

# Lake Nighthorse:

## Administrative background information and history



by **Todd Ellison, Records Administrator, City of Durango**, last updated **6/18/2020**  
(drawn mostly from documents publicly available from the City's electronic records management database)

### Statistics, overview, rules and issues

Lake Nighthorse is a 1,500-surface acre body of water that was created by filling Ridges Basin just west of Bodo Industrial Park as part of the half a billion dollar Animas-La Plata Water Project. Its capacity is 123,541 acre-feet of water—about the same quantity as Vallecito Reservoir but with fewer surface acres (i.e., it is deeper).<sup>1</sup> The water, pumped roughly 600 feet uphill from the Animas River at Santa Rita, is for nonagricultural use by three Native American tribes and nontribal entities—and the City of Durango has purchased use rights for 1,900 acre-feet of it. The US Bureau of Reclamation owns the project, and had to assure that the recreation plan met the National Environmental Protection Act's guidelines. One of the requirements is that water can be drawn to the reservoir from the Animas River only when river flows through Durango are above the levels that are necessary for maintaining recreation on the river and keeping fish alive in the river.<sup>2</sup>

The City's webpage for Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area is <https://www.durangogov.org/lakenighthorse>. City parks and recreation rules apply at Lake Nighthorse. There can be no camping, no campfires, no

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<sup>1</sup> *Durango Herald* articles, 5/26/2011 and 8/1/2012.

<sup>2</sup> Indiana Jones, "Lake Nighthorse: Open for business and pleasure", *Durango Magazine*, Summer/Fall 2018 issue ca. 5/1/2018.

alcohol, no use of drones, and no glass beverage containers. A vendor rents paddleboards and kayaks at the lake during its seasonal hours. The lake is closed in wintertime (mid-November to late March) to protect wildlife. Visitors may walk onshore around the perimeter of the lake, except for designated no-access areas around the dam and at the intake and outflow areas where water is brought in from the Animas River and where it is released to serve Lake Durango in western La Plata County.

This beautiful multi-use body of water has become a popular regional destination. Visitors will now see a monumental steel entrance sign that was lifted into place on June 10, 2020. A Tribute Garden overlooking the lake is accessible just to the west on County Road 210 and has signage recognizing various entities that contributed to the development of the project over many decades. Those included the Bodo family, whose ranch included the land that the government obtained for the project.

Lake Nighthorse represents the outworking of many of the challenges that have been recurring political themes in Durango and many other municipalities of the West:

- how to provide an adequate **supply of domestic water**, water for agricultural purposes, and water to meet US treaty obligations to Native American stakeholders and water rights holders
- **environmental concerns** re: preserving and making available large expanses of natural beauty
- **archaeological challenges** of how best to preserve the remains of prehistoric civilizations
- how to **budget** the process responsibly, obtain funding, and respond to cost overruns and delays
- the role and influence of vocal citizens' **special interest groups**
- how to persuade municipal water users to agree to fee increases to address the costs of **deferred maintenance of water supply infrastructure**
- prioritization of funding for **recreational amenities** such as motorized and human-powered craft
- how to resolve different viewpoints and needs of local, regional, tribal and federal government entities

The City's involvement with this reservoir greatly differs from other City Parks and Recreation projects because the City must answer to a number of controlling boards, including the Animas-La Plata Operation and Maintenance Committee, which has a Recreation Committee with whom the City's Parks and Recreation Director must negotiate. That committee includes representatives from three tribes, with government entities in New Mexico, and with the water association that owns the water and operates the facility.<sup>3</sup>

## A broad history of the project<sup>4</sup>

Lake Nighthorse represents the culmination of a hope and a vision that began as early as the 1930s, to move water from the Animas River (comprised of a larger and higher drainage area) to the La Plata River Basin (a significant land area requiring a more dependable water supply). In 1938 the Bureau of Reclamation devised an engineering plan, which the La Plata Water Conservancy District pursued in

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<sup>3</sup> City Council regular meeting minutes, 12/19/2017, page 16.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Animas-La Plata Project collection inventory at the Center of Southwest Studies, initially produced by Todd Ellison while he was the Archivist at Fort Lewis College. For an overview of the archaeological aspects, see <https://www.swca.com/news/2019/05/animas-la-plata-the-water-project-that-spanned-generations>

1944. The reservoir could offer irrigation benefits to both Colorado and New Mexico, and could deliver water to lands belonging to the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain tribes. By 1964, New Mexico and the Southern Ute interest in the proposed project had expanded to include municipal and industrial water users.

