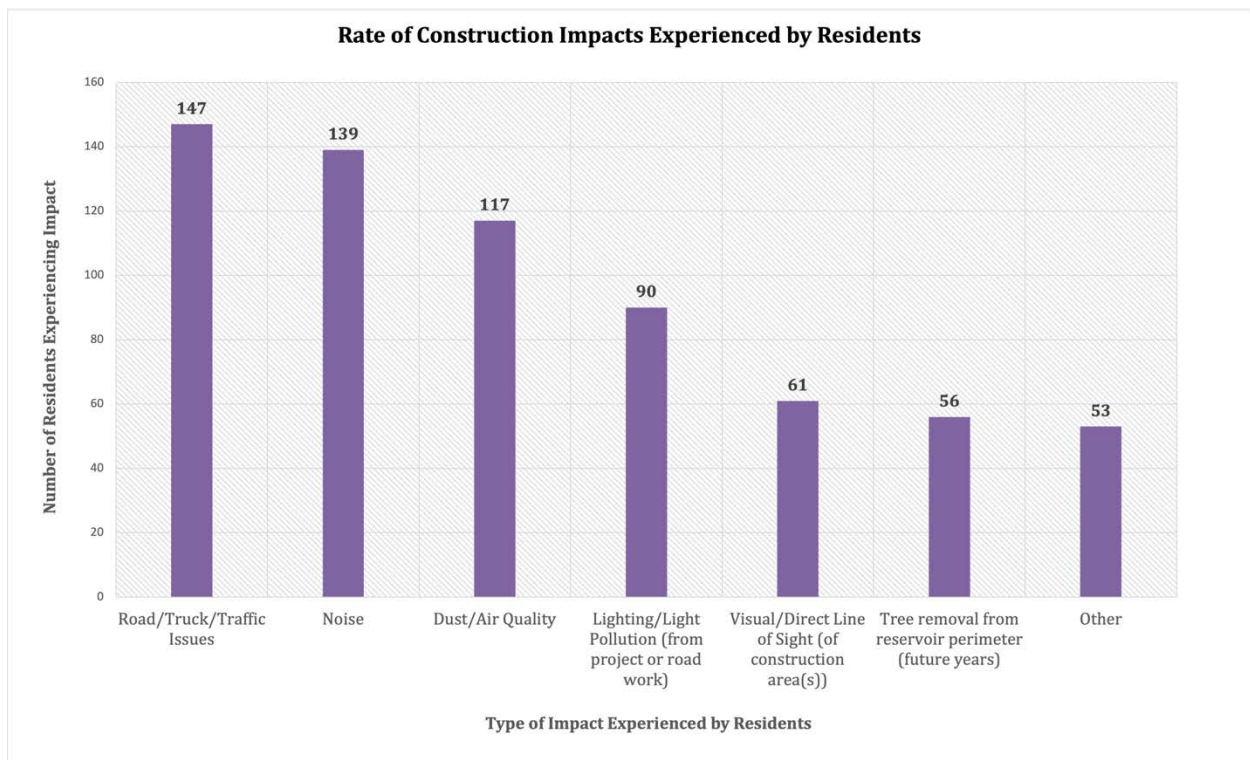


Boulder County Gross Reservoir Community Impact Mitigation Fund
Community Survey Key Themes
April 6, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Over a period of eight months beginning August 2022, Boulder County administered a survey of residents in the area surrounding Gross Reservoir to assess construction impacts associated with Denver Water’s Gross Reservoir Dam Expansion project. The following document organizes these survey responses by topical key themes.

A) CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS EXPERIENCED BY RESIDENTS



The bar graph includes responses from the Boulder County survey of residents surrounding Gross Reservoir, impacted by the construction associated with the Gross Reservoir expansion. The survey gathered 170 responses as of April 5, 2023.

1) IMPACTS ON RESIDENT HOME, HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND LIVELIHOOD

- Loss of property value (i.e., trouble selling and renting)
- Loss of revenue (i.e., Airbnb closures, trouble renting, summer land use income, etc.)
- Loss/degradation of scenic view from property (current view of landscape scarring/clear cutting, construction/truck activity, new buildings, heavy equipment movement)
- Excessive dust and light pollution inside homes and on properties.
- Degradation of sleep quality and health from noise and light at night.

