

North Forty News

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County comments on NISP to be completed this month

By Cherry Sokoloski
North Forty News

On Aug. 25, the Larimer County Commissioners hashed out a number of fine points in the draft environmental impact statement for NISP, the Northern Integrated Supply Project. The water-supply project proposes construction of Glade Reservoir northwest of LaPorte and a second reservoir, Galeton, in Weld County.

The commissioners will submit their comments about the project to the permitting agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is anticipated that they will approve final language for the comments at their Sept. 9 meeting. Fort Collins will also submit comments, and the city council is scheduled to discuss the issue on Sept. 2. The public comment deadline is Sept. 13.

At the August work session, commissioners did not state whether they favored NISP as a whole or not. Rather, they reviewed comments from numerous advisory boards and county departments regarding the EIS and decided which concerns should be forwarded to the Army Corps. Commissioners agreed that NISP is not consistent with two themes of the Larimer County Master Plan, those designating the mouth of the Poudre Canyon and the U.S. Highway 287 corridor as important natural resource areas. That comment will be forwarded to the Army Corps.

U.S. 287 will have to be relocated if NISP is built, and the EIS identified two alternative routes. Commissioner Glenn Gibson has long supported the so-called northern route that would tie into Owl Canyon Road, hoping that the project would pay for paving the western section of the road. The other option, called the western route, would cut through a hogback and tie in with the existing highway further to the south.

Gibson's fellow commissioners wanted to discuss the issue more, and a recommendation is expected in their final comments to the Army Corps.

Gibson said one issue not addressed in the EIS is the possibility that if NISP is not approved, "this (Poudre River) water may go away, anyway," to other water users with junior rights.

The commissioners will ask for several mitigations if NISP is permitted. They want spring surges and minimum winter flows to be required for the Poudre River, along with mitigations for water quality, river morphology, ecology and recreation.

The final EIS, commissioners said, also needs to better address problems of geology, soil constraints and chemical leakage from the Atlas Missile Silo at the proposed Glade Reservoir site.

Commissioners will ask the Corps to consider how changes in river flow would impact mosquito populations, especially with regard to West Nile virus. Cumulative impacts of NISP and the proposed Halligan/Seaman reservoir expansion project are also of concern to commissioners, as well as impacts from pipelines proposed for NISP. Pipelines would connect Glade with Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake.

Commissioners will also recommend that NISP participants be required to implement water conservation measures so that water from the project is used wisely.

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Send your comments and questions to info@northfortynews.com

Web site by S. Virginia De Herdt, Freelance Writer

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