

# McGraw Memorial Park kayak launch, fishing platform getting use

*Kayakers go from McGraw to  
Pine Valley Open Space*

**By Caedi Coler**

Intern

Residents of Park County are making daily use of the new kayak launch and fishing platform found in McGraw Memorial Park in downtown Bailey, whether to kayak, fish, or simply enjoy being near the North Fork of the South Platte River.

The launch and platform opened in May and have, since then, seen daily traffic, according to volunteer and co-owner of Freestone Aquatics, Luke Kelly.

“People are naturally drawn to it,” he said. The area is used not only for kayaking and fishing, but also for family outings. People have been seen picnicking or simply having fun on the bank of the river since the stone stairs down to it were built.

The success of the outdoor additions to Bailey’s appeal stem from the contributions of several organizations.

One is the Park County Historical Society, which has the mission of “promoting the history and prehistory of the County through awareness and education for the citizens of

Park County,” according to its Facebook page. It played the role of initiating the construction that took place at McGraw Park, which it owns.

Another is Destination Bailey, an arm of the Platte Canyon Area Chamber of Commerce that has the goal to “improve the economic environment for the Platte Canyon Corridor and expand the quality of life options for local residents,” according to its Web site.

Susan Lambert is the president of the Destination Bailey board of directors, and without her, the McGraw project never would have been completed, according to Kelly.

“We provided moral support,” laughed Lambert, giving all of the credit to Freestone Aquatics.

Fitting into the pictures is the North Fork – South Platte River Foundation, which Kelly is helping to lead.

Officially established in 2009, the NFSPRF “is a grassroots group of stakeholders who are striving to improve and maintain the management of the river’s riparian habitat, channel habitat, water quality, and in-stream flows through the collaboration of local organizations, mine reclamation, and community edu-

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## McGraw

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### Take-out spot

Traffic on this stretch of river continues until the kayak-take-out spot in Pine Valley Open Space Park, Jefferson County. While consisting of mostly kayaks, there are the occasional small white-water rafts seen on the river.

Canoes, however, don't contribute to the participation increase. That's because of the rough waters through the stretch. Class 5 rapids are found between McGraw Park

and Pine Valley Open Space Park, and while that level is not the most intense water rating, it is still considered elite, and not safe for canoeing.

Just up the road from McGraw Park, farther into downtown Bailey, the river is not fit for any type of recreational boating.

While the town water "has great potential," according to Kelly, there is barbed wire strung across the river in several places, making McGraw the best location for the launch.

Along the set stretch of

river, private sections of the water are well-maintained, with no manmade or natural obstacles. Going could get tough, however, in the area of the North Fork of the South Platte controlled by the U.S. Forest Service, because if a natural obstruction were to occur, chances of it being moved are slim.

So far, though, kayakers are seeming to enjoy their journeys down the North Fork of the South Platte River, and Bailey residents in general are making use of the newly improved area to sit and enjoy nature.



### NEW FISHING PLATFORM

These stone steps, constructed on volunteer time by Freestone Aquatics, lead down to the new fishing platform in McGraw Memorial Park in Bailey. Similar steps lead to the kayak launch on the other side of the Keystone bridge, seen in the background. (Photo by Caedi Coler/The Flume)