On September 30, 1968 Congress officially authorized the construction of the Animas-La Plata Project (ALP) through the signing of the Colorado River Basin Act. The project that is commonly referred to as ALP began in 1979 with a non-jeopardy opinion from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Bureau of Reclamation published a Definite Plan Report for ALP that called for the construction of two reservoirs, seven pumping plants, a 24.3 mile dry-side canal, and 198 miles of laterals. Water would be pumped 525 feet up from the Animas to a reservoir in Ridges Basin. The Ridges Basin pumping station would pump the water 400 feet up to the La Plata Basin. The water would then travel to the La Plata River drainage and a 24.3 mile dry side canal, eventually supplying individual farmers and the Ute tribes with pressurized irrigation water.

In December of 1986, the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribes became a part of ALP when they signed the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Final Settlement Agreement. By signing this agreement, the Utes dropped their claims to San Juan Basin rivers, in exchange for water in ALP at no charge, and \$60 million in development funds. The groundbreaking ceremony in Durango took place on October 26, 1991, but in July 1997 the Animas-La Plata Reconciliation Plan, allowing for the maximum of 57,100 acre-feet per year, was created as a way of reconciling funding and political interests.

The federally-funded project ended up costing a half a billion dollars. One of the requirements of the construction was that a percentage of the work would be contracted to Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribal partners. They had preference in receiving the contracts.

The dam for the Ridges Basin reservoir was topped off on November 9, 2007; it was the largest earthen dam construction project of its time. The reservoir is near the massive Environmental Protection Agency burial site for Durango's uranium mill tailings (another half-billion-dollar US taxpayer-funded project). The rock covering of the tailings burial is visible from the water, if you are in the middle of the lake, looking toward the swim beach.

The reservoir, called Ridges Basin while in its planning stages, was named Lake Nighthorse after Ben Nighthorse Campbell, one of the U.S. legislators who pushed through the authorization and funding for this controversial and costly project.<sup>5</sup> His father was a Northern Cheyenne Indian. One of the aspects that made the project controversial was the cost of pumping water uphill 2.5 miles into a reservoir, where some of it would evaporate. Actual use of the water by federally recognized tribes as originally envisioned is not yet a certainty, due to the electrical cost of pumping the water (which any tribe using the water would need to reimburse the federal government) and due to the huge and as-yet unfunded costs of directing the water from Lake Nighthorse onto any tribal land.

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<sup>5</sup> Mr. Campbell, of Ignacio, was a Colorado congressional representative (1983-1987), US Congressman (1987-1993) and US Senator (1993-2004). He took on the use of the name Nighthorse partway through his political career.

## Who owns the reservoir? Who has water rights in it? Who pays for its maintenance and operation?

The Southwestern Water Conservation District owns the water rights to the water in Lake Nighthorse. Through project contracts, the following entities were allocated shares of the water stored there: the State of Colorado, the Navajo Nation, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the [New Mexico] La Plata Conservancy District, the San Juan [New Mexico] Water Commission, and, initially through the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority, the City of Durango and the Animas-La Plata Water Conservancy District. These entities formed the Animas-La Plata Operation, Maintenance and Replacement Association in 2009, which fronted money in anticipation of water purchases by the City of Durango and the Animas-La Plata Water Conservancy.”<sup>6</sup> The La Plata Archuleta Water District is also involved, drawing water from Lake Nighthorse to serve its customers on the west side of its district.<sup>7</sup>

An initial question was how much each partner would pay for operations and maintenance of the potable-water project. The lake was originally intended to be a State park. If the State of Colorado chose to not remain a sponsor and pay the commensurate costs, its allocation of 5,230 acre-feet of water would be divided equally between the two Ute Tribes, which together already held the largest share of the water in the reservoir.<sup>8</sup> The Colorado State Parks decided it lacked the funds to take on the recreational aspects of the reservoir. The three Native American tribes were assessed none of the construction costs and will not pay anything for operations and maintenance until they put their water to use. The Navajo Nation would get its water via a pipeline it or the US Bureau of Reclamation would build from Farmington to Shiprock. The New Mexico owners/sponsors receive their shares of water from the Animas River.<sup>9</sup>

## Project construction

The US Congress approved initial planning for the Animas-La Plata Water project by the US Bureau of Reclamation in 1956. In 1968 Congress authorized the project to provide a stable water resource for irrigation, municipal and industrial uses. Ten years later Congress appropriated \$710 million for the project; President Carter vetoed the entire appropriations bill to protest what he viewed as wasteful pork barrel projects, but Congress overrode the veto. In 2000 Congress approved a scaled-down version, recognizing that it would be economically unfeasible but deciding it was nonetheless necessary as a means of settling US treaty obligations with certain tribes in the Four Corners region regarding water rights. ALP construction did not begin until 2002/2003.<sup>10</sup> A number of options were considered for storing water from the Animas River—including damming it above Silverton. When

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<sup>6</sup> “Public meeting planned on Lake Nighthorse,” *Durango Herald*, 5/22/2014.

