

Happy Thanksgiving!

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Board of Directors was scheduled to hear an update on the Bear Creek Study last Thursday, November 20. We were planning to give a short presentation after the update. However, CWCB Staff received communication from the Corps of Engineers on November 19th and did not feel comfortable updating the Board after that communication. Therefore, the Bear Creek Update was pulled from last week's agenda. The agencies are scheduling a call to clarify the new information. CWCB Staff is committed to updating Save Bear Creek Lake Park as soon as they have additional information to share.

The Bear Creek Update has been moved to the CWCB's next quarterly Board of Directors meeting in January. Despite not being able to present in person last week, we provided a written comment to CWCB's Directors (see below). Please take a moment to read it. As volunteer Directors at SaveBCLP, we are working hard to advocate for the future of Bear Creek Lake Park. We are not blind to the state's water needs. We support less destructive and more sustainable opportunities for water use and storage so that critical habitat and environmental assets, such as those within Bear Creek Lake Park, may be preserved.

While the roller-coaster of hurry-up and wait continues, there is no doubt that we are getting closer to a full draft of the Feasibility Study. Please stay tuned.

We are grateful for your continued vigilance and participation in this community-wide effort!

Katie Gill and Don Baumgardt
Directors
Save Bear Creek Lake Park



November 20, 2025
Comment to the Colorado Water Conservation Board
Re: Bear Creek Study Update

Save Bear Creek Lake Park, Inc. values CWCB's mission of safeguarding Colorado's water future and appreciates this opportunity to comment. We are organized, motivated and represent a large community of passionate supporters who strongly support Alternative 1, a 300 acre-feet (af) reallocation. This would provide needed water storage to three local providers. On the other hand, we strongly oppose Alternative 5, a 6,000 af reallocation.

- There is a high environmental cost to Alternative 5. Grasslands, wetlands and riparian habitats all along the Front Range are being threatened or destroyed. This park is the most intact such area on the edge of the Denver metro region and is vital for both year-round and migrating wildlife.

- Riparian areas comprise less than 2% of Colorado, yet they support the highest density and abundance of plants and animals. The cottonwood forests along Bear and Turkey Creeks provide myriad ecosystem services including carbon sequestration and temperature regulation. These forests should be preserved, not destroyed. They support Thriving Watersheds. (*Colorado Water Plan Actions 3.1-3.10*)
- The Corps' review notes that an additional 6,000 acre-feet will have a "high" wetland/ riparian impact as significant lengths of Bear and Turkey Creeks would be lost. Thousands of trees stand within that inundation area. Alternative 5 captures .6 miles of Bear Creek and half a mile of Turkey Creek, for a total of 1.1 miles of stream loss.



6000 ac-ft Expansion Results: 183 acres inundated including 1.15 miles of riparian corridor

Area Capacity model TOPO Ref. <https://coloradohazardmapping.com/lidarDownload> (2020 DRCOG SET)

- 6,000 acre-feet would raise the normal pool elevation by approximately 33 feet. For comparison, the 20,000 af addition at Chatfield Reservoir directly corresponds to only 12 vertical feet of pool rise. Bear Creek Lake Park is 1/3 the size of Chatfield and has much less capacity to absorb inundation extents and "mud flats" associated with annual fluctuations of the pool.
- There is also a high social cost to a large reallocation. I cannot emphasize enough how critical Bear Creek Lake Park is to many thousands of people who rely on it for health and well-being. It supports Vibrant Communities. (*Colorado Water Plan 1.1-1.10*)

- Being close to the metro area and offering affordable, accessible terrain to a wide variety of users, the Park hosts over 800,000 visits each year. The City of Lakewood's assessment identified specific and significant recreational impacts of a 5,000 af reallocation.
- An additional 6,000 acre-feet would inundate miles of forested, shady trails, the most cherished portion of the park for those seeking natural refuge. Inside these riparian corridors, traffic noise is replaced by the sounds of flowing water, singing birds, and hooting owls as cool breezes move along the creeks. This is not just poetic hyperbole. The threatened region of the Park immerses people in the natural world. It cannot be mitigated with new trails sandwiched between a larger pool and the surrounding roads and highways.
- The preliminary storage yield model relied on pre-2017 inflow data. Since then, withdrawals from Bear Creek have increased substantially to provide water to the Red Rocks Ranch. These withdrawals will continue to increase as the development builds out over the next five years, likely reducing inflows into the reservoir. We appreciate that further analysis of firm yield potential is planned.
- The federally authorized purpose of the dam and reservoir is flood control. Climate change is water change. Flood risk and uncertainty are increasing. Wildfire risk in the upper Bear Creek Watershed creates additional uncertainty around the potential scope of future flood events.
- A 6,000 a-f reallocation would undermine Goals 6, 7 and 8 of the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan: to Protect and Enhance Watershed Function, Environmental Attributes, and Recreational Attributes.
- Dozens of elected officials from all levels of government have visited the site with us. The City of Lakewood also issued a *Proclamation Supporting Save Bear Creek Lake Park*, and the Town of Morrison adopted a Resolution opposing a significant reallocation.
- Let's lead with conservation and utilize alternatives that are less destructive and more sustainable. Resilient Planning (*Colorado Water Plan 4.1-4.10*) suggests further investigation of the Non-Federal alternatives listed in the Corp's review.

At the recent C9 Summit Director Lorelei Cloud spoke of water as a relative, not just a resource. This kinship is why we are fighting for Bear and Turkey Creeks.

Thank you for your consideration and service.

Respectfully,

Katie Gill
 Director, Save Bear Creek Lake Park, Inc.