



Stateline

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COLORADO CARES DAY, 2003

BY GOVERNOR BILL OWENS

Saturday, August 2 marked the Fifth Annual Colorado Cares Day, a celebration of Colorado's 127th anniversary and an opportunity for Coloradans to give back to their community. In past years, volunteers have cleared acres of noxious weeds, cleaned debris from the devastating Hayman fire and helped by volunteering with charities and projects in their local community.

This year's Colorado Cares Day was once again a success, bringing out hundreds of volunteers to our State Parks to clear tamarisk, often considered the most destructive plant in the western United States. Tamarisk, a non-native plant introduced more than a century ago, has invaded Colorado's river basins, consuming excessive amounts of water.



Governor Owens at the Cherry Creek Reservoir, removing tamarisk trees.

Simply put, tamarisk is devastating to an ecosystem. It provides little nutritional value and actually eliminates the vegetation that wildlife would otherwise consume. Also known as saltcedar, tamarisk pushes out native trees and plants as it raises the salinity levels in the soil. With its extremely flammable leaves, tamarisk plants are also a fire danger.

Perhaps its worst drawback, is its high consumption of Colorado's water reserves. In fact, an acre of tamarisk consumes 1.3 million gallons of water a year, compared with 845,000 gallons consumed by native cottonwood trees. Given the recent drought, our water has become a precious commodity. But even the drought had little effect on the tamarisk, which has shown to be highly durable and resistant to both drought and floods.

Consequently, we stepped up our efforts to eradicate the plant from our state. Earlier this year, I issued an executive order directing the Colorado Department of Natural Resources to coordinate

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TOTAL COMPENSATION PROPOSAL SUBMITTED

BY JEFF WOODHOUSE
DPA LEGISLATIVE LIAISON & PIO, DPA

For the first time since 1994, the Department of Personnel & Administration (DPA) has proposed a "total compensation" budget package to ensure that both health insurance benefits and employee's salaries keep pace with those paid by comparable public and private sector Colorado employers. At a time when a significant number of state employees are nearing retirement, this proposal should help attract and retain qualified employees, addressing a concern made in July by the Legislative Audit Committee.

Last month, DPA Executive Director Troy Eid recommended to the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee (JBC) that the State provide an additional \$47.5 million next year to go toward the total compensation of the State's 32,000 classified employees. Included in the proposed increase, Eid is recommending that \$33.2 million go toward health benefits contributions. Currently, Colorado ranks in the lower third of states' health contributions for their employees.

"The recommendation enables the State of Colorado to come closer to achieving actual market parity with what comparable large Colorado employers pay for their employees' health insurance benefits by January 2006," says Eid. "It boosts the State's contribution for employees' insurance premiums starting in January 2005 to up to 77 percent of the total cost. Beginning in January 2006, I plan to recommend increasing the State's contribution to employees' insurance premiums still further to 85 percent of the total cost, which is the current prevailing level among Colorado employers."

Last year's passage of House Speaker Lola Spradley's HB 1316, The Total Compensation Reform Bill, made this big jump in benefits spending possible. This new law provides the

opportunity for the DPA executive director to recommend how available money should be spent among performance pay, salary, and health benefits for state employees. Without this bill, Colorado's percentage contribution for health benefits would have fallen even farther, to possibly as low as 35 percent of the total cost in January 2005, which would have been the lowest in the nation.

Most of the remaining money from the recommendation will be used to give performance-based salary increases to higher-performing employees, those scoring a rating of 3 or 4, and to ensure that salary ranges for all employees shift upward and that no employee falls below job-range minimum.

While not every state employee will realize a direct benefit from the health insurance recommendation, most will. Approximately 67 percent of state employees are enrolled in one of the State's health insurance plans, but numerous employees have dropped their coverage over the past several years. It is expected that as the State's contribution goes up over the next two years and the plan increases its benefits, many who have recently dropped out of the plan will be able to afford coverage once again.

The next step in the process is for DPA and the Governor's Office to work with the General Assembly to ensure the recommendation receives the proper funding. Undoubtedly, as next year's legislative session begins the budget process, the eyes of employees from around the state will be focused on the results of their legislators' work.

