



South Suburban
PARKS AND RECREATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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River Enhancement Project for South Platte River to Begin March 25

Thanks to a 2009 investigation into the health of the South Platte River led by South Suburban Parks and Recreation and the City of Littleton, a River Enhancement Plan was created, approved, and just received permitting from the Army Corps of Engineers. Phase one of a multi-year project will begin Mon., March 25.

The project is intended to correct changes to the river channel that have occurred since the installation of Chatfield Dam. Sediment-hungry water released to the river from the dam, impacts of surrounding development, and increased storage or diversion of water from the river have all combined to alter the nature of the river. Flows once supported a 120-foot-wide channel that meandered across a wide floodplain. Current flows are more typical of what should be a 40-foot-wide channel so the water runs wider and shallower, providing less habitat variety for fish and wildlife.

Visitors to the area will see a large excavator working in the dry channel. The contractor will insert a steel sheet diverting the river flows around the work zone, and a large quarry truck hauling materials in and out of the channel. Phase I of a multi-year project, and will involve reshaping the river from the Mineral pedestrian bridge in South Platte Park 1200 feet downstream. The work will concentrate the river at low flows, and mimic the riffle-pool-glide sequences of a natural river. Rock material will be hauled in, sediments in the river will be moved around, and two wetland areas will be created in nearby lakes. Some additional bank stabilization work will occur a mile upstream, near Redtail Lake. Vehicles will use existing service roads at the edge of the Cooley Lake wildlife area in South Platte Park.

No trail closures are expected, however, the river and its access points in the work zone will be temporarily closed to recreational use. South Platte Park will cancel the free Cooley Lake hike on May 10, and the guided hikes offered April 13 and May 11 will be rerouted.

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Some wildlife will be displaced by the work and the aquatic ecosystem will be temporarily impacted. Keeping the majority of the river undisturbed is one reason the project is being implemented in phases. The ultimate goal is to create healthier habitats and restore more natural river functions for the long term. The project was designed by Environmental Resource Consultants, Inc. and is being managed by Urban Drainage and Flood Control.

Funding is provided by South Suburban Parks and Recreation, the City of Littleton, Urban Drainage and Flood Control, a Fishing is Fun grant from the State of Colorado, and Trout Unlimited. Minor improvements to fish habitat are expected but the area is not expected to see significant increase in game fish quality. The focus of the work is for overall river health and riparian habitat.

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