An innovative, multipurpose, sustainable water resource project to benefit Colorado, the Chatfield Reallocation Project reallocates 20,600 acre-feet of water in a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed dam for renewable water sourcing. The project provides a blueprint for future regional reallocation projects.

Created in 1975 for flood control and water storage, Chatfield Dam and Chatfield State Park draws 1.6 million visitors annually while providing water supply for Denver and the Front Range. With a metro population expected to double over the next 40 years, area water providers are challenged to meet growing water needs of communities and farmland while reducing demand on depleted groundwater supplies. Redeveloping the public facilities displaced by raising the operating water level 12 feet was a monumental feat of engineering and construction. This required moving 14 sites and 1.4 million cubic yards of soil — the equivalent of burying a football field 787 feet deep — across 500 acres. Throughout the two-year construction period, the team kept the park open, limited disruptions, and maintained the park’s $2 million annual revenue.

To satisfy reservoir volume maintenance requirements, each yard of material placed was matched by a yard removed at the same elevation elsewhere. Planning and design under these constraints, and adjacent to a large body of water, required unique modelling, structural, and geotechnical approaches and solutions.

Completed on schedule and on budget, the $171 million Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Project provides generations of Coloradans, municipalities and agriculture additional water supply at less cost, disruption and environmental impact than a new reservoir.