



South Suburban
PARKS AND RECREATION

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South Suburban Wants to Educate Residents about District Lakes during Drought

South Suburban Park and Recreation District manages several popular lakes and ponds that are being affected by the drought, mainly because none have a significant water source, and are at the mercy of Mother Nature.

One favorite is Ketring Lake in Littleton. Ketring Lake is fed solely by the Highline Canal. Denver Water controls flows in the High Line Canal and after several years of drought conditions, the water authority has had to make the difficult decision to let the canal stay dry for 2013. Without steady rain, and a forecast of high temperatures and continued drought conditions, the lake could potentially dry up.

South Suburban manages Ketring Lake, and is exploring other alternative water sources, although it's doubtful there will be a viable solution. The entire metro area is under strict watering guidelines and there isn't water to spare in these conditions.

In Colorado, drought cycles are nothing new. Similar droughts occurred in 2002 and 2003, and again in 2011 and 2012; and in the late '70s Ketring Lake went temporarily dry. Although the lake hasn't gone dry so far this year, the drought presents other conditions that the park staff is monitoring closely. South Suburban is treating the lake to control aquatic weeds and combat the growth of algae. The aerator in the lake helps to provide and circulate oxygen. "Short of the influence of fresh water from rain, there's not a lot more that can be done," says Dave Brueggeman, South Suburban's parks maintenance supervisor. Unfortunately, as the water level drops, any fish in the lake will be affected. South Suburban staff is monitoring the situation closely and will remove fish on a regular basis, if fish begin to die.

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Other District lakes, including Sterne and Cherry Knolls, are experiencing the same issues. With lack of water turnover, algae blooms, fish die and water levels drop. With temperatures soaring into the 90s, evaporation is high, and hot weather stimulates algae growth. South Suburban park crews are monitoring all the lakes, although, there is not much the District can do in these drought conditions. "We understand the public's feelings about the aesthetics of the lakes, and we're trying to do what we can," continued Brueggeman. This year is a challenge with lack of rainfall and a lack of water source for the lakes.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is responsible for stocking the lakes and makes the determination about whether there is enough water, and if conditions are right to sustain wildlife. In all probability, most District lakes will go un-stocked in 2013.

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