

## 2020 Year in Review | Looking Ahead to 2021

The Chatfield Storage Reallocation Project (CSRP) was able to achieve many important milestones in 2020, including receiving final approval to begin storing water in the reallocation pool.

2020 was also a year of unique challenges, in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to adapt and persevere and are looking forward to building on our progress in 2021.

### Spring 2020

In April, the Chatfield Reservoir Mitigation Company (CRMC) announced that all on-site recreational modifications and environmental mitigation work required for the Chatfield Storage Reallocation Project was completed.

In addition to the work at Chatfield State Park, CRMC was also able to secure the remaining off-site environmental mitigation credits needed to demonstrate that all mitigation milestones had been met. The strong partnership with Douglas County to permanently protect portions of its newly acquired open space properties, Sandstone Ranch and Schmidt Property, was vital to CRMC successfully implementing the overall project.

In May, CRMC announced that the Chatfield Storage Reallocation Project had received final approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), granting the project participants the right to store up to 20,600-acre feet of water in the new reallocation pool. In total, almost \$171 million was spent to complete the CSRP, and all of it was paid for by the water providers who are members of the CRMC.

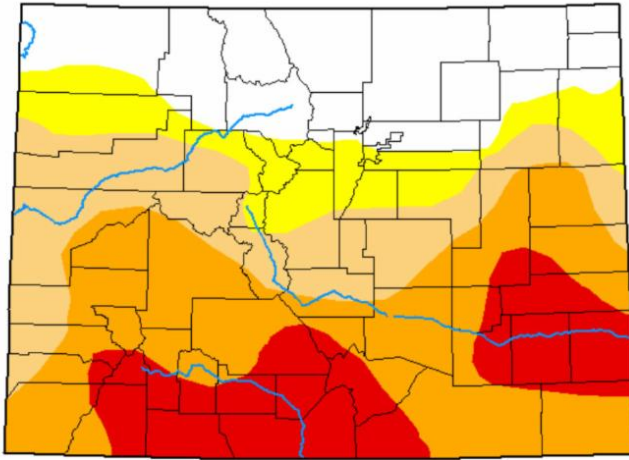
At the time of the USACE approval, the snowpack in the South Platte River Basin was trending slightly above average. However, due to warm and dry conditions, the yield of water from the spring runoff decreased sharply. The drought conditions only worsened throughout 2020, landing most of the South Platte River Basin in the extreme to exceptional drought categories, according to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#). Because of the conditions, marginal water storage occurred in the new reallocation pool.

# U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

**May 19, 2020**  
(Released Thursday, May 21, 2020)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0	D1	D2	D3	D4
<b>Current</b>	23.22	11.58	18.89	28.80	17.52	0.00
<b>Last Week</b> 05-12-2020	20.76	16.58	16.58	31.43	14.65	0.00
<b>3 Months Ago</b> 02-18-2020	28.74	27.43	40.52	3.30	0.00	0.00
<b>Start of Calendar Year</b> 12-31-2019	31.72	17.10	31.08	20.11	0.00	0.00
<b>Start of Water Year</b> 10-01-2019	30.14	42.34	27.53	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>One Year Ago</b> 05-21-2019	99.99	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

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[droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

The Drought Monitor in May 2020 illustrated Abnormally Dry conditions in the South Platte River Basin.

While lack of significant water storage in the first allowable year was unfortunate, the participants recognize that there are several factors involved in how much the reallocation pool will be filled each year. Some of those factors include weather and drought/flood conditions, the calls being made from non-CSR water rights holders, the priority status of the participants' water rights, and the flow rates of Plum Creek and South Platte River.

## Summer 2020

Completion of the on-site recreational modifications and environmental mitigation work could not have wrapped up at a better time. With the COVID-19 restrictions in place and encouragement from state and local leaders to spend time outdoors, recreation usage at Chatfield State Park reached an all-time high. While all Colorado state parks saw a rise in attendance during 2020, Chatfield State Park was especially popular. According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Chatfield State Park saw almost 2.4 million visitors in 2020, an increase of over 650,000 visitors from 2019.

The new recreational facilities around the reservoir received high marks from park visitors. Some of the new and updated amenities include the new swim beach and bathhouse, marina docks and floating building, restroom facilities, and picnic areas. The new trail systems, especially in more remote areas along Plum Creek and South Platte River, allowed even seasoned park visitors the opportunity to discover areas of the park previously not as accessible.



*North Boat Ramp following construction that was completed in June 2018.*

## **Fall 2020**

In September 2020, CRMC was thrilled to attend the grand opening of the first phase of public access at Sandstone Ranch. A new parking lot off of Highway 105 provides hikers, cyclists, and horseback riders access to [12 miles of non-motorized trails](#).

The opening of Sandstone Ranch's public access follows an extensive planning process involving public input, which culminated in the adoption of the [Sandstone Ranch Master Plan](#). In coordination with CRMC's Sandstone Ranch Management and Monitoring Plan, which provides guidance for management of the CSRP's protected portions, Douglas County's Master Plan provides a vision for Sandstone Ranch that balances appropriate public access while conserving the historic ranching operations, wildlife habitat and corridors, connectivity to Pike National Forest, native vegetation and other natural and cultural resources.





