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Decision on Glade delayed at least a year; more study required

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A decision on whether to build Glade Reservoir north of Fort Collins has been delayed at least a year for further environmental study.

After receiving volumes of public comment, including concerns from the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decided this week to prepare a supplemental draft environmental impact study.

That document, which will take a closer look at concerns about wildlife, habitat and water quality, is expected to be completed in June 2010.

The delay will not derail the efforts to build Glade Reservoir and the smaller Galeton Reservoir near Eaton, said Brian Werner, spokesman for Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.

His agency has applied to build the reservoirs to store water from the Poudre River on behalf of 15 towns, cities and water districts, mostly in Weld and Boulder counties.

“They’re as gung-ho as ever,” Werner said of the 15 participants. “They’re fired up.”

He believes the reservoir project is sound and ultimately will be approved despite the delay.

Opponents of the reservoir, however, hope the added scrutiny will stop the project for good.

“The project definitely needs serious scientific scrutiny,” said Gary Wockner, spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition.

His group has called for the new environmental study to look closer at its plan, the Healthy Rivers Initiative.

“If they don’t, we think it could be a waste of money and time,” said Wockner.

The scientists, economists and land stewards in the citizen group say that the actual amount of water needed in the future is much less than reported by Northern Water.

Those water needs, they say, can be met through conservation and rotational fallowing at much less cost and without harming the Poudre River, the environment or water quality.

Rotational fallowing is a program where farmers grow crops nine out of 10 years. On the off year, they sell their water to the cities and give the land a rest.

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