



FRESHWATER CAST · FRIDAY CAST

Horsetooth: Cool Showers, Foothill Rock & Smallmouth Lead

Horsetooth Reservoir · Fri Oct 2 – Sun Oct 4, 2026 · bank / kayak / boat · times in MT

Mild weekend · Fri ~79° → Sat–Sun ~86–79° MT

Primary: smallmouth bass

Verify dam boards before you go

Soft Friday recreational · no named trail event pulled

Horsetooth's midweek stays showery and cool — pack layers, fish the first rock spine at light, and let the bait on the graph pick your pocket between cells.

● WEEKEND OUTLOOK

National Weather Service Boulder's point forecast for Horsetooth Reservoir frames a dry, mild weekend for the **Fri Oct 2 – Sun Oct 4, 2026** window. Read every clock in this Cast as **MT**. Friday opens near **79°F** after overnight air near **46°F** (patchy fog then sunny, 2 to 8 mph E). Saturday climbs to about **86°F / 51°F** (sunny, 3 to 13 mph N). Sunday holds near **79°F / 50°F** (sunny, 1 to 10 mph SSE). No active watches or warnings were highlighted for this pull. Barometer was not logged station-by-station on every arm; treat pressure as steady-fair under this quiet pattern.

For **smallmouth bass**, that pattern favors fishing hard around storm edges rather than waiting for a bluebird day. **First light and the hour after a cell clears** are the primary windows when thunder is not overhead. Midday plans should stay flexible — duck into a protected pocket or the truck when radar lights up. Friday is the softer traffic day; Saturday and Sunday recreational pressure builds around popular ramps, and **no named national trail event was pulled** for this water on Oct 2–4.

Carry more layers than you think you need — highs fall through the midweek on many Front Range and plains waters, and wet wind feels colder than the number on the phone. A simple three-rod rotation covers almost every bank you will fish. When a pocket goes quiet, make one short move to the next point that shows bait on the graph rather than a long empty run.

FRIDAY OCT 2

~79°F

Low ~46° · dry · 2 to 8 mph
E

Patchy Fog then Sunny

Sunrise ~6:57 AM · Sunset

~6:37 PM MT

*Best bite: first light--~10 AM;
softest weekend traffic*

SATURDAY OCT 3

~86°F

Low ~51° · dry · 3 to 13
mph N

Sunny

Sunrise ~6:58 AM · Sunset

~6:35 PM MT

*Best bite: first light--~10 AM;
shade and structure after 11
AM*

SUNDAY OCT 4

~79°F

Low ~50° · dry · 1 to 10
mph SSE

Sunny

Sunrise ~6:59 AM · Sunset

~6:34 PM MT

*Best bite: dawn edges; mid-
day slow under cover*

● LEVEL & FLOW CHEAT SHEET

Larimer County / Horsetooth recreation notices pages are the live source for pool and park notices on Horsetooth. Fixed Fri–Sun recreational generator calendars are often thin for Colorado reservoirs — treat any elevation, release, or advisory as live. Failover: check the agency and park page the morning you launch, and call the marina or park desk if you need a same-day condition read. Advisories can change without notice.

WATER	OBSERVED	FLOW / BOARDS	HOW TO FISH IT
Horsetooth dams / pool	Verify live county / park pool and recreation notices before you launch	No fixed Fri–Sun recreational release calendar pulled	Fish rock spines and points; treat any flow change as a live check, not a schedule

Dam and restricted zones stay off-limits whether flows are quiet or moving. If a local advisory, fire restriction, or temporary closure appears on the park or agency page, that overrides any general weekend outlook here.

● HOW TO FISH IT — BANK / KAYAK / BOAT

BANK

Public shoreline and day-use pockets along Horsetooth's long rock spine put points, riprap, and shade in casting range near popular access nodes. Fan-cast first light with a tube or spinnerbait, then pick apart individual spines with a Ned or drop-shot once the sun climbs. Stay on posted public access, give climbers and crowded parks room, and skip private banks. If one rock point shows bait, stay and rotate search and finesse baits before hiking the next canyon pocket. Carry a small rain shell on the hike — showers can arrive faster than the walk back to the truck — and keep casts tight to the first break when wind turns a bank on.

KAYAK

Launch early at a public ramp and paddle onto the nearest rock spine or point before wind and traffic build. Horsetooth rewards a slow, thorough rock plan more than racing the whole reservoir. Wear a PFD, mind afternoon winds on the long fetches, and have a bailout cove when showers or lightning build. Keep a tube, a small swimbait, and a Ned on the deck. Mark bait first, then fish the break thoroughly. If a cell builds while you are mid-lake, turn toward the nearest protected shoreline early rather than finishing "one more cast" under dark sky.

BOAT

Public ramps put you on rock spines, points, and creek arms quickly. Start shallow on rock at dawn with a topwater or spinnerbait when showers allow, then rotate to tubes, Neds, and small swimbaits on the break. Midday, fish shaded rock and protected pockets rather than empty long runs under dark sky. Keep a spotter when running, give other boats space on narrow lanes, and honor dam restricted zones. After a cell clears, fish the next stable hour hard on the nearest productive spine. Keep a simple run plan on the graph: launch, fish the nearest baited structure, then expand only if marks stay empty.

