

Gardner responds to criticism on reservoir bill

[Steve Lynn](#)

Rep. Cory Gardner responded to criticism Tuesday from an environmental group, saying that opponents mischaracterized newly proposed legislation on water storage.

Gardner, R-Yuma, said his bill would require regulators to approve or deny permits for reservoir projects within 270 days after a governor sends a letter to the federal government supporting a project. The congressman has criticized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for taking too long to approve the Northern Integrated Supply Project.

"Conservation is an important part of our water future in Colorado," Gardner said. "But we also have to store more water."

Gardner has not introduced the bill yet, but he plans to do so when lawmakers reconvene this month.

Fort Collins-based Save the Poudre said Tuesday that Gardner's bill would "gut" the National Environmental Policy Act and create a new bureaucracy within the Army Corps of Engineers called the "Office of Water Storage."

"The National Environmental Policy Act is very clear: It requires sound science, and sound science takes time," Save the Poudre director Gary Wockner said. "By forcing permitting in a certain time period, Congressman Gardner would be undermining and gutting the National Environmental Policy Act."

Save the Poudre also contended that the bill, if it leads to approval of water storage projects would lead to increased taxes and water fees to fund them.

Gardner called Save the Poudre's arguments "pure fiction."

"This bill has nothing to do whatsoever with taxes, that's blatant lie No. 1," Gardner said. "Blatant lie no. 2... is that it overturns environmental laws."

Gardner announced details of his water storage project bill Aug. 30. He has pushed reservoir projects such as the Northern Integrated Supply Project, which would create two new reservoirs: Glade Reservoir north of Fort Collins and Galeton Reservoir east of Ault. Two water pumping stations and pipelines also would be built.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been reviewing the project since 2004, when the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District first submitted an application for the project.

Supporters contend that the agricultural industry needs additional water storage, especially during drought periods. Environmentalists point out that the project will diminish Poudre River flows.