

Cache la Poudre makes list of "most endangered" rivers

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KUSA - The Cache la Poudre River runs wild through the mountains northwest of Fort Collins, a haven for fishermen, kayakers and nature lovers. It is Colorado's only "wild and scenic" river. Now, it's also considered one of the country's "most endangered".

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The Washington D.C. based American Rivers organization listed the Cache la Poudre third on its list of 10 most endangered rivers. The reason? The group says it is threatened by two proposed reservoir projects. However, not everyone believes that the group's listing is accurate.

The two reservoir projects would both divert water that currently flows through the river. One would divert the water which flows through Fort Collins into a new reservoir. A second project would divert water a little farther downstream. American Rivers believes there are other sources of water and that the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District should double its efforts to find new water. The group believes the public can also aid in saving the river.

In an interview with our partners at The Denver Post, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District Spokesman Brian Werner argued that the Cache la Poudre is a working river and should be allowed to do its job. One group's "endangered" designation "won't take away the need for the (reservoir) project," he told The Denver Post. Werner says the projects are needed to serve 40,000 people expected to move to northern Colorado in the upcoming years. Werner also told the post that the district gave up the best reservoir sites higher in the mountains so that the Cache la Poudre could be designated as the state's only "wild and scenic" river.

The Fort Collins City Council is waiting for an environmental impact statement to be released on the reservoir projects before it takes a stand on whether or not to support the river diversions.

This year marks the first time that the Cache la Poudre has made American Rivers "most endangered" list.

Rivers on the list, in order, were the Catawba-Wateree River (Carolina); the Rogue (Oregon); the Cache la Poudre (Colorado); the St. Lawrence (New York and Canada); the Minnesota; the St. John (Florida); the Gila (New Mexico and Arizona); the Allagash Wilderness Waterway (Maine); the Pearl (Louisiana), and the Niobrara (Wyoming and Nebraska).

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