

I support Healthy Rivers Alternative

Written by

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The Cache La Poudre River flows through the heart of Fort Collins and is the life-blood of our community's economic vitality and well-being. As such, the people must protect and preserve this critical natural resource now and for future generations while addressing Northern Colorado's water needs through wiser and more fiscally responsible alternatives. I support the broad range of solutions embodied in the Healthy Rivers Alternative proposed by Save the Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper and other conservation groups such as Western Resource Advocates, and I oppose the Northern Integrated Supply Project and Glade Reservoir that would ultimately do more harm than good.

We can protect and improve the Fort Collins and Northern Colorado economy and environment with a plan to provide a dequate water supplies to our region's communities that better protects farms, allows for sensible public debt, advances smart growth and keeps our river alive and well. Such outcomes can be achieved through agricultural water-sharing agreements that help farmers stay on the land producing the food that we eat. By preserving peak flows in the Poudre, we help maintain healthy river ecosystems,

reduce flooding risks and improve water quality, all of which helps everyone in our communities, including farmers.

We can store water appropriately in already-existing reservoirs, smaller new reservoirs, gravel pits and aquifers rather than building NISP and Glade Reservoir, which would dramatically diminish the Poudre River and irreparably harm sensitive riparian habitats while doing serious damage to our local economy that co-exists with the river. Using a pay-as-you go model, the HRA plan could be implemented at less cost than NISP without burdening our children with unnecessary future debt.

Another HRA key component advances comprehensive water conservation practices for city and agriculture uses, which can be integrated into landscaping and new subdivisions as well as crop irrigation. There's so much more we can do as individual citizens to maximize water conservation and efficiency, such as drip irrigation, low-flush toilets, xeriscaping and

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common sense, above all.

On the other hand, NISP will drain up to 71 percent of the Poudre River water in an average year, on top of the 60 percent that is already diverted for current purposes, thus leaving only 25 percent of the natural flow through Fort Collins. This water would fill the massive Glade Reservoir northwest of Ted's Place to be built with massive public debt paid off by increasing water rates on customers of the Weld County towns and Larimer County water districts that buy into this project. In addition, one study shows that NISP would accelerate the demise of 123,000 acres of farm land (Healthy Rivers Alternative: http://poudreriver.home.comcast.net/%7Epoudreriver/Healthy_Rivers_Alternative.pdf and Farm Facts About NISP: <http://savethepoudre.org/docs/farm-facts-april2011.pdf>).

I suggest that this is not a good deal to pass on to our children. Go down by the river, and watch it flow during the spring runoff, and what you see and feel will show why we must save our river.

John M. Kefalas is a Fort Collins Democrat who serves as state representative for House District 52 in the state Legislature.

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