



June 20, 2008

Greeley turns Glade tables

Majority of meeting attendees support project

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GREELEY - A change of venue produced a different turnout for a public hearing on a draft Environmental Impact Statement on the controversial Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP.

Speakers in support of the project outnumbered opponents two to one Thursday in Greeley in contrast to two Fort Collins hearings that were dominated by critics of the project, which would include Glade Reservoir.

Supporters included representatives of communities that would participate in the project who touted the need for NISP's water to meet the needs of future population growth.

Others said the project's water would help keep local agriculture viable.

Dave Long, a Weld County commissioner, said more water storage is needed for the county to grow food for the country and the world.

"It defies logic not to go forward with this project," he said.

At roughly 100 people, attendance at the University of Northern Colorado student center was significantly less than the hearings in Fort Collins. But emotions on NISP still ran high.

Michael Kirkpatrick of Fort Collins, a professional rafting guide on the Poudre River, said Glade would severely impact the river's flow through the city. The reduced flows would harm the river's ecosystem, including killing off the fish.

"Glade Reservoir would turn the Poudre River through Fort Collins into a bug-infested mud bog," he said. "Our quality of life would be directly affected by a sick river flowing through our town."

Residents should realize Colorado is semi-arid and understand that growth does not equal progress, he said.

Clair Orr, a farmer from Kersey, said agriculture is dying as cities "buy and dry" increasing amounts of farmland for its water. Farmers are struggling to make a living, he said.

Orr said that he is more interested in helping people than wildlife and that producing food should take precedence over other issues.

"It's incumbent upon us to build projects along these tributaries ... because we should be good stewards of the resources we've got," he said.

Glade Reservoir would be built north of Ted's Place and draw water from the river near the mouth of

Poudre Canyon. Its largest draws would be during times of high flows, primarily during the spring runoff.

The reservoir would draw some water every month of the year through exchanges with two irrigation companies that would end up getting water from Galeton Reservoir, which through NISP would be built northeast of Greeley.

Fifteen regional municipalities and water districts are working with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District and would foot the bill for the \$426 million project.

The Poudre's flow through Fort Collins would be reduced 25 to 71 percent based on monthly averages, according to the draft EIS.

Reduced flows are likely to affect the river's water quality, said Gina Janett, a former City Council member. The river's flow would be reduced by 44 percent through Greeley, she said.

"This is not an isolated issue for Fort Collins," she said. "These low flows are going to affect Greeley as well."

Opponents of Glade called for extending the comment period on the draft EIS at least another 90 days for further study.

But supporters said every 90-day delay of a decision costs Northern Water and participants \$1 million.