<sup>7</sup> “How does Durango get its water?,” *Durango Herald*, 10/3/2015.

<sup>8</sup> An acre-foot of water, about 326,000 gallons, would cover a football field to a depth of 1 foot.

<sup>9</sup> “Operations talks for ALP under way,” *Durango Herald*, 6/1/2009.

<sup>10</sup> “Opening Lake Nighthorse by 2014? Hold your horses,” *Durango Herald*, 3/23/2013; and “Public meeting planned on Lake Nighthorse,” *Durango Herald*, 5/22/2014, and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animas-La\\_Plata\\_Water\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animas-La_Plata_Water_Project) viewed online 9/18/2019.

that option was discarded, the originally proposed irrigation component of the project was dropped.<sup>11</sup>

This was one of the last Colorado Compact reservoirs built (Long Hollow, a small reservoir south of Redmesa on the Dryside in La Plata County was the final one, in 2014/15). Rich Ehat engineered the construction of both projects (Long Hollow and Ridges Basin). The *Durango Herald* reported that he “brought the ALP to completion on time and on budget.”<sup>12</sup> Touted by Parks and Recreation Director Cathy Metz as “closer than Walmart,” the Lake Nighthorse reservoir is only 1.5 miles from downtown Durango. As Indiana Jones’ article in a Durango tourist magazine noted,

The reservoir came into being with construction of the Ridges Basin Dam, built by the federal Bureau of Reclamation. Most will never see the engineering masterpiece that is Ridges Basin Dam because of security issues; but according to statistics gathered by the bureau, the 5.25 million cubic yards of earthen material used to construct the 276-foot-tall dam could cover a two-lane highway stretching all the way from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City with a foot of soil. Cement used for the foundation of the dam could construct a 27-mile-long sidewalk, and the underground gate chamber that holds and releases water from the dam back to the Animas River is large enough to house the Lincoln Memorial statue and its pedestal.<sup>13</sup>

Numerous challenges relating to pumping so much water a long distance uphill had to be resolved and are still being resolved. In January of 2020 the BOR began a year-long project to rebuild the water intake system on the west bank of the Animas River in Durango to reduce the costly intake of sediment.<sup>14</sup> In the early days of the project construction, adjustments had to be made because of the belated recognition of a need for high-voltage electrical lines between the river and the reservoir to power the water pumps. Water was first diverted to fill the Ridges Basin in the spring of 2009. The reservoir was declared full in the summer of 2011, but it was off limits until the City opened it to the public on April 1, 2018.<sup>15</sup>

## **Funding for capital construction of the lake’s recreational amenities**

The lake’s recreational functions are being developed in phases as money is available, and were scaled down from an original estimate of \$20 million. The *Durango Herald* reported the total estimated cost for five phases at \$5.6 million, to provide an access road, entrance station, inspection point for watercraft carrying invasive zebra or quagga mussels, a boat ramp, parking, swim beach, and a trail network and picnic area.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Books have been written about the saga of the Animas-La Plata Water Project, including *Durango: A novel* by former Presidential candidate US Senator Gary Hart of Colorado and Cynthia Barnett’s book, *Mirage, Florida and the vanishing water of the Eastern U.S.* ( University of Michigan Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> “Long Hollow to the rescue: Construction of reservoir expected to end in July,” *Durango Herald*, 4/26/2014, viewed [online](#) on 5/27/2020.

<sup>13</sup> Indiana Jones, “Lake Nighthorse: Open for business and pleasure,” *Durango Magazine*, Summer/Fall 2018 issue ca. 5/1/2018.

<sup>14</sup> “Bureau of Reclamation begins yearlong project in Animas River: Structure that diverts water to Lake Nighthorse taking in too much sediment,” *Durango Herald*, 1/22/2020.

<sup>15</sup> “Ready to recreate at Lake Nighthorse?,” *Durango Herald*, 11/11/2011.

<sup>16</sup> *Durango Herald* article, 4/13/2011.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife awarded the City \$285,000 from Motorboat Colorado to develop the recreation; those funds came from a total available of \$300,000 in federal pass-through funding from the excise tax on motorboat fuel, and were designated for the boat inspection station, a dock and buoys, and design of the access road and the overall recreation master plan.<sup>17</sup> \$3M in earlier funding from that federal tax via a Motorboat Colorado grant paid for construction of the boat ramp, access roads, parking and public toilet facilities. (Those minutes also mention an economic study conducted by RPI, a local firm, in 2010 that projected annual revenues of almost \$13 million per year.)<sup>18</sup>