CDOT Repeats as Softball Champion

BY DENNIS VANPATTER
COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST, CDOT

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) co-ed slowpitch softball team won its third consecutive State League Championship by defeating the Department of Public Health & Environment in the title game. CDOT compiled a 9-3 record this season, capping a three-year 35-5 record in all State League games, including 9-0 in the last three playoffs. In 2004, CDOT will go for the league record of four consecutive titles.



Team members are, front row from left: Donnie Ortiz; Alvaro Duran; Balta Moreno; Anthony Sanchez; Telicia McCline; Brandon Reck; Art Negretti; and Gregg Gargan. Back row from left: Sally Gamino; Michelle Ortiz; Kim Gilbert; Craig Schick; Johnie Abad (team manager); Ted Abad (team coach); Mindy Crane; Mark Ceja; Dawn Ceja; and Frank Montoya.

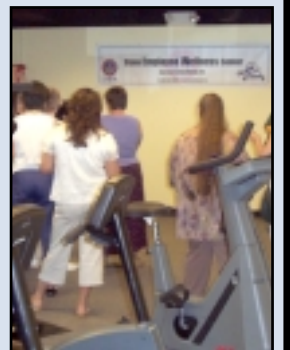
Photo courtesy of CDOT Public Relations.

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THE STATE FAIR, A CELEBRATION OF COLORADO

BY JIM MILLER
DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS, CDA

The history of the Colorado State Fair reaches back to before statehood. It even predates the exhibition of cowboy skills we call "rodeo." A lot has changed since those early days, but its fundamental purpose has not. The Colorado State Fair is first and foremost an educational event designed to foster better understanding of the science of agriculture.

Today's Colorado State Fair features amusements, food, merchandise and entertainment, but its principle feature is education. As an arm of the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the Colorado State Fair Board is committed to providing a venue where people of all ages can have fun while increasing their knowledge of farming and livestock production.



"Most of Colorado's citizens are now two or more generations separated from the farm," said Don Ament, Colorado's agriculture commissioner. "The Fair Board is committed to bridging that gap between today's non-farm citizens and their rural cousins. Just experiencing the feel of a rabbit's fur or the mane of a horse could spark an interest in a child that could become a lifelong bond to nature and to agriculture."

Other agencies within the Department of Agriculture pitch in to make the Colorado State Fair happen. State Veterinarian Dr. Wayne Cunningham and his staff are on the scene checking the animals that arrive for the exhibitions and the rodeos for signs of disease and general health. They stand ready to treat animals that might become ill or injured during the sixteen-day event.



Because of the sheer number of cattle, horses, sheep and goats that are present at the Fairgrounds, the possibility of escape, ownership mix-ups or other disputes need to be anticipated and prevented. The department's Board of Stock Inspection Commissioners, commonly called the Brand Board, has staff on hand to check ownership papers and identify animals by their unique markings called "brands" that are permanently affixed to certain animals to

eliminate ownership disputes. The branding system also enables the State Veterinarian to trace movement of the animals if it becomes necessary to track or trace back the origin of a disease outbreak.

Other divisions within the Colorado Department of Agriculture also make educational information available to fairgoers. The department has an exhibition hall that features displays and interactive booths to promote learning about the science of modern farming and ranching.

Farm and livestock organizations, in addition to Colorado State University's Cooperative Extension, lend their help by providing displays, demonstrations and hands-on learning opportunities, many of which are geared toward younger Coloradans. At the department's exhibit hall this year, kids were given a toy cow and were urged to "brand" their cow with their own unique design. In past years, children learned about the state's important multi-million dollar a year nursery and floriculture industry by planting their very own flower to take home and nurture.

"We want kids to learn that agriculture is still an important part of our state's economy and culture," Commissioner Ament said. "In doing so, we hope they will find an interest that could lead to a career in one of the many opportunities that are available to young people. Agriculture needs future scientists and business leaders, as well as those who grow the food and fiber for this country."

In short, the Colorado State Fair is much more than funnel cakes, cotton candy and amusement rides. It's an experience that is both fun and educational, and it connects



people across the state with their culture, their natural resources, and their fellow Coloradans, Ament explained. "We're proud of the industry the State Fair showcases, and we're proud that citizens travel hundreds of miles from across the state to once again experience a slice of Colorado agriculture."

