



A look at NISP through the eyes of Evans

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Evans is growing up. With several development projects in the works -- following in the path of already furious growth in past years -- the town is among the fastest growing communities in northern Colorado.

Yet in the end, according to Mayor Lyle Achziger, all that carefully planned growth boils down to one important thing: water. That is where the Northern Integrated Supply Project comes in.

"We have an opportunity here to take water that we already have, that we already have rights to, and store it in one of -- what I feel -- is the more better thought-out plans for a reservoir," Achziger said. "To not do that, I think, would be a travesty to the area."

A controversial and costly project, the project is being hailed as either the much-needed answer to water supply concerns for 15 municipalities and water districts in northern Colorado or the death of the Poudre River -- depending on the source.

The more than \$400 million project would consist of building two reservoirs that would ultimately provide 40,000 acre feet of water to the municipalities, which include Eaton, Windsor, Firestone, Frederick and Evans. The planned Glade Reservoir would total 170,000 acre feet -- helping to supply water for the municipalities -- while Galeton Reservoir would total 40,000 acre feet -- water used for farmers.

The water that Evans holds rights to are in the form of junior water rights -- water that is only available during years of high spring run off, according to Brian Werner, spokesperson for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. He said under these conditions, water would be available every 4 of 10 years -- still a very important slice of the pie, and something that often gets lost in translation.

"There's a lot of small communities that stand to benefit from this and there's a lot of small communities that maybe don't have many other resources by which to get water," Achziger said.

Opponents to the plan say it is too costly, will damage the Poudre River and will hurt farmers. Gary Wockner, spokesperson for Save the Poudre, compared this importance of this project to that of the proposed uranium mine near Nunn -- a project that has been met with considerable ire in northern Colorado.

Wockner also said it would severely hurt downstream water flow and water quality of the river through Fort Collins -- causing vast and terrible economic effects for downtown businesses.

"If they conserve all the water they can and they find a way to work with farmers, they will get all the water they need and they don't have to drain the Poudre River to get it," said Wockner.

Yet, Achziger said the town already has many conservation efforts underway and that conserving water alone would not be a solution -- pointing to Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District's estimate that such efforts would only ease a city's water use by 10-15 percent.

Should a "No Action" ruling be made by the Army Corps of Engineers, which will make the final decision on the future of the project, it is estimated that 25,000 acres of agricultural land will dry up as water is used for the

municipalities, according to the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.

While stopping short of saying Evans would definitely be forced to buy more of this water should such a ruling be made, Achziger said it is a very real possibility. Werner said it was inevitable.

For Achziger, who grew up in agricultural country, such a thing would be painful to watch.

"What hasn't been dried up certainly has the potential," Achziger said. "Because as the cities that have bought those water rights up -- as they have a demand to actually use that water, I mean its anybody's guess as to how many of those farms will be totally dried up."

The Army Corps of Engineers released a report on the project and the impacts it would have for the region, and will receive public input until July 30. As a part of this process, three forums will be held in the coming week for residence to voice their opinions.

Achziger said he plans to read a resolution passed by the Evans City Council confirming its support for the NISP at one of the Fort Collins forums, and other members of the council would do so at the meeting in Greeley.

"We know that water is a finite resource and we know that we've had record growth along the Front Range," Achziger said. "It just stands to reason that at some point in time, there's not going to be enough water if we continue at this rate of growth."

BREAKOUT:

* For more information from the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, please visit www.nwcd.org/project_features/nisp_main.asp

* To learn more about Save the Poudre, please visit www.savethepoudre.org

* To learn more about water conservancy and xeriscaping in Evans, please contact Dan Willadsen, parks superintendent, at (970) 339-4081 ext. 108

To attend the forums:

* Open house at 4 p.m.; forum at 6 p.m. on Monday at the Hilton Hotel, 425 W. Prospect Dr. in Fort Collins

* Open house at 4 p.m.; forum at 6 p.m. on Tuesday at the Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive in Fort Collins

* Open house at 6 p.m.; forum at 7 p.m. on Thursday at the University Center, 20th Street and 10th Avenue in Greeley

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