The availability of the lake for boaters, swimmers and fishers seems to have exercised an appeasing effect on many who opposed the ALP pumping project. A 2012 Durango Herald editorial described the lake as “a reverse desert island in the dry environs of its surroundings.”<sup>19</sup> Progress toward reaching an agreement about opening the area for recreation improved in early 2015 when it was agreed that recreational uses of the edges of the lake would be restricted to the east side and a 25-foot strip of shoreline around the lake.<sup>20</sup>

Along with boating and swimming, fishing is one of the three primary recreational aspects of the lake. Colorado Parks and Wildlife has been stocking Lake Nighthorse with brown trout, rainbow trout and kokanee salmon since 2011, and added eight hundred 18-20"-long rainbow trout for fishing when the Reservoir opened to the public on Sunday, April 1, 2018.<sup>21</sup>



## Recreation management role assumed by the City

The City of Durango began considering taking on the role of managing recreation at the lake in 2011 after the State declined to assume it and, for years after the reservoir was filled, no other party was stepping up to do so. A key factor for the City from the start was that the user fees would cover the costs; the City did not want it to put pressure on the City’s General Fund.<sup>22</sup> As the development of the recreational plan progressed, the City reduced its expectations to only 90 percent cost recovery, splitting the remaining 10% costs with the Federal Bureau of Reclamation, which owns the property.<sup>23</sup> The lake was deemed off-limits to the public until the City assumed the responsibility, annexed the territory, and made the necessary initial capital improvements for recreation. Annexing the area gave the Durango Police the authority to respond to public complaints and to arrest or issue a citation to a lawbreaker.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “Recreation projects at lake get \$285K boost,” *Durango Herald*, 8/1/2012.

<sup>18</sup> City Council regular meeting minutes, 12/19/2017, page 15.

<sup>19</sup> “Lake Nighthorse,” *Durango Herald*, 8/3/2012.

<sup>20</sup> “Lake Nighthorse construction likely this summer,” *Durango Herald*, 2/9/2015.

<sup>21</sup> Photo: a youngster poses with her parents after catching one of the first fish on the first “Kids Fish First” event on 3/31/2018. In just 2018-2019, the State added 186,228 fish. “Stocking Lake Nighthorse with trout ahead of opening day,” *Durango Herald*, 3/27/2018, and two *Herald* articles dated 3/31/2018.

<sup>22</sup> “City considers reservoir rec program,” *Durango Herald*, May 25, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> “Recreation projects get thumbs up,” *Durango Herald*, 11/26/2012.

<sup>24</sup> “City considers annexing Lake Nighthorse,” *Durango Herald*, 9/25/2012.

The City had to wait for completion of a federally mandated environment assessment before opening the lake for recreation. The Bureau of Reclamation released the Final Environmental Assessment regarding the Lake Nighthorse Recreation Plan on December 19, 2016. After that, the Bureau completed negotiations with 25 Native American tribes and signed a lease agreement with the City.<sup>25</sup> City Council approved a 25-year lease on 1/3/2017 to allow the City to manage recreation at the lake.<sup>26</sup> The Bureau approved the agreement on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Soon after, City Council approved a plan for protecting the archaeological sites around Lake Nighthorse once it was opened to the public.<sup>27</sup> Ridges Basin was heavily populated about a thousand years ago; artifacts identified and curated prior to construction were dated from the late 800s and early 900s.

In early 2018 Amy Schwarzbach, formerly the executive director of the La Plata Open Space Conservancy, took a job as the City's Natural Resource Manager, a new position slated largely to be the main person tasked with the City's management of the lake.<sup>28</sup>

### **Public debate re: allowing motorized watercraft on the lake**

As the opening of the lake for recreational uses approached in early 2018, many vocal residents were asking the City to exclude motors from the allowable uses. Whether to allow motorboats on the lake, and conditions for their use there,



reached a head around that time. Rose Chilcoat of the Quiet Lake Nighthorse Coalition delivered to City Council on June 19, 2017 about 1,200 signatures supporting a 5 mph speed limit on the lake.<sup>29</sup> On December 19, 2017 the Council discussed the proposed (but apparently never adopted) Resolution R-2017-43 regarding opening Lake Nighthorse to public recreational use on April 1 of 2018 and mentioned the input by a citizens' interest group, Friends of Lake Nighthorse, which was focused on limiting motorized boating on the lake.<sup>30</sup> The first half of the March 13, 2018 City Council Study Session focused on the revised operations plan for Lake Nighthorse that set aside Mellow Mondays and Wakeless Wednesdays each week for wakeless (i.e., under 5 mph) use, a decision that led to a concern about the anticipated loss of revenue from motorboat users.<sup>31</sup>

Lake Nighthorse was officially dedicated on May 14, 2018 (an excellently produced 3-minute selection of City Public Information Office staff member Victor Locke's video of the event is available for online viewing at [https://archive.org/details/codco-Lake\\_Nighthorse\\_Dedication](https://archive.org/details/codco-Lake_Nighthorse_Dedication)), but it had already opened to

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<sup>25</sup> "Lake Nighthorse to open seasonally to motorized boating: Environmental assessment complete, but tribal, city negotiations will precede before public opening," *Durango Herald*, 12/19/2016.

