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NISP not this generation's C-BT

Those who favor building Glade Reservoir and the rest of the Northern Integrated Supply Project often wrongly compare it with the Colorado-Big Thompson Project.

Completed in 1957, the C-BT project includes Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir as well as reservoirs west of the Continental Divide and brings more than 200,000 acre-feet of water from the Colorado River basin each year to the Northern Front Range.

NISP advocates invariably claim NISP will bring benefits like those produced by the C-BT project. Although there are some similarities between the two, a close look shows that while NISP has the same drawbacks as the C-BT, it has none of the benefits - NISP is not "this generation's C-BT."

The most obvious similarity between the two projects is that they are both large reservoir and diversion projects. However, while the C-BT brought "new" Western Slope water to the South Platte River basin, adding reliability to the water supply for our agricultural community, the proposed NISP project would subtract water from our system, taking flow from the Poudre near the canyon's mouth.

In fact, NISP would subtract more than one-third of the water currently brought to us by the C-BT system, transferring it to suburbs north of Denver for new development. None would go to agriculture.

A drawback shared by the two projects is severe environmental damage. In the years since the C-BT was built, we have learned much about the ecology of river systems - scientific knowledge that was not available to those who built the C-BT. State and federal resource agencies have spent decades trying to protect and restore endangered species in the Colorado River because of the massive diversion of water by the C-BT and other projects. Water diversions from the Big Thompson, Poudre and South Platte rivers have already contributed to similar ecosystem damage along the Platte in Nebraska.

We must not repeat C-BT's serious mistakes by removing even more water from the Poudre River.

Another item to consider is the high cost of such projects. The C-BT project was funded largely by American taxpayers. Whereas repayment to the government was capped at \$25 million under the 1938 repayment contract, the ultimate construction cost totaled \$163 million, leaving taxpayers on the hook for the remainder - more than \$1 billion in today's inflated dollars.

Moreover, taxpayers are still paying for this project. Thirteen million dollars in annual property tax assessments went to pay for C-BT in 2008 alone. In addition, Americans have also spent hundreds of millions of dollars trying to recover species that have been endangered, in part, by the C-BT project. NISP, like the C-BT, would require costly remediation both to protect the Poudre's ecosystem and mitigate additional downstream effects.

How much would the proposed NISP project ultimately cost taxpayers directly and indirectly if constructed?

Although the C-BT, by introducing a huge "new" source of water, brought benefits to the Northern Front Range, it also brought serious problems we are still dealing with today. Because NISP will not bring any new water to our basin, it will not provide the agricultural benefits of the C-BT project, and it

will have many of the same drawbacks. A thorough comparison of the two projects shows we should not blithely accept claims that NISP would have only positive effects for our region.
