

Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Project helps Denver drink

More than four million people and counting are thirsty in the greater Denver area but have a limited supply of water to drink. This is because the area has a growth rate that has steadily increased over the last 10 years and is projected to continue growing.

“In 1958 Congress enacted legislation that provided for water supply storage to be an authorized purpose at Corps of Engineers reservoir projects which was an expression of an important new federal policy,” said Kayla Eckert Uptmor, Chief of Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District. The Omaha District, along with the state of Colorado, recognizes the population growth and has a plan to provide storage of water for consumption and for farming for years to come; the Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Project.

The Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Project is a plan developed by USACE, in conjunction with the state of Colorado, which takes the Chatfield Reservoir and increases its storage capacity without compromising its designated flood-control function. The additional water allows both municipal and agricultural water providers to meet the needs within the state.

“Based on the current and future water demands anticipated by the State of Colorado, the project is realizing that vision of inclusion of storage for anticipated demands by allocating 20,600 acre feet of storage in the Chatfield Reservoir for municipal and industrial water supply and other purposes including agriculture, environmental

restoration and recreation and fishery habitat protection and enhancement,” Eckert Uptmor continued.

The project is a partnership between eight water providers in the Denver metropolitan area and northeast Colorado, and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

The Chatfield Reservoir, built between 1967 and 1975 by USACE as a response to a flood, is used for flood-control and as a water supply reservoir for Denver but is also used for various other activities. The reservoir offers fishing, camping, scuba diving, hiking, water skiing, an Audubon center and fishing to local residents. There is also a hot air balloon launch area and an RV dump station for campers staying longer than a few days.

Construction is scheduled to start this fall, and some of these amenities will be temporarily effected as progress is made. The Chatfield Reservoir Mitigation Company was created in 2015 to implement the project and to ensure that recreation on the reservoir will continue to remain available for current and future generations.

To ensure the public continues to be well informed about the project, the CRMC hosted an open house on May 30, 2017, and invited all local and interested citizens to visit and learn about mitigation efforts to preserve the reservoir and the activities associated with it. Engineering and design consultants were in attendance to answer all questions regarding reservoir reallocation.

“The entire team strives to keep the public informed on the implementation activities for the project. The May 30th Open House is a great example of the public outreach efforts,” said Colleen Horihan, project manager, Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha

District. Approximately 200 people attended the open house to learn about the project.

“(The open house is a) reflection of USACE's commitment to ongoing transparency and collaboration that this project has had since the original team led by Planning Branch staff Gwyn Jarrett, Eric Laux and others completed the Feasibility Report/Environmental Impact Statement that culminated in a Record of Decision,” commented Eckert Uptmor.

The Feasibility Report/EIS for the Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Project was completed by USACE on May 29, 2014. Additionally, the Record of Decision was signed on the same date approving the recreational and environmental mitigation efforts identified by the eight Chatfield Project participants.

There are several environmental mitigation efforts to ensure the additional stored water does not negatively affect the area around the reservoir. One of the many environmental mitigation plans is to remove dying, dead and invasive trees to protect the safety of park visitors. After that, the CRMC will monitor the health of the remaining trees after the completion of the project to ensure the wildlife, bird and endangered species habitat stays intact.

Construction is scheduled to last between 1 ½ to 2 years; however, no additional water will be stored in the reservoir until the required environmental mitigation and recreational facility modifications are completed. All project participants want the mitigation work to be completed with as little impact on visitors as possible.

To learn more about the project and the many mitigation efforts designed to benefit the public, visit <http://chatfieldreallocation.org>.

Additionally, there are regular updates to the project's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ChatfieldReallocation/>.