

## Planning approach offers hope

For the past few years, all the talk has been about the water war on the Poudre. Is it possible that peace could be breaking out?

Not likely, but there are some opportunities for downscaling the all-out war that is approaching. The Poudre River, as many citizens know, is vastly endangered because of a plethora of proposed dams, diversions, reservoirs and developments in the basin. Those projects include the NISP/Glade Reservoir scheme, the Windy Gap Firming Project, the new Seaman Dam/Reservoir, the new Halligan Dam/Reservoir, the Bellvue Pipe, the Million Pipeline, and on and on.

While a full-scale water war about the NISP/Glade Reservoir scheme seems imminent, another project that involves the new Halligan and Seaman dams/reservoirs might offer opportunities and hope for the future.

Both the city of Fort Collins (which wants to build Halligan) and the city of Greeley (which wants to build Seaman) have worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to create a "Shared Vision Planning," or SVP, process wherein stakeholders can try to meet each others' needs. The process aims to avoid costly and lengthy court battles that have plagued water projects in Colorado and in other states during the past few decades.

Save The Poudre is interested in engaging with the cities and with the Army Corps in this SVP approach. Specifically, Save The Poudre has developed a list of 13 alternatives to the Halligan Reservoir proposