



February 8, 2009

NISP review requires a deeper look

Answers needed on project that includes Glade Reservoir

Time heals all wounds, but will it shed some additional light on the Northern Integrated Supply Project?

On Wednesday, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that it will spend more time studying the NISP, which includes the proposed Glade Reservoir in Larimer County. The Corps, which will either initially approve or deny permits for the overall project, has decided that a supplement to the draft Environmental Impact Statement completed last year is in order. That supplement is likely to be completed in June 2010.

The deeper review on the massive, \$426 million project is welcome, not only for the additional scientific review but also to allow for more public comment. The supplement could delay the project, if approved, until at least 2017. Or it could be a step toward denying the project. The key will be ensuring that all questions are answered in a fair, logical process.

NISP, which is scheduled to provide 40,000 acre-feet of water each year to 15 communities and water districts, is either a logical water storage project for a well-planned future or a scourge on the environment and water quality - it all depends on how you look at it and where you live.

But looking to science to transcend politics has been difficult, too. A study paid for by the city of Fort Collins found that the city might have to spend up to \$90 million to upgrade its water treatment facilities if water from Glade is piped into Horsetooth Reservoir (one of the city's water sources). That study also said decreased water flows along the Poudre River could force the city to upgrade its wastewater facilities at a cost of \$125 million.

But last week, the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District provided its own study that found impacts from Glade on the city of Fort Collins were much less than what were outlined in the city's study. And district officials emphasized that NCWCD, not the city, would pay for any costs incurred from the project. The water district also vowed to work with city officials on mitigation efforts.

The only clear element in this debate over NISP is that more time could, we hope, provide more research, rather than rhetoric, about this project.
