



From tragedy to triumph: 10 years after the Big Thompson Flood

Building flood resiliency in Loveland

Sept. 12, 2013, was a day that changed the trajectory of the Loveland community.

Steady rain continued for a week. Under the pressure of heavy rainfall, water levels in the Big Thompson River, which flows through the City of Loveland, increased by 500 times its seasonal flow. Lake Estes filled enough that water had to be released from the Olympus dam, or it would break, causing catastrophic damage to Loveland.

Flood water inundated more than three square miles of Loveland, covering roads and closing all bridges over the river. Parks, trails and natural areas including Fairgrounds Park, were damaged or destroyed. Sixty-six buildings in Loveland and more than 1,000 in adjacent county areas were impacted. Emergency responders were dispatched, making 80 rescues in less than 24 hours.

Power lines and infrastructure were damaged. Rushing flood water and boulders destroyed two of the City's three water lines. To protect the last line – and Loveland's water supply – city staff and partners devised a plan to move the river southward, back into its original channel.

"This move had never been done before. Normally such an effort would take months, if not years of design and planning. In probably 30 minutes, we devised a plan to redirect the river's energy, and it worked," said City Stormwater Division Manager Chris Carlson.

The Disaster Assistance Center, operated and managed by the City, Larimer County and nonprofit partners, was a place for the community to go for supplies, resources, shelter and support. During the flood and through November 2013, 1,035 people from Larimer County and throughout Northern Colorado sought and received assistance. Volunteers logged 145,000 hours, and more than \$1.8 million in donations were received to help those in need.

Recovery and resiliency

"Recovering from a flood of this magnitude is not a sprint; it's a marathon. We knew it would take years to recover. Bad things occur because of a flood, but good things come from it. It allowed the Loveland community to come together like never before," said Carlson.

Shortly after the September 2013 floods, the Loveland City Council appropriated funds for Business Assistance



Big Thompson River damage extended to businesses, homes and public spaces along important Loveland corridors.

Flood Recovery Fund Grants, which helped support 37 businesses.

All damaged power and water infrastructure have been repaired or replaced. The Foothills Solar and Substation Facility completed in 2017 adds a layer of backup power for the City. Roads, sidewalks, curbs and gutters have been replaced, and the City is working to execute the 287 Corridor Plan.

Namaqua, Barnes, Fairgrounds and Centennial parks were restored and reopened before the summer of 2014. Repairs to Mariana Butte Golf Course, reconstruction of the Recreation Trail underpass at U.S. Highway 287 and River's Edge Natural Area repairs were all completed by the end of 2015. Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park was approved by Larimer County Planning Department in late 2016, and the first phase opened in late September 2018.

Recovery began immediately and continues, making Loveland more resilient and vibrant. Some of the most significant recovery impacts from the flood have been improvements to planning, monitoring and improving the flood corridor to be better prepared for the future. This includes the Better Big T plan.

Read about Loveland's flood resiliency, improvements to the 287 corridor, and the Better Big T Plan at lovgov.org/abetterbigt.

2013 Flood Documentary

Watch a special flood anniversary documentary beginning Sept. 12, 2023 on the City's YouTube channel, youtube.com/cityofloveland.

Connect With Pulse The Way You Want

How do you like to connect with your internet provider? With Pulse you can give us a call at **970-541-4990** and speak to a locally-based team member. You can visit in person at **2695 W. Eisenhower Blvd. Suite 200**. Or you can get signed up online at your leisure any time of day or night at [LovelandPulse.com](https://www.LovelandPulse.com). However you want to connect with us, is how we want to connect with you!

Pulse is proud to offer service that is tailored to the needs of the Loveland community. Our Net Promoter Score is over 16 times higher than the National average for Internet Service Providers (learn more about this in our February 1, 2021 article titled "[Pulse Internet Is Obsessed With Outstanding Service and Our Scores Show It](#)" at [LovelandPulse.com/News](https://www.LovelandPulse.com/News)). You can also view our 4.6-star average rating on Google Reviews to see what current customers are celebrating.

Pulse customers also sing praises about:

Personalized attention: We understand the needs and concerns of the Loveland community, because we are also part of the fabric of Loveland. When you call our Customer Service line at **970-541-4990**, email us at Pulse@LovelandPulse.com, webchat with us at [LovelandPulse.com](https://www.LovelandPulse.com), or come in to visit us with any questions, you can rest easy knowing you're speaking with our staff located near the corner of Eisenhower Boulevard and Wilson Avenue.

Knowledgeable staff: We are able to answer your questions about internet use, let you know when and where we'll be out in the community to



Your Loveland Pulse Team, Spring 2023

connect, dispatch a technician if you need assistance, and provide assistance with any technical troubleshooting issues you may encounter.

Flexible hours: Pulse customers have access to Northern Colorado-based Technical Support 24 hours per day, every single day of the year. Questions and issues are solved by a local team whenever you need us – day or night.

Serving the community is the reason Pulse exists, and we take our commitment to excellence very seriously. We invite you to reach out with any questions or thoughts you may have and look forward to helping you understand how your community-owned, multigigabit internet utility will make your digital life better in every way.



