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## Health of Poudre River at center of reservoir proposal

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FORT COLLINS — Supporters of the Northern Integrated Supply Project say it will provide much-needed water to 15 water providers along the northern Front Range without harming the Poudre River.

Naysayers think it will dry up the Poudre, damage the riparian ecology and kill river recreation.

Both will get some answers about the project by the end of the month with the release of an environmental impact statement.

However, people on both sides of the issue could only speculate Monday night about what the report will reveal when it comes out April 30.

The project has 15 partners, including Frederick, Dacono, Firestone, Erie, Lafayette, the Left Hand Water District and the Central Weld County Water District. Berthoud dropped out of the coalition last year.

The Fort Collins Regional Library District and Front Range Community College sponsored a panel discussion about NISP on Monday night. The 12-member panel represented people on both sides of the argument.

“Once the (impact statement) comes out, we’ll be hearing a lot more about the impacts to biodiversity,” said opponent Philip Cafaro, an associate philosophy professor and member of the Audubon Society.

But proponent Brian Werner, spokesman for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, said results aren’t going to be what opponents are expecting.

“I think you’re going to find that it isn’t going to be the same impacts you think there are right now,” he said.

The Northern Integrated Supply Project was proposed in 2003 to provide 40,000 acre-feet of new water to the 15 partners.

The \$400 million project would consist of two reservoirs. The 177,000-acre-foot Glade Reservoir would be built northwest of Fort Collins near Ted’s Place and filled with water diverted from the Poudre. Galetton Reservoir, a 40,000-acre-foot reservoir to be built northeast of Greeley, would provide new water to farmers from the South Platte River, according to the conservancy district, which is spearheading the project.

Supporters of the project say the water diversions will have little effect on the rivers while providing participants with water for future growth.

“Water is needed for people in northern Colorado,” Werner said. “(The Northern Integrated Supply Project) will not dry up the Poudre River.”

Supporters also believe the reservoir will provide more water to the municipalities, allowing agricultural users to keep more of their own water.

Reservoir opponents say the Poudre River will be ecologically damaged and dried up, which would harm recreational opportunities.

“If this project is built, every year will be a dry year on the Poudre through (Fort Collins),” said Gary Wockner of the Save the Poudre Coalition. “This is a working river. If this project is built, the Poudre River will be worked to death.”

The water would be taken from the river during the spring runoff, which usually occurs in June.

Opponents fear that taking the water from peak flows will harm the river ecology; the high flows help nourish habitats and flush out sediments.

After the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers releases the draft environmental impact statement, which will address those issues, there will be a 90-day comment period.