

Hello Friends,

The *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* had an exceptional full-color 2-page article about Larimer County's Cache la Poudre River (and the proposed threats/dams, and a new book titled *Pulse of the River*) in last Thursday's paper (1/18/2007). For a text version:

<http://www.wyomingnews.com/articles/2007/01/18/news/outdoors/out0117-01.txt>

This article also contains many quotes from a spokesperson for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (NCWCD is a public agency). It is unfortunate, however, that NCWCD is using our tax dollars to fund a public relations campaign that is repeatedly making false statements and exaggerations to the press and public.

The statements in the article made by the spokesperson for NCWCD are reprinted below. After each statement, I offer a "TRUTH TEST," in which every statement is shown to be false or an exaggeration. Moreover, I have a longer list of false statements and exaggerations that have been made to the press and in public meetings over the last three years by NCWCD. This article, unfortunately, is just one example of a pattern of behavior that is, at best, unethical and inappropriate and a mis-use of taxpayer dollars.

If NCWCD is using our tax dollars to pay public relations people to deceive us, that is a deplorable public policy. That NCWCD seems to be intent on spreading false information makes me more strongly question their motives and wonder why they are not embracing a broad public dialogue about the impact of these dams/reservoirs on the Poudre River and our quality of life.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Cordially,

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(this is a public email...forward it to whomever you want)

The NCWCD "TRUTH TEST"

Statement 1:

"The status quo is not sustainable," she said. "Things are going to change in the future, whether or not (the reservoir) gets built. It's a choice between pooling resources and building a joint water project or having all of these folks supply water to their towns on their own. That's more expensive, and it will mean drying up irrigated agriculture."

Truth:

1. What is not sustainable is building dams and reservoirs. It's a gross mis-use of the word "sustainable" to suggest that a dam and reservoir is sustainable, and I challenge anyone to find any definition anywhere that suggests it is. Sustainable means you can continue to do it repeatedly in the future and not hinder your capability to keep doing it. Dams are not sustainable; conservation is.

2. The price of NISP/Glade -- ~\$10,000/acre-foot, and counting -- is close to the price of buying junior water on the open market right now. NISP/Glade is more expensive than most other choices. The total cost of NISP/Glade, with interest on the bonds, could be up to \$825 million, part of which will come from a loan backed by the State of Colorado. More to the point, conservation and efficiency are proven to supply water at 1/2th to 1/20th of that price. Thus, the "choice" referred to in Statement 1 is a false choice and

does not need to be made. (See Facing Our Future for reference to conservation costs: http://www.westernresourceadvocates.org/facingourfuture/facingourfuture_lowres.pdf)

3. The NISP/Glade Reservoir will require the dry-up, sell-off, and pave-over of about 25,000 acres of open space and agricultural lands to pay off the debt that will be incurred to pay for the project. This reservoir will be funded by debt that is to be paid back by growth -- growth will occur on open space and agricultural lands. Dry-up of agricultural lands would likely occur at a slower rate if NISP/Glade IS NOT built. (visit NCWCD's website for information about the required growth and acres of farms/open-space that will need to be developed to pay back the NISP/Glade debt. <http://ncwcd.org>)

Statement 2:

"We would only be diverting water (into the reservoir) during the high water months of above-average years," she said. "These projects wouldn't drain the Poudre - it's already protected by minimum stream flows through Fort Collins, and something like 60 percent of the river above the Poudre Canyon is protected as a wild and scenic river."

Truth:

1. The Glade Reservoir will hold 177,000 acre-feet (over 57 billion gallons), and deliver over 40,000 acre-feet every year. All of this water will come directly from the Poudre. The NISP/Glade diversion will capture what's called the "June Rise," the spring snowmelt absolutely essential for river health through its cleansing and restorative action. The river's hydrograph will increasingly be "flat-lined." The "above-average" years referred to in Statement 2 are already 50% below the Poudre's native flows, and the NISP/Glade diversion will take about another 50% of that. See this image of the river's hydrograph: http://savethepoudre.org/images/likely_impacts_to_the_river/figure2_poudre_river_flow_regime.gif

Further, by taking off the "June Rise," NISP/Glade will dramatically change the hydrological system around the Poudre such that the area-wide water table will be lower and thus result in lower river flows year-round. Further yet, this NISP/Glade project is one of three huge planned projects on the Poudre -- the other two will take another 40,000 acre-feet. The cumulative effects of these projects (which no one yet wants to talk about) will be even more devastating to the ecology and recreation in the river.

