

Northern Colorado BUSINESS REPORT

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NISP getting second look from Corp of Engineers

By Staff

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Feb. 4 announced it will take a second look at the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project, and determine whether studies of NISP and the proposed expansions of Halligan and Seaman reservoirs used common baseline models to ensure study results are consistent among all three projects.

The Corps said it is preparing a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for NISP, which the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District plans to provide water for anticipated population growth in the region. The project includes two reservoirs, Glade Reservoir northwest of Fort Collins and Galeton Reservoir east of Ault.

The Corps released a draft EIS for the NISP project on April 30, 2008, and received numerous comments during the following five months. "Due to the number and complexity of significant comments received during the comment period, the Corps has determined that additional analysis is required before a decision on whether to approve or deny the permit can be made," according to a press release from the Corps of Engineers.

"We will revise key portions of the original draft and conduct additional study in categories such as hydrology modeling, water quality, vegetation and aquatic resources," said Col. David Press, commander of the Omaha District of the Corps of Engineers. "This next stage will also give us the opportunity to broaden and encourage public participation, which is an extremely important part of this process."

As part of that supplemental EIS, the Corps will require common baseline models for NISP and the Halligan and Seaman reservoir expansions. Halligan-Seaman is a separate water supply study being prepared for the cities of Fort Collins and Greeley, which are not taking part in the NISP project.

"We want to ensure a fair process where we are using the same sets of data and comparing apples to apples on all three of these projects before we make a final decision," Press said.

Halligan Reservoir is owned by the city of Fort Collins and Milton Seaman Reservoir is owned by the city of Greeley. Both reservoirs are located on the North Fork of the Poudre River and would impact water flow out of Poudre Canyon, where the proposed Glade Reservoir would be located.

Eric Wilkinson, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District general manager, said the supplemental EIS was not unexpected and expressed his support.

"This supplemental environmental impact statement will be very useful as we cooperatively develop the best project possible for the citizens of Northern Colorado," Wilkinson said. "The 15 participating communities and water districts are deeply committed to seeing NISP completed in a fair, scientific and defensible fashion, and we are equally committed to assuring that NISP is carefully designed and environmentally sensitive. As such, we support the Corps as it collects the additional information it needs to further evaluate this project."

Gary Wockner, spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition that opposes NISP, said the need for a supplemental study proves the project is "fatally flawed."

"NISP/Glade is an environmental and debt disaster in the making," Wockner said.