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EPA view heartens foes of water plan

The group set to build the massive storage area says the problems are being addressed.

By Monte Whaley
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A scathing Environmental Protection Agency assessment of a massive water-storage project in northern Colorado could stall or kill the proposal.

The EPA said the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) "will have substantial and unacceptable impacts to aquatic resources of national importance."

The federal agency also said the NISP is not in compliance with Clean Water Act guidelines and asks the Army Corps of Engineers to hold off on issuing any permits allowing the project to move forward.

The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District is scheduled to build the project. District spokesman Brian Werner said the EPA's concerns are not a surprise and the district is working to fix the problems cited by the agency.

"We're addressing all those concerns now," Werner said.

The letter is dated Oct. 16 and was sent to the Corps. But it was publicized Thursday by the Save

the Poudre Coalition, a group opposing the NISP.

Poudre Coalition spokesman Gary Wockner said he is heartened by the EPA's conclusion. "This basically means the EPA wants the Corps to stop this and look at other alternatives," Wockner said.

The EPA is among thousands who have commented about the NISP for the draft Environmental Impact Statement, which is needed to determine if the project can go forward.

The project is a \$420 million undertaking that involves building two reservoirs. Glade Reservoir, north of Fort Collins, and the Galeton Reservoir, east of Ault, would supply 40,000 acre-feet of water to 15 municipalities and water districts across northern Colorado.

Several agricultural groups support it. But environmental groups — including the Save the Poudre Coalition — claim the diversion of peak spring and summer water flows from the Cache la Poudre River could damage parkland and wildlife habitat.

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