

# Huston Lake



## Background, Long Term Issues, and Trends

- Huston Lake served as an agricultural irrigation source as far back as the 1930's.
- Heavy waterfowl use during spring and fall migrations suggests this has been a preferred re-fueling stop for decades, if not longer. High waterfowl use is typically associated with rich growth of rooted plants which provide good waterfowl food source (seeds & aquatic insect habitat).
- Huston has characteristics of a wetland (shallow depth, extensive cattail and bulrush stands along the perimeter, often rooted plants throughout) and should therefore be considered as such.

## Developing Issues

**Stormwater Structures:** Two sand filter storm water inlets on the north perimeter (at Bryant and at Alcott Streets) were renovated in 2013. An additional stormwater quality structure (parking/forebay-swale - northeast perimeter near Zuni St) was installed fall of 2014. This should further improve the quality of storm water discharging to the lake.

**Waterfowl & Plants:** Extensive control of algae and plant growth over the past few years appears to have decreased use of the lake by waterfowl due to limited food supply.

**Water Quality Standards:** Exceedances for **pH** and **dissolved oxygen** (D.O) are attributable to the lake functioning as a wetland (naturally variable pH and oxygen due to plant and algae activity). The pH – D.O. combination have been good the past three years (*see figure below*). A bacteria (*E. coli*) "issue" was attributable to one elevated reading in 2008.

**Garfield Discharge:** Huston Lake receives water that is discharged from Garfield Lake via Salisbury Lateral. Because this is a discharge from the lower depths (**hypolimnion**) of Garfield, the water quality can be marginal (low oxygen, elevated **suspended solids** and metals).

## Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat

**Fish:** No fish were stocked in 2014, but Huston did receive bass and bluegill additions in 2013. The often rich plant community sustains a good food base (bugs) for fish. While this makes for good warm-water fish habitat, the extreme swings in dissolved oxygen and pH combined with often warm temperatures makes this poor trout habitat.

**Wildlife:** There is typically a nice mix of waterfowl found at the lake in addition to cormorants and occasionally egrets, herons, pelicans, kingfishers, and turtles. However, waterfowl use is dependent on the status of food supply which is dependent on rooted vegetation and algae.

**Habitat:** The in-lake habitat consists of either rich growth of rooted vegetation, or, is very limited after chemical controls have been conducted. The former will support food and cover for fish, as well as food for waterfowl. Perimeter cattail and bulrush stands provide excellent waterfowl cover as well as feeding habitat.

## Recommendations

- Establish goals for the lake and manage the vegetation and algae accordingly. If waterfowl habitat is a high priority, allow for rooted vegetation and algae with up to 30% cover so as to sustain food and aquatic insect habitat.
- Increase naturalized landscape around the perimeter to reduce impacts of high maintenance turf grass (i.e., fertilizer).
- Work with the State to develop standards appropriate for wetlands that provide water quality and wildlife benefits (i.e., make allowances for conditions expected in healthy wetlands, such as variable pH and dissolved oxygen).

**Location:** 850 S Bryant St  
**Surface Area:** 13.6 acres  
**Max Depth:** 4 to 5 ft  
**Primary Source Water:** Clear Creek via Agricultural Ditch (Salisbury Lateral)  
**Intended Lake Uses:** Aesthetics, wildlife habitat, storm-water detention & mitigation, fishing  
**Current Regulatory Issues<sup>1/</sup>:** Dissolved oxygen, pH, *E.coli* (bacteria)

1/ Conditions exceeding state water quality standards.

Updated **December 2014**; questions to: [alan.polonsky@denvergov.org](mailto:alan.polonsky@denvergov.org)

