

Fort Collins City Council OKs funds to review Glade study

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The city of Fort Collins will spend \$750,000 studying the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project and an accompanying 702-page draft Environmental Impact Statement released last week detailing the water project.

In addition to the \$350,000 the city had previously spent, City Council on Tuesday unanimously approved using \$225,000 from general-fund reserves, \$135,000 from utilities and \$50,000 in natural areas funds to pay for an additional \$410,000 to study the plan. The city has about \$13.5 million in general-fund reserves.

The NISP project would include a 170,000-acre-foot reservoir northwest of Fort Collins and could, as proposed, reduce the Poudre River's flow through Fort Collins by 71 percent in May and more than half as runoff peaks in June, according to the EIS completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The city does not get a vote in deciding whether the project moves forward but is planning to submit a detailed report to the Corps outlining the city's concerns about the project.

A bulk of the approved money will pay for outside consultants to study the draft EIS and determine the potential impact of the project on city drinking water standards, legal standing and ecological aspects within the city limits.

"The (EIS) is highly specialized, and in many cases, we don't have available resources in our organization to do it, and so we are going out and enlisting that talent to help us," City Manager Darin Atteberry told the City Council.

"If we want our comments to be taken as valid by the Corps of Engineers, our comments have to be very specific, very data-driven and with a high level of expertise. This is an extraordinary effort that will take additional resources," he said.

Council member Diggs Brown said he was a "hesitant yes" to approve the expenditure wondering if it is a good use of city taxpayer dollars.

"In my world, three quarters of a million dollars to study a study is a lot of money," Brown said, adding that Larimer County should be assisting the city in the detailed look. "I have concerns about studying a study and spending that kind of money."

City staff will address the council June 10 and again July 1 with updates about the city's in-depth review. All public comments on the draft EIS are due by July 31.

Council member Lisa Poppaw said the vote to approve the additional funding was an easy yes for her.

"This is clearly an expenditure that will protect the interests of the city of Fort Collins," Poppaw said. "I think this is a good investment."

