaurants are not purchasing the processed products. This has turned the entire industry upside down, Ehrlich said.

As for the Valley's potato crop, "I am concerned acreage will be down this year because of this [market uncertainty]," Ehrlich said, noting that it may be a hard decision for farmers given the market whether to plant or not. "If farmers don't plant, they have no income but no expenses either," he pointed out. "Farmers are used to risk, but this is a crazy risk." And the virus crisis is affecting all agriculture sectors, not just potatoes, he added.

Regarding the water situation, "It doesn't look like it will be a banner runoff like 2019," Pat McDermott, a longtime staff engineer with the Division of Water Resources said in an email Monday. "I think we are generally looking at runoff being only two-thirds of the long-term average."

"There are places in the basin that are better (Saguache Creek) and worse (Rio San Antonio). The southern part of Colorado is drying up and runoff has started early. The northern part of the state, as expected, looks to be in good snow condition."

The potato dilemma is further explained in the following articles Ehrlich forwarded from the USDA and the AcuitasAg site.

Processing and crop planning issues According to an article by Acuitasag at <https://www.acuitasag.com/news/2020/04/why-are-farmers-dumping-commodities-when-grocery-store-shelves-are-empty/>, most consumers have no idea how the food supply chain operates and how complex the relationship is between producer, processor and buyer. And disruptions now could result in shortages later.

"The food supply chain beyond the farm is incredibly capital intensive. Every type of food we have available to us requires a specialized supply chain and economies of scale to perform the way it performs."

"Processed foods add more complexity. We'll use french fries as an example.



McDonald's has incredibly stringent requirements for what ends up being called a McDonald's french fry. Only certain potato varieties are acceptable, and entire processing plants are tooled to create only that french fry.

"Thousands of acres of potatoes are planted, grown, and harvested specifically to become McDonald's french fries. The potatoes are stored, sometimes for nine or 10 months, before being delivered to the plants where the potatoes are washed, sliced and flash-fried a particular way to produce those fries, and then they are packaged for delivery to the restaurants—usually in 25 or 50-pound boxes.

"You can't buy a McDonald's french fry in the frozen food section of the grocery store regardless of how it is packaged, and even if you could, who is going to buy a 50-pound box? processor partners) face difficult decisions. "Thousands of acres of vegetables and fruits are not being planted or are being tilled up because there's no one to buy the product from the farmer. French fry processors are cutting contract acres for the 2020 season by 20-25 percent. Those are huge cuts, and we won't have a chance to replace those acres until 2021... These types of cuts could result in food shortages in coming months."

USDA assistance not enough The USDA reports: "Thus, as the country eventually returns to normal, everyday business, the question remains: how quickly will consumers return to business as usual? This is a key question faced by growers and

processors who have decided or are now deciding how many acres to plant or contract.

"If demand is slow to return, the industry may see excessive shrink or diversion to feed, an extended overlap between old crop and new crop, overstocked freezers and warehouses, and idled processing facilities. As there is no easily applied precedent here (on which to base forecasts), and seed and inputs were already ordered and/or received, growers (and their

Regarding a \$2.7 billion in financial support announced April 17 by the Department of Agriculture to assist the fruit and vegetable industry, Kam Quarles, Chief Executive for the National Potato Council told Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue that evening week the amount falls far short of the anticipated need.

"The U.S. potato industry is \$4 billion annually with 60 percent of that total involving food service. Potato growers appreciate Secretary Perdue's rapid action intended to stabilize family farms whose survival is threatened due to the mandated food service shutdown. Today's announcement is a down payment on those efforts that will require additional resources and flexibility to deliver the necessary relief for our great potato industry."

In a letter this week, Quarles noted the following improvements to the USDA plan needed to help potato farmers.

"1) Broadening the scope of producers eligible for direct payments to include representative potato producers impacted due to the food service shutdown.

"2) Ensuring that payment distributions are fair, equitable, and achieve the intended goal of providing relief to family farms involved in the potato industry.

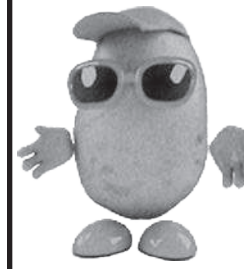
"3) Rapidly purchasing potatoes in volumes necessary to provide them to needy recipients and ensuring that the supply chain operates efficiently, so damage to both the current (2019 crop) and the upcoming (2020) crop are sufficiently mitigated.

"USDA has indicated that they will only purchase potatoes based upon the demand they receive from food banks and related organizations. Though these recipients should be fully supplied first, purchases cannot stop there. USDA needs to purchase surplus potatoes in substantially greater volumes that clear out the oversupply of the 2019 crop that continues to build due to the food service shutdown.

"NPC, the state organizations, and other agriculture associations across the country are working with individ-

ual Congressional delegation members to urge the White House to remove the unusually low payment cap on relief for farmers. A bicameral (House and

Senate) letter is being circulated for signatures across the livestock, dairy, and produce sectors that will be sent to the White House this week."



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