<sup>26</sup> "City signs lease for Lake Nighthorse: City must annex area," *Durango Herald*, 1/3/2017.

<sup>27</sup> "Protection plan for Lake Nighthorse approved: Construction underway at lake," *Durango Herald*, 6/7/2017.

<sup>28</sup> "Land conservancy director resigns, takes job with City of Durango," *Durango Herald*, 2/6/2018.

<sup>29</sup> "No-wake Lake Nighthorse petition draws 1,200 signatures," *Durango Herald*, 6/19/2017.

<sup>30</sup> City Council regular meeting minutes, 12/19/2017 and see also "Durango City Council commits to opening Lake Nighthorse on April 1," *Durango Herald*, 12/20/2017.

<sup>31</sup> "Durango identifies 'quiet' days on Lake Nighthorse: City councilors tweak plan for wakeless use," *Durango Herald*, 3/4/2018. The City set the entrance fees to mirror State Parks fees, except the City charged a dollar more a day.

paid public recreational use on Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> (the previous day was specially opened for young children to be the first to fish). The water temperature that morning was 40 degrees. It was, from the start, deemed a good lake for morning boating.<sup>32</sup> The first official rescue mission on the lake was to retrieve a dog that was washed overboard when a sailboat capsized after the winds picked up late that Sunday.

The first *motorized* boating and *launching of boats from trailers* began on Saturday May 19, 2018 and continued through Memorial Day on May 28<sup>th</sup>, but was shut down the next day to begin repairs of the boat ramp and the parking area.<sup>33</sup> The City's first season was challenging in other respects: the 416 Fire contributed to lower-than-anticipated visitation and revenues, resulting in a loss of at least \$170,000 by the City. There were 48,078 visits to the lake that first summer. For the 2019 season the City expected to spend \$400,000 to operate the lake, generating about \$300,000 through sales of passes and through contracts with vendors. As per the agreement, the Bureau of Reclamation covered half of the estimated \$100,000 shortfall; the City's \$50,000 was paid from the City's 2015 half-cent sales tax.<sup>34</sup> Plans for the fall of 2019 included building a new 384-square foot shaded pavilion, an ADA-accessible fishing dock, and drilling a water well near the entrance for watercraft decontamination and future entrance building needs (unfortunately, drilling determined the area to be dry and no well can be drilled). The City will continue to haul water to decontaminate boats for aquatic nuisance species and will be exploring alternatives for the future.

## **Annexations by the City**

Ordinance O-2018-4 approving the annexation and initial zoning of Lake Nighthorse (Nighthorse) Addition to the City of Durango, effective March 31, 2018. The annexed area is approximately 1,927 acres and is accessed from La Plata County Road 210. The purpose of the annexation was to facilitate the opening of the lake to recreation, which would be managed by the City. Exhibit A of the Ordinance described the elevation of the lake as 6,882 feet, which is 11 feet below the crest of the Ridges Basin Dam.

Previously, the City's Ordinance O-2009-16 had approved the annexation and zoning of the Animas-La Plata Pump Station Addition to the City of Durango at the request of the Animas-La Plata Water Conservancy District, effective September 25, 2009.

## **City purchase of Lake Nighthorse water rights**

By Resolution R-2011-30 dated August 23, 2011, City Council agreed to ask Durango voters to approve an increase in City debt at a Special Election on November 1, 2011, via Ballot Issue 2A, to fund the City's purchase of water from the Animas-La Plata water project via a \$4 million bond issue. The City's purpose in this was to gain water-storage rights (initially stated as 3,800 acre-feet of water, i.e., 680 million gallons, i.e. 1.6% of the water in the reservoir; the total cost for the City to acquire

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<sup>32</sup> "Lake Nighthorse opens with long line of eager recreationists: Public can finally enjoy Lake Nighthorse," *Durango Herald*, 4/3/2018.

<sup>33</sup> "Parking lot repairs to limit access at Lake Nighthorse," *Durango Herald*, 5/17/2018.

<sup>34</sup> *Durango Herald* articles July 10 and 17, 2018, 10/31/2018, 1/8/2019 and 7/26/2019.

that water-storage right was \$6M payable to the Animas-La Plata Project; the \$2M not from the bond issue came from the financial reserves in the City’s water utility fund). 3,264 persons voted on this ballot issue; 60.62% of them were in favor.

