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Glade foes rip survey

Save the Poudre Coalition calls new NISP data 'a biased push poll'

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Opponents of Glade Reservoir on Monday ripped a recent survey that indicated broad public support for the reservoir and the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project.

The survey, which was financed by the 15 regional municipalities and water districts that would build NISP through the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, was "a biased push poll" intended to manipulate respondents, said Gary Wockner, spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition.

Wockner said the poll is "filled with false and grossly misleading information" and fails to mention environmental and economic problems that could be brought on by the project, which would draw water from the Poudre River and store it in Glade Reservoir north of Ted's Place.

"It's like telling people about the benefits of nuclear power but not telling them uranium causes cancer," he said. "The push poll is a complete sham."

The survey was done by Denver-based Ciruli Associates headed by Floyd Ciruli, who has more than 30 years experience in public-opinion research. The results were released Friday during a presentation to the Northern Water board of directors.

Ciruli said Monday he followed standard methodologies and techniques in crafting the survey's questions and in interviewing respondents. The survey showed 52 percent of respondents from Larimer County were aware of NISP, he said.

A key survey question on NISP was preceded by background information gleaned from media reports on the project and the draft Environmental Impact Statement on NISP, he said. The information was intended to be as neutral as possible.

Responses to follow-up statements, to which respondents could agree or disagree, showed strong support for increased water storage and keeping water available for agriculture, he said. The answers were consistent, Ciruli said.

"I think if you look at the data, you'll find the people of Weld and Larimer counties are exceptionally well informed on water issues," he said.

The survey found 63 percent of responding Larimer County residents and 57 percent of Fort Collins residents favor the project. In Weld County, 81 percent of those surveyed support NISP.

Wockner dismissed the results as skewed because of the questions and how they were presented.

The random survey of 500 registered voters in Larimer County and 300 in Weld County was conducted in early August.

The Larimer County results have a margin of error of plus or minus 4.4 percentage points, while the margin of error for the smaller Weld County sample is 5.7 percentage points.