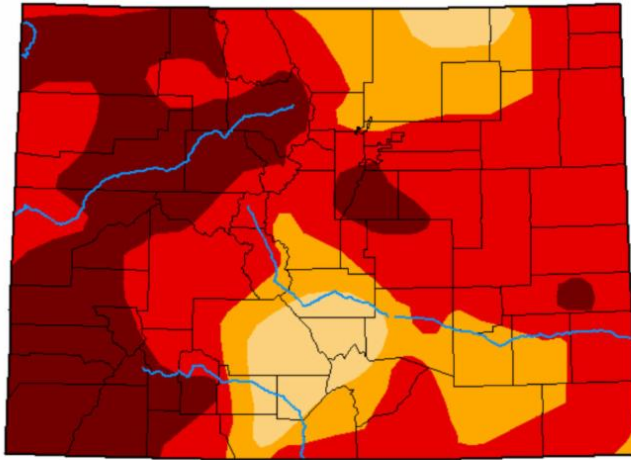
*View from a high point within Sandstone Ranch. Very few open vistas like this one are left along the Front Range.*

### **Winter 2020/2021**

CRMC has continued to keep close watch of the snowpack totals and weather forecast to refine the water storage outlook in the reallocation pool for 2021. Well below average precipitation in the fall and early winter have put snowpack totals below average. Coupled with very dry soil moisture across the region, spring runoff is not looking favorable for a significant rise in Chatfield Reservoir's elevation this year. We are hopeful that March and April will bring the Front Range and the rest of Colorado some much needed precipitation to not only assist in water storage, but to alleviate the drought conditions that have blanketed the state.

# U.S. Drought Monitor Colorado

**January 5, 2021**  
(Released Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021)  
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
<b>Current</b>	0.00	100.00	100.00	93.73	76.17	27.60
<b>Last Week</b> 12-29-2020	0.00	100.00	100.00	93.73	76.17	27.60
<b>3 Months Ago</b> 10-06-2020	0.00	100.00	99.30	90.39	59.23	16.72
<b>Start of Calendar Year</b> 12-29-2020	0.00	100.00	100.00	93.73	76.17	27.60
<b>Start of Water Year</b> 09-29-2020	0.00	100.00	99.29	89.35	52.88	2.64
<b>One Year Ago</b> 01-07-2020	31.72	68.28	51.19	13.84	0.00	0.00

Intensity:



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[droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

The Drought Monitor in January 2021 illustrated Extreme and Exceptional Drought conditions in the South Platte River Basin.

## 2021 Activities

With spring just around the corner, CRMC is busy planning for activities to occur at Chatfield State Park this year.

One of the most visible activities will be the continued weed control and revegetation efforts along the recreational and environmental areas. Crews will be on-hand to water the planted shrubs and trees, treat noxious weeds, and reseed areas of low native establishment. These activities will be ongoing throughout the 2021 season. Signs will be posted in any temporary impacted areas. Please be mindful of these areas to ensure successful reestablishment of native grasses and shrubs.

CRMC also has a few warranty items planned to occur before Memorial Day Weekend. Some of the work may include asphalt and concrete repair, restroom building touchups, and other minor maintenance and warranty items. We will work closely with Chatfield State Park to ensure any temporary closures are clearly marked. CRMC is committed to minimizing impacts to park visitors.

## Ongoing Monitoring

While all the recreational modifications and environmental mitigation have been implemented, monitoring activities of the improvements will continue for the next several years. Success criteria outlined in the FR/EIS's Compensatory Mitigation Plan will be assessed on an annual basis in areas throughout the park including in the environmental mitigation areas, the fluctuation zone, and reclaimed areas in and around the day use areas.

Some of the annual monitoring activities include:

- Assessing the herbaceous cover, plant and tree survivability, vegetation communities
- Conducting noxious weed surveys
- Calculating the environmental mitigation credits for bird, wetlands, and Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse
- Evaluating the inundation in the fluctuation zone (elevation 5,432 ft – 5,444ft msl) for impacts on tree health, habitat, and water quality





*Plantings along the restored Plum Creek channel in 2018.*



*Plum Creek channel showing improved health in early 2020*

Once significant water storage occurs in the reallocation pool, additional activities such as tree flagging and removal, may occur as part of the [Adaptive Tree Management Plan](#).

Advisory committees that have assisted the CRMC throughout the planning, design, and construction phases, including the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Operational Advisory Committee (OAC), will continue to meet over the next several years to provide technical and operational reviews of all on-going activities. Representatives on these committees include federal, state and local government agencies, environmental and conservation interest groups, and water providers.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For questions contact us at [info@chatfieldreallocation.org](mailto:info@chatfieldreallocation.org).

For detailed information on the Chatfield Storage Reallocation Project, or to view the project video, please go to our website [www.chatfieldreallocation.org](http://www.chatfieldreallocation.org).

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