Ron LeBlanc (the City Manager at the time) called this arrangement a “‘secure source of water forever,’ allowing for the buildout of new neighborhoods and industrial areas, such as Twin Buttes, Three Springs, Ewing Mesa, La Posta Road and `even the redevelopment of downtown and North Main Avenue.” The City would get to hold its water in the reservoir until it would need it. Without that resource, the City’s water storage during the hottest, most water-guzzling times could be as little as seven days.<sup>35</sup> The maximum annual City repayment cost cannot exceed \$253,000, and the City’s total repayment cost cannot exceed \$4,990,000.

An integral component of the City’s water storage plan, being funded by each water bill payer but not yet settled, is to build a \$50M water treatment plant somewhere downstream from the Lake Nighthorse dam, and pumps to tap into the ALP system (the ALP pumps on the Animas River are much lower than the City’s current pumps). This treatment plant will allow the City to shut down operations at its current plant on College Mesa to do maintenance. According to the Herald’s 2015 article, “The City has also started building a water-sampling station at Lake Nighthorse to complete the required two years of monitoring that must take place before a plant can be built.”<sup>36</sup> To meet the cost of these and many other capital improvements, water rates for Durango residents increased steeply in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century to pay for upgraded infrastructure, including the envisioned new water treatment plant.<sup>37</sup>

## Viewing the lake from afar

Numerous video cameras cover the lake at all times. Some are operated by the Bureau of Reclamation, others by the City of Durango. Since the start of 2020, the camera that the City’s Public Information Office set up in 2019 is posting a live 4K survey of the Lake 24/7/365 on YouTube (as shown on the covers of this booklet—two views seen on 6/10/2020: front is of a motorboat, with the swim beach under construction in the background; back cover is looking toward the dam). DurangoLiveCam is another online source, at <http://www.durangolivecam.com/lake-nighthorse/>.

The US Bureau of Land Management’s webpage of data about the ALP Ridges Basin project at <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/animas/> includes a number of graphs that dynamically report on various aspects of the reservoir operations. Also: the City produces an annual Lake Nighthorse Recreation Area season report, which contains a wealth of summarized data.

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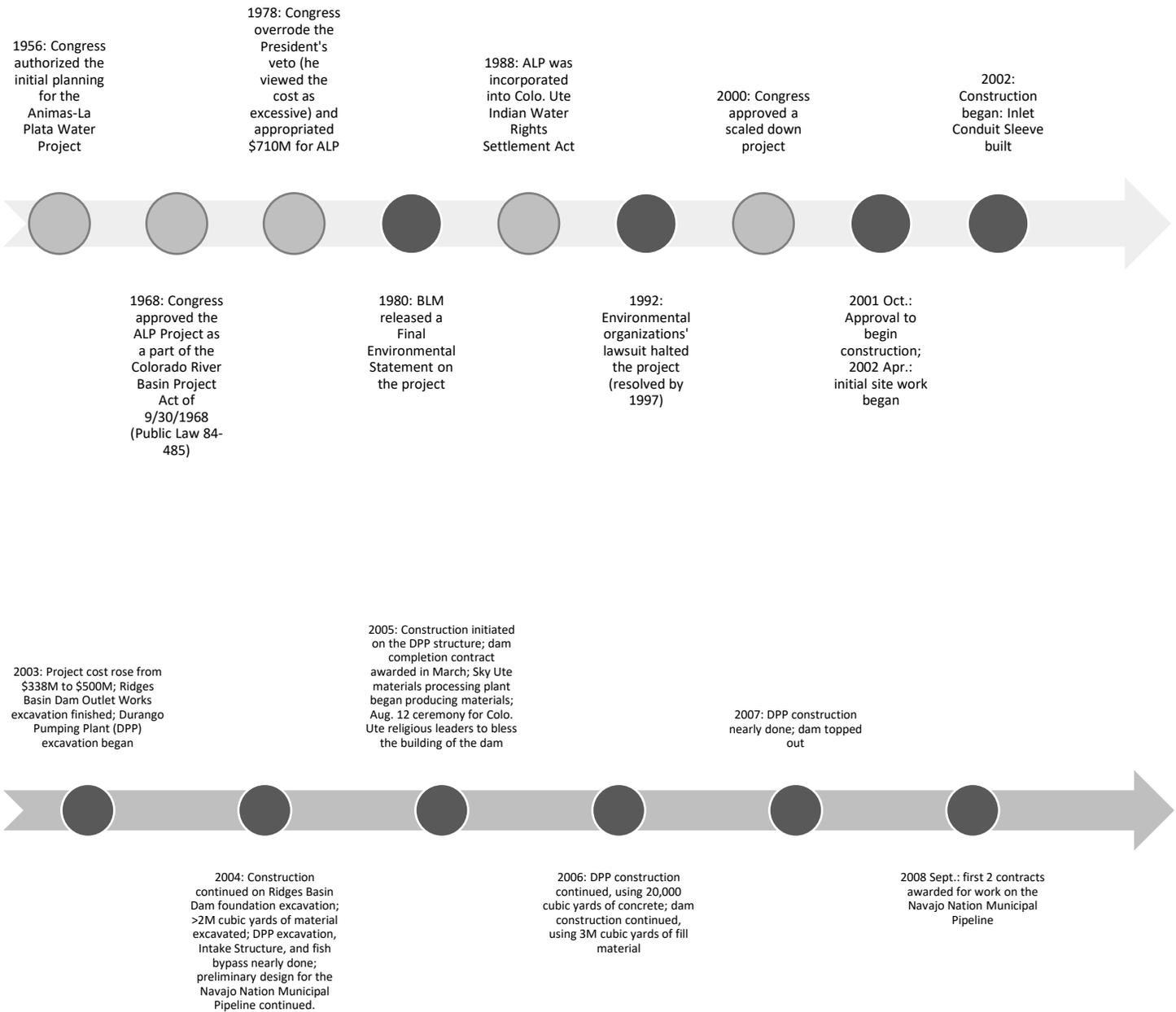
<sup>35</sup> “Water security in a dry land,” *Durango Herald*, 7/22/2013; and 10/3/2015.