State Employee Wellness Center Becomes A Reality

BY JULIE POSTLETHWAIT
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, DPA

The State Employee Wellness Center, located in the lower level of 1570 Grant Street in Denver, is now open. More than 400 state employees attended last month's grand opening of the Center. "I just wanted to thank you for all your hard work on the Wellness Center," Department of Education employee Bush White said to DPA's Executive Director Troy Eid. "I know if you didn't have the vision for it, we would not have one. Thanks."



Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting. Pictured from left to right: Bill Taylor, Division of Central Services Associate Director; Linda Summers, Division of Central Services Director; Troy Eid DPA Executive Director; Kathy Knudsen, Healthbreak, Inc. President; and Frank Lombardi, Capitol Complex Manager.

The Wellness Center is a pilot program designed to provide state employees with options to pursue a healthy lifestyle.

Health benefits' data shows the state workforce has an above average age with a high utilization rate, both of which are major contributors to the yearly increases in health benefits costs. By making healthy choices, state employees may be able to help curtail these rate hikes.

While the Center is located in a state building it will be operated by Healthbreak, Inc., a health promotion management company that provides consulting, wellness program management, and fitness center management services. The Center

will offer a variety of programs to improve state employees' overall fitness and will be open Monday through Friday, 5:30am-6:30pm and Saturdays, 8:00am to noon. Healthbreak has purchased a variety of state-of-the-art cardiovascular and strength training equipment for the center and a staff of certified health professionals will provide group exercise classes and personal training. The Center will primarily serve those employees located in the Denver area, but the wellness programs will be available to employees throughout the State.

Memberships are available for a one-time \$20 initiation fee (which includes access to the Center, orientation and general exercise guidelines) or a one-time \$75 initiation fee (which includes all of the above, plus three personal training sessions, a personal fitness plan and a fitness evaluation). The monthly membership fee for either plan is \$25. Memberships are now being accepted at the Center. For more information, or to download a membership application, go to www.colorado.dpa/ and click on the State Employee Wellness Center, located to the right in the "Hot Topics" box.

RTD RAISES COST OF ECO PASS

BY SANDY DIMATTEO
STATE ECO PASS COORDINATOR

This past spring the Regional Transport District (RTD) announced plans to end the Eco Pass Program, but after a great deal of public outcry those plans have been changed. The Eco Pass is a program designed to encourage commuters to use the bus system rather than their personal cars. The State has been an active member of the program for eight years and many state employees depend on the Eco Pass program to get to work.

After a number of public meetings and a lot of hard work by a committee made up of program stakeholders and RTD staff, the RTD Board of Directors has agreed to continue the program, but with a 13% price increase and an increase to contract minimums. These increases will take affect on January 1, 2004.

As always, how much each state employee will be charged for his or her Eco Pass will vary by department or agency. Eco Passes are also priced according to where the employees work; to determine the cost increase for your specific service level check the RTD web site at www.rtd-denver.com or contact your agency's Eco Pass administrator.



STATE EMPLOYEES SOUND OFF ON TOTAL COMPENSATION RECOMMENDATIONS

By TROY A. EID
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DPA

The recent publication of the Total Compensation Survey, coupled with my recommendations to the Legislature prompted a great deal of email. With their permission, I am reprinting just a few of the over 700 emails I have received from state employees on this issue. Please continue to email me with your thoughts, questions, or concerns.

I see that there isn't a provision for the salary survey increase in your proposal. I am worried that our wages will stagnate as compared to the comparable salaries in Colorado private industry and that as the cost of living increases, our wages will fall way behind if the salary survey increases aren't included. I am (and have been my entire career) a peak performer, so funding the CPP will help me, but that doesn't help others when it comes to an increasing cost of living in Colorado. And while you might say that only funding CPP will make the others work harder to excel at their jobs, I think it will be more of a morale breaker than we already have. Plus, the small amount available for CPP doesn't really help with cost of living.

Jerri Baker
Department of Natural Resources

Jerri,
Thanks for your note. If you mean that not every employee will get an automatic increase regardless of performance, you're right. There WILL be salary increases for those who fall below job-range minimum, and for those who score 3 or 4. Those increases will be substantial AND funded, unlike the current system, so they will in fact help with the cost of living.

Conversely, everyone will now be offered a competitive health benefits package for the first time in a decade – the biggest issue for employees in all the surveys we've collected for the last three years.

