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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Water Quality Improvement Plan Submitted for Barr Lake and Milton Reservoir

The Barr-Milton Watershed Association announced today that it has completed a six-year study to improve water quality in Barr Lake and Milton Reservoir. The Association is a not-for-profit watershed group that includes representatives from municipalities, wastewater treatment facilities, irrigation companies, and others. The study was supported by grant monies from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and was developed through extensive collaboration efforts among several municipalities, publicly owned treatment plants, CDPHE, EPA and many other stakeholders.

The resulting plan, known as a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), was recently submitted to CDPHE for review. A TMDL is required when a water body does not meet state water quality regulations. Most importantly, a TMDL provides possible solutions for correcting the problem. The Association expects that the TMDL will be submitted to EPA for approval later this year.

For many years, Barr Lake and Milton Reservoir, both located northeast of the Denver metropolitan area, have experienced high levels of pH that can potentially harm fish and other aquatic life. The study found that high pH levels were associated with excessive growth of algae. In particular, the study identified over-abundant levels of phosphorus, a nutrient that comes from many sources in the watershed, as a primary cause of the high pH levels.

The TMDL includes an Implementation Plan that Association members will follow to evaluate ways to prevent phosphorus from entering the reservoirs as well as possible treatment options to remove phosphorus that is already contained in the reservoirs' sediments.

Laurie Rink, chair of the Association, praised the cooperative work of Association members in conducting the study and developing the TMDL. "The water supplying these reservoirs comes from the entire metropolitan area, which is a source of many contaminants, including phosphorus," she said. "Improvements in water quality will depend on continued cooperative efforts to reduce contributions from all sources."

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