

Press Release

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[Save The Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper](#)

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Congressman Proposes Scheme To Gut Environmental Laws To Create Federal “Office Of Water Storage” Even Though Rivers And Reservoir Are Already Draining And Drying Up

River Activist Says Bill and Office Should Be Named:

“Office to Destroy Our Rivers and Publicly Increase Taxes” [ODOR PIT]

Fort Collins, CO – Who would propose creating a brand new federal bureaucracy to gut environmental laws and fast-track more new dams and reservoirs just weeks after the federal government declared the first ever water shortage in history in the Southwest U.S. because the rivers and reservoirs are already draining and drying up?

Colorado's radical anti-environmental Congressman Cory Gardner, that's who.

Today, Save The Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper announced its direct opposition to a bill proposed by U.S. Rep. Cory Gardner (R-CO4). ([See Gardner's press release from August 30, 2013 here.](#)) The bill (as yet untitled) proposes to gut the National Environmental Policy Act and Clean Water Act and create a new federal bureaucracy within the Army Corps of Engineers called the “Office of Water Storage” which would undermine sound science in order to fast-track permitting for dam, reservoir, and pipeline schemes in Colorado and across the Southwest U.S.

Gary Wockner, Director of Save The Poudre and a river activist in the Southwest U.S. said the bill and office should be renamed. “Let's call it ODOR PIT,” said Wockner, “which stands for ‘Office to Destroy Our Rivers and Publicly Increase Taxes.’”

For years, Congressman Gardner has been carping about the proposed “Northern Integrated Supply Project” (NISP) a scheme to drain and destroy the Cache la Poudre River of Northern Colorado in order to build a huge new reservoir that would create massive public debt (about [\\$1 billion](#) for 14 small towns) to subsidize population growth and fracking in Gardner's neighboring congressional district (Gardner's Weld County has nearly [20,000 active oil and gas wells](#), more than any county in the U.S.). If built, NISP would drain [40,000 acre feet](#) of water out of the Poudre River each year, a river that is already 60% drained and listed as one of the [Most Endangered Rivers In America](#). Further, towns that want NISP water are proposing to dramatically [increase water rates](#) and tap fees to pay for the project. NISP has been stalled for 5 years because the

Army Corps of Engineers is examining the negative impact the project would have on the river.

“ODOR PIT would gut science, destroy rivers, raise taxpayers’ fees and rates, and create a new federal office and bureaucracy,” said Wockner.

Gardner proposed ODOR PIT just weeks after the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation declared the first water shortage in history and [cut back water deliveries](#) along the Colorado River in the Southwest U.S. The shortage was declared due to overuse of water, drought, and climate change which has left the two biggest reservoirs in the Southwest U.S. – Powell and Mead – at their lowest combined level in history and the entire Colorado River America’s [Most Endangered River in 2013](#). On the local front in Northern Colorado, [not enough water exists to fill the NISP](#) reservoir scheme that Gardner has been carping about. In fact, earlier this year the [spokesperson for the project stated](#) that they hadn’t yet figured out a way to fill the reservoir for NISP due to low water in the Poudre and Colorado Rivers.

“If this bill moves forward and the projects are built, the drained and drying rivers and reservoirs of the Southwest U.S. will further turn into the exact name of this bill – ODOR PITs,” said Wockner.

Gardner’s bill may also follow in the path of revenue-raising schemes elsewhere in Colorado and Utah to build more pipelines and reservoirs along the Southwest U.S.’ dying rivers. Earlier this year the Utah legislature [proposed to raise statewide sales taxes](#) to fund a massive new pipeline sucking even more water out of Lake Powell on the Colorado River. The State of Colorado has longed used public state revenues to [fund](#) (through the Colorado Water Conservation Board) and [subsidize](#) (through the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority) water projects – but massive amounts of additional funding would be needed to build a list of projects [on the drawing table](#). Further, in 2012, the U.S. Department of Interior dismissed ideas to build massive pipelines into the Southwest U.S. which had mind-boggling price-tags because they were “[impractical and technically infeasible](#).”

The environmental community has put forward alternatives to the new projects, including this alternative for the Cache la Poudre River titled, “[A Better Future For the Poudre River: Alternative to the Northern Integrated Supply Project](#),” which lays out a broad array of solutions including conservation, efficiency, recycling, and water sharing agreements with farmers. The devastation to farmland if NISP gets built is discussed in [this technical document here](#).