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Reservoir impacts debated  
NISP opponents worry about the Poudre; supporters say it'll be fine

By Kathryn Dailey  
The Reporter-Herald

FORT COLLINS — Debates regarding the impact on the Poudre River if a proposed reservoir is built may be resolved by the end of the month with the release of an environmental impact statement.

However, people on both sides of the issue could only speculate Monday night as to what would be revealed by the statement when it comes out April 30.

The Fort Collins Regional Library District and Front Range Community College sponsored a panel discussion regarding the Northern Integrated Supply Project on the Poudre River. The 12-member panel represented people on both sides of the argument.

“Once the (impact statement) comes out we’ll be hearing a lot more about the impacts to biodiversity,” said opponent Philip Cafaro, an associate philosophy professor and member of the Audubon Society.

However, proponent Brian Werner, spokesman for the Northern Colorado Water Conservation District, said that results aren’t going to be what opponents are expecting.

“I think you’re going to find that it isn’t going to be the same impacts you think there are right now,” he said.

The Northern Integrated Supply Project was introduced in 2003 as a way for participating jurisdictions to secure water in the future. Currently, there are 15 participants.

The project would consist of two reservoirs. The proposed 177,000-acre-foot Glade Reservoir, to be built northwest of Fort Collins near Ted’s Place, would provide users 40,000 acre-feet of water a year.

Junior water rights on the Poudre River would be used to fill Galeton, a 40,000-acre-foot reservoir to be built northeast of Greeley.

An acre-foot is the amount of water that would cover an acre to a depth of one

foot and is generally enough to supply up to two households for a year.

Supporters of the project say that the water diversions will have little effect on the river while providing participants with water for future growth.

“Water is needed for people in Northern Colorado,” Werner said.

“(The Northern Integrated Supply Project) will not dry up the Poudre River.”

Supporters also believe that the reservoir would provide more water to the municipalities, allowing agricultural users to keep more of their own water.

Reservoir opponents say that the Poudre River will be ecologically damaged, dried up and recreational opportunities will be negatively impacted.

“If this project is built every year will be a dry year on the Poudre through (Fort Collins),” said Gary Wockner from the Save the Poudre Coalition.

“This is a working river. If this project is built, the Poudre River will be worked to death.”

The water would be taken from the river during the spring runoff, which usually occurs in June. It would be diverted at the mouth of the canyon.

Opponents fear that taking the water from peak flows will be detrimental to the river because it helps nourish habitats and flush out sediments.

After the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers releases the draft environmental impact statement, which will address those issues, there will be a 90-day comment period.

“I think a lot of things are going to beyond discussion,” said Fort Collins resident Rico Moore, who attended in support of the Save the Poudre Coalition.

“It’s going to be a pretty significant finding.”

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