PulseTV is all about you.

Our modern app-based streaming platform was designed for how you watch TV today, with the comforts of a traditional TV experience.



Learn more at [LovelandPulse.com/TV](https://www.LovelandPulse.com/TV)

CITY OF LOVELAND

SKI & SPORTS SWAP

SELL old stuff!

BUY new stuff!

lovgov.org/skiswap

Fri, Oct 20 | 5:30 – 8:30P
VIP Entry 4:30 – 5:30, \$7 (in advance)

Sat, Oct 21 | 9A – 2P
Closeout Pricing: 12 – 2P

700 E. 4th St.

CITY OF LOVELAND PARKS & RECREATION CHILSON Recreation & Senior Center

VOTE 2023 ELECTION

Visit GoVoteColorado.com to register to vote or update your voter registration.

YOUR VOTE, YOUR VOICE.

For more information on local elections, visit lovgov.org/elections

CITY OF LOVELAND

Reporting an encampment?

Looking for shelter information or resources for people in need?

See disruptive behavior or trespassing?

LovGov.org/homelessness or call the Homelessness Hotline at **970-962-2150**.

CITY OF LOVELAND



Loveland Water and Power

Utility News

Main switchboard
970-962-3000

Utility Billing
970-962-2111

Website
lovelandwaterandpower.org

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**A word from
Loveland Water and Power
Director Kevin Gertig**

Ten years ago, Colorado experienced one of its worst natural disasters when a rain flooded 20 counties in Northern Colorado. U.S. Highway 34 between Loveland and Estes Park washed away while the meadows below were ripped apart, leaving critical water mains in ruins and Big Thompson Canyon residents stranded and without power.

Although the havoc wrought on our city was astonishing, restoration work bolstered our infrastructure making it more resilient and reliable than it was before the flood. Two healthier, strategically placed water lines bring water to customers from the water treatment plant. The power infrastructure in the Big Thompson Canyon is modernized and hardier. The old hydroelectric facility destroyed by silt and sediment was replaced with a 3.5 MW solar facility that not only produces more power but adds to our renewable energy portfolio.

It was a time of devastation but also a time of generosity and ingenuity. Our community faced massive obstacles but found opportunities in disguise along with courage and character. People helped themselves by helping each other.

Today, our community remains resilient and continues to prepare for unexpected emergencies. We have strengthened our incident command systems, fortified our relationships with Larimer County and first responders and practice response methods in our local emergency operations center on a routine basis. We stop a moment to acknowledge those who sought the challenge to rebuild, unite and relish the character of the west to persevere. Ten years later, we remain dynamic and as your utility continue to review our vulnerabilities due to extreme weather events.

Remembering the 2013 flood: Our teams' fight to keep water, lights on during crisis

This month marks ten years since the 2013 Big Thompson River flood – a part of one of the worst natural disasters to impact the state of Colorado, causing more than \$4 billion in damages statewide including staggering destruction to the Big Thompson Canyon.

Within hours north and south crossings from the Big Thompson Canyon to Greeley were flooded and impassible, creating a blockade that spanned the region. Loveland Water and Power (LWP) was on the front lines as the raging waters rerouted the Big Thompson River and destroyed two of the three main water lines leading to the city, threatening the third.

"The water was coming through so fast it was eroding everything away," Municipal Fiber Manager and former LWP Senior Electrical Engineer Briana Reed-Harmel, said. "We lost two of our three clean water



Crews dump rocks from nearby quarry to keep floodwaters from unearthing city water lines.

lines to flood water. If we'd lost the last one it would have taken out all the water to the city – this was our immediate focus as the flood began."

