

**2027 ACEC AWARDS**

Chimney Hollow Reservoir Project

Loveland, Colorado, USA | **Executive Summary**

The Chimney Hollow Reservoir Project is a collaboration between 11 Northeastern Colorado water providers and one power provider to improve the reliability of water supplies from the Windy Gap Project. Recognizing rapid population growth in 1970, communities along the northern Front Range formed the Northern Water Municipal Subdistrict, a subordinate organization of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (Northern Water). In the 1980s, Windy Gap Reservoir was built to bring water from the Colorado River on the Rockies' western slope to the Front Range through a pre-existing water conveyance system called the Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT) Project, composed of 12 reservoirs, 35 miles of tunnels, 95 miles of canals, six hydroelectric power plants, and 700 miles of electric transmission lines. Because of the Windy Gap Project carriage contract between the Municipal Subdistrict and the Bureau of Reclamation, water storage in the C-BT Project could not be guaranteed. Not long after the Windy Gap Project was built, Northern Water and its Municipal Subdistrict considered dedicated storage. In 2000, the Windy Gap Firming Project was created to develop infrastructure needed for future water demands and to "firm up" the Windy Gap water right.

Eight of the 10 fastest-growing cities in Colorado are in northeastern Colorado, which are in Northern Water's boundaries.

As population in Northern Colorado continues to grow, the region needs collaborative projects to help meet its future water demands while also protecting the environment and wildlife, maintaining local food production, and preserving the region's quality of life. Those are the objectives of the Chimney Hollow Reservoir Project as the main component of the Windy Gap Firming Project. The new reservoir is located just west of Carter Lake in southern Larimer County and will store 90,000 acre-feet of water—slightly smaller than neighboring Carter Lake (112,230 acre-feet). The project will provide a more reliable yield of 30,000 acre-feet annually, supplying water to over 800,000 people in northeastern Colorado.

The project also incorporates recreational opportunities, environmental enhancements, and wildlife habitat features. The environmental enhancements extend past the reservoir to the West Slope with the related project Colorado Connectivity Channel (CRCC). The CRCC is a collaborative project that connects the Colorado River upstream and downstream of Windy Gap Reservoir, restoring a vital habitat link between river segments and improving stream health and ecosystem function. On the East Slope, Larimer County will oversee day-use recreation at both Chimney Hollow Reservoir and the adjacent county-owned Chimney Hollow Open Space.