

Soapbox: Glade Reservoir would suck life out of river

Benjamin Wasserstein 10:06 p.m. MST November 16, 2014



(Photo: Courtesy photo)

27 | CONNECT | TWEET | LINKEDIN | 7 | COMMENT | EMAIL | MORE

An early morning angler casts for rising trout as commuters bustle to the harmonious tune of streamside birds. A kayaker cautiously navigates a whitewater feature and lazy pods of tubers meander their way down the Poudre River as it flows through Fort Collins.

This majestic river serves as a defining element of our community by providing lush banks and clean water for any soul seeking rejuvenation.

Unfortunately, an impending menace lies upstream — a 170,000-acre-foot threat to the vitality of the Fort Collins community. The construction of Glade Reservoir threatens to dewater the very resource that brings life to our city.

The Poudre River already has withstood severe impacts from development and agriculture. Nearly 60 percent of its water is currently diverted for various uses along the Front Range, and Glade Reservoir stands to further test the resilience of the Poudre River ecosystem.

Every minute, the river passes an average of two Olympic swimming pools of water through Fort Collins during June peak flows. Energy-intensive pumps would remove nearly 40 percent of that water upstream of town near Ted's Place. Glade would clearly pull a tremendous amount of water out of our river as it filled over the years, exerting enormous pressure on one of our community's most prized resources.

A very real connection exists between the water in our river and all that inhabit the adjacent land. This connection extends beyond that of the anglers, tubers, kayakers and bicyclists that frequently visit the Poudre River. Cottonwoods thrive, and diverse riparian communities support myriad animals from brown trout to mountain lions.

Barry Noon, a professor of conservation science at CSU, notes the adverse effects that flow reductions would have on the birds of the Poudre River corridor. Diets of these birds are highly subsidized by aquatic insects, and aquatic insects would be quickly decimated by reduced flows and increased water temperatures resulting from low water levels. These effects would likely be long-lasting. We also may see willows and cottonwoods replaced with plants that support less diverse insect populations of lower abundance.

Glade Reservoir literally threatens to suck the life out of our river. Its effect would likely be immediate, severe and long-lasting. Every voice counts — there are other ways we can provide water into the future without further harming the Poudre River ecosystem. Ask what your river does for you, and then act to preserve values that you find important. Write our government officials and voice your values and concerns so that the natural function of the Poudre River can be preserved for generations to come.

Benjamin Wasserstein is an undergraduate student at Colorado State University.