



There are better alternatives to Northern Integrated Supply Project

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By Gary Wockner

In a recent editorial in this newspaper, newly elected Congressman Cory Gardner endorsed pro-NISP propaganda that, under factual analysis, is completely misinformed.

The facts reveal that NISP — the Northern Integrated Supply Project and its destructive Glade Reservoir — would severely impact the Poudre River, is likely not supported by most citizens and would negatively impact Colorado's agricultural economy.

First, Gardner says NISP would "protect and preserve" the Poudre River. This is a ridiculous statement that violates factual reality.

NISP's draft Environmental Impact Statement is very clear — NISP would drain more than half of the remaining water out of the Poudre River through downtown Fort Collins in the months of May, June and July.

This diversion is in addition to the nearly two-thirds of the water that is already drained out.

If NISP is built, less than one-quarter of the natural flow of the Poudre would remain through downtown Fort Collins. NISP would help turn the Poudre River into a muddy, stinking, polluted ditch.

That's in part why the Fort Collins City Council unanimously opposed NISP, why the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said NISP "is not in compliance with the Clean Water Act," and why the State of Colorado Water Quality Control Division refused to give NISP an early water quality certification.

Second, Gardner says a majority of northern Colorado citizens support NISP.

Again the facts refute this statement. The 2008 "poll" Gardner is referring to was a "push poll" by a political pollster who was paid \$50,000 per year to help create NISP propaganda. This poll told people on the phone that the Poudre had "excess" water in it, and didn't tell people there were any negative impacts of NISP.

The fact is that the Poudre is sometimes drained completely dry and that NISP would have severe negative impacts. This sneaky, election-style, push-polling tactic would be like telling people cigarettes taste good and give you a little buzz without revealing that smoking tobacco causes cancer. The fact is that there has never been a scientific poll of citizens in northern Colorado about NISP.

Third, Gardner repeats the tired, discredited mantra that NISP will save farms.

Again, the facts counter Gardner's statement. A new technical report titled "The Farm Facts About NISP" indicates that NISP would help force the dry-up of up to 123,000 acres of farms in Colorado. NISP would lead to faster subdivision of farms, increase the salt pollution on farms, take away water that farmers are currently using and submerge productive farmland.

NISP is not like the C-BT project (Horsetooth Reservoir), which brings new water into northern Colorado from the Colorado River across the Continental Divide. NISP will take water out of the Poudre River and the South Platte River that farmers are currently using and send that water to rapidly growing cities.

Save the Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper supports efforts to create new water supplies. That is why we created a plan for a "Healthy Rivers Alternative" to NISP that allows cities to get water, protects the Poudre River and better protects farms.

The Healthy Rivers Alternative relies on smart water conservation strategies and collaboration with farmers.

We encourage you to take a look at this alternative by visiting our website at savethepoudre.org/healthy-alternatives.html.

The Healthy Rivers Alternative is a faster, smarter, cheaper path forward for northern Colorado.

Congressman Gardner, and NISP, are wrong.

Gary Wockner of Fort Collins is the director of Save the Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper. For more information, visit savethepoudre.org.

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