

North Forty News

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Supplemental EIS ordered for Glade Reservoir proposal

By Cherry Sokoloski
North Forty News

The Northern Integrated Supply Project, which includes a proposed Glade Reservoir, keeps getting pushed further into the future. That's good news for opponents of the project, not-so-good news for communities looking to enhance their domestic water supplies.

In early February, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced it will prepare a supplemental draft environmental impact statement for the project, a process that will push the construction target date from 2011 to 2013.

The reason for the additional document, according to an Army Corps press release, is the need for additional analysis of hydrology, water quality, vegetation and aquatic resources.

Both Fort Collins and the Environmental Protection Agency have been critical of NISP in regard to its effects on water quality and the health of the Poudre River.

The Army Corps also directed that further studies for NISP be coordinated with studies for the Halligan-Seaman Reservoirs so that "study results are consistent among all three projects." The Army Corps is currently working on a draft EIS for Halligan-Seaman.

A supplemental DEIS means more opportunity for public input. Carl Brouwer of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, the agency coordinating NISP, said the new public comment period would likely come in the spring of 2010.

The supplemental document will also add to costs for NISP participants.

According to Brouwer, the additional review could cost participants between \$500,000 and \$1 million. The process so far has cost about \$6 million, he said.

However, Brouwer noted, the 15 project participants have "become more galvanized as a group" in the past few months. They are getting more involved in the direction of the project, he said.

Also in February, Northern Water announced the results of its own study regarding environmental effects of NISP. The study, conducted by engineering firm Black & Veatch, concluded that water quality and treatment issues raised by Fort Collins and the EPA are not significant and can be easily addressed.

In other NISP news, Fort Collins officials have approached Northern Water about sitting down to discuss the project. "It's the first indication we have received since early last year that they would like to open up a dialogue," said Brouwer. "We view it as a positive development. We might be able to talk about mitigations, especially flows through Fort Collins."

Brouwer said that "if everything fell apart" with NISP's preferred alternative, which includes Glade Reservoir, Northern Water would look at the alternative using Cactus Hill Reservoir. That option would not require a permit from the Army Corps. However, he said, the NISP participants are still pushing for Glade.

The big disadvantage with Cactus Hill, located in Weld County, is that Horsetooth Reservoir could not be used as a conveyance facility for NISP water. Pipelines would have to be built instead, Brouwer said.

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