

## **City of Fort Collins**

### **Water Quality Management Policy for City-Owned Lakes and Stormwater Basins in the Growth Management Area**

#### **Background**

As development and urbanization have continued and increased in the Fort Collins Growth Management Area (“GMA”), new and existing water quality challenges in lakes and stormwater basins have arisen and intensified. Examples of these challenges include: pollution associated with urban growth, development, and land use practices; climate change; and other factors that can lead to water quality impacts such as sedimentation, fish kills, algal blooms, and water-borne pathogens.

The City of Fort Collins (“City”) recognizes the importance of managing water quality in lakes and stormwater basins to support management goals for the benefit of community, ecosystems, and downstream water quality. Such management can also implement the City’s triple bottom line approach to consider social, economic, and environmental impacts, as well as supporting and furthering various City plans and objectives related to water quality. Numerous lakes and stormwater basins in the GMA are privately owned. By comparison, the City has some degree of control and influence over the water quality of the lakes and stormwater basins it owns.

This City of Fort Collins Water Quality Management Policy for City-Owned Lakes and Stormwater Basins in the Growth Management Area (“Policy”), and the associated Guidance Document, have been created to provide a foundational framework for the City’s operational and management decisions related to water quality in City-owned lakes and stormwater basins.

This Policy was developed using an integrated One Water approach by an inter-departmental team of City staff, including the Managing Departments listed below. The Policy’s content was further informed by feedback from key stakeholder groups, which included: urban lakes and water quality management subject matter experts; the City’s Land Conservation and Stewardship Board, Natural Resources Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation Board, and Water Commission; and members of the Fort Collins community.

#### **Vision and Purpose of the Policy**

The City’s vision is that water quality in City-owned lakes and stormwater basins in the GMA supports management goals while also maintaining or improving aesthetics. To that end, the purpose of this Policy is to provide a foundational framework for the City’s operational and management decisions related to water quality management in City-owned lakes and stormwater basins.

#### **Key Terms**

The following describes and discusses several key terms used throughout this Policy.

## EXHIBIT A

*City-owned lakes and stormwater basins* refers to lakes and stormwater basins where the City owns the surrounding and underlying land and thus manages the water in them.

*Fort Collins Growth Management Area (“GMA”)* is as defined in Section 1-2 of the Fort Collins Municipal Code, being the Fort Collins Urban Growth Area as defined in Article XIII of the Charter of the City, namely, that geographic area within and adjacent to the City identified by the Intergovernmental Agreement between the City and Larimer County as that area identified for annexation and urbanization by the City, including the Urban Growth Area as it exists on March 5, 1985, together with any amendments or changes thereto.

*Guidance Document* refers to a separate document the City has developed and will update as a technical resource intended to support City staff in implementing this Policy. The Guidance Document provides Managing Departments with management tools, including<sup>1</sup>:

- Inventory of all City-owned lakes and stormwater basins;
- Certain water quality-related information for City-owned lakes and stormwater basins;
- Management categorization for City-owned lakes and stormwater basins, based on management goals of the respective Managing Departments;
- Assistance with management prioritization; and
- Best management practices for water quality management.

*Lakes* refer to basins and depressions that are generally filled with water. For the purposes of this Policy, lakes include: on- and off-stream reservoirs filled with water diverted from the stream; ponds used to manage water for irrigation and other uses; unlined gravel pits that have filled in with groundwater; and other basins and depressions that are generally filled with water.

*Managing Departments* refer to the components of the City organization that manage the City-owned lakes and stormwater basins. The current Managing Departments are Natural Areas, Parks, and Fort Collins Utilities.

*Stormwater Basins* refer to areas that are designed to collect precipitation runoff, including snowmelt. Stormwater basins include both: stormwater detention basins/ponds, which are designed to temporarily detain stormwater, generally for less than 72 hours; and stormwater retention basins/ponds, which are designed to detain or store stormwater runoff for longer than 72 hours. Stormwater retention basins/ponds may also be lakes. Although stormwater basins do not always have water in them, they can influence water quality and are thus included in this Policy.