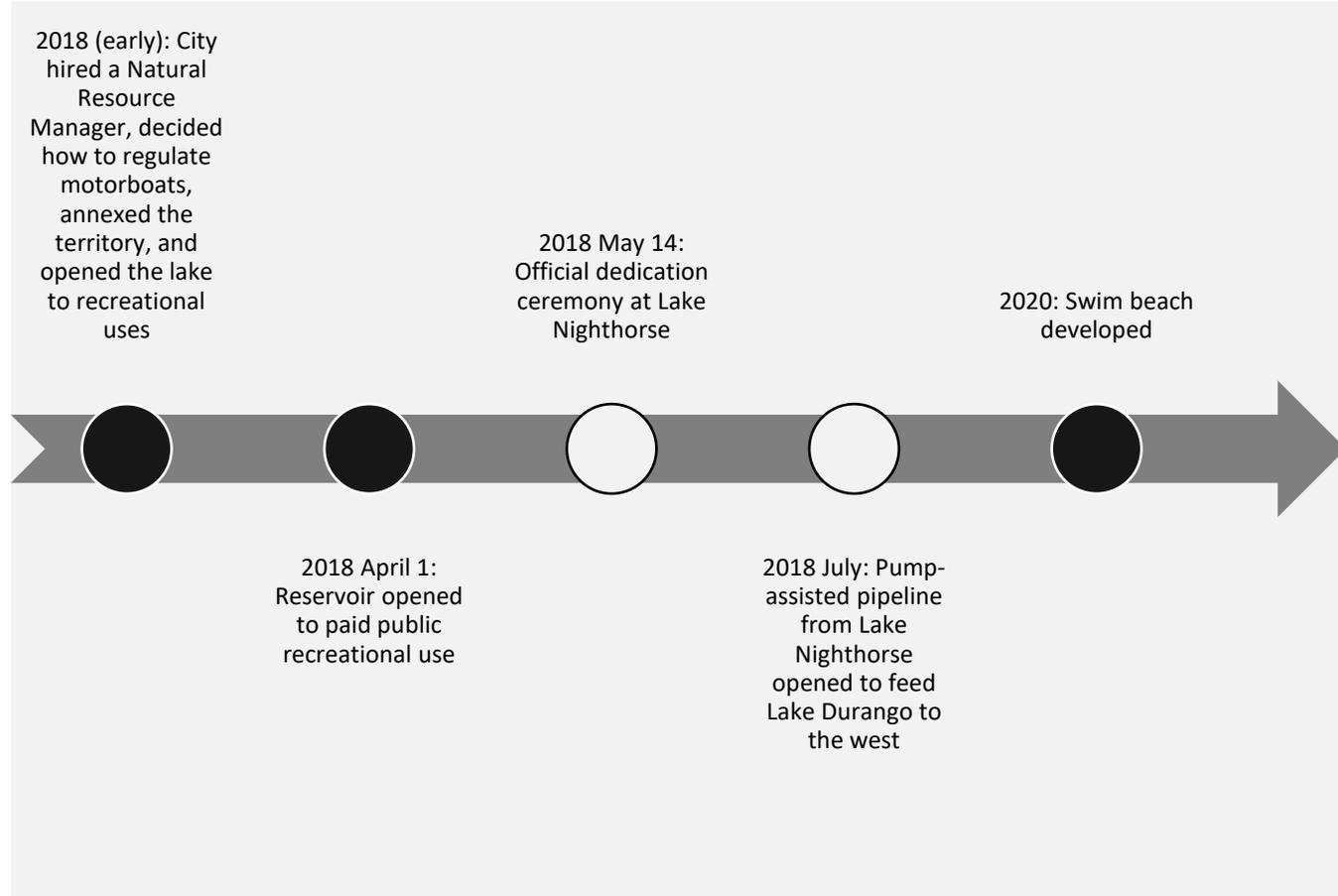
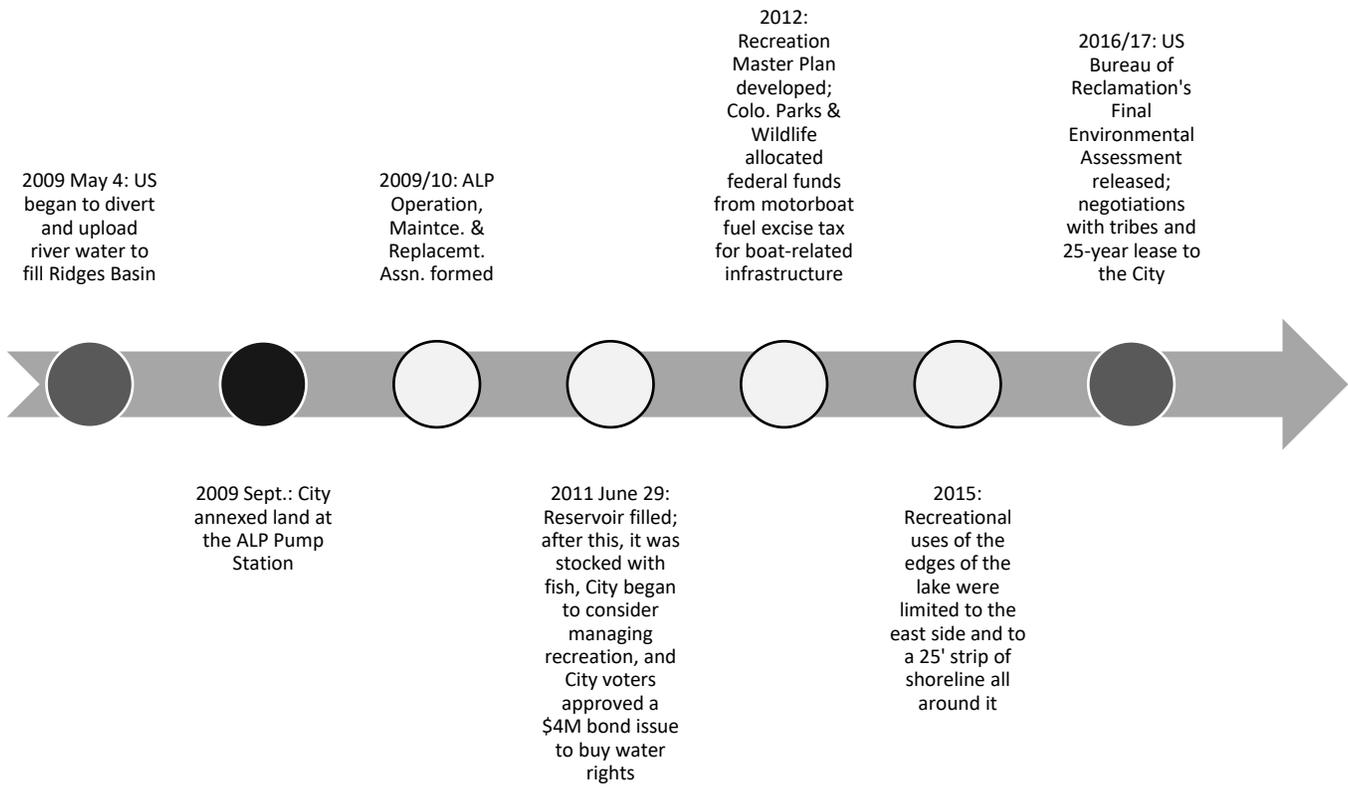
<sup>36</sup> “How does Durango get its water?,” *Durango Herald*, 10/3/2015.

<sup>37</sup> “Does Durango need a new water treatment plant? Residents paying for Lake Nighthorse facility, but no construction timeline set,” *Durango Herald*, 8/12/2017.

# A timeline of major events and decisions leading to the opening of Lake Nighthorse for recreation:

US legislative; 
  US executive; 
  City of Durango; 
  multi-partner







The purpose of this booklet is to introduce you to some of the most important facts regarding the unfolding of the decades-long project that now allows us to enjoy recreating on Lake Nighthorse in Durango. Its goal is to place that pleasurable experience in a broader historical and administrative context.

