

Introduction

The Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners emerged from the first Cherry Creek watershed forum held in 1999 and have been successful in promoting active stewardship of the Cherry Creek watershed ever since. The Partners formed in response to the need for cross-jurisdictional coordination and communication on watershed issues such as open space connections, recreation and water quality in our streams and reservoir. The Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners enjoy the time, talent and financial support of individual citizens and representatives from land use jurisdictions, state and federal resource management agencies, conservation, recreation and historic preservation groups and the business community. The Partners have participation from agencies and individuals in both the upper and lower portions of the watershed, above and below the dam, providing regular information-sharing forums, coordination, and participation in projects and activities that enhance water resources and promote stewardship and community pride.

2024 Outreach

The [Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority](#) (CCBWQA) was created in 1985 and tasked by Colorado's Legislature with preserving, protecting and enhancing the water quality of Cherry Creek and Cherry Creek Reservoir. Water quality can be thought of as a measure of the suitability of water for a particular use based on selected physical, chemical, and biological characteristics. Water in Cherry Creek and the Reservoir is managed to remain swimmable, boatable and fishable.

The Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners (Partners) engage in a variety of activities and invite area schools, businesses and residents to join us as we explore the many benefits of living, working and playing along Cherry Creek. From Prairie Canyon Ranch and Castlewood Canyon State Park near the Palmer Divide, along the historic 'Cherokee Trail' and on to the confluence of Cherry Creek with the South Platte River in the heart of Denver, the Partners invite curious creek-lovers to learn about the rich human history, natural history and ecology of Cherry Creek.

The Partners help explain some of the many stream protection projects undertaken by the Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority and their partners in Douglas, Arapahoe and Denver Counties. Early in 2024, we began planning for the Cherry Creek Dam Safety Outreach Event. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), who built Cherry Creek Dam between 1948 and 1950 also operate the dam and reservoir to lower flood risk to the downstream communities. The USACE "Silver Jackets Project" was intended to increase public awareness and understanding of the role Cherry Creek Dam, along with Bear Creek and Chatfield Dams, plays in reducing flood risk in greater Metro Denver. Each spring the USACE releases a significant amount of water from the Dam 'the flush' and this event was timed to coincide with the release of 150 to 1,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) or roughly 1,125 to 97,500 gallons on May 22nd. The Partners coordinated the planning, logistics and communication with neighbors and residents above and below the dam for the 'Be Dam Aware' community event on May 18th.



2024 Outings

Each year the Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners lead excursions along Cherry Creek where interested local residents can see their tax dollars at work. The late January **Hawk Walk on Cottonwood Creek** is an annual event where Cherry Creek State Park staff, bird fans and 'friends of Cherry Creek' gather to walk the length of Cottonwood Creek for an opportunity to evaluate project benefits, learn about pollution reduction facilities and engage the community. A pond on Lone Tree Creek is a major attraction for waterfowl, especially during the colder months when many ponds are frozen. The pond is a popular spot for birds and birdwatchers. The Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority technical team sought input from the community regarding management priorities on Lone Tree Creek.



This photo is the intrepid Hawk Walk crew, January 27, 2024.

Annual Solstice and Equinox hikes at the Cherry Creek Valley Ecological Park add extra sets of eyes to observe and report on changing conditions in the watershed. The Partners help residents engage with land use agencies and build an understanding of land use and water quality priorities

Considerable Beaver activity was noted at various locations in 2023 and continues to grow along Cottonwood Creek and elsewhere on Cherry Creek. The Beaver's work provides habitat benefits and ecosystem services. Their dam building activities have a significant impact on the landscape. The Partners coordinate with Colorado State Parks, the Colorado Department of Transportation and Mile High Flood District to share cost effective coexistence tools that create win-win scenarios preventing Beaver from damaging infrastructure while allowing them to stay on the landscape providing ecological benefits.

Beaver Work along Cherry Creek at 17-Mile House Farm Park



More Beaver Work along Cottonwood Creek at Cherry Creek State Park



Other building projects will affect Cherry Creek as well. A large residential development is underway north of the 17-Mile House Farm Park between Parker Road and Cherry Creek. Stormwater drainage and trail access will be managed to protect water quality and trail access for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Construction on Vermilion Creek
Development...upland and toward Creek.

