

Protection of Poudre reflects on us

At a debate last week at the Harmony Public Library between representatives from the Save Poudre Coalition and the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, I was appalled to hear Brian Werner of Northern Water state that Glade Reservoir would actually benefit local recreation!

He also stated that all recreation on the Poudre River takes part upstream of the canyon mouth - this is above the area that, if Glade were built, would turn from a living river into an irrigation ditch. How many thousands of Northern Colorado residents have spent time in, on or near the Poudre River as it flows through Fort Collins?

As a lifetime resident of Fort Collins, an avid fly-fisherman and sportsman, I have spent hundreds of days catching beautiful, wild brown trout through the town of Fort Collins. As a member of the Cache la Poudre River Foundation, a conservation organization based on the protection of fishing for Wild Trout in the Poudre through Fort Collins, I could hardly believe that Werner totally disregarded the tremendous amount of recreational use that the Poudre receives as it flows through the towns of Bellvue, LaPorte and Fort Collins. He and the district aren't aware of what the Poudre means to this community. He's not aware of what is at stake.

In order to prove the importance of this fishery through town, the Poudre Foundation is contributing on a Creel Census with the Division of Wildlife. This data will be used in the DOW's comment on the Environmental Impact Statement, which is to be released Wednesday.

Those of us who know the Poudre are aware that it is an indispensable recreational asset to our community and will not see it further degraded. The district could easily meet their water demands through conservation and efficiency - not dams and dewatering.

And I might say a few words in dedication to my friends - the Wild Poudre River Trout. I admire them because they are resilient. They survive through extremely low flow conditions and water pollution. They escape definition - with each passing moment, the river becomes a different being, and the trout seamlessly adjust. Long, sleek and powerful, the Trout of the Poudre are each unique in their color and markings; some are silver and flash in the sun; some are a deep, dark brown, like the color of ancient clay; some have eyes like rounded, black river stones. Some are tiny fish, and some are like prehistoric predators.

Our Poudre River trout sustain our imaginations, our souls and our lives. These trout, their power and beauty are to be destroyed should Glade Reservoir be constructed, and along with them, the thousands of birds, mammals and amphibians that call the Poudre River home.

How the Fort Collins community protects the Poudre will demonstrate our civil unity. It will also reflect our capacity to live in harmony with the natural environment. Should Glade Reservoir be built and the Poudre River destroyed, we should not be surprised when our economy trickles to emptiness. If we do not save the Poudre, the wild creatures that we so admire, the beautiful sounds of the wind blowing through the cottonwood trees and the slow rise of a trout will become stories that we regretfully tell our children of what we let slip away.

Rico Moore lives in Fort Collins.