*Water quality* refers to the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of water. Numerous human and natural factors can influence water quality.

*Water quality management* refers to the use of pollution prevention and/or mitigation best practices to address water quality management goals.

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<sup>1</sup> In this Policy, “include” signifies a list that is not necessarily exhaustive.

## **Scope and Applicability of this Policy**

This Policy applies only to City-owned lakes and stormwater basins in the GMA. Nothing in this Policy is intended to conflict with any applicable laws, including: the City Charter and City Code; Colorado state law, including permits and approvals issued thereunder; federal law, including permits and approvals issued thereunder; and applicable agreements and other contractual arrangements. To the extent that there is such a conflict, the applicable law controls.

This Policy does not apply to lakes and stormwater basins in the GMA that are not City-owned. For example, this Policy does not apply to lakes and stormwater basins owned by homeowners associations, or lakes owned by ditch or reservoir companies in which the City owns shares. The owners of such other lakes and stormwater basins are free to consider this Policy and the Guidance Document, in their discretion, in their management of their structures.

This Policy does not apply to lakes and stormwater basins that are outside of the GMA. This includes reservoirs the City owns that are outside of the GMA (e.g., Joe Wright Reservoir). Those lakes and stormwater basins are generally located outside of the urban environment and face challenges distinct from those addressed in this Policy. The water quality challenges of those lakes and stormwater basins are thus addressed separately. The owners of such other lakes and stormwater basins are free to consider this Policy and the Guidance Document, in their discretion, in their management of those structures.

## **Management**

Each Managing Department will manage water quality in their lakes and stormwater basins to address their own management goals. Specifically, Managing Departments will:

1. Identify which City-owned lakes and stormwater basins they are responsible for, relying on the inventory in the Guidance Document. If more than one Managing Department is responsible for a lake or stormwater basin, the responsible Managing Departments will work together on all aspects of management.
2. Identify the management goals for their lakes and stormwater basins based on their uses and purposes. This may include a consideration of the categories of types of lakes and stormwater basins and their various uses and purposes, as described in the Guidance Document.
3. Determine which of their City-owned lakes and stormwater basins should be prioritized for water quality management or other related actions.
4. Determine whether to act (or not act) on water quality issues.<sup>2</sup>
5. Develop water quality management plans as necessary for prioritized City-owned lakes and stormwater basins (as discussed below).
6. Collaborate with other Managing Departments where responsibilities, projects, or other actions related to water quality management overlap with or will affect other departments.
7. Communicate internally within the City organization and externally to the Fort Collins community (as discussed below).

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<sup>2</sup> How Managing Departments staff and otherwise resource their actions are not addressed in this Policy.

## **Management Plans**

Managing Departments will develop water quality management plans for individual lakes and stormwater basins, as necessary, to address their water quality management goals. These plans may be separate, standalone documents, or may be integrated into other plans or other documents related to their lakes and stormwater basins. These plans should include:

- statement of the Managing Department's goals and priorities for their lakes and stormwater basins;
- consideration of the analyses, recommendations, and other aspects of the Guidance Document;
- water quality-related goals for their lakes and stormwater basins;
- water quality management practices for their lakes and stormwater basins;
- a communication strategy (as discussed below); and
- other items appropriate to further the Managing Department's goals and priorities.

## **Communication**

Consistent with their communication strategy, Managing Departments will communicate internally within the City organization and externally with the Fort Collins community regarding water quality of lakes or stormwater basin. This will include communications regarding: water quality data; any public health risks; and non-routine maintenance work. Communications will be made pursuant to applicable City policies. Managing Departments will periodically communicate internally to improve interdepartmental alignment regarding water quality management practices.

## **Policy and Guidance Document Updates**

An inter-departmental team from all of the Managing Departments (minimum 1 staff member from each) will be established to ensure proper implementation of this Policy and to periodically revise and update the Policy and Guidance Document as needed.

The team will annually review the Guidance Document to identify and address data errors, necessary updates, and other opportunities for improvement, including:

- Adding any City-owned lakes and stormwater basins to the inventory;
- Updating lake-specific water quality information; and
- Adding or updating water quality management practices.