



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council

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### STAFF

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### SUBJECT

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**Resolution 2023-024 Adopting the Water Quality Management Policy for City-Owned Lakes and Stormwater Basins in the Growth Management Area.**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The lakes and stormwater basins (together, “urban lakes”) that the City owns are important resources that provide a range of benefits to the Fort Collins community. There are significant challenges associated with managing water quality in the City’s urban lakes. A project team has been working over the last two years to address these challenges by developing the City of Fort Collins Urban Lakes Water Quality Management Policy (“Policy”) and associated Guidance Document (“Guidance”). The Policy provides a framework for the City’s water quality operational and management decisions for its urban lakes and the Guidance provides technical resources to assist City staff with implementing the Policy. Development of the Policy and Guidance were informed by feedback received as part of an extensive stakeholder engagement process, and the Water Commission, Land Conservation and Stewardship Board, Natural Resources Advisory Board, and Parks and Recreation Board have formally recommended that City Council adopt the Policy.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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Staff recommends adoption of the Resolution.

### BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

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The City’s urban lakes include all ponds, lakes, irrigation reservoirs, and stormwater basins where surrounding and underlying land is owned by the City and that are located within the City’s Growth Management Area (GMA). The City’s urban lakes are important resources to the Fort Collins community, providing recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, irrigation water storage, stormwater infrastructure, and other benefits. City-owned urban lakes do not include privately-owned waterbodies, the City’s drinking water reservoirs, or the Poudre River and other flowing surface waters.

Water quality is a term used to describe the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water relative to management goals. Managing water quality in the City’s urban lakes has become increasingly challenging due to factors including the absence of an accurate inventory of City-owned urban lakes and undefined management jurisdictions, roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, pollution associated with urban growth and development, wildfires, land use practices, climate change, and other factors are

contributing to more frequent and apparent water quality impacts in urban lakes such as algae blooms, sedimentation, fish kills, and increases in water-borne pathogens.

To begin to address some of these challenges, a project team consisting of staff from Natural Areas, Parks, Utilities, the City Attorney's Office, and SWCA Environmental Consultants developed the Policy and the associated Guidance. The City's project team used a series of focused meetings and facilitated workshops to develop the Policy and Guidance. The Policy and Guidance were further informed by information gathered during engagement with several stakeholder groups as described in the Public Outreach section below.

The Policy articulates the City's commitment to preserving the value of these important resources and provides a framework for the City's urban lakes water quality operational and management decisions.

The Policy includes:

- a background, vision and purpose to provide a rationale for why Policy was developed;
- definitions for several key terms;
- a description of the City's urban lakes water quality management scope, including jurisdiction;
- expectations regarding urban lakes water quality management and management plans;
- communication between departments and the community; and
- staff accountability regarding Policy implementation, including future Policy and Guidance updates.

The Guidance (attached) is intended to serve as a technical resource to assist City staff with implementing the Policy. The Guidance includes a complete inventory of City-owned urban lakes within the GMA and a summary of known water quality-related information. For each City-owned lake, management categories were assigned based on departmental management goals. Urban lakes were then ranked based on relative water quality risk. A Geographical Information System (GIS) geodatabase was developed as part of this effort to manage information related to all City-owned urban lakes and their related attributes. This tool will facilitate future updates and mapping needs related to urban lakes management. And lastly, the Guidance includes a list of targeted best management practices (BMPs) for mitigating water quality issues in the City's urban lakes.

It is important to note that the Guidance is not intended to be a comprehensive water quality management plan for the City's urban lakes. Urban lakes management plans, including prioritization, water quality monitoring, best practices implementation and other specific management elements will be developed on a case-by case basis by managing departments.

It is also worth noting that numerous lakes and stormwater basins in the GMA are privately owned. As stated above, the Policy does not apply to them. Nevertheless, the Policy and Guidance may be informative and helpful to the owners of those urban lakes in their owners' water quality management decisions.

## **CITY FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

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There are no anticipated direct financial impacts associated with adopting the Policy. However, managing departments will likely incur future costs associated with developing management plans and implementing pollution mitigation BMPs.