So it strikes a balance – not the one you might have struck, but one that keeps pace with the market in all respects rather than just one. Thanks for your perspective.

Best,
Troy

So this year's plan/proposal for "total compensation" really only addresses health insurance coverage, which is good. However, it appears the once-separate salary survey has been effectively legislated-out of existence and may never occur again. And, the funds for performance-based pay will likely be cut from the proposal by the legislature, so the bottom-line effect on state employees is two years of frozen salaries. This doesn't adversely affect anyone, except those employees approaching retirement who like to see a little increase in their highest average salary. What about those employees who received level three and four ratings THIS year? Haven't heard a word about them and their motivation to continue next year when last year they weren't compensated. I guess a counter-argument from DPA is that, at least, frozen compensation is better than more reductions/layoffs. Any "total" bad news can have a positive spin placed on it that makes it more acceptable to some. The health insurance increases may positively affect recruitment, which will help because retention will be negatively impacted because of the salary problem.

Kenneth Dobrovolny
Department of Human Services

Kenneth,

Thanks for your note. The real difference is this: unlike every other DPA proposal for the past decade, this proposal in its entirety is now part of the Governor's budget, and will be presented to the Legislature as part of a balanced budget on November 1. In the past, executive directors did the so-called salary survey but never built in the entire funding in the Governor's budget proposals. HB 1316 puts an end to this hide-the-ball practice. What you see in the letter is what we intend to advocate for this session.

Of course, you're correct that the Legislature can modify appropriations. But last year they took more than 90 percent of the budget decision items proposed by the Governor and his cabinet without making any changes. The elimination of performance pay as a separately funded (or unfunded!) add-on program – another result of HB 1316 – and its integration into salary increases within competitive salary ranges should help strengthen this component of total compensation as the debate unfolds. But we'll see and I certainly appreciate your insights.

Best,
Troy

I appreciate your personal response. I wish you good luck with the upcoming legislative session. It will again be interesting to see whether the legislature funds "their" performance-based pay system. The small amount designated towards this piece (25% or about 11.875 million) doesn't seem like enough to make much difference, but I guess \$100 a month is better than not getting anything. Again, thanks for your time.

Kenneth Dobrovolny

Thank you for sharing your proposal. The efforts on health insurance benefits are appreciated. However, myself and others do not understand the discussion of salary survey. State employees received no salary survey adjustment for the current year. It appears from your description that the same holds true for the request year. You appear to be saying that everyone is frozen except for those that fall below the minimum for a job range. That would mean salary is frozen at least for two years for almost all employees. For many as they begin to approach their last year's of state service this poses a significant hardship on the last three years of highest average salary. This also could hasten the number of employees that leave state service if an employee can receive equal to or higher benefits and a salary increase. It seems that your proposal could have sought a greater balance between salary survey, since we have already lost one year, and an increase in health benefits.

Mark Tandberg
Department of Human Services

Mark,

Thanks for your note. You are correct: Salary increases for 1s and 2s would be on hold for another two years, with substantial increases for 3s and 4s. At the end of the two years, we will have finally closed the gap on competitive health benefits. That will provide a foundation for greater emphasis on moving employees through the salary ranges, which in the meantime will have remained competitive.

The proposal does attempt to strike a balance given the most urgent needs of the workforce and budget realities. It is apparently not the balance you would have sought, and I respect your position. However, the actuaries tell us that health-insurance increases will continue for at least the next two years. Colorado is so far behind that it is doubly expensive to catch up here at a challenging budget time. The way the budget works, we won't have any relief until January '05. As retirements occur – 40 percent will retire in

the next five years – it is imperative that the State act now so that we can be in a better position to offer a competitive salary and health benefits plan.

Thanks again and best,
Troy

As a "new" state employee with only 2 years of service and approaching age 61, you can believe that my reason for being here (the Division of Wildlife) is not related to compensation, either in salary or benefits, but I do realize how stressed many of my fellow employees have been over these issues. I know they will be especially grateful during these tough economic times. I have experienced many economic cycles during my work career and sense we are heading back in the right direction.

Larry Strohl
Department of Natural Resources

It will be a pleasant surprise if the State's health care contributions increase, especially for the folks at CDOT who are just beginning their careers and are not making very much money to begin with.