- Impacts on the Whispering Pines and CCCIA community gathering atmosphere.
- Reduced recreational quality for residents, many of whom moved to the area for such access.
- Increased health issues related to poor air quality and excessive dust (i.e., asthma, weak lungs, etc.)
- Inability to open windows for cool or fresh air.
- Inability to spend time outside alone or with friends and family.
- Degraded mental health due to the environmental degradation.
- Increased dust on windows and homes.
- Damage to heating/cooling systems due to excessive dust (Gross Dam Rd.)
- Impacting astronomical observatory and ability to collect accurate data.
- Increased delivery challenges and fees due to decreased access.
- Concerns for safety while walking, running, and biking in the area.
- Impacts to work from home environments.
- Reduced hunting options in the area for those who subsist on local meat.
- Concerns of safety when on roads (i.e., truck drivers tailgating or running people off the roads, excessive number of heavy and light trucks using the road 24/7)
- Constant shaking/vibration in homes due to blasting and construction.
- Increased reports of dogs being afraid of the shaking/vibration and noise.
- Increased cracks in homes and foundations from construction and blasting.
- Concerns about residential well dry ups if the reservoir level drops for construction.
- Loss of a safe and peaceful place for residents with anxiety and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Experiences of dirt in eyes and mouth from construction dust coupled with typical high wind weather.
- Increased costs to landowners already mitigating (i.e., blackout curtains, etc.)
- Concerns about safety accessing mailboxes along busy roads (Gross Dam Rd.)
- Frustration that the water in Gross Reservoir does not benefit local residents.

2) TRUCKS, ROAD CONDITIONS, AND INCREASED TRAFFIC IMPACTS

- Excessive noise and dust from 24/7 heavy and light truck traffic (Gross Dam Rd.)
- Jake brakes at all hours and headlights in homes at night
- Concerns about trucks in the area during the day and night
- Denver Water contractors using Flagstaff Rd. instead of SH72 to access the project site
- Too many single occupancy pickup trucks by Denver Water/KB contractors on SH72 & GDR
- Frequent stops and closures along GDR to accommodate Denver Water's activities (passenger cars are made to stop and wait for DW trucks to get by)
- Concerns about the changes made to local roads by Denver Water construction

- Concerns about increased traffic from displaced recreational users
- Concerns about the impacts on roads like Lazy Z and Magnolia that should be paved.
- Increased tension on the roads leads to erratic driving patterns.
- Concerns about unsafe driving from DW contractors (i.e., speeding, swerving, and jake braking)
- Concerns about the following events caused by increased traffic and construction:
 - Broken windshields from construction vehicles
 - Changes to typical driving expectations (e.g., longer routes, slow construction vehicles creating traffic jams, and road closures)
- Increased amounts of oil on the roads.
- Recession of property lines from widening and grading.
- Impacts to driveway entries due to widening and grading from increased traffic.
- Increased potholes and vehicle maintenance due to potholes.
- Support for signage to reduce traffic in residential areas.
- Concerns about the safety of residents, walkers, bikers, school buses, etc.
- Concerns about Lazy Z's ability to withstand increased traffic.
- Change to SH72 & GDR intersection (*covered in more detail in a separate section)
- Support for road improvements on Highway 72 (HWY 72), Lazy Z, and others.
- Concerns about Denver Water using private roads.
- Impacts to access for residents and visitors.
- Concerns about driver safety due to truck headlights during the early morning and night.
- Too many cars at the North Shore Parking lot in warm months/overspill of cars onto Flagstaff Rd. when parking lot fills.
- Complaints of the increase in size of the North Shore parking lot.

3) INCREASED WILDFIRE DANGER

- Concerns about whether Denver Water or its contractor has a fire protection plan.
- Concerns about construction vehicle accidents that could lead to fires.
- Fears of wildfire risk drive some residents to stay elsewhere.
- Concerns about work crews (on the site and flaggers on the roads) causing accidental fires with construction equipment and smoking.
- Concerns about sparks from chainsaws during tree removal.

4) IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE

- Concerns about impacts on water systems and ecology.
- Concerns about the lasting and permanent damage to the landscape and ecosystem.
- Concerns about tree removal plans (i.e., displaced view, displaced wildlife, increased noise, etc.)
- Concerns about displaced bear, moose, elk, and mountain lion populations.

- Concerns about increased risks of displaced mountain lions attacking resident dogs/domestic animals.
- Concerns about how the West's megadrought will impact the amount of water in Gross Reservoir.
- Dust and fumes from trucks and construction is having a negative impact on the ecosystem (S. Boulder Creek runoff, trees and foliage dealing with more gases, etc.)
- Belief that conservation should precede dam projects.
- Concerns about displaced wildlife impacting the ability to hunt for meat.
- Concerns about carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the project due to cement, the increased number of vehicles in the area, and tree removal efforts.
- Concerns about embankment erosion along South Boulder Creek from increased water flows and reservoir releases.
- Concerns that there will not be restoration efforts after the project is complete.
- Concerns about more litter on the roads.

