

Reducing flow would impact Poudre River's health

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If you have looked at the Poudre River recently, in town or in the mountains, you know the Poudre needs its ash wiped.

The Hewlett Gulch and High Park fires have smothered large portions of the river with ugly, black ash and sediment.

Unfortunately, snowfall has been near a record low and it is doubtful that the river will be cleansed by more typical snowmelt runoff this year. It is also likely that high-elevation summer rains will continue to deliver large amounts of ash and sediment from fire-charred hillsides to the river for several years to come.

And if our hot, dry weather persists, more wildfires probably will erupt in our watershed, adding further to the black sediment problem.

Historically there was energetic streamflow in all but the driest of years to flush most accumulated sediment like we see now out of the channel, rejuvenating the river for fish, bugs that fish eat and even streamside trees.

The 2008 draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project's Glade Reservoir estimated that peak river flows through the lower Poudre River would be reduced up to 71 percent if that project were built — and that's on top of a more than 40 percent historical reduction in peak flows. In effect, NISP/Glade would make almost every year a dry year on the Poudre River.

We can do smart things to help the watershed recover from fires. Save The Poudre supports those efforts. We can do smart things to add minimum flows to rewater the river — as long as those actions don't further deplete cleansing high flows on the Poudre or any other river. Save The Poudre likewise supports those efforts.

We may even be able to do smart things to reduce the harmful effects of climate change. Save The Poudre supports those efforts, too. We can make a positive difference if we try.

But if we build huge water projects that make almost every year a dry year, that rob the river of its own ability to cleanse itself with adequate flushing flows, the new normal will be a river that will struggle for long periods, trying to recover from trauma.

Save The Poudre will never support projects such as the controversial NISP/Glade proposal — especially since smart, cost-effective solutions to reliably meet the region's future drinking water needs are so readily available (see the pragmatic assessment and enlightened recommendation at WesternResourceAdvocates.org/water/nisp.php).

Let's let the river kick ash!

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STP Editor's Note:

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The photo that was submitted was:

