

Happy Holidays!

The latest from the Corps of Engineers is that they are continuing to refine the Storage Yield Analysis for the Reallocation Study. This will provide an estimate of how much water might actually be available for storage in Bear Creek Reservoir. We asked the Corps how the reservoir expansion proposal might be affected by water rights holders who are planning to increase their withdrawals from Bear Creek in the coming years. The agency is partnering with Brown and Caldwell Engineers to assess yield potential and how this concern could impact the study.

Our Facebook and Instagram posts for December, The Twelve Days of SaveBCLP, highlight key reasons to Save It and how you can help.

Twelve Days of SaveBCLP

The First Day:

RIPARIAN CORRIDORS are the transition zone along flowing water where a wide variety of plants and animals thrive. According to the EPA “Riparian areas comprise less than one percent of the land area of most western states, yet up to 80 percent of all wildlife species in this region of the country are dependent upon riparian areas for at least part of their life cycles.” Nearly two miles of Riparian zone along Bear Creek and Turkey Creek would be lost if the reservoir is expanded to the largest size being studied by the Army Corp of Engineers. Human development is reducing these areas at an alarming rate and what’s in the park could not be replaced on-site through mitigation efforts.

The Second Day:

OPEN SPACE and QUALITY OF LIFE- At least 800,000 people enter the park each year. This number is probably low because visitors who walk or ride into BCLP are not counted, and neither are those who drive by the gate with annual passes. Natural open space is vitally important for our physical and mental health. The park’s proximity to where so many people live- along with its combination of shady forests, grasslands and flowing water- makes it irreplaceable.

The Third Day:

WILDLIFE HABITAT and MIGRATION ROUTES- Plants and animals thrive in the riparian corridors and open space of BCLP. Some live here all year and some migrate through. Much of this would be lost by an enlarged pool with fluctuating water levels. The Colorado Water Plan highlights "Thriving Watersheds" as a priority. Proof that even the Water Plan contains key reasons to Save It!

The Fourth Day:

GET INVOLVED, DONATE! Send your comments on the need to Save It to the Army Corps of Engineers and elected officials. Numbers matter. Sign up for our email list, put a Save It sign in your yard, donate to our 501(c)(3) organization, tell others about the issue. Tools for all these activities can be found at our web site.

To submit a comment: <https://savebearcreeklakepark.org/take-action/>

To donate: <https://savebearcreeklakepark.org/donate/>

The Fifth Day:

FLOOD CONTROL AND DAM SAFETY- “There’s value in an empty reservoir.” That’s what a Colorado water expert told us not long ago. Bear Creek Lake Dam and Reservoir were built to prevent floods downstream on Bear Creek and the S. Platte River. Heavy rains hit the front range in 1965, catastrophically flooding Denver. That event led to the building of dams at

Bear Creek, Chatfield and Cherry Creek. Storing more water in Bear Creek Lake could compromise the original purpose.

The Sixth Day:

DON'T WE NEED THIS WATER STORAGE? ISN'T THIS PART OF THE COLORADO WATER PLAN? Um, no. Conservation and smarter water storage are the strategies we need to secure our water future. While the Colorado Water Plan (and related documents) calls out the need to study ideas such as an expanded reservoir at BCLP, it does not identify or justify this particular project. In fact, several of the goals discussed in these plans would be undermined by the environmental degradation caused by enlarging the reservoir.

The Seventh Day:

CONSERVATION: THE REAL KEY TO OUR WATER FUTURE- Colorado can't simply create more water - we have to live with what's available (and that amount is decreasing). Using less water is the only real way to get there. 90% of the water used in Colorado is for agricultural purposes. This is where most conservation needs to happen. Agricultural producers provide our food and fiber. They are also a critical part of the state's economy. Colorado can support this sector and our shared water future through investing in improved irrigation and soils management. Municipal use accounts for 7% of our water, and about half of that is for outdoor watering, which can be reduced or eliminated.

The Eighth Day:

DEPENDABLE YIELD- The study being conducted is looking at storing up to 20,000 acre feet of water in Bear Creek Lake. That's **TEN TIMES** more water than is normally in the reservoir! Although the Army Corps of Engineers has not released study findings, it's highly unlikely that this volume of water (that's not already owned by other users) will flow down Bear Creek and Turkey Creek in most years. We'd be left with a fluctuating lake level and wide mud flats on (most) low water years. These mud flats would be unsightly and bad for the environment.

The Ninth Day:

ALTERNATIVE STORAGE OPTIONS- Above ground storage in fluctuating reservoirs represents old-school thinking! We're constantly reading stories about nearly empty reservoirs and the need to implement different methods of storing water. Two great ideas we support are aquifer recharging and gravel pit storage. Aquifers - naturally occurring areas containing large amounts of underground water - have been depleted over the decades. We can store "excess" water here, where it won't evaporate, and pump it back out later. And, gravel pits along the S. Platte River can be used to store water - this is already happening and would be a great solution for water that's not available every year.

The Tenth Day:

WATER QUALITY IN THE RESERVOIR AND DOWNSTREAM- A larger quantity of water in Bear Creek Lake would result in more areas of very shallow water. In the summer, warming water in shallow areas leads to water quality problems like algae blooms. This would also effect the quality of water downstream from the dam as this water is released to flow through the greenbelt in Lakewood and on to the S. Platte River.

The Eleventh Day:

TWELVE MILES OF TRAILS would be lost with more trails disrupted in the Army Corps of Engineers' proposal to expand the reservoir by 20,000 acre feet. These trails are on relatively flat ground, making the area perfect for a wide range of user groups. The park's location on the edge of the Denver metro area makes it accessible to large numbers of users seeking relaxation and recreation in a natural environment.

The Twelfth Day:

FUTURE GENERATIONS- Much of the natural world has been lost to human development and destruction. This harms the ecosystem - the plants and animals that can thrive without our interference. People also need a healthy environment for recreation, health and survival. Replacing places like BCLP is nearly impossible. As our supporter, Liam Hopkins, told Lakewood's Mayor and council last year, "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children". Maybe the best reason of all to Save It - for those yet to come.

Warmest wishes,