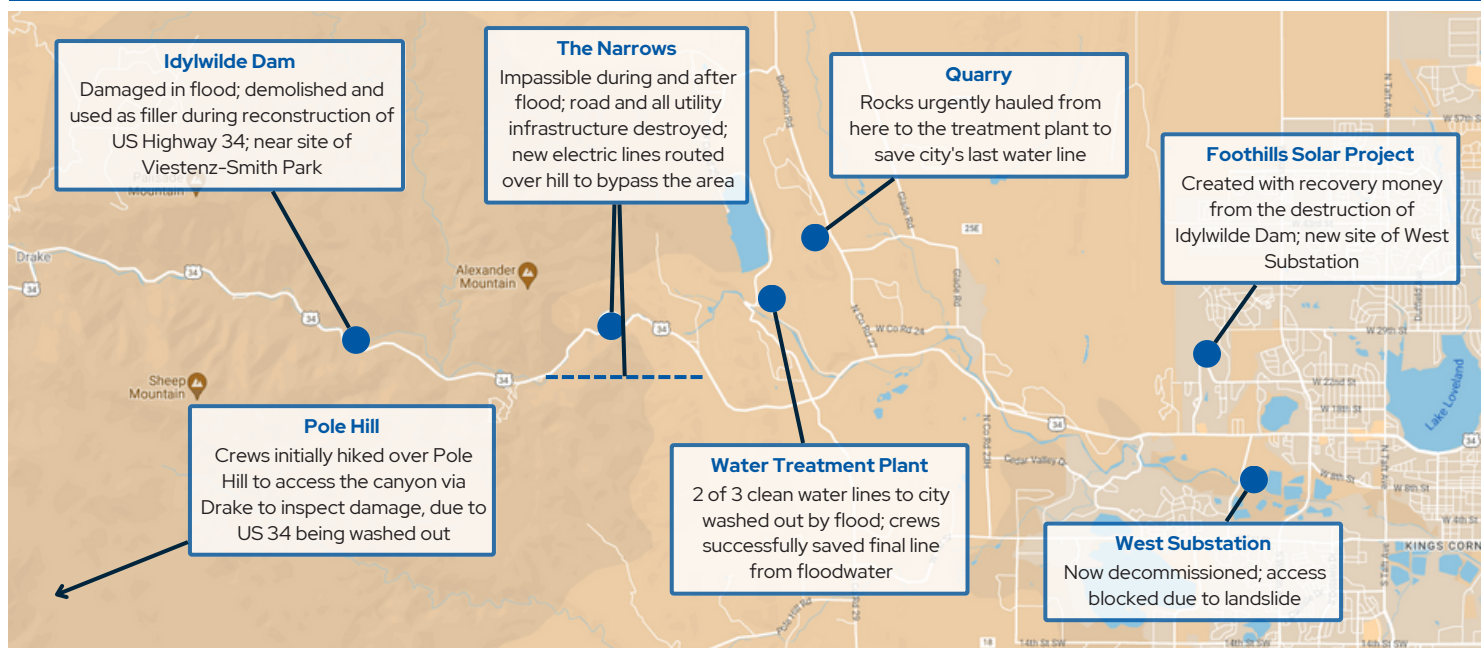
While crews battled to keep the remaining water line intact, employing heavy stones from a nearby quarry and a "miraculous effort from everyone involved" according to City Manager and former LWP Director Steve Adams, the situation upriver in the canyon remained

largely unknown. West Substation, delivering electricity to customers in the canyon, was inaccessible due to a landslide and U.S. Highway 34 washed out near the bottom of the canyon.

"The entire road through the Narrows didn't exist, so we couldn't inspect canyon damage," Reed-Harmel said. "We couldn't determine on-the-ground impacts from

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Utility News



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forestry helicopters, so our crews set out on foot and literally hiked over Pole Hill, heading into to the canyon via Waltonia Road near Drake, to inspect damage.”

First responders encountered incredible destruction in the canyon. Power lines were ripped from their poles, leaving nearby homes without electricity for months. Idylwilde Dam, the hydroelectric dam on the Big Thompson River near Viestenz-Smith Park, was laden with silt and rocks and deemed nonoperational.

“Our Water Treatment Plant staff stayed at the plant for days to keep clean water running to the city... slept there, ate there,” Adams said.

“We had power line workers digging holes for new power poles, people figuring out innovative ways to bring in supplies like horses and all-terrain vehicles, wastewater teams adjusting wastewater pumping due to flooded sewer lines, our whole team helping man our phones 24/7 and river water being relentlessly diverted into irrigation canals to try to keep the river level from rising more in town. Thanks to a truly incredible effort from our staff and from everyone helping us out in the

community, we kept water, wastewater and power on to the city throughout the crisis.”

“I remember the community just really coming together, especially in the canyon,” Reed-Harmel added. “We were all taking on such an overwhelming effort – our teams, the residents, the fire department, the forest service, sister cities, state and federal teams. We even used Forest Service helicopters to help bring power poles into the canyon, since the roads were impassible for weeks. It was wonderful to have so many people working together.”

2023 Public Power Week: October 1-7

What's Public Power Week?

Every year Loveland Water and Power celebrates providing public power. We're community-owned. We don't profit from our utility rates; our rates cover our operational costs. That means all the work to remain reliable, to keep costs as low as possible and to plan for our community's future energy needs are only possible with your support and participation. From our public utility commission board to using community feedback as the foundation of our future projects. Your voice matters.

Event Spotlight: Talk electrical safety with a lineworker!

We're co-hosting an event for 2nd-5th graders to talk electrical safety with one of our electric lineworkers! To join us **Friday October 13th from 10-11am at the Loveland Public Library (300 North Adams Street)**, call 970-962-2587 to reserve a spot.

Enter to win!

To celebrate Public Power Week this year, we want to hear from you in the form of haikus!

What are haikus? They're short-form poetry made up of three lines of verse that alternate from five syllables to seven syllables and then back to five syllables. Here's an example:



We want your entries
To be about our power
Creative and fun

<-----5 syllables
<-----7 syllables
<-----5 syllables

To enter: Email your haiku to efficiency@cityofloveland.org

Deadline to enter: October 8

Prizes: Two winners (one staff favorite and one randomly drawn winner) will win a \$100 Downtown Loveland gift card

Announcement of winners: We'll announce our winners on social media and in our November City Update