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# THE Durango HERALD

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## Drought drives insects from mountains to La Plata County



JERRY MCBRIDE/Durango Herald photos  
Joe Kuefler, left, supervisor with the Animas Mosquito Control District, and Seth Foster, AMCD manager, inspect the district's new field drone on Thursday. The drone will save staff members many hours otherwise spent trekking through difficult terrain by distributing granular mosquito control products into hard-to-reach areas to control mosquito larvae.

# Mosquitoes on the move

**BY CHRISTIAN BURNLEY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Mosquitoes don't suck blood to feed. They suck blood to breed.

Breed, they have – and migrated, too – said Seth Foster, Animas Mosquito Control District manager.

"I always find that insulting when I get bit by a mosquito and I don't get her and she flies away, because I know that she's going to make eggs out of my blood," Foster said.

Keeping the mosquito population of La Plata County in check this year has proved challenging thanks to the migration of mosquitoes of the culex and aedes genuses from mountain elevations up to at least 13,000 feet because of this summer's shortage of moisture.

So less water means more mosquitoes? That may sound counter-intuitive, Foster said, but it isn't.

"If you think about it, the mosquitoes just need some damp soil to lay their eggs, and



Melody Schaaf, officer manager and lab technician for Animas Mosquito Control District, prepares to identify species of mosquito larvae under a microscope in the district's new lab and headquarters at 6525 East Animas Road (County Road 250).

if they don't have anywhere to lay their eggs, they're going to go flying," he said.

Mosquito species that inhabit the San Juan National Forest can fly 20 to 25 miles from where they hatched in search

See **MOSQUITOES, 8A**

See **RAIN, 8A**

**DURANGO**

## Nearly 2 inches of rain fell last week

Valkyrie Relay athletes brave storm for Saturday race

**BY CHRISTIAN BURNLEY**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Mudslides, flash flooding and thousands of lightning strikes defined a dynamic low-pressure system in La Plata County last week. Likewise, athletes in the Valkyrie Relay on Saturday were measured by their perseverance through the storms.

Hundreds of athletes and spectators braved the vicious weather as racers competed in the approximately 80-mile, eight-hour multisport relay race that consisted of trail running, mountain biking, road cycling, paddleboarding, swimming, kayaking and road running across La Plata County.

Their determination paid off, said Erin Hughes, Valkyrie Relay co-director, at the finish line at Santa Rita Park on Saturday afternoon. By about 3 p.m., dark thunderclouds above the park had given way to blue and sunny skies.

"Thank you to the racers. Give yourselves a round of applause for sticking around in this weather," she said through a microphone. "... It was a rough day. It was really touch and go, wasn't it? You guys are amazing."

Before the closing ceremonies, as the last racers were still pounding pavement toward the finish line, Hughes had breathed a sigh of relief. Early Saturday morning, she was sure the weather would force her to call off the relay altogether, she said.

The first leg of the race, a nearly 10-mile trail run through the Rocky Road, Extended Ridge, Sugar, Cuchillo and Horse Gulch trails, was initially scheduled to begin at 6 a.m. and was delayed about an hour.

For the second leg of the race, mountain biking, race coordinators had to readjust plank bridges and shorten

# Colorado attorney general weighs in on pressing issues

Phil Weiser says he's a fighter, and that's what state residents need

**BY SCOUT EDMONDSON**  
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Headlines abound in today's political discourse about President Donald Trump's blizzard of legal battles and the separation of powers between the executive, congressional and judicial branches of the U.S. government. The Associated Press reports that the administration is involved in 320 lawsuits regarding

Trump's executive orders and the administration's actions.

Of those, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser has either filed or been involved in 35 lawsuits – the majority of which he has won in court. He has been in the judicial system for a long time, working for the Obama and Clinton administrations and as a law clerk for Supreme Court Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Byron White. Those are both rea-



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/Associated Press file  
Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser speaks during an election watch party Nov. 8, 2022, in downtown Denver.

sons why he argues Coloradans should cast their votes for him, rather than his Democratic rival Sen. Michael Bennet, during the 2026 Colorado gubernatorial race.

"I have shown that commitment to fighting for principle and moral clarity," he said during a Sept. 11 interview with *The Durango Herald*.

In a wide-ranging interview, Weiser covered topics having to do with his lawsuits, wolf reintroduction in Colorado, the state's rural-urban split, political

See **WEISER, 2A**