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Save The Poudre responds to B. J. Nikkel

Posted By [Gary Wamsley](#) On July 9, 2010 @ 8:56 pm In [Guest column,Voices & Thoughts](#) | [1 Comment](#)



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By Mark Easter and Gary Wockner

We are writing in response to BJ Nikkel's recent editorial in the Recorder Online, wherein she supports the hugely damaging Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP/Glade). Let's be clear –Agriculture and the Poudre River stand to be the big losers if NISP/Glade is built.

In their ground-breaking report "Farming on the Edge: Sprawling Development Threatens America's Best Farmland", the American Farmland Trust identified the Cache la Poudre Valley as some of the best farmland in the world. The report identifies our Ag heritage as critically endangered due to poor land use planning, sprawling development, inefficient use of water resources and inadequate protections for agricultural water rights.

We agree wholeheartedly with that assessment. For this and other reasons, [Save The Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper](#) [2] adamantly opposes NISP/Glade.

We should be doing everything in our power to protect the agricultural economy while also protecting northern Colorado's rivers.

Instead, actions taken by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District and the NISP/Glade subscribing cities threaten that farm economy and endanger our rivers.

Their actions are cloaked in language that misinforms the public and the very farmers that pay taxes to the district. We aren't alone in that opinion –Scientists from the U. S. Environmental Protection agency agree, and in 2008 they warned the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers that the analysis of NISP/Glade did not meet the most basic requirements for open, honest disclosure of the project's true economic and environmental impacts.

The water proposed for NISP/Glade is not new water for Northern Colorado – it is water currently used by Ag downstream in the South Platte basin. Developing this project means taking water from existing Ag users and sending it to suburbs.

Our own analysis shows [2] that NISP/Glade will put at least 100,000 irrigated acres in the Poudre Valley out of production and offers virtually zero protections or incentives for Ag. A summary shows:

- » NISP/Glade-subscribing cities will grow on top of 76,000 acres of farms, of which 48,000 are irrigated. That water that now grows crops will instead flush toilets and water lawns.

- »Because of the water trade in the South Platte Water Conservation Plan in NISP, at least 3,000 acres of irrigated farmland on the "Larimer and Weld" and "New Cache la Poudre" ditches will become too saline to farm and thousands of acres will suffer lower yields because of increased salinity.

» NISP would take on average 20,000 acre feet per year from the Poudre River — which currently irrigates 14,000 acres of farms and provides return flows on the eastern plains. When that water goes, so will the farmland, with zero compensation to the farmers for lost production and wells shut down.

»NISP/Glade intends to lease up to 100,000 acre-feet of Ag water to initially fill Glade Reservoir. That water currently irrigates approximately 70,000 acres — at least half of it in Northern Colorado.

Farmers agree with us. At least one Ag group filed objections in water court on the grounds that NISP/Glade harms their water rights.

NISP/Glade will facilitate the loss of up to \$80 million per year of agricultural goods and services to our region. Over the 30-years of government debt required to pay for NISP/Glade, billions in goods, services and jobs will be lost.

There are many, many sides to the NISP/Glade controversy. Unfortunately, the version told by NISP/Glade supporters misinforms the public and farmers. We must protect Northern Colorado from NISP and its destructive Glade and Galeton Reservoirs.

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