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NISP outlines plan for future water supply

Public comments on pros, cons of reservoirs

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The Reporter-Herald*

FORT COLLINS — Years ago, many people were up in arms about the potential of building the Colorado-Big Thompson project to bring water to Larimer County.

“Try to imagine this area without it,” said Mike Applegate, a board member of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District and 47-year area resident.

“Fort Collins and Northern Colorado would be a difficult place to live,” he said.

Like the now-completed project, the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project plans for the future in a way to protect water supplies, riparian habitat and the agricultural economy, Applegate said.

Tuesday night, officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers heard public comment on the project, which would add two new reservoirs in Northern Colorado.

More than 250 people crammed into the Fort Collins Senior Center on Tuesday to tell Peter Chandler, rep-resentative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, whether they think his agency should approve the reservoirs.

A day earlier, about 500 people attended a similar meeting at the Fort Collins Hilton, speaking for 5 1/2 hours into the night, for and against the reservoirs.

Applegate’s agency, Northern Water, has asked to build Glade Reservoir in a valley northwest of Fort Collins to store water from the Poudre River and provide 40,000 acre-feet of water to 15 neighboring communities and water districts, not including Loveland. A second, smaller reservoir northeast of Greeley would draw from the South Platte River.

Instead of taking and using more water, however, residents should conserve, said Fort Collins resident Thomas Wilding. He argued that residents could easily cut in half the amount of water they use with water-saving toilets and urinals, by changing times and frequency of yard watering and changing types of landscape.

“We can use less today than we did yesterday,” Wilding said.

“NISP is like a 300-pound child asking you for a lifetime supply of doughnuts.”

Another resident, Bill Tremblay, was alarmed when he learned that Glade Reservoir would reduce river flow by 71 percent in peak years.

“I realized that I’ll be sitting along the banks of the river looking at a practically nonexistent river and writing an elegy to the river,” Tremblay said. “I’m trying to represent or speak for the river. We are all wrapped up in commodifying water, and we are leaving out the concept of the river as a living system which supports all kinds of life not just the riparian forests or the animals that come to drink there.”

He, like others before him, stressed the importance of ensuring that, if the reservoirs are built, Northern Water will protect minimum stream flows, banks and wildlife habitat.

“I would like to see those protections enforced and not just given lip service to,” he said.

Don Ament, a farmer from Iliff, former state legislator and former agricultural commissioner, argued that the reservoir would protect farming and the state’s agricultural industry and should be approved.

“Let’s store water while we have it to store to ensure the future of our young people,” he said.

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