5) IMPACTS ON LOCAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Many residents have trespassing, security, and privacy concerns due to the new and future trails in the area.
- There is typically high recreation use in the area. The project impacts this by reducing recreation opportunities and displacing recreation users, impacting residents.
- The area is no longer a pleasant place to recreate (e.g., walking with grandkids, biking, horseback riding, etc.) Quiet hours could be instituted.
- There is reduced access to the reservoir for recreation. The access point and shuttle system that was created were disappointing to many residents.
- For many residents, access to recreation was the reason for purchasing a home in the area.
- There is opposition to Boulder County's intention to extend the parking area at the Ethel Harold Trailhead.
- Bikers are no longer safe without improvements to HWY 72, GDR, and other roads in the area.
- Some organizations, such as the C4C, hope to identify trail connectivity efforts and improvement opportunities for recreational users from Boulder to the West through this area.

6) INTERSECTION RECONSTRUCTION @ HWY 72 AND GROSS DAM ROAD

- Several survey responses indicated frustration and concerns about the intersection construction and its impacts on resident privacy, peacefulness, and safety.
- Concerns that construction project will leave nearby houses and community meeting places exposed to headlights and noise coming off the new stop sign (i.e., truck and car uphill acceleration 24/7).

7) CONCERN FOR NEIGHBORS

- Several survey responses indicated concern for neighbors who are more impacted, who have animals that are impacted by the construction, and who may have embankment erosion challenges in the future.
- Concern for health issues of neighbors impacted by dust, noise, and lighting.

8) WATER AND DROUGHT

- Where will the water to fill Gross Reservoir come from, considering the extreme drought throughout the West?
- Will the Reservoir be adequately filled, given the drought throughout the West?
- Is it not true that reserved drainage loses more water to evaporation than it saves downstream?
- The current water levels in Gross Reservoir are very low. Why should the reservoir be expanded if this is the case?
- The water that DW plans to divert from the Upper Colorado Basin does not exist due to climate change.

9) DENVER WATER'S COMPLIANCE

- There does not seem to be an operating/safety plan, as evidenced by the death of a truck driver last summer.
- There does not seem to be a fire protection plan.
- It does not seem that Denver Water is operating within the terms of the agreement and regulations for construction. There should be someone to enforce the agreement between Denver Water and the County to ensure that residents are impacted as little as possible.
- The tree removal plan is dangerous and flawed. It is too disruptive to the environment and the people who live around the reservoir. It does not take into account the impact on residents.

10) OTHER NOTEWORTHY ITEMS/COMMENTS

- There was a great deal of distress due to the death of a truck driver who drove into Gross Reservoir last summer. Many residents saw the search and rescue efforts.
- There was a suggestion to use The Environmental Group to better connect with residents.
- Some residents were/ are not against the expansion but were surprised by the impacts associated with construction and indicated that changes need to happen for them to withstand living in the area.
- There is much interest in engaging in this process and distributing the funding.
- There is at least one resident with a desire to connect with the Corps of Engineers that oversees Denver Water.

- There is frustration and disappointment that Denver Water does not seem to care about the residents. For at least one resident, this goes so deep that they now “hate” Denver, the city, in addition to Denver Water.
 - There are several residents who oppose the expansion and value conservation over such projects.
 - There is frustration about Boulder County's strict building codes/plans for homes compared to the application of rules to the expansion project.
 - There is curiosity/concern about future conflicts due to the water source that will be added to Gross Reservoir.
 - There is curiosity about what will happen to the removed trees.
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B) COMMENTS RE: MITIGATION FUND DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

1) EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION/PINYON STUDY

- Interest in the environmental evaluation/Pinyon study
- Desire for the Pinyon study to include interviews with all residents
- Interest in whether the Pinyon study includes noise data during the day and night

2) SUPPORT FOR FAIR TREATMENT AND PROCESS/ SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO ALLOCATE THE FUNDING

- Residents closer to the construction should receive more compensation.
- Residents in both counties (Boulder and Jefferson) deserve compensation.
- The allocation of funding should not be "one size fits all."
- The expansion project impacts everyone in the area.
- Local businesses, organizations, the church, and the local k-8 school should receive compensation.
- The funding should provide internet and cell service to all residents so that residents all have access to emergency information.
- There is concern that the funding will be spent on consultants.
- The funding should go towards road improvements and increased safety measures (i.e., increase Colorado State Patrol presence), especially on HWY 72, Magnolia Road, and Lazy Z.
- Boulder County should distribute the funds so that the landowners may decide the best use of the funds.
- The funding received by Boulder County Open Space (separate settlement fund) should be dedicated to this area.

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