

Friday, May 2

Fort Collins weighs in critically on NISP

The Poudre River is worth as much as \$12.7 million a year to river users and Fort Collins residents, based on a study released by the city.



Last November, the city of Fort Collins convened a handful of CSU profs and federal river ecologists to take a look at the draft draft (that's not a typo) environmental impact statement for Glade Reservoir and NISP. The draft planning document for the public came out this week, and today the [city has posted a white paper with comments from the gathered technical advisory group](#) on the \$420 million water-development project, as well as an economic valuation of the Poudre River and its current flows.

From the city's report:

Because the NISP project will significantly reduce peak flows from the current flow regime it is likely to further reduce its complexity and preclude future opportunities to restore habitat or ecosystem functions at the local level. Survival of some of the remaining native aquatic species will become further imperiled.

This statement comes from a group that includes some of the country's most esteemed scientists on river ecology and restoration, including CSU professor [Ellen Wohl](#) and a group of federal scientists who have studied river health and function all over the West. In other words, NISP backers can't write this off as an emotional appeal.

The technical group also raises concerns about "an undesirable increase in water temperature, human generated chemicals and sewage related to stagnation and reduced capacity for dilution of pollutants."

The economic valuation by [John Loomis](#) of CSU's resource economics is pretty interesting, too. Using a common model based on surveys to the public, Loomis concludes that the Poudre in its present state yields annual benefits worth between \$8.5 million and \$12.7 million.

At least 50 percent of the survey participants expressed a willingness to pay \$234 or more to preserve the river's flows, as compared to letting NISP divert the water. These and other responses show that locals who live near and recreate along the Poudre (as well as people who visit the river from elsewhere) have a comparable value of the river, as compared to diversion costs:

Overall, this analysis indicates a substantial economic value to visiting and nonvisiting Fort Collins households to maintain current peak spring and summer flows in the Poudre River. It appears the value of these instream flows to Fort Collins residents is of the same magnitude as the market value of the

water in alternative uses.

Check out the documents at [the city's website](#) and check out the draft EIS via [the Army Corps of Engineers' site](#).

Posted by Zaffos at 8:50 AM 