



The I-70 Scout

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Searching for news in Watkins, Bennett, Strasburg, Byers, Deer Trail and Agate

Wednesday, September 9, 2026

Fracking activity on the rise in ArapCo

by **Steven Vetter**
Managing Editor

LITTLETON — The ongoing uptick in oil and gas development activity across unincorporated Arapahoe County doesn't appear to be slowing as one public com-

ment period deadline is quickly arriving and a handful of other projects are in some state or review by the county. The most pressing application is for the proposed Black Canyon project at County Line Road (County Road 149) and South Oakleaf Street about 20 miles south of

Bennett. Arapahoe County Public Works will receive public comments about the proposal through Wednesday, Sept. 16. Comments are being taken online only at arapahoe-co.gov. "This site proposes 12 wells to be drilled

on an approximately 325 foot by 465 foot gravel pad," said the letter of intent from applicant GMT Exploration Company. "The facility will be located on undeveloped property currently zoned for agri-

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DOUGLAS CLAUSSEN/The I-70 Scout

Firefighters work to contain a fire that broke out Sept. 5 at a property on County Road 145 south of Bennett.

Fire erupts at acreage near Ant Hills

by **Steven Vetter**
Managing Editor

STRASBURG — Despite taking about four hours on scene with smoke plumes visible from several miles in all directions, a fire near the Antelope Hills subdivision last weekend did not spread to neighboring parcels or

result in injuries. At about 5:45 p.m. Sept. 5, Bennett-Watkins Fire Rescue was dispatched to the area of Kiowa-Bennett Bennett Road and Arapahoe County Road 18 on report of an outside fire, but the call was quickly expanded to include all I-70 Corridor emergency agencies and was relocated to

South County Road 145 about 1½ miles north of County Road 6. The property is among the closest to the eastern boundary of Antelope Hills, including the Bennett Regional Park & Open Space fishing pond. "The fire involved a large num-

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Strasburg science teacher 1 of 8 finalists for top education award

by **Douglas Clausen**
Publisher & Editor

STRASBURG — A Strasburg High School science teacher is among eight finalists for Colorado's 2027 Teacher of the Year. Merci Ames had previously been named one of 21 semi-finalists for the award. She learned of the honor Sept. 3 during a sur-

prise visit to her classroom by Superintendent Kelle Bongard, Principal Victoria Dickens, Rep. Chris Richardson, R-Elizabeth, three Strasburg School Board members, and other officials. The group shared the news with Ames and helped celebrate her selection as a finalist.

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DOUGLAS CLAUSSEN/The I-70 Scout

Officials surround Strasburg science teacher Merci Ames Sept. 3 after she was named one of eight finalists for the Colorado Department of Education Teacher of the Year award. Pictured are school board member Diana Elliott, Superintendent Kelle Bongard, Emma Garrett-Nelson with the state education department, Ames, Rep. Chris Richardson, Boettcher Foundation representative Mark Paricio, and school board members Mary O'Malley and Gema Gomez.



STEVEN VETTER/The I-70 Scout

Replacement of a power pole and lines on Xmore Road at Highway 36 north of Byers continues around 8:30 a.m. on Labor Day about five hours after a vehicle struck it. In addition to Xmore being closed between the highway and County Road 2, a CORE Electric Cooperative map Monday morning showed about 40 customers without power.

Semi fire snarls traffic on I-70

by **Steven Vetter**
Managing Editor

Colorado State Patrol Limon Troop officers and local first responders found itself busy throughout the Labor Day weekend, including a semi accident and fire that closed I-70 near Deer Trail Friday afternoon and an early Monday morning car crash north of Byers that result-

ed in a small-scale power outage to the immediate area.

FRIDAY INTERSTATE RESPONSE A little after 2:30 p.m. Sept. 4, local law enforcement and fire departments were dispatched between mileposts 325 and 326 on eastbound I-70 on report of semi tractor and trailer off the

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Road ahead unclear for Xcel Power Pathway

by **Steven Vetter**
Managing Editor

Uncertainty is growing about when the Elbert County commissioners' appeal of a proposed power route from the state's utility commission and largest power company might be heard. In addition, a recent state high court ruling, which denied Xcel Energy's appeal of an Eastern Colorado court ruling against eminent domain for a power line route between a pair of company wind farms and its under-construction Power Pathway conduit, has intensified that uncertainty. In a brief unanimous decision released Aug. 31, the Colorado Supreme Court denied the utility's attempt to have it overturn a Cheyenne County district judge's ruling that Xcel Energy did not have the power to use eminent domain to acquire the right of way. That ruling followed an Aug. 20 decision from the state's high court to not fast-track Xcel's legal challenge over the targeted

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