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THREAT: WATER DIVERSION AND RESERVOIR PROJECT

Summary

Colorado's only Wild and Scenic River, the Cache La Poudre River, or "Poudre," is the lifeblood of the cities and farms it serves. But its future is threatened by a water diversion scheme that would stretch the river beyond its limits in order to quench future development elsewhere. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) must deny this flawed proposal, and ask involved Colorado cities and water districts to implement simple water conservation and efficiency measures instead. If they do not, communities, agricultural operations, and other businesses may no longer be able to enjoy the myriad benefits the Poudre River now offers.

The River

The Poudre, flows 140 miles from its protected headwaters in Rocky Mountain National Park to its confluence with the South Platte River. The river's unusual name comes from French fur trappers who, as they warred with local Indian Tribes, hid their gunpowder near the mouth of the river's canyon. They named the river the Cache la Poudre, or "hiding place for powder." Today, the Poudre's upper reaches sustain a hotspot for fly fishing, boating, camping, hiking and a scenic respite from city life. However, as the Poudre exits the foothills and winds through the rapidly-growing communities of Laporte, Fort Collins, Windsor and Greeley, the river becomes a sluggish remnant of its mountain

glory. This unprotected section of the river has more than 20 irrigation and municipal water projects that divert water from the river and substantially reduce its flow.

The Threat

The Poudre River is endangered by a proposal known as the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP)/Glade Reservoir. This project would

POUDRE RIVER AT-A-GLANCE

RIVER LENGTH: 140 miles

WATERSHED AREA: 1,882 square miles

LARGEST CITY IN THE WATERSHED: Fort Collins (pop. 135,000)

DID YOU KNOW? The Cache la Poudre River is the only Wild and Scenic River in Colorado.





The Poudre and Global Warming

As temperatures rise, snowpack will decrease and melt earlier in the spring. As a result, there will be less snowpack to feed the Poudre during the dry summer months. Taking additional water from the river for the NISP project or other diversion schemes only increases surrounding communities' vulnerability to global warming. Improving municipal and agricultural water efficiency is a better solution for ensuring a consistent water supply under warming conditions.

take an average of 40,000 acre-feet from the river every year before it reaches Fort Collins. A huge pumping station would be constructed on the mainstem of the Poudre to pump and divert the water to the Glade Reservoir. The 177,000-acre-foot-capacity off-stream reservoir would be created in what is now a scenic valley to store water from the Poudre River. A major highway that runs through the valley would be rerouted from the proposed reservoir site at a cost of tens of millions of dollars. In addition to removing much-needed water from the river, NISP/Glade would also eliminate the "June Rise," a natural increase in flows that occurs when mountain snowpack melts in the spring that is critical to sustaining a dynamic and healthy river.

Moreover, NISP/Glade would divert water not to existing communities, but to fuel future growth, the majority of which would be outside of the Poudre River basin and in suburbs north of Denver. Municipalities and water districts financing the proposal have not implemented significant water-saving measures such as tiered water rates that provide an incentive for customers to use less water. This, coupled with the use of water-saving appliances and implementation of agricultural water efficiency technologies such as pivot or drip irrigation could help eliminate need for NISP/Glade altogether. If utilized, such measures would allow these communities to thrive using less water from the Poudre River and grow in a smart and sustained manner.

What's At Stake

Fort Collins considers the Poudre River to be one of its "economic engines" due to

the river's recreational and commercial values as well as its proximity to downtown. Dozens of Fort Collins businesses have direct economic ties to both the upper and lower Poudre. If completed, NISP/Glade, in combination with existing water projects on the river's lower reaches, will reduce the Poudre to a mere trickle before it reaches the city, and eliminate the resource upon which these businesses depend.

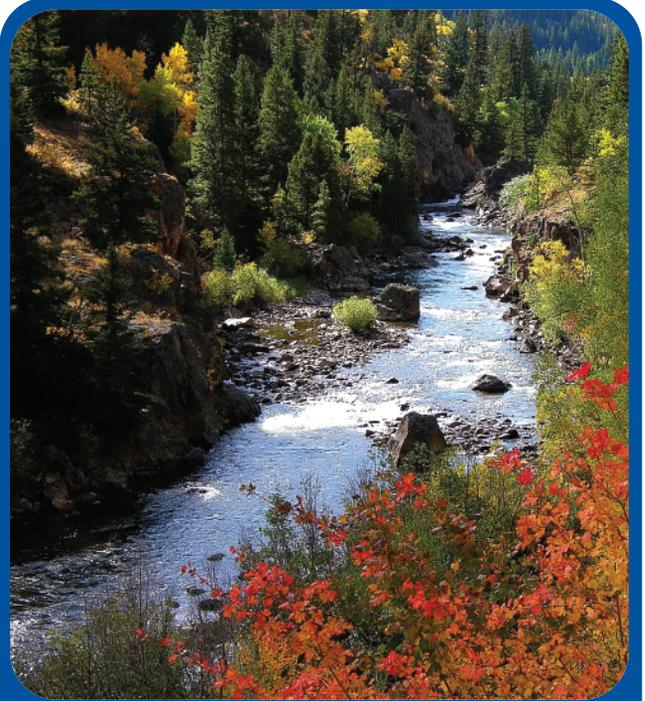
Due to the many existing water diversions, wetlands are stressed and invasive algae infestations are common. Stretches of the river run dry at certain times of year, causing widespread fish kills. Surrounding cottonwood and willow forests, which cool the water, filter urban runoff, and slow storm flows, are already declining due to insufficient water. These problems will be

exacerbated if NISP/Glade is constructed.

What Can Be Done

Communities and water districts financing this misguided project must implement comprehensive water conservation and efficiency measures before considering new water pumping or storage. If they do not, the Corps must heed public concern and refuse to issue the necessary section 404 Clean Water Act permit for NISP/Glade.

There are several bills moving through the Colorado legislature that would help permanently allocate water to Colorado rivers. State legislators from Fort Collins are deeply committed to protecting the Poudre, and other members of the state legislature should support these bills for the future of all Colorado's rivers.



WARREN RUSSELL FLICOR.COM

CONTACT INFO

Darcy Nonemacher, American Rivers, 206-213-0330, ext. 16, dnonemacher@AmericanRivers.org

Gary Wockner, Save the Poudre Coalition, 970-218-8310, garywockner@comcast.net