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More time granted for Glade input

Corps increases comment period until Sept. 13

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The public comment period on a draft Environmental Impact Statement for Glade Reservoir and the Northern Integrated Supply Project has been extended 45 days.

Officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decided to increase the comment period until Sept. 13 in response to requests for more time to study the 702-page document and about 4,000 pages of technical reports, said Chandler Peter, who is overseeing the EIS process for the Corps.

"We made the recommendation that 45 days would be a reasonable period given the public interest in the project, and we know the applicant and participants have an interest in how long this process takes," Peter said.

The decision was made by Col. David C. Press, commander of the Corps' Omaha District. An extension is not unusual for an EIS process, Peter said, especially for a project as significant and controversial as the Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP.

The 90-day comment period originally set for comments on the draft EIS is double what is required by federal regulations. The draft EIS was released April 30.

Opponents are "disappointed" with the 45-day extension, said Gary Wockner, spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition.

The draft EIS has "severe deficiencies," Wockner said and requires in-depth research.

Project opponents asked for a 90-day extension repeatedly during a recent series of public hearings on the draft EIS, saying the time was needed to pore through the complex document.

"It's not adequate," he said. "However, we're going to do our best to analyze the document and highlight its many problems in the limited time available to us."

The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which has proposed building NISP in cooperation with 15 regional communities and water districts, has no problem with the extension, said spokeswoman Jill Boyd.

"We believe in the process that we are going through, and if the Corps feels an extension should be part of the process, we support that," Boyd said.

NISP would draw water from the Poudre River and store it in Glade Reservoir, which would be built north of Ted's Place. It also would draw from the South Platte River and store that water in Galeton Reservoir, which would be built northeast of Greeley.

Supporters say the project is needed to meet the future water needs of participating communities and water districts. Critics say NISP would take too much water from an already-overburdened Poudre River, causing a host of environmental and economic problems.

Officials from Fort Collins and Larimer County are developing their comments on the document.

A public hearing on the draft EIS by the Larimer County commissioners is scheduled Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the county courthouse office building, 200 W. Oak St., but no final opinion is expected to be reached.
