

Background and Overview of Study Underway at Chatfield Reservoir

This is the first white paper in a series to help provide information on the Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Study currently underway at Chatfield Reservoir. The purpose of the study is to determine if Front Range water providers can use an existing storage facility to help provide for a more reliable water supply along the Front Range of Colorado. Located 25 miles southwest of Denver, Chatfield Reservoir currently provides Denver Metropolitan area citizens with protection from South Platte River flooding, some limited water storage capability and numerous recreational opportunities.

Periodic flooding on the South Platte River has occurred throughout history as a result of snowmelt runoff or major rainstorm events. Most notably, a devastating flood in the Denver area happened in 1965 causing loss of life and severe property damage on the order of \$3 billion in today's dollars. To address this situation, Congress authorized the United States Army Corps of Engineers to begin constructing Chatfield dam in 1967. In 1974, land now known as Chatfield State Park was leased to the state. Over the next thirty-five years, the park environs were improved to include diverse recreational activities such as camping, boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, biking and horseback riding, as well as provide wildlife habitat.

Located on the South Platte River, Chatfield Reservoir provides a unique opportunity for Front Range water providers to store water for future uses. This project was authorized by Congress in 1986. In 1999, the State of Colorado signed an agreement with the United States to formally study if and how more water might be stored at Chatfield. In 2006, studies confirmed that additional water could be safely stored in Chatfield Reservoir, without making any changes to the dam or spillway, through use of storage space currently reserved for flood control.

Upon the completion of the current study effort, a document called a "Draft Environmental Impact Statement" will be released for public review and comment. The period for public comment on the document is expected in the summer or fall of 2011. If the project is determined to be feasible, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works could approve the report and issue a "Record of Decision" to reallocate a portion of the storage space in Chatfield Lake to allow additional water to be stored in the reservoir. It could take several years to complete planning and implement these changes.

In the coming months, a series of articles will address information about the study, including who is participating in the study, who may benefit if the Corps determines more water can be stored at Chatfield, who intends to purchase a portion of the reallocated storage space and who (or what) could be impacted. Entities participating in the study include water providers, recreational interests, environmental interests and agricultural interests. Beneficiaries of the Chatfield Reallocation Project would include water providers in Arapahoe, Douglas, Park and Weld counties, homeowners, farmers and ranchers and state park users.

There will be potential impacts and benefits from any project of this type, and this series of articles will help to raise the public's interest and awareness of the perspectives that were included in the study process. To learn more information about this important study at Chatfield, please look for this series of articles by visiting: www.chatfieldstudy.org.

1st Chatfield Whitepaper

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By: Chatfield Water Providers

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