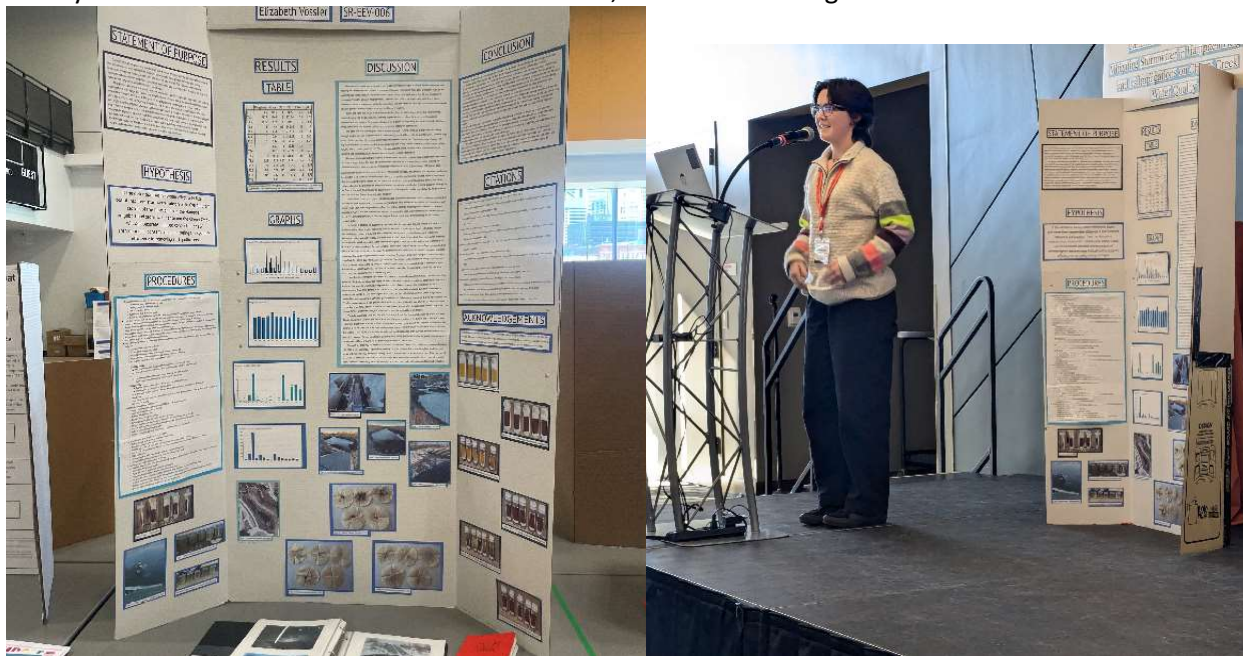


(Insert 'blooms along Cherry Creek' for internal reference only)

Denver Metro Regional Science and Engineering Fair – downstream collaboration

The Partners work to build a constituency that supports efforts to maintain beneficial uses of Cherry Creek Reservoir and the entire Cherry Creek Watershed, both above and below the dam. As part of that collaboration, the Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority has sponsored the Denver Metro Regional Science and Engineering Fair since 2003. Volunteers from Douglas and Arapahoe Counties, the City and County of Denver and the City of Aurora have worked as Display and Safety Judges, Special Awards Judges, and resource professionals able to engage with High School and Middle School scientists who display “Excellence and Outstanding Achievements in Environmental Science in the study and experimentation for the protection and preservation of life’s most important resource on earth...water!”

The 2024 Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority Water Quality Award was given to Elizabeth Vossler, for her project on Detention Basin Systems. We invited Elizabeth to present her poster at the Cherry Creek Watershed Conference November 12, 2025. It was a big hit!



The Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners promote stormwater outreach events and provide support as requested. The Partners attend community events to share resources with neighbors who are ready to learn more about how stormwater infrastructure works in their area. Each year the Partners sponsor an educational activity at the **Aurora Water Festival**. In 2024 we took an 'Incredible Journey' through the water cycle to explore the many states of water as it moves through the water cycle. At each 'phase' of the Incredible Journey students collect a bead that represents elements of the hydrologic cycle.



