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NISP will cost citizens while providing no benefits

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A little over a year ago, I wrote a column about Glade Reservoir and the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP), the gist of which was that the economic, recreational, ecological, and many other benefits that we receive from the Poudre River flowing through our community are in grave danger if this project is built.

I have to admit -although I knew at the time that the project has major problems, I did not realize just how bad they are. The costs to the citizens of Fort Collins go far beyond what I originally believed.

Based on careful analysis done by scientists, economists and other professionals, this project will cost the citizens of Fort Collins plenty while providing us with essentially no benefits.

The costs come in many forms, but ultimately, originate from substantially reduced flows of the Poudre River.

While what may come to mind is a less attractive and possibly smellier river through our community, the negative effects of these reduced flows are much more extensive - adversely affecting our drinking water quality, wastewater treatment, and flood management ability, in addition to substantial ecological and economic losses.

Here's just a small sample of these costs.

Based on rigorous scientific modeling, NISP/Glade will likely degrade the Fort Collins' drinking water quality to a point where the city will have to install advanced water treatment systems.

These systems will cost citizens anywhere from \$50 million to \$90 million in one-time costs, in addition to annual operating expenses of \$3 million.

In addition, part of Glade would be built on a former nuclear missile silo that is contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE), a solvent used to clean rocket fuel tanks. Long-term TCE exposure in minute concentrations causes liver damage and cancer. If Glade Reservoir is built, TCE-contaminated groundwater may end up in our drinking water and in the Poudre River. The costs to correct this are potentially enormous.

On the other end of the water spectrum, because of lower flows in the river, the city would most likely have to install advanced wastewater treatment systems at both the Drake and Mulberry plants (reduced flows require cleaner wastewater upon discharge). The cost? Somewhere between \$75 million and \$125 million plus significant annual operation and maintenance costs.

Also in grave jeopardy would be the riparian vegetation (including the magnificent cottonwood trees), aquatic habitat and wildlife. Recreational opportunities like fishing, kayaking, tubing and bird watching would be greatly diminished. These effects would significantly diminish the value of the city's \$30 million investment in parks, natural areas, and trails along the river, in addition to many residents' quality of life.

The river's reduced flows also would endanger plans for continued improvement and revitalization of downtown Fort Collins centered around the Poudre River corridor. Overall, we could lose what the City calls one of its "economic engines".

Promoters of the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP), of which Glade Reservoir is a major component, are saying that Fort Collins shouldn't stand in the way of this enormous water project, all in the name of regional cooperation.

I say - hold on to your wallets! You're being asked to pay dearly while receiving no benefits in return. That's not cooperation; that's highway robbery!
