



# COLORADO

## Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

6060 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80216

**To:** Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission  
**From:** Heather Dugan, Acting Director  
**Date:** 08/25/2022  
**Re:** The Division of Parks and Wildlife recommends denying the citizen petition to allow recreational seaplanes at Jackson Lake State Park

### Summary

The Parks and Wildlife Commission prohibits using aircraft at state parks except in emergencies. P-1, #100(C)(15). Raymond Hawkins with Colorado Seaplanes Initiative filed a citizen petition to allow the recreational use of seaplanes at Jackson Lake State Park. The Division recommends placing the petition on the consent agenda and denying it because (1) operating seaplanes is incompatible with other recreational uses of the lake and (2) the lake's owner objects to the petition.<sup>1</sup>

### Discussion

First, operating seaplanes is incompatible with other recreational uses of Jackson Lake State Park. As the park factsheet<sup>2</sup> explains, the park is home to one of the most popular recreational lakes in northern Colorado. Popular recreational activities include boating, water skiing, swimming, fishing, and wildlife observation. But space on the lake is limited. When full, the surface area of the lake is about 2,500 acres. This area shrinks dramatically during the irrigation season, when water is released from the lake (a reservoir) to satisfy agricultural demands. Particularly at this time, allowing seaplanes on the lake could create conflicts with and safety hazards to boaters, water skiers, swimmers, anglers, and other users. Adding another motorized use to this natural setting would also diminish its value for wildlife viewing and add administrative and enforcement burdens to an already understaffed park.

Second, CPW doesn't own Jackson Lake—we lease it for limited purposes from the Jackson Lake Irrigation and Reservoir Company. CPW's lease with the company requires CPW to manage the recreational use of the lake and surrounding lands to provide hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities to the public. Under the lease, CPW must make and enforce rules to protect public health and safety and the company's interests. The lease also requires CPW to consult with the company about any rule changes.

The company strongly opposes allowing recreational seaplanes at the lake. In response to a similar petition Mr. Hawkins filed and withdrew earlier this year, the company explained its concern that "landing seaplanes for recreational purposes in the lake will introduce invasive species . . . or other nuisances which could damage vital reservoir infrastructure used to store and deliver water to the Company's shareholders." In addition to invasive species, seaplanes themselves could damage reservoir infrastructure, particularly during periods of low water when they would be forced to operate in the deep water near the dam.

For these reasons, the Division recommends denying the petition.

<sup>1</sup> If the Commission follows the Division's recommendation and denies the petition via the consent agenda without additional discussion, this memo will express its rationale.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/JacksonLake/Documents/JacksonFactSheet.pdf>.

