



## Report on Glade Reservoir provokes two divergent views on project's impact

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As area conservationists expected, a study released Wednesday says a new reservoir northwest of Fort Collins would substantially dry up the Cache la Poudre River through the city -- by as much as 71 percent, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project, known as NISP or the Glade Reservoir Project, would divert hefty amounts of water during the Poudre's peak flows and store it in a new lake slightly bigger than Horsetooth Reservoir.

Project supporters say it is needed to shore up water supplies for future population growth and continued agricultural use.

Brian Werner, spokesman for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which hopes to build the \$426 million project, acknowledged the 71 percent number would have to be addressed as the project was planned.

"Yeah, it's there," he said. "We're going to have to look at how we reduce the impacts and do mitigation. We think by having a big reservoir above the river, we ought to be able to manage flows a little better. There are a number of things that will be negotiations as this moves forward -- where can we make improvements?"

Detractors say it would effectively kill one of Colorado's last free-flowing rivers and the state's only federally protected Wild and Scenic river.

Gary Wockner, an area conservationist and spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition, said members of the river group anticipated some of the data in the report, but they have not yet fully digested it.

"Our initial opinion is we see nothing in there that changes our opinion that this project will be very bad for the Poudre River," he said. "There are some numbers in there that are worse than what we expected."

According to the environmental impact statement, a four-year, \$6 million study, the greatest changes in river flows would take place in May, June, and July of wet and average years.

The flow reduction would occur on a roughly 23-mile span of the river from the Poudre Valley Canal, a diversion canal near the canyon mouth, all the way to the New Cache Canal diversion two miles south of Timnath.

In addition, because of water exchanges, the Poudre might run higher in August -- even extending the boating season, according to the Corps -- so long as there is enough water in the Colorado-Big Thompson project to make the exchange.

The plan calls for relocating seven miles of U.S. 287 north of Ted's Place. That road inundation would cause problems for some flora and fauna, most notably native prairie grasses and the threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse. Werner said that habitat would have to be replaced, and it could be done in the forebay area above the reservoir.

Glade also would add roughly \$17 million in recreational value, according to the Corps.

Werner said much of the data bolsters the water district's argument that the plan will not dry up the Poudre.

"By and large, I think we're pleased," he said. "I think it shows that the aesthetic impacts are much less than I think people thought, and there is going to be less impact to the riparian areas and the wildlife that people had some concerns about. This should alleviate some of those concerns."

The public has 90 days to review the document and offer comments to the Corps, which will review the comments before preparing the final statement.

Several groups, including the Poudre coalition and the city of Fort Collins, are considering asking for even more time given the document's technicality and length -- about 700 pages, with hundreds of supplemental reports and data.

The Fort Collins City Council is expected to approve spending another \$410,000 to study the project at its meeting next Tuesday; so far, Fort Collins has spent \$350,000 studying Glade.

Wockner would not confirm whether there would be a lawsuit to stop the project, but he said preventing it is the end goal.

"All I'm going to say is that we have a team of citizens, scientists and attorneys that are going to meticulously analyze the document," he said. "We think it will be very bad for the Poudre River, and our goal is to stop the project."

Regardless of any litigation, the project still has a fight ahead. Werner said he hoped the Corps' final report would be ready by the end of the year, and even then, the reservoir would not be completed until 2014.

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