Keep up the good work,
James P. Bemelen
Department of Transportation

Thank you for your efforts in working towards a more competitive compensation package for all of us. I continue to wonder if and when the issue of equality among *employees with no dependents* (covered family members) vs. *employees with covered dependents* will be addressed.

Please explain to me how it is fair that I, as a single person with no dependents, receives substantially less towards my benefit package than a co-worker in the same position, who covers his/her family with health insurance. If myself and the co-worker are paid the same salary, and they have family coverage and I only cover myself, then that person is in fact being paid a higher salary for the same work. This to me is unfair, as the person covering a family is being paid \$200-300 more per month in benefits.

Why doesn't the State of Colorado offer a lump sum towards benefits and let the employee decide how to spend those dollars? Employees like myself should not be penalized by not having a family to insure. There is always a lot of talk about efforts to retain good employees, but I for one feel like little is done in this regard.

I hope that your future efforts will include equalization of pay for employee only and employee + family benefit levels, and remove the bonus that goes to those with a need for family coverage.

Sincerely,
Nancy Hazlett,
Department of Transportation

Thanks for your note, Nancy.

It is a market practice among both public and private employers to effectively subsidize families by offering a more generous contribution to their premium. Your point is valid, and it is relatively unfair to you. But the law requires us to follow prevailing industry practices.

The lump sum is a great idea. The biggest problem is that currently about 33 percent of employees don't
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take our coverage (I expect that 75 percent of all state employees will sign up given the more generous benefits). The Legislature never appropriates (funds) the monies for those employees who don't sign up for coverage. This would cost at least another \$28 million, which the State doesn't have.

Looking forward, I'd like to move toward the lump-sum approach as the budget situation improves.

Thanks for what you are doing for CDOT.

All the best,
Troy

How do cost of living increases fit into this formula?

Beth Lipscomb
Division of Administrative Hearings

Beth,
Thanks for your note. Salary ranges shift upward with the survey so that anyone who falls below range-minimum gets an adjustment. All other increases would be in base-building performance-based salary increases for those rated 3 or 4. A salary freeze applies to all other employees.

Best,
Troy

I having been working at USC, now known as CSU-Pueblo, for the past 24 years and have never seen so many people working without insurance benefits. They have opted to go without insurance benefits, even with families, simply so they can put food on their tables. This, as you know, would be devastating to them and their families should any major medical condition happen to any of them.

The premiums are outrageous and the coverage and co-pays worse! This past spring, I fell at home and broke five bones. I not only had to wait in the emergency room for 3 hours, because of so many people taking in their sick children and themselves into the emergency room with flu symptoms, because they did not have insurance, but then had to deplete most of my savings paying for hospital, doctor, x-ray, medicine, etc. co-pays for the next four months! And I opted for one of the better insurance coverage! This is absolutely outrageous. Not to mention I stopped taking some of my monthly medications because the co-pays were \$60 per month for 30 pills! It makes you think...what kind of coverage are we being offered that makes it worth paying for insurance premiums like we do. No wonder so many state employees opt out of paying for insurance and go to emergency rooms for medical assistance!

This on top of 60 hours of mandatory furloughs from our agencies, staff being cut or hours being cut, and salary and hiring freezes all make for the worse morale I have seen in my past 24 years in higher education as a state employee!

So to read that you are proposing adding \$47.5 million in state employees' salary and health benefits in next year's budget is a godsend!

Claudia Atencio-Stubenrouch
CSU-Pueblo

Coats for Colorado



In conjunction with Governor Owens' proclamation of October 1, 2003 as **Coats for Colorado Day**, Dependable Cleaners

and Denver's 7 (KMGH-TV) have teamed up to collect warm coats for Colorado's needy.

Coats will be collected on Wednesday, October 1 at the State Capitol.

In support of this 22-year tradition, employees are urged to collect coats in their communities and departments/agencies and bring them to the Capitol on **October 1**. Coats may also be donated at any Dependable Cleaners through November 30.

For more information, please call **303-777-2673** extension **31**.

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efforts to eliminate tamarisk from Colorado within the next ten years. In light of this, the year's Fifth Annual Colorado Cares Day event took aim at this destructive plant. This year's event was one way to combat this challenge by soliciting the help of our citizens - a relatively inexpensive way to help preserve our state.