2. It is simply not true that the Poudre is protected through Fort Collins. As an example, I point you to this photo taken two months ago just northwest of town before the river even reaches Fort Collins:

http://garywockner.home.comcast.net/dry_river_11_16_06.JPG. (you have my permission to reprint it, here is a hi-res version: http://garywockner.home.comcast.net/dry_poudre_hi_res_11_06_2006.JPG)

NCWCD says NISP/Glade won't drain the Poudre, but the river is already dry like this for many months every year (here is a map of just some of those dry-up spots:

http://garywockner.home.comcast.net/poudre_dry_ups.jpg ...this map was created by NCWCD staff).

Additionally, the minimum streamflow that is referred to is not enforced, is a junior water right, and only amounts to a trickle (between 5 and 30 cfs, seasonally). Call the City Natural Areas program or the FC Water Utility to confirm the fact that the Poudre is frequently dry through town and that no one enforces anything. To float a canoe through town, at least 100 cfs are needed.

3. The river below the canyon mouth, which is not currently legally protected, will be doomed by NCWCD/NISP. The economy and quality of life that citizens in Fort Collins enjoy is increasingly dependent on the natural areas and the Poudre River. The City, County, GOCO, and federal government have spent tens-of-millions of dollars buying and preserving open space along the Poudre River. The UniverCity group is assessing the economic potential of the naturalness of the corridor as a tourism attraction. The recreational use along the Poudre in Fort Collins is growing dramatically. All of this is occurring in the 40% of the river that NCWCD/NISP/Glade is proposing to dry up and destroy. Justifying these dams by saying that 60% of the upper river is protected is like justifying having your leg cut off below the knee and saying that's good because you've saved 60% of your leg when in fact you're leg was not diseased in the first place. NCWCD is cutting off the leg of the river that runs through Fort Collins and Greeley.

Statement 3:

Seltzer said the methods currently used by Front Range cities to buy up irrigated land and transfer water rights from agricultural use to municipal use won't work forever. "Colorado has doubled its population in the last 35 years," Seltzer said. "In that time, we've only built one major water storage project - Windy Gap - and that was 20 years ago. In short, we can't meet the water needs of future generations by taking shorter showers."

Truth:

1. About 85% of the water that flows down the Poudre (~290,000 acre-feet/year) is currently used for irrigated agriculture. If all the cities bought all of that water (and the water on all the farms in the South Platte basin), Colorado could likely have enough water to grow forever and fill the eastern plains from top to bottom with subdivisions (we seem to be headed that direction). For a fact, cities -- on a per-acre basis -- use about the same amount of water as irrigated agriculture. I don't believe it is preferable or sustainable to transfer all of ag water to cities, but it is a false statement to say it won't work. More usefully, if we conserved just 15% of the water currently used in irrigated agriculture in the Poudre and South Platte basins, we'd have enough water to double the supply to all the communities in the South Platte basin including the communities subscribing to NISP/Glade. Even further, this conservation could happen through "interruptible supply" agreements and water sharing that would both enhance farm economies and allow cities to keep growing -- legalizing such agreements has been of increasing concern at the Colorado legislature in recent sessions. (The Colorado Water Conservation Board reports that 87% of the water in the South Platte basin is used for irrigated ag, and 13% for cities. If we conserve 15% of that 87% of ag water, we'll double the water available to cities from 13% to 26%. See the Colorado Water Conservation Board's South Platte Basin facts page for reference:

http://www.cwcb.state.co.us/IWMD/SWSI_SouthPlatte.htm) Additionally, statewide, 91% of water is used for irrigated ag, whereas only 9% is used for cities:

http://www.cwcb.state.co.us/IWMD/pdfDocs/SouthPlatte/So_Platte_SWSI_Update_7%2019%2004.pdf)

2. No serious water conservation strategy involves taking shorter showers. Water conservation scientists/economists have a proven regimen of options available to meet increased demand, and this statement is a silly political spin of a serious scientific/economic topic. Call any water conservation consultant for confirmation.

