

Reallocation of Bear Creek Lake

JoAnn Hackos. November 1, 2021 :

A virtual meeting, hosted by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Army Core of Engineers, and water developers was held on October 14. They have learned from the “success” of the Chatfield Reallocation that parks are a great place to store water. This group is now conducting a Feasibility Study to inundate Bear Creek Lark Park,

A group has been formed called [Save Bear Creek Lake Park](http://SaveBearCreekLakePark.org), you can contact them at info@SaveBearCreekLakePark.org. The group founder said:

“I first heard about the proposal to expand the reservoir in an informal 2019 water quality report by the Bear Creek Watershed Association that was presented to the Town of Morrison. The report mentioned a proposal to expand the reservoir from 2,000 to 22,000 acre feet. I thought it was a typo and asked the Town to look into it. It wasn’t a typo.”

The Bear Creek Lake Reallocation Project, if completed as proposed, will increase the Bear Creek Reservoir to more than ten times its current volume and inundate 493 acres of Bear Creek Lake Park.

After a two-year delay, the CWCB and the Corps decided to move forward with the Bear Creek Lake Reallocation Feasibility Study. A 20,000 acre feet expansion would inundate nearly 500 acres of trails and over a mile of Bear Creek. Cottonwood trees along Bear and Turkey Creek would be removed, destroying significant stretches of riparian habitat. These inner regions of the park, where the surrounding highways are not seen or heard, will never be the same.

[View the slides](#) presented at the first Public Scoping Meeting on October 14. They provide an overview of the Bear Creek Lake Reallocation proposal.

Now is the time to send our comments to the Army Corps of Engineers. If we want to preserve Bear Creek’s wonderful birdlife and migrant stronghold, we need to act now. Here is a key statement from the proposed feasibility study: Impacts on recreational resources could significantly affect the character of Bear Creek Lake Park. Although impacts must be mitigated, maintaining the park’s overall character (e.g. land-based vs. water-based) may be difficult.

Denver Audubon wrote:

“The Reallocation would cause substantial changes/damage to terrestrial-based recreation at Bear Creek Lake Park. This is a well-known birdwatching site, featured in the book *The Best Front Range Bird Hikes* by Norm Lewis (Golden, CO: The Colorado Mountain Club Press, 2021), p. 115-121.”

The Bear Creek Valley has also been designated as an [Audubon Important Bird Area](#) (IBA).

“Two hundred twenty different bird species have been found in the corridor. Of these, 153 species, about 55%, are neotropical migrants. Observations have confirmed that 95 of the species breed in the Bear Creek corridor. Teams have observed 167 of the species in specific habitats and for levels of breeding and abundance during the migrating and breeding seasons.”

Please send your comments soon to:

Mr. John Shelman
USACE
Attn: CENWO-PM-AC
1616 Capitol Ave.
Omaha, NE 68102