



## Seeking to safeguard a river

### Group puts Poudre at a 'cross point,' cites urban growth

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The scenic Cache La Poudre River has been designated as one of the nation's most endangered streams, thanks largely to plans to divert more of its dwindling flows to serve fast-growing cities in northern Colorado.

American Rivers, an advocacy group in Washington, D.C., added the river to its at-risk list this week, citing concerns over the proposed Glade Reservoir.

The reservoir, backed by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, would be located northwest of Fort Collins and would serve small, fast-growing communities such as Erie, Fort Lupton and Firestone.

American Rivers said the project, if it's approved, could threaten the Poudre's already strained ecosystem.

The listing comes three years after the Fraser River in Grand County was classed as endangered, in part because Denver Water is planning to divert more from its dwindling flows as well.

"These rivers are at a cross point," said Garrett Russo, a spokesman for American Rivers.

"To continue putting more and more straws in rivers and taking more water out with out making substantive changes to the way we use water is not sustainable," he said.

As Colorado grows, though, its major water utilities are seeking new water projects to help keep urban areas afloat. State studies show water needs are projected to surge in the next 20 years and new water projects will be critical to prevent shortages.

But environmental groups believe if Coloradans used less water and could find ways to tap into agricultural water supplies without putting farmers out of business, new projects would not be necessary.

Utility officials disagree.

"These are cities and towns that are growing, that need water that don't have water. Some of them need it today. Some of them needed it yesterday," said Brian Werner, spokesman for Northern. "They don't have the luxury of a Fort Collins or a Greeley," he said, referring to those older cities' well-developed water supplies.

Gary Wockner, a sharp critic of the Glade proposal and a spokesman for the Save The Poudre Coalition, said his group isn't opposed to those communities' growth, but he said Glade Reservoir is too environmentally damaging to the Poudre.

"We're not against growth," Wockner said. "We're just saying no more water out of the Poudre River. We've been saying the same thing for three years. Now we're finally getting national recognition that it really is endangered."

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