On July 18th, the Partners co-hosted the **Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management** at Prairie Canyon Ranch near the headwaters of Cherry Creek. This accredited training opportunity combining aspects of forage and livestock management, open space aspects of ranching, water supply and water quality.

This ranch is situated in the headwaters area of Cherry Creek and has a unique story to share. The property was homesteaded by Frederick Bartruff and his family in 1873 and has been used as a working cattle ranch since that time. The collection of buildings illustrates significant advances in agricultural and architectural technology from the 1870s to the 1930s. The land is also rich in archaeological resources, with evidence of human occupation up to 9,000 years ago. The property consists of several historic structures including a house, barn, saloon, blacksmith shop, cemetery, a stone cave and corrals (circa 1875-1938). The ranch is characterized by rolling grasslands, mixed pine and Gambel oak forests, rocky outcrops, sandstone canyons. Supported by Cherry Creek and its associated floodplain the ranch provides diverse wildlife habitat for hawks, pronghorn, coyotes, deer, elk, and great blue heron.



Provide support to Cherry Creek State Park in their education and outreach efforts.

In collaboration with the Bronco Wild Fund the Partners were on hand with educational materials to celebrate the grand opening of the new Education Center building being constructed on the Swim Beach at Cherry Creek State Park. The Partners are happy to work with Cherry Creek State Park staff to incorporate the water quality mural onto the façade of the Education Center. The Partners will continue to collaborate with Cherry Creek State Park to develop water quality messaging and signage.



2024 Conference

The 26th Annual Cherry Creek Watershed Conference: Ways of Knowing - The Data-Information-Knowledge-Wisdom (DIKW) Pyramid was held at the Parker Arts & Cultural Events Center on November 12, 2024. Speakers explored topics which included: results from the Cherry Creek Reservoir monitoring program for Water Year 2023, planning for the future, designing for resilience and nature-based solutions, Cyanobacteria monitoring and response as well as presentations from members of the community specifically related to education and public outreach. The Conference was well attended providing a snapshot of the level of engagement and knowledge generated by investments in water quality and community amenities.



What to watch for in 2025

Hawk Walk

Denver Metro Regional Science and Engineering Fair

New Educational signage at Cherry Creek State Park

Solstice and Equinox Hikes, Unique to the Creek and Race for the Watershed

27th Cherry Creek Watershed Conference

Stormwater Outreach

The Partners lent a hand to Splash, a local Stormwater collective, to host the return of the **Race for the Watershed**. This popular event brings residents and businesses to the Creek to enjoy the healthy activities and trails that really are 'Unique to the Creek'.



Douglas County Cooperative for Local Awareness and Responsibility (DC CLEAR) is another active stormwater cooperative working to actively engage residents in pollution reduction activities through print and social media publications as well as community Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection events.

Colorado Water Plan

Efforts to actively engage in partnerships with other identified groups working on water related issues in the Cherry Creek Watershed include active participation on the Metro Round Table and the South Platte Round Table www.southplattebasin.com of the Inter-Basin Compact Committee. The Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners provide the matching contribution that allows the Metro and South Platte Roundtables to conduct Public Education, Participation and Outreach activities in the Cherry Creek and South Platte watersheds.

(Insert Cherry Creek Glamour Shot here).

Multiple agencies and dedicated individuals take pride in their collaborative efforts to achieve and maintain water quality standards for the reservoir and watershed. Stream protection and reclamation projects have been completed from the headwaters of Cherry Creek to the dam at Cherry Creek State Park. Below the dam, the City and County of Denver and the City of Glendale have embraced Cherry Creek as a community amenity and cooperated to manage Cherry Creek for the benefit of area residents, both human and otherwise. Partnerships with Mile High Flood District, Southeast Metro

Stormwater Authority (SEMSWA), Arapahoe and Douglas Counties as well as the City of Aurora, Town of Castle Rock, City of Centennial, Town of Foxfield, City of Greenwood Village, City of Lone Tree, Town of Parker, and Castle Pines North have resulted in the planning and implementation of riparian corridor projects protecting the floodplain and reducing sediment flowing into Cherry Creek Reservoir. That work is enjoyed and valued by the thousands of residents and millions of visitors who come to the Cherry Creek Valley each year.

Florida Marine...

[Water quality refers to the **chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water**](#)

USGS

<https://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/water-quality-information-topic>