

Freedom To Fish should have happened

Had Thomas Jefferson been a fisherman, he might have written the Declaration of Independence a little differently.

Imagine if you will, a mature but young at heart Mr. Jefferson sitting beside his favorite lake, with a cane fishing pole in hand, contemplating what he might write for his fellow 'libertarians' of the Continental Congress to review.



Outdoors

By Joel Evans

They have assigned him the task of authoring a paper

about freedom that will be presented to all men.

Someone even suggested it would be a declaration of independence. And after all, what better time is there than relaxing on the water's bank, taking it easy, while fishing, to clear the troubles of the day and ponder great thoughts of independence?

Just as he is casually contemplating about such basic rights as life and liberty, a fish of substantial size seizes his bait. (Might as well make the fish a big one as long as we are making this up.)

After fighting this gargantuan fish for some time, then bringing it near his feet, all of a sudden the fish makes one last leap, gets off the hook, gaining its freedom. This whole experience, in spite of the fish escaping him, has brought him great happiness.

Although somewhat rattled yet rejuvenated by his experience with this lost



Independence Day reminds us of our liberties and freedoms. As a day to express that freedom in many ways, fishing is one of them. This Uncompahgre River brown trout, caught in town last fall, is about to be released to back his freedom. (Contributed photo)

fish of enormous proportions, he settles back down on the bank with his back against a shade tree, again collecting his previous thoughts about freedom.

Without really realizing it, this creature of the wild has caused him to think about happiness and rights and freedom in one common thread, and so he decides to include a phrase in this now called declaration of independence that captures all of these weighty thoughts.

He determines that there are certain

unalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Having unintentionally just released a big fish, he feels compelled to include in this document of freedom, the explicit right to go fishing.

Mr. Jefferson, after returning home, pens these exact thoughts on paper. But just as he writes the part about fishing, his dog jumps in his lap, causing him to smear the wet ink. Unfortunately, the part where his soon to be historic document says that all

men are entitled to a leisurely life of fishing gets smeared. It becomes unreadable.

Unfortunately, since Thomas is working under a pressured deadline to present his paper to the Continental Congress, no time is left to re-pen the paper and get the fishing part back in. He must go with what he has. Later, when the draft is adopted, no one can make out the words in the smeared part about fishing, so it gets cut out in the editing session.

So maybe the greatest document of modern times was supposed to include the freedom to fish.

Think what might have been. A national fishing holiday. Maybe even a national fishing week.

Trout, bass, walleye, catfish, pike, steelhead, crappie – all of them – all declared the national fish. Rivers and lakes teeming with fish. Fishing is the national pastime. Laws against denying a man the right to fish. Fishing taught as a required class in school at an early age. A national museum of fishing.

A rod and reel in every home. Mandatory days off from work for fishing. Oh, what might have been.

But alas, history was altered by a mere smear of the ink. Fishing was not elevated to national pastime status.

Our forefathers created a great document that endures today, yet could it be that a few critical fishing phrases were indeed left out?

Well, it could have happened. Well, it should have happened.

Joel Evans is an avid fisherman, and outdoor writer and photographer, having explored western Colorado for decades.

Summer is the time to hit the hiking trail

Summer is finally here. The wet spring has left the mountain vegetation very thick and green. If you want to get away from the heat in town, head for the hills and take a hike on one of the many trails within Montrose County.

Before you jump out on that trail, there are several things you should consider.

If you live here close to town, where the altitude is just over 5000 feet, you might want to do some conditioning first. Your muscles and cardio-vascular system may need a bit of work, especially if it has been several months since you did any real exercise.

Your leg muscles and your core body muscles are what you will use mostly while hiking. You might start out by walking around your neighborhood each day for a week or two before hitting the trail. Wearing your pack with some weight in it will help condition your other muscle groups and will give you a cardio workout as well.

Once you are ready to hit the trail, plan your first hike conservatively. Pick out a trail that is not real steep and limit the hike to a shorter distance than usual. This will help further condition your body and get you back into hiking mode.

Like any outdoor activity, it is always better and safer to go with another person. It is always nice to enjoy the outdoors with someone and, if something goes wrong, another person can be a big help.

