

North Forty News

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Glade rests with Corps; EPA report highlighted

By Cherry Sokoloski
North Forty News

For the most part, quiet has descended on the Northern Integrated Supply Project since the public comment period ended in September.

In silent cyberspace, however, vocal opponent Save the Poudre Coalition is studying the comments submitted by more than 2,000 agencies and organizations about the water project.

The coalition recently publicized the Environmental Protection Agency's written comments, which were critical of the depth of analysis used to prepare the draft environmental impact statement for NISP. The EPA cited insufficient assessment of the project's impacts on water quality, water flow, agriculture and the overall character of the Cache la Poudre River.

Four alternatives, including a no-action option, were outlined in the draft EIS. The project participants prefer an alternative that includes two new reservoirs, Glade northwest of Fort Collins and Galeton northeast of Greeley.

NISP is now in the hands of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the permitting agency, which is reviewing comments and meeting with agencies such as the EPA and the Colorado Division of Wildlife to see

what additional analysis needs to be done.

Brian Werner of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which has been coordinating NISP for the 12 participants, said the EPA concerns, submitted about two months ago, are "the same concerns that we've known about for a long time." He added that he thinks all of the environmental concerns "can be resolved or mitigated."

New consultant hired

An additional consultant has been hired to specifically look at water quality issues that have arisen with NISP, Werner said. The firm Black & Veatch, a global engineering, consulting and construction company, will be working on those issues.

According to Chandler Peter of the Army Corps, the agency is assessing how much additional work needs to be done on the environmental impact statement, based on feedback received during the comment period. The Corps will decide whether to proceed to the final EIS or to require a supplemental EIS.

Fort Collins, which has been strongly critical of NISP as proposed in the draft EIS, requested a supplemental EIS. That process would include additional public hearings and would delay the final document, Peter said.

In general, the EPA's comments involve the need for more thorough analysis of expected NISP impacts. Specific areas of concern include the following.

- Impacts to wastewater treatment plants
- Changes in spring peak flows on the Poudre River that will impact sedimentation, channel changes and aquatic life
- Effects of climate change
- Inadequate study of alternatives that would have "less adverse impacts" than the participants' preferred alternative. The EPA suggested looking at agriculture-municipal leases and long-term transfers of water rights.
- Conservation: "Conservation efforts should be more fully considered," the EPA report stated.

Halligan/Seaman EIS

Another proposed project, expansion of the Halligan and Seaman Reservoirs on the North Fork of the Poudre River, is currently in the draft EIS preparation stage. Peter said it will be at least one year before the document is ready for public review.

Both NISP and Halligan-Seaman would affect water levels in the Cache la Poudre River, and Corps officials have said that the cumulative effect of th projects will be taken into account before any permits are granted.

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