



Massive water project advances amid criticism

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FORT COLLINS - A pipeline project that would ship a tremendous amount of water from Wyoming to Colorado has moved beyond models and maps.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has decided to review the Regional Watershed Supply Project (RWSP) - a step necessary for any project of this magnitude to proceed.

The project would draw water from the Green River and Flaming Gorge Reservoir in southwest Wyoming and transport it via a pipeline - 578 miles in length - to towns and cities in Wyoming and Colorado's Front Range.

The amount of water could total 250,000 acre-feet. That's enough to feed the need of roughly 500,000 homes a year.

Aaron Million, a Fort Collins resident, developed the plan several years ago. To move the multi-billion dollar project forward, Million asked the Corps to conduct a review.

That review is called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Corps agreed to conduct an EIS late last year.

Before a review even gets underway, the Corps must hold public meetings in which people can express their various concerns.

Such meetings for RWSP have already occurred in Utah and Wyoming.

Monday night, the first meeting in Colorado was held at Fossil Ridge High School in Fort Collins.

There, most of those who spoke criticized the various aspects of the project.

Robert Livingston, a Fort Collins resident, said he was wary of allowing a private company to possibly control so much water.

"[Non-elected entities] are acting as commodity brokers and it won't be regulated," he said.

"We're concerned with the greenhouse gas emissions that would be associated with transporting water to Colorado," said Gary Wockner, spokesperson for the Save the Poudre Coalition, which is fighting the proposed Glade Reservoir.

Million, while responding to a number of the questions, addressed Wockner's worry saying, "We're looking at everything we can do to lessen our carbon footprint."

Several attendees of the meetings in Wyoming and Utah expressed concerns over how the project might affect the environment in and around the Green River and Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

In one meeting, the mayor of Green River argued that such a large draw from the river would negatively affect the Seedskadee Wildlife Refuge.

During the Fort Collins meeting, Million said, "The endangered species will be protected, recreation will be protected."

A draft EIS is scheduled for release in 2012, while the final EIS isn't expected until 2014.

The next scoping meeting will be held at West High School in Denver. It will run from 6:30 p.m. until 9 p.m.

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