Plan your hike ahead of time. Use maps and your GPS to select the trail and layout your route. Leave the plan and location of your hike with a competent person here in town. Instruct this person to contact the Sheriff's Office if you do not return at the arranged time. This person can provide your prearranged itinerary to search and rescue people if you are overdue.

Make sure your contact person knows where you will be parking the car. Have them keep a record of the color, make, year, model and plate number. This



Hiking in Western Colorado is a great summer activity. There are many things hikers can do to make their adventure more fun and keep safe. (Courtesy photo)

gives searchers a great starting point. Leaving a note on your car windshield of your direction of travel and planned route is another asset to rescuers.

Stick to your preplanned route, and do not deviate. If your plan changes midstream, immediately contact your person back home to let them know of the changes. You certainly don't want rescue folks looking in the wrong place as it can cost valuable time.

Carry a pack with some basic items with you. There are many types of packs to choose from. A fanny pack works well for most day hikes but a larger pack would be required for an overnighter. You do not want to overload your pack, as it

will become very burdensome on the trail.

Here are a few basic items I carry for a day hike: Water – you can use 3 quarts a day. A camelback is a great way to carry drinking water on a hike. A water filtration straw is a good back up to have.

Food – high energy, compact foods are what you need for hiking.

First Aid kit – a small kit with just the basics is best.

GPS – with extra batteries, compass and a map of the area.

Multi-tool – one with a knife blade.

Fire starter – several kinds, waterproof matches and a magnesium fire starter.

Rain gear – and some extra clothes for warmth.

Flashlight – with extra batteries.

Cell phone – keep it off to conserve power until needed.

Insect protection – a small bottle of this can save the day.

Toilet paper – because you just never know.

Your list should be customized to fit your exact needs and duration of the hike. Things like prescription drugs, glasses and sunglasses could be added.

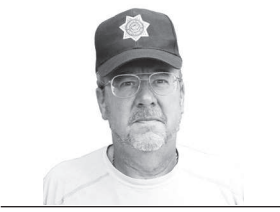
Pay special attention to the weather. In Western Colorado, we have all learned just how fast conditions change. Get a reliable forecast before you go. It is better to postpone a trip for bad conditions than to take a chance.

Carry some extra clothes, in case there is a temperature drop.

Hiking is a terrific way to enjoy our mountains in the warmer months. You can go for several hours or several days, just make sure you do your homework first.

Until next time, see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Outdoor briefs

National Park topic of talk

In commemoration of its centennial year, the National Park Service has created a monthly special speaker series. The series is being offered by the National Park Service in cooperation with Colorado Mesa University's Montrose campus, and Western State Colorado University's Center for Environment and Sustainability.

The July speaker in this series will be Jerry Frank, PhD. Frank will present a program on the environmental history of Rocky Mountain National Park at 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 6, in Room 106 at the Colorado

Mesa University Montrose campus. Admission is free.

Frank has been studying national parks for the past fifteen years and is the author of "Making Rocky Mountain National Park: The Environmental History of an American Treasure." His current book project, "Playing with Western Water: History, Ecology, and Policy," investigates the complicated history of water-based recreation in the American West.

Frank is a graduate of Montrose High School, a 1999 graduate of Colorado Mesa University, and a former faculty member of Western State Colorado University. He is currently a

professor of environmental history at the University of Missouri.

Wildlife commission to meet

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission meets at the Fairfield Community Center, 200 Main St., Meeker, July 7 and 8. The meeting is slated to begin at 1 p.m. July 7, and is scheduled to adjourn at 11 a.m. July 8.

Commissioners will receive briefings on a variety of issues, including: updates from CPW director, regional managers, law enforcement and financial services. The Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources as

well as SHIFT Director Christian Beck is also slated to present.

Informational updates to the commission include a draft commission sponsorship policy and reimbursement guidelines.

The pending action item includes changes to wildlife chapter W-16 that sets procedural rules in place for citizen petitions. A complete agenda can be found at: <http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Commission/2016/July/Agenda.pdf>.

The next commission meeting is scheduled for August in Montrose. Other meetings will be held in September (Creede), November (Lamar) and December (Fort Collins).

JULY 4TH SIDEWALK SALE

Friday & Saturday

EVERYTHING on the Side-Walk
50% off! Additional mark downs
have been taken

Bonus!
75% Off Rack



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