

January 21, 2023

Happy New Year,

We're still hoping the next public scoping meeting on the current Feasibility Study will be held in late winter or early spring. A draft of the Study could be available by the end of 2023, and we expect an update on the Study's progress at the next public meeting. I'll let you know as soon as I get a date for that meeting.

In the meanwhile, let's talk about the Big Question: Don't we need this storage? Over the next few months, we will attempt to address this question from various angles. The short answer from Save Bear Creek Lake Park is that a significant expansion of the Bear Creek Reservoir creates an outsized negative impact relative to the minimal, intermittent benefit.

We recognize the severity of the growing water crisis in the West and in Colorado specifically. While we support thoughtful sustainable storage as part of the longterm solution, we must lead with conservation and recognize the limitations and negative impacts of surface storage.

How much can be gained through conservation? According to the Colorado Water Plan, the state's water use can be divided into three broad sectors: Agriculture (90% of Colorado's water use), Municipal (7%) and Industrial (3%). Municipal use will be the topic of a future email, but today I'd like to focus on opportunities for water conservation in agriculture. A cornerstone of Colorado's economy, we rely on agriculture for all of our food and fiber. The inspiring innovations and efficiencies being implemented by farmers and ranchers will be a critical piece of securing our water future.

Water Education Colorado dedicated their summer edition of Headwaters Magazine to the promise of conservation in the Agricultural Sector. The lead article, Farms of the Future, describes how "Tomorrow's farms and ranches will use less water than today's."

<https://www.watereducationcolorado.org/publications-and-radio/headwaters-magazine/summer-2022-how-are-colorado-farms-and-ranches-managing-water-for-tomorrow/>

Significant efficiencies can be gained through improving irrigation infrastructure and methods. The article also describes the many benefits of regenerative agriculture and notes, "Irrigated corn fields of eastern Colorado can require 10% less irrigation water depending on tillage and residue management practices, according to a 2020 study." While 10% doesn't seem like much, a 4% percent reduction in Colorado's agricultural water use is equivalent to a 50% reduction in state-wide municipal use.

Let's lead with conservation in all sectors and thoughtfully evaluate the impacts and relative benefits of surface storage projects.

Our organization is dedicated to the responsible preservation of Bear Creek Lake Park. To that end, we must see the issue in the broader context of our water resources.

For more on the promise of Restorative Agriculture, check out the 2020 documentary, Kiss the Ground here: <https://kissthegroundmovie.com>

You can also attend a free screening of the film in Lakewood on Friday, January 27 from 7-9 PM. Details: <https://www.milehichurch.org/calendar/kiss-the-ground-documentary-screening/>

Stay warm and enjoy the snow,

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Katie Gill
Chair
Save Bear Creek Lake Park