

February 2023

This month I attended another Lakewood City Council meeting to provide an update on our work. As many of you recall, the City unanimously approved a Proclamation Supporting Save Bear Creek Lake Park last spring. We are still waiting for the second Public Scoping Meeting to be announced and will be given 30 days advance notice.

One of the reasons we oppose a large expansion of the Bear Creek Reservoir is because many of the park's assets would be consumed by the inundation. In the last few years, policy directives have placed additional emphasis on assessing the value of social well-being in evaluating water projects.

At the October 14, 2021 Public Scoping Meeting hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Chief of Project Management Greg Johnson said, "There is some special emphasis on social well-being considerations in the decision-making process that came out of the Assistant Secretary of the Army within the last calendar year, so social well-being is being elevated to a higher level of consideration versus just pure economics anymore." He went on to say, "It's one of the reasons we are trying to keep the Lakewood community engaged in the process, because you'll know better than we will in terms of how those effects translate into your own backyard."

A multi-agency report released last July, linked below, furthers this emphasis. It is titled ENHANCING BENEFITS EVALUATION FOR WATER RESOURCES PROJECTS: TOWARDS A MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH FOR NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS. <https://ewn.erdc.dren.mil/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/EvolutionofUSACEWaterResourcesProjectSelection.pdf>

The document describes how USACE has evaluated costs and benefits of water projects over the years. Economic drivers have long been the primary focus of BCA (Benefits Cost Analysis). In recent years, project valuation strategies have sought to incorporate benefits that are less quantifiable, such as Environmental Justice, Ecosystem Services, and Social Well-Being. From the Executive Summary of the report:

- The past and current use of benefit-cost analysis (BCA) has contributed to undervaluing the environmental and social benefits of potential water resource alternatives and projects.
- In 2020-2021, Congress directed USACE to advance the practice of comprehensive benefits analysis that addresses economic, environmental and social goals.

Importantly, these policy directives were not in effect when the Chatfield Reallocation was approved. Furthermore, the negative social and environmental impacts of a large reallocation at Bear Creek Lake are dramatically more significant when compared to those impacts at Chatfield.

If you haven't shared your concerns with USACE, please consider submitting a comment. More info here: <https://savebearcreeklakepark.org/take-action/>

Thanks for your continued interest in this longterm effort!

Katie Gill
Chair- Save Bear Creek Lake Park