

Understanding Glade impact imperative

Cost of review justified, but cutting tab makes sense

The city of Fort Collins has an important stake in what happens to the Northern Integrated Supply Project.

Fort Collins is not a partner in the large water storage project, but it has key interests in the project. Part of NISP will divert water from the Poudre River upstream of Fort Collins to the proposed Glade Reservoir.

Questions about water quality, river flows, economic viability, water availability and impact on the city's own water storage plans must be answered. And the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which is proposing the massive project, should hear any concerns that the city of Fort Collins might have about its plans.

Thus, it was wise Tuesday for City Council to approve a science-based and objective review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project, which will draw water from the Poudre River to fill Glade Reservoir.

Still, the cost of that review must be questioned. City Council approved spending an addition \$410,000 to study the Draft EIS on top of \$350,000 the city has already spent reviewing the project. Of that, \$135,000 will come from the Utilities budget, \$50,000 from natural areas funds and \$225,000 from the city's general-fund reserves.

While it is understandable that most city staff members don't necessarily hold the level of expertise required to study such a large project, thus requiring the need for consultants, city officials are encouraged to review whether this total \$760,000 expenditure can be reduced. Perhaps Council member Diggs Brown is correct that the city could reduce its tab by partnering, at least in part, with Larimer County, which is also reviewing the EIS. Can some members of the city's professional staff participate in lower-level reviews or conduct preparatory work?

In turn, City Council and staff should further define just how much influence this costly city report will have on the Corps decision, including potential mitigation proposals, given Fort Collins' status as an impacted outsider. The review is certainly necessary, but the public also should be assured that this expenditure will benefit the city.