Statement 4:

Water conservation is vital, Seltzer said, but it won't go far enough. "Conservation is really important - it's a tool that all our municipalities use, but it's only one leg of a stool," she said. "Even if you do conserve a bunch of water, where are you going to put it? More storage ultimately needs to be the answer."

Truth:

1. A recent survey in SWSI (statewide water supply initiative) showed that the counties in the NCWCD have very weak water conservation programs.

<http://cwcb.state.co.us/IWMD/pdfDocs/SWSIWaterConservationAndEfficiencyTRTWhitePaper.pdf>

Moreover, the 16 municipalities that are proposing to use the NISP/Glade water have very little, or no, water conservation programs. (visit their websites and call their water depts for verification) As one example, here is a graph of the per capita daily water use of several of the NISP sponsoring cities.

http://garywockner.home.comcast.net/water_conserve1.jpg Note the city at the far right, Aurora, is not in NISP, but has one of the best water conservation programs in Colorado -- Aurora has gotten its per capita daily use down to 125 gallons and it has not affected their quality of life. Most of the other cities aren't even close to 125, but they're proposing to drain the Poudre when they haven't addressed conservation adequately, or at all.

2. See the "Facing Our Future" report for a realistic version of conservation's ability to supply water to the Northern Front Range:

http://www.westernresourceadvocates.org/facingourfuture/facingourfuture_lowres.pdf Conservation and efficiency can save up to 50% of water, and do it more cheaply than dams/reservoirs. As just one example of how Statement 4 is wrong, the City of Fort Collins has increased population from 1994 - 2005

by ~25,000 people (24%), but our average daily water use and peak daily water use have actually gone down. See chart: http://garywckner.home.comcast.net/Water_Use_FC.htm This decrease in water use is due, in part, to conservation programs (which are weak and underfunded in Fort Collins), and to better land-use planning. **More people do not require more water storage. Conservation and interruptible supply agreements can meet the demand of growing populations, and meet it on a sustainable pay-as-you-go basis rather than an unsustainable, debt-ridden, one-size-fits-all basis of dams/reservoirs.**

3. Conserved water does not require new storage; rather, it dramatically lowers demand, year-round, and allows for new storage not to be built.

4. If water conservation is "vital" and "really important," then why doesn't NCWCD require that NISP participants conserve water? Rather, NCWCD has lobbied the EPA to set nominal per capita water use rates at over 200 gals per day. Such levels would be among the highest in the country and would not encourage conservation. There are no (or very few) conservation stipulations on how the Poudre River water will be used in NISP. If there are stipulations and requirements, then show me the report -- city by city -- of what's required, in acre feet. By comparison, the cities of Aurora, Boulder, and Fort Collins are not in NISP, but they all have conservation programs (though Fort Collins' is by far the weakest of the three), and none of the cities participating in NISP/Glade have programs even near that of Fort Collins (see chart: <http://garywckner.home.comcast.net/WaterConservationComparison.htm> source: city web pages). Further, NCWCD currently requires **no water conservation programs** from its participating providers throughout the district, they merely "recommend" it.

TRUTH TEST: FAILED

For information about the efforts to stop NISP/Glade, visit <http://SaveThePoudre.org>

Gary Wockner and his conservation colleagues have put together a slideshow titled, "The Dam Truth," which they are presenting to many public audiences. If you'd like to see the slideshow, send an email to garywckner@comcast.net. "The Dam Truth" is being made into a film that will be released in early summer of 2007.
