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House District 49 candidate Karen Stockley on NISP

Posted By [Gary Wamsley](#) On July 15, 2010 @ 7:58 am In [Guest column,Voices & Thoughts](#) | [2 Comments](#)



^[1]Karen Stockley
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Berthoud, CO
Guest Commentary

One of the biggest and most complex issues Colorado will be facing over the next 100 years is water. I'm Karen Stockley, candidate for State House District 49, responding to my opponent's opinion piece glorifying the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP). I have studied this issue for many years, and I firmly believe the NISP project is one of the most damaging reservoirs ever proposed for Northern Colorado. The primary reason to deny this mega-reservoir is simple – this project is a fiscal nightmare that will end up costing the taxpayers an unbelievable and unnecessary amount of money and debt.

Colorado will certainly see growth over the next century. We citizens need to ask ourselves if we want to grow by being fiscally responsible, or do we wish to incur large burdensome debt in the process? Folks, we have a choice! In building the NISP proposal, we will subject our children and grandchildren to large bond debts that will hurt our communities for up to 30 years. My opponent cites a rally in Erie in support of the NISP project. Yet the cost of this project to Erie families is projected to be at least \$15,000 *per family*, certainly not worth celebrating!

The cost to build this project keeps rising, and, including interest on debt, may exceed \$1 billion, excluding operating costs. It is we, the taxpayers, who are funding the current Environmental Impact Studies to determine if this project is even feasible. It is we, the taxpayers, who will pay the rising water rates necessary to fund building this reservoir if it is ever approved by the Army Corps of Engineers. And it is we, the taxpayers, who will have to bail out this project in the event of an economic downturn.

My town, Berthoud, has decided the NISP project is not worth the cost. In 2007, the town trustees ended their participation in the project. Berthoud wisely looked at all the costs involved and decided they could be smarter and do better with other water resources for future needs. Berthoud realized that, at about \$24,000 an acre-foot, there are more reliable and cost effective sources available. Berthoud looked towards the future by protecting their taxpayers and not committing *current* residents to fund future growth.

Who benefits from this reservoir? Certainly not the farmers, who stand to lose many acres of prime farmland to the houses needed to pay the cost of NISP. Farmers would see irrigation water become much more saline and crop yields decline if NISP were built. And certainly not the river, which stands to lose healthy spring flows that cleanse the river and keep the aquatic life in balance. And not we, the taxpayers, who will sign up for long-term bond indebtedness that can only be paid out of our pockets and those of our children.

Are there other solutions? Absolutely...first and foremost we need to ask each subscriber to NISP to adopt water conservation programs – which will go a long way to alleviate the need for new water. Communities need to adopt water efficiencies and investigate transferred rights. We need to encourage following agreements that allow our farmers to keep farming and to get compensated for sharing their water. And we need to look into expanding existing reservoirs and gravel pits.

It is my hope that by working together, Coloradoans can meet their future water needs, and still remain financially solvent. It is my intent to work with others so that we may achieve this goal.

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