



June 17, 2008

Glade debate packs house

Both pro, con represented at public forum

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Nearly 300 people from around the state attended the first of three public hearings Monday night at the Hilton Fort Collins on the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project, which would include building Glade Reservoir north of Ted's Place.

Water for the reservoir would be drawn from the Poudre River, primarily during times of peak flow during the spring runoff.

Many of the 74 people who signed up to speak during the hearing opposed the proposal and asked that alternative solutions be considered for water conservation and usage. Many also expressed concerns for the vitality of the Poudre River.

"It's not a sustainable solution," said Cordelia Stone, who lives in LaPorte. "Conservative measures need to be more thoroughly researched. It shouldn't just be about water as a commodity, but about saving our river."

Glade is part of the Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP, a proposal by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District to supply 40,000 acre feet of water a year to 15 participating communities and water districts. An acre-foot is enough water to meet the needs of two urban families for a year. Glade would hold 170,000 acre feet when full.

The city of Fort Collins would not draw water from the project. The Fort Collins-Loveland Water District, which serves portions of south Fort Collins, would.

A draft Environmental Impact Statement on NISP was released April 30 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

A comment period during which local governments, organizations and individuals may weigh in on the controversial project is scheduled to end July 30, but it could be extended.

NISP would include building Glade Reservoir north of Ted's Place, Galeton Reservoir near Greeley and about 30 miles of pipeline to carry pumped water.

Glade would draw water from the Poudre River using an existing canal near the mouth of Poudre Canyon.

Most of Glade's water would be drawn during times of above-average flow, primarily during the peak spring runoff. The river's flow through Fort Collins would be reduced 25 percent to 71 percent, based on monthly averages.

Various representatives from the 15 participating communities spoke Monday night about the need to prepare for growth in their areas and the importance to their communities of building Glade.

"We feel this is a responsible way to handle a very scarce commodity," said Fred Burmont, a member of the Evans City Council.

But Martha Roden of Fort Collins questioned the impact of growth on the area.

"The problem may not be entirely water conservation but continued growth," she said. "When we don't adjust our habits, it's the environments that pay the price. We need to look at radically adjusting our behaviors."

Dana Miller traveled from Buena Vista to the hearing Monday evening to speak in favor of the proposal.

"I think with this project there's definitely a need that's been identified," she said. "I don't believe this project is excessive. I believe it's prudent at this point. ... I came from Buena Vista because I believe in this project, and I'd like to see a positive change for people along the Front Range."

Dolores Williams of Fort Collins was concerned that the 15 communities who stand to benefit from NISP are not familiar enough with the Poudre River.

"We really need to have people in our area talking about what to do with our river," she said.

Most who spoke at the hearing also asked that the public comment period be extended at least 90 more days to allow more time to review the 700-page Environmental Impact Statement document.

"I think that we all have a right to have time to review this enormous document to have a fair say in what is happening," said Catherine Thomas of Fort Collins, who said she opposed the project.

NISP project manager Chandler Peter from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Steve Dougherty of ERO Resources, third party consultants for the project, attended Monday night's meeting. All comments made at forums this week will be added to comments submitted to the Corps of Engineers through July 30.
