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SUBJECT: **PAGOSA QUALITY FISHING PROJECT**
PHOTOS: ADDITIONAL PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

A Believable Fish Story: **Solitude and Bountiful Fish in Pagosa Springs Allow a Market Catch**

PAGOSA SPRINGS, COLORADO – In 2008, the Pagoda Quality Fishing Project secured \$50,000 with most monies allotted to the release of over 8,000 trout into the San Juan River. The San Juan, running throughout the town of Pagosa Springs, offers easy access for anglers of all ages and skill to experience solitude and bountiful fishing. According to Jim White, Aquatic Biologist, Colorado Division of Wildlife, there are two miles of public access for shore or wade angling at numerous access sites along the San Juan River and guided wade or float fishing available from several local guide services. PQFP set a goal to keep anglers visiting the waters of Pagosa Springs (throughout the year) and maintain its tourism market share by using the town's natural resource-fishing. By stocking the river with trout, anglers not only experienced catching quality large fish but also increased numbers of fish in a relaxing and scenic Pagosa Springs setting. "In as little as three months into the project, we began to see the concept of solitude and bountiful fish already paying for itself and reaching beyond our expectations with 5-10% visitor increases", said Thaddeus Cano, then project chairman. According to Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Cano was on target. Their recent report demonstrates that by any measure, America's 34 million hunters and anglers are among the most prominent and influential of all demographic groups. Spending more than \$76 billion a year on hunting and fishing, America's hunters and anglers would rank in the top 20 list on the Fortune 500. These latest figures demonstrate that season after season hunters and anglers are an economic powerhouse, driving the economy from big businesses to rural towns, through booms and recessions.



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What makes this fishing story even more believable is the economic impact of hunting and fishing for Archuleta County and Pagosa Springs. According to 2007 research commissioned by Colorado Division of Wildlife, direct expenditures of \$11,300,000 were reported. A total impact of over \$19 million (72% fishing expenditures, 28% hunting expenditures) and an additional 206 jobs were created in Archuleta County. In 2008, Archuleta County reported 31,623 over the counter hunting and fishing licenses were sold for a total of \$1.6 million dollars. Even more dollars were created through online sales and draw licenses. In addition sales of fishing equipment and

supplies sales add even more revenue to town revenue figures. As a result, it is no surprise the National Sporting Goods Association ranks fishing sixth out of forty-two recreation activities, preceded only by walking, swimming, exercising, camping and bowling. Cano boasts license sales are the bearing indicator the PQFP successes. In July and August, nonresident fishing licenses sold increased by 248 licenses (with a total of 6,100 licenses for 2008) and resident licenses were up 158 (with 841 resident fishing licenses for 2008). At first glance, these small increases may not seem much, until you account for the increased town revenue. The average angler visitor stays five days, spending a conservative \$147 a day for lodging, meals, and other expenditures. Resulting in over \$299,000 was created for the local economy for the two month period for residential and non-residential licenses sales. Recent summer surveys indicate anglers are spending as much as \$255 a day and adding even more to the local economy figures. A 2009 survey was conducted with Pagosa Springs license vendors Eagle Mountain Mercantile, Ski and Bow Rack, The Outfitter, and Wolf Creek Anglers to help determine whether resident license sales for the month of July and August were Pagosa resident (locals) or Colorado residents from outside Archuleta County. Surveys showed a majority of residential licenses purchases being Front Range (including Denver, Fort Collins, Boulder, and Colorado Springs) and New Mexico anglers. Considering 6,100 nonresident fishing licenses were sold at an average stay of 5.4 days with \$147 daily expenditures-over \$ 4.8 million in direct expenditures were received. These figures represent a 12% increase in the two month period (July and August 2009). The fishing season thrives in September and October (and continues through the winter and spring months), and oncoming figures should hold strong increases for the town's revenue.



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"Marketing to anglers is unusual because unlike most sports, word-of-mouth marketing carries high impact between anglers", notes Bruno Petersons, PQFP chairman. PQFP launched and manages its own web site. The web site, www.pagosaqualityfishingproject.com, catered to the angler with valuable resources from licenses information and locations, downloadable fishing access area map, lodging, meals, fishing supplies, local business sponsors, and "Angler Catch Gallery". "Web site results showed visitors stayed in the site with a start of more than ten minutes, indicating a venture throughout the site", states Wen Saunders of The Wendy Saunders Companies, a Pagoda Springs marketing firm. Results also verified anglers are hooked on viewing fish catches, as the number one hit page was the Angler Catch Gallery. Angler Catch Gallery, located within the web site, features visitors with their angler catch (images provided by visitors and PQFP photographers). PQFP produced 5,000 brochures which featured the project and fold out fishing access areas map. "The PQFP brochure listed the web site, included a map providing visitors a visual for fishing access points and served as a free Pagosa Springs memory", says Saunders. Anglers are able to visit the web site and view their Pagosa catch experience upon their return home in the Angler Catch Gallery section of the web site. The fish experiences continue as visitors email and call their family and friends. Unlike most events in Pagosa Springs that gain exposure for the town during a weekend, the PQFP web site and brochures marketed Pagosa Springs fishing throughout the year. Considering the Town Tourism Council supported the project in 2008 with a sizable amount of funding (most of which went to fish stocking), the increased fishing marketing exposure and return dollars should excite them.

There are catch regulations regarding trout in the San Juan River through the town. According to DOW, from US 160 and Highway 84 intersection downstream to the Apache Street Bridge, bag and possession limit is two trout. Above and below Pagosa Reach the standard bag limit is for trout is 4 per day and 8 in possession (mostly private land above and below accessed by raft or drift boat only). Last year, together with the Town of Pagosa Springs and DOW, PQFP post 2 trout limit signs along public access points to remind anglers of the regulations. PQFP encourages and supports catch and release while fishing.



PQFP is again approaching Town Tourism Council (TTC), along with local and out of state anglers and business sponsors for funding of the project for 2011. PQFP donations encompass a variety of sponsors. "This year, cash donations range \$10-\$1,000 from local and out-of-state anglers who are excited to support our efforts", says Don Haywood, project treasurer. TTC has committed to funding for two river stockings. The first stocking is scheduled in conjunction with a PQFP Fund Raiser on June 18 at Town Park. The event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. will feature a fish stocking, BBQ, silent auction items provided by area businesses, games with prizes for children, and angler demonstrations. The Fund Raiser is an opportunity for anglers and the community to support the project. Anglers, including children are encouraged to help with the morning stocking by meeting at Town Park at 10 a.m. Participants can actually help stock the river (wear clothes and shoes to enter the river). The event will continue at 11:30 a.m. with BBQ and other events. Suggested donation for a food plate is \$5 for adults and \$2 for children.

The 2009 and 2010 PQFP stocking totaled about 4,000 trout (with 15% of them over 3 pounds). PQFP hopes to raise \$30,000 to provide additional stockings through the summer of 2011 and late spring 2012. In downward economic trends, the community is wise to support and promote its natural resources that have proven to provide economic stability and town revenue producers. If you cannot attend the June 18 event, you can support the project by sending your tax deductible donation to PQFP, Don Haywood, Treasurer, Post Office Box 4486, Pagoda Springs, Colorado 81147. Donations to PQFP are also accepted at Ski & Bow Rack and Exit Advantage Pagoda Realty (Wen Saunders 903-0038). For more information or to volunteer with the project, please contact Bruno Petersons or Maryellen Kerwick at Ski and Bow Rack, 264-1171.