It was Winston Churchill who said, "We make a living by what we get. But we make a life by what we give." Each year, hundreds of Coloradans exhibit compassion and devotion when they volunteer during Colorado Cares Day.

Still, Colorado Cares Day is just one day. Although it provides an excellent opportunity to volunteer, your help is needed throughout the year to help build strong communities.

Volunteerism has accomplished great things for Colorado. Thank you for your service and your commitment to helping us make Colorado an even better place to call home.

Editor's Note: Gov. Bill Owens initiated Colorado Cares immediately upon taking office as a way for Coloradans to volunteer in their community and give back to the state. Since its inception, volunteers throughout Colorado have donated thousands of hours to helping others and preserving our state.

COLORADO ON THE MOVE™ SELECTED AS FIRST STATEWIDE WELLNESS PROGRAM

Registration has begun for the first wellness program for ALL State employees. Colorado on the Move™ is an eight-week program designed to challenge participants to increase daily activity by using a pedometer to track steps. For a nominal \$20 registration fee, participants will receive a pedometer, weekly health education information, motivation, and the chance to win one of several prizes!

For details including registration information, see www.colorado.gov/dpa under Hot Topics. Registration deadline is September 12.

ATTEND WILDLIFE WATCH FREE

Wildlife Watch is a wildlife viewing skills workshop. **State employees and family members** (adults and children over 12) are invited to attend any workshop **free of charge!** Participants need to register for Wildlife Watch online or by phone. The workshop dates, times and places are detailed on both the Web site and phone line. When you sign-up, be sure to let us know that you are a state employee and tell us how many are coming.



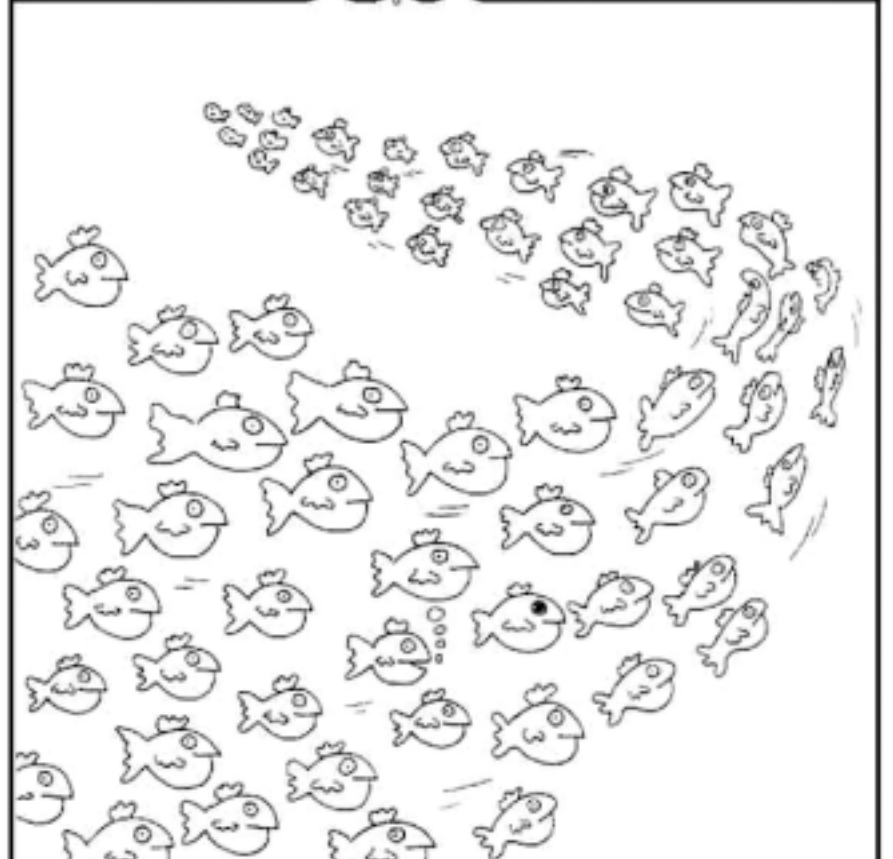
Register online at www.wildlifewatch.net
or by phone: 303- 291-7250

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Stateside MattHolman



"How was the eye doctor?"