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Glade poll reporting was uncritical

The Coloradoan's Sept. 13 story on the Glade Reservoir poll was not especially insightful journalism. While the survey was conducted scientifically, the interpretation of the results should have been more thoroughly examined.

Only 52 percent (260 responses) of the 500 respondents in Larimer County were aware of the issue and only 28 percent (84 responses) of the 300 respondents in Weld County were aware of the issue. Yet most respondents still went on to offer an opinion - only about 10 percent said "don't know" on the question concerning support. Many of the opinions reported in this survey were quickly formed at the time of the interview (a phenomenon known as "pseudo opinions"). Responsible survey reporting would have constrained the results to the respondents who reported having been previously aware of the issue.

The headline for the story might have been "Poll shows mixed awareness of Glade." The lead might have been "Nearly half of Larimer County residents and fully two-thirds of Weld County residents report knowing very little or nothing about Glade Reservoir" These results can hardly be interpreted as showing "overwhelming support" for Glade, as reported.

Two technical issues are worth noting. For the smaller sample sizes of respondents who were aware of the issue, the margins of error are about +/- 6 percent for Larimer and +/- 11 percent for Weld County. Finally, no overall participation rate was reported, so we do not know how many refused to participate. This is important for assessing potential bias in the sample.

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