## **BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

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### **Land Conservation and Stewardship Board Regular Meeting, January 11, 2023**

The Land Conservation and Stewardship Board unanimously recommended Council approve the Water Quality Management Policy for City urban lakes and stormwater basins in the Growth Management Area, and fully fund all of the proposed management actions that are recommended in the policy.

### **Water Commission Regular Meeting, January 19, 2023**

The Water Commission unanimously recommended City Council approve the Urban Lakes Water Quality Management Policy.

### **Natural Resources Advisory Board Regular Meeting, January 18, 2023**

The Natural Resources Advisory Board unanimously supported Council consider adoption of this item.

### **Parks and Recreation Board Regular Meeting, January 25, 2023**

The Parks and Recreation Board recommended City Council adopt this policy as soon as reasonably possible.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

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Policy and Guidance development was informed by feedback from three stakeholder groups, including internal and external urban lakes water quality management subject matter experts; several City advisory boards and Water Commission; and the community at-large.

Community engagement included:

1. **Urban Lakes Water Quality Management Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)** were interviewed and/or surveyed during April and May of 2021 to better understand known water concerns in City-owned urban lakes. SMEs included City staff; local private lakes managers; ecological consultants; scientists with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Colorado State University; and others.
2. **City Advisory Boards and Water Commission** were engaged during September of 2021 to solicit feedback on the project team's Policy development approach. City Advisory Boards included the Land Conservation and Stewardship Board, Natural Resource Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation Board and Water Commission. The project team presented final drafts of the Policy and Guidance to these City Advisory Boards in January 2022 and requested a formal motion from each board to recommend that City Council adopt the Policy (see Board and Commission Recommendations above).

The **Community at-large** was also engaged to better understand the diverse range of perspectives in our community regarding water quality in City-owned Urban Lakes.

Engagement efforts were designed to be equitable and inclusive in order to reach community members whose voices are often underrepresented in City processes. The project team's engagement approach included the development of an urban lakes water quality survey; the use of a social media campaign and the creation of project informational websites, where the survey was posted. All engagement materials were developed in both English and Spanish.

The project team also engaged community members directly at City-owned urban lakes and using focused meetings. Urban lakes managed by each department were selected for engagement based on vulnerability indicators analyzed as part of the City's 2021 Equity and Opportunity Assessment Study. Vulnerability indicators included: housing, education, income and race and ethnicity. Lakes selected for engagement included Overland Park Pond and Sheldon Lake (Parks); Arapaho Bend Ponds, North Shields Pond and Riverbend Ponds (Natural Areas); Avery and Manhattan Ponds (Utilities); and Rigden Reservoir (Utilities/Natural Areas).

The project team conducted 30 community engagement events at the City's urban lakes listed above between May and June of 2022. A total of 437 people were observed engaged in various activities at these lakes. The project team directly engaged with 1,444 people at engagement events and a total of 273 surveys were completed.

Engagement results indicated that the City’s urban lakes are important to many in our community and support recreational, wildlife habitat, provide natural beauty, intrinsic and other values. The community engagement survey helped staff to document our community’s urban lakes water quality priorities and concerns. Engaging with community members at select urban lakes provided additional insight through observation of activities and direct feedback. Nearly half of people surveyed reported that they have been negatively impacted by water quality issues in some City-owned urban lakes and avoid these areas. Survey respondents expressed support and appreciation for the development of the City’s urban lakes water quality management Policy and Guidance.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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1. Resolution for Consideration
2. Resolution Exhibit A
3. Urban Lakes Water Quality Management Guidance
4. Land Conservation and Stewardship Board, January 11, 2023, Meeting Minutes Excerpt
5. Natural Resources Advisory Board, January 18, 2023, Meeting Minutes Excerpt
6. Water Commission, January 19, 2023, Draft Meeting Minutes Excerpt
7. Parks and Recreation Board, January 25, 2023, Draft Meeting Minutes Excerpt
8. Letter of Recommendation from Colorado Parks and Wildlife
9. Triple Bottom Line Scan Summary