
Corps of Engineers study will delay NISP

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will prepare a supplemental draft environmental impact statement for the Northern Integrated Supply Project.

The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which is proposing the project, said it supports that decision. Through the study, the corps will gather and evaluate additional details about the project and its potential impact on the environment.

The corps, in a press release, said it will require that studies for NISP and expansion of the Halligan and Seaman reservoirs proposed by Greeley and Fort Collins use "common baseline models and data collection to ensure that study results are consistent among all three projects."

Halligan-Seaman is a separate water supply study being prepared for Greeley and Fort Collins. Those projects are similar to NISP in that they seek to provide additional water supply to the two cities. NISP has 15 partners in northern Colorado, which will share in the estimated 40,000 acre-feet of water that will be supplied from a new Glade Reservoir northwest of Fort Collins and the Galeton Reservoir east of Ault.

Gary Wockner of the Save the Poudre Coalition, a group that includes 13 national, state and regional organizations, said the latest report represents "another very long delay and cost overrun for the fatally flawed" water projects.

Both he and Brian Werner, spokesman for the water district, estimated the latest process could take up to a year or longer. But Eric Wilkinson, general manager of Northern Colorado Water Conservancy, is not concerned.

Wilkinson said the 15 participating communities and water districts remain "deeply committed" to ensuring that NISP is carefully designed and environmentally sensitive.

Jon Monson, director of the city of Greeley's water and sewer department, said the latest move by the corps doesn't have an immediate effect on Greeley's plan to enlarge Seaman Reservoir from its current storage capacity of 5,000 acre-feet to 53,000 acre-feet. An acre-foot is enough to supply two families with a year's supply of water.

"This will make things more complicated and more expensive, but it's really good to have everybody using the same guidelines," Monson said. The expansion plans, he added, are at least two years behind NISP.

"Alternatives (to the expansion) are still being examined, so we've got a ways to go," Monson said.

Col. David Press, Omaha district commander of the corps, said the new study came as a result of comments received following the release of the original environmental impact statement last year on NISP.

"We will revise key portions of the original draft and conduct additional study in categories such as hydrology modeling, water quality, vegetation and aquatic resources. This next stage will also give us the opportunity to encourage public participation, which is an extremely important part of this process," Press said in the press release.

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