- ELIZABETH FEHRINGER/gtphoto@greeleytribune.com

At rally, a reservoir of support for water project

BILL JACKSON,

ERIE — The importance of water storage to the future of northern Colorado was the theme Thursday at an agricultural rally in support of the Northern Integrated Supply Program at the Anderson Farm north of here.

About 200 people attended the Farmers for NISP Rally, including representatives from municipalities and water providers who are funding the project, which is designed to build Glade Reservoir northwest of Fort Collins and Galeton Reservoir east of Ault.

Glade would store water from the Poudre River and supply 40,000 acre-feet to the municipalities financing the project, while the Galeton Reservoir would take water from the South Platte River for use by two irrigation companies in exchange for the irrigation water they give up off the Poudre River.

The project, estimated at $490 million, is under an

environmental review by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is expected to complete that process later this year.

Opponents of the project — particularly the environmental group, Save the Poudre — say the project will not only ruin the Poudre River but would result in removing more land from agricultural production. And Thursday, the group expressed outrage that a new bumper sticker that was passed out at the rally — Save the Poudre, Store it in Glade — calling it an infringement on its name.

Don Ament, a former state legislator and Colorado agriculture commissioner who farms and ranches in Logan County, said he didn't mind those groups "who want to recreate on our water," but he and others stressed that Save the Poudre does not represent agriculture. The state is looking at a crisis, he said, if more water storage is not built — and soon.

Without the project, he and others said, the impact on agriculture would be devastating, reverting 100 square miles of irrigated land to dryland.

"The population of this country forgets they spend only 9 percent of their disposable income to eat. That's the lowest in the world. But they can't do that without water," Ament said to a cheering crowd. He said farmers "conserve water every day; we are conservation-minded. But it only makes sense to store water when you've got it."

Ament said the state is losing several thousand acre feet of water once again this year because of a lack of storage.

Several state lawmakers spoke in support of the reservoirs, led by state Sen. Mary Hodge, D-Brighton, who has served on both the House and Senate agriculture and natural resources committees. Those in support from Weld included Rep. Glenn Vaad, R-Greeley and Sen. Scott Renfroe, R-Greeley. Dan Maes, who is seeking the Republican nod to run for governor, also offered support. All five Weld commissioners spoke in support of the project.

Hodge, who has been in the state Legislature for the last 10 years, said she has been a supporter of the project from the beginning. The alternative, she said — the buy and dry of agricultural land — is not one she wants to

accept.

"We need to save water for dry years," she said.

Project participants
Participants of NISP and the permitted water yield they will receive.*

Fort Collins-Loveland Water District (3,000 acre feet).

Windsor (3,300 acre feet).

Left Hand Water District (4,900 acre feet).

Erie (6,500 acre feet).

Evans (1,600 acre feet).

Central Weld County Water District (3,500 acre feet).

Fort Lupton (3,000 acre feet).

Fort Morgan (3,600 acre feet).

Morgan County Quality Water (1,300 acre feet).

Eaton (1,300 acre feet).

Severance (1,300 acre feet).

Lafayette (1,800 acre feet).

Firestone (1,300 acre feet).

Frederick (2,600 acre feet).

Dacano (1,000 acre feet).

* One acre foot is enough water to supply two families with a year's supply of water.

Source: Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.

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