● PURE-GAS.ORG E0 · THIS WATER

Closest public **ethanol-free (E0)** listings from Pure-Gas.org near Horsetooth. Listings can change — confirm the E0 grade at the pump if that matters for your motor. No pump prices in this Cast.

- Horsetooth Inn Rv Park — Fort Collins, CO · ~2.2 mi · UNBRANDED · E0 octane 91 · 970-999-5650
 - Conoco — Fort Collins, CO · ~4.8 mi · CONOCO · E0 octane 88, 91 · 720-677-5664
 - Magnolia Street Market — Fort Collins, CO · ~5.0 mi · FRONTIER · E0 octane 91 · 970-482-3665
 - Team Petroleum — Fort Collins, CO · ~5.1 mi · UNBRANDED · E0 octane 88 · 970-482-2533
- Call ahead when you can — E0 availability changes. Distances are rough estimates to this water.

● LURE BOX

TOP

Walking bait and small popper on rock at dawn when storms allow.

MID

Spinnerbait or small swimbait on wind-blown rock; tube ready for the same cast.

BOTTOM

Tube, Ned rig, and compact jig on the first break and shaded riprap.

Match size to **crawfish and small baitfish along rock spines and points**. Size down when fish short-strike; size up when you mark bigger bait. Primary species this week is **smallmouth bass**.

● SMALLMOUTH BASS LIFE STAGE

Spawn is long over. This midweek window is about **post-summer smallmouth** tracking craws and bait on rock. Shower edges can help when lightning is not overhead. Match the bait you mark.

What's on the menu: crawfish and small baitfish along rock spines and points are the most likely menu this week. Public hatch reports are often thin — lead with the forage above, and match the bait you mark on the graph or see dimpling on the surface.

Watch for bait dimpling on calm mornings and for birds working a point or riprap seam. Those clues beat a generic deep-only rule this week. If fish short-strike, downsize before you abandon the spot; if they flash and leave, try one size larger or a different profile on the next cast.

● ALSO HOT / ALSO IN SEASON

Largemouth in quieter pockets and **trout** for light-line anglers. Smallmouth lead this Cast.

● PRESSURE, CLARITY & BITE WINDOWS

Clarity swings with wind and showers — a stained bank can sit next to clearer main-lake rock. Start with natural colors in clearer water and switch to a darker, slower profile when a pocket muddies. Decision tree for this midweek: **low light / storm edge** = points and riprap with a search bait; **stable cloud** = slower bottom baits on the break; **lightning** = off the water, no debate.

Weekday recreation is softer than weekend traffic — launch early, fish the plan, and treat crowd pressure as soft weekday recreation unless a named event shows on the calendar.

Heavy Traffic: no named trail event pulled for Mon–Wed on this water. Soft Friday recreational; Saturday–Sunday builds at popular ramps only.

● FOOTHILL ROCK GAME PLAN

Fish one spine thoroughly between showers rather than hopping every canyon. Layers and a radar plan matter more than a huge lure box this midweek. Clear open water early if lightning is close, then reset on the same rock once the cell passes.

Keep notes on which bank produced and what the graph showed — early-fall patterns often repeat the next morning if nights stay cool and the wind direction holds. If Wednesday's storms arrive early, shorten the open-water window and commit to closer structure sooner.

● ACCESS NOTES & SAFETY

Regs change by water and season. Use the live CPW licensing and regulation pages for bag limits and gear rules before you fish. County park rules, parking, and mussel checks can change — verify before you trail in. Wear a PFD when the boat is on plane, keep a spotter in busy lanes, and

give swimming beaches room. If lightning builds, get off exposed water early.

Trailer lights, spare PFDs, and a basic tool kit belong in the truck on any midweek hop — small failures cost more fishing time than almost any lure change. Tell someone your launch and return window when you fish alone, and leave with enough daylight for the drive if Wednesday storms run long.

● GEAR & PACING NOTES

On a wet Colorado midweek, pace matters more than covering every mile of shoreline. Fish a productive bank thoroughly, then make one deliberate move to the next point that shows bait on the graph. Keep rain shells, spare socks, and a dry bag in the truck so a soaking cell does not end the day. A calm, safe plan between storms beats a rushed lake-wide tour under lightning risk.

Match lure size to the bait you mark after each shower — cold rain can shrink the bite for an hour, then turn it back on along the same seam. If Wednesday's coverage stays high, shorten the open-water plan and commit to structure you can reach quickly from the ramp.

● LOOKING AHEAD

Next 1–3 weeks: watch the first true cool, stable autumn stretch and any weekend tournament calendars that would stack Heavy Traffic on Horsetooth. As nights keep dropping, expect smallmouth bass to spend more of the morning on bait and edges. Confirm mussel rules, park hours, and storm patterns as the calendar flips.

● SOURCES

NWS Boulder point forecast · Larimer County / Horsetooth recreation notices · Pure-Gas.org E0 listings. Elevations, advisories, and station lists change — verify dam boards and pump grade before you go.