

North Forty News

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County concerns include pipelines, open lands

By Cherry Sokoloski
North Forty News

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After months of input and discussion, the Larimer County Commissioners sent their concerns about the Northern Integrated Supply Project to the Army Corps of Engineers in September.

The county response includes several requests for more information, including a thorough cost/benefit analysis for each NISP participant for all alternatives listed in the draft environmental impact statement.

During a work session on the county comments, Commissioner Randy Eubanks said if the project becomes cost prohibitive for one community, which then pulls out, it would place a burden on those left in the project. NISP participants have already spent \$5.4 million to get to this point in the review process.

The Army Corps is the permitting agency for NISP, which could include a new Glade Reservoir northwest of LaPorte that would be filled by diverting water from the Poudre River.

In developing their comments, the commissioners collected input from the public, county staff and several volunteer advisory boards.

When the final document was approved, Eubanks also asked for an up-or-down vote on the overall NISP project, but his fellow commissioners declined. At an earlier campaign press conference, Eubanks said he supports the Fort Collins

position that NISP as proposed would create serious financial impacts for the city and serious risks to the Poudre River.

"Last time I checked, Fort Collins pays county taxes, too," he said.

Eubanks said he was not against NISP in general but opposes the project as described in the draft EIS. He said he wants more specifics in the EIS about impacts and mitigations. Other water storage methods should be explored, he added, and the Army Corps needs to take a wider view of all water projects that will drain water from the South Platte Basin.

"This is an area of statewide concern," he said.

Commissioner Kathay Rennels noted that there are several municipalities in the county and commissioners were not asked to support one over another.

"Glade will be beneficial in many areas, but there are valid concerns," she said. "The Corps of Engineers has an opportunity to take these concerns and do some enhancements that would not otherwise be possible," such as augmenting winter streamflow and creating more flushing flows on the river in the spring.

Concerns expressed in the commissioners' letter ranged from open lands to pipelines to water contamination near the proposed forebay for Glade Reservoir. The NISP project is not consistent with specific parts of the Larimer County Master Plan and the Open Lands Master Plan, regarding protection of the mouth of the Poudre Canyon and the U.S. Highway 287 corridor, the letter stated.

In addition, commissioners said, various pipeline routes associated with NISP should be more fully defined and evaluated, since individual property owners could experience serious impacts from such pipelines. The commissioners also suggested looking at a combination of small conservation projects as another reasonable alternative.

A trichloroethylene spill from the 1960s Atlas Missile Silo is of concern to commissioners, since it is near the site of the proposed Glade forebay. The spill area "must be modeled with the hydrological effects of the forebay and the contamination plume must be computed for at least 50 years," the letter stated, to be sure it doesn't shift towards the river or drinking water supplies.

Other concerns expressed by the commissioners included effects on water quality, fault lines and other geologic risks at the Glade Reservoir site, the impact on mosquito populations and thus on transmission of West Nile Virus, and the impact of proposed water exchanges on delivery systems and potential loss of crop yields.

The commissioners asked the Army Corps to require several mitigations if NISP is built. Those include requiring minimum winter flows and spring surges, as well as working with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to enhance the river corridor and mitigate impacts on big game and migratory birds.

The letter also asks the Corps to evaluate cumulative impacts of NISP and the Halligan/Seaman project and to coordinate mitigation requirements for both. NISP participants should be required to implement "reasonable conservation measures," the letter says, "to account for the value and importance of the water that will be diverted from the Poudre."

The Army Corps is now reviewing all public comments collected since the draft EIS was released in late April.

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Web site by S. Virginia De Herdt, Freelance Writer

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