



**Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners
2022 Annual Report**



In 2022, the Partners continued to build on efforts to 'Follow the Nutrients' with these guiding questions:

- 1** What are nutrients? Why are they a concern in Cherry Creek basin?
- 2** How does the geology of Cherry Creek basin contribute to nutrient loads?
- 3** How do excess nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) impact Cherry Creek as it flows through Parker/Douglas and Arapahoe counties into the reservoir, then on downstream below the dam?

You can think of nutrients as lawn fertilizer. Lawn fertilizer labels tell you how much Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K) is in the mixture in the bag. The numbers are always in the same order (N)(P)(K).

Nutrients move through the Cherry Creek watershed with a tendency to find a home in Cherry Creek Reservoir. In the reservoir the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus act just like fertilizer...for the algae. In the shared effort to keep Cherry Creek Reservoir swimmable, boatable and fishable, land use agencies in the watershed work together to slow the flow of nutrients and attempt to manage the algae that grows in the Reservoir. Pollution abatement projects that allow water in creeks and streams to spread out and slow down tend to reduce erosion and work to filter out nutrients.

Supporting Messaging

Residents of the Cherry Creek watershed can help by following recommended guidelines for landscaping and lawn maintenance. Our friends with the Barr-Milton Watershed Association has developed a program, [H2Only](#), that recommends using lawn fertilizer that does not add phosphorus to the NPK formula.

Stormwater runoff from lawns, parks and golf courses is a form of 'Nonpoint Source Pollution'. The Partners work in the community to raise awareness of potential effects of Nonpoint Source Pollution and encourage informed behaviors that reduce pollution. Adopting the guidelines of H2Only for lawn-care is recommended to help reduce the amount of phosphorus that flows into the Cherry Creek Reservoir.

Through a network that includes [education](#) organizations, local businesses, civic groups, website and social media the Partners have presented hands-on soil chemistry workshops encouraging gardeners to get to know their soil. What kind of fertilizer do our Colorado plants really need, when and how much? What can we all do to minimize unwanted nutrients getting into our creeks and streams and ultimately into our lakes and reservoirs.

'H2Only' is a program developed by the Barr -Millton Watershed Association and used by some Arapahoe County stormwater management agencies. Fact sheets and promotional materials are available to encourage the use of phosphorus-free fertilizers and other lawn care guidelines to help protect our watersheds and downstream conditions.

Green Lawns Blue Waters Be P-Free

- Don't apply fertilizer within 15 feet of water
- Watch the weather, avoid any storms
- Calculate the right amount to apply
- Use phosphorus free fertilizers
- Storm drains are not treated
- Sweep up all fertilizer spills
- Mulch your lawn clippings
- Compost your leaves
- Exposed soils erode
- Get a soil test

lovecoloradowater.org

barr-milton.org



Buy phosphorus-free fertilizer and keep our water clean.

Don't feed the algae: Too much nitrogen and phosphorus grow scummy algae in our lakes. Do your part and help keep Colorado's water clean by using phosphorus-free lawn fertilizers. [Learn more](#) →



The Landscape

With the support of the Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority, the Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners provide information and outreach to help residents of our watershed understand how their actions can affect water quality in the Creek and Reservoir.

The landscape and connected trails along Cherry Creek provide a valuable community amenity. The health benefits of relaxing or recreating outdoors are well known. Each year the Partners invite our neighbors to 'get outside' to enjoy their investment in the Cherry Creek Watershed. Guided hikes along Cherry Creek, Cottonwood Creek and even Plum Creek give us the opportunity to talk about the work of the Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority and their partner agencies. Describing the partnerships that provide the resources and expertise to build some of the most innovative stream protection projects in the Rocky Mountain and Great Plains region is our opportunity to talk about what makes Cherry Creek so unique.



For example, our little prairie stream flows toward the mountains as it makes its way from the Palmer Divide on a north westerly path through, Douglas, Arapahoe and Denver counties, that leads to the confluence with the South Platte River in downtown Denver. Other unique characteristics of the Cherry Creek watershed include:

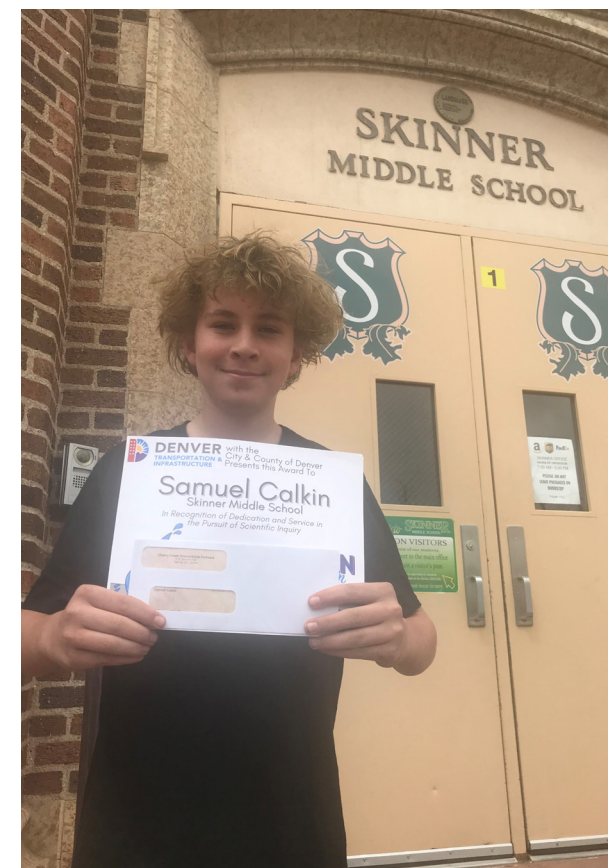
-An urban center with significant recreational amenities – over 150,000 residents and more than 2,000,000 annual visits to Cherry Creek State Park alone

-Sandy soil with high background concentrations of phosphorus in the form of phosphate – it is estimated that close to 210,000 tons of sand is moving along with the water in Cherry Creek each year

-Examples of projects that incorporate natural stream processes into urban design with the goal of creating more sustainable systems

Developing Relationships

By developing relationships with other institutions in the Cherry Creek watershed, the Partners seek to reinforce messaging and leverage other efforts and activities to provide consistent, reliable and relevant water quality information to our communities. Examples of these relationships include: the Denver Metro Regional Science and Engineering Fair, Sand Creek Regional Greenway, Denver Dept. of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Colorado Foundation for Agriculture, The Barr-Milton Watershed Association, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Colorado State University Extension Service. Other groups in the community look to the Partners to provide basic water education as well as soil and water chemistry testing and field trip opportunities



The Cherry Creek Annual Conference

Each year the Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners host a highly popular Annual Watershed Conference. In 2022, the Conference explored the 'adventure' of nutrients moving through the Cherry Creek Watershed with presentations from the Cherry Creek Water Quality Authority technical team, Parker Water and Sanitation District, Mile High Flood District, Cherry Creek State Park, Colorado Water Quality Control Division, and others. Participants spent time in classroom-style sessions AND outdoors for a hands-on exchange of experience and expertise





Thank You!

With broad support from local jurisdictions and the Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority, the Partners bring students of all ages and area residents out to the Creek to learn the history and ecology of the Cherry Creek watershed. Events and outings are posted on our website: www.cherry-creek.org You are invited to join the Partners on any of their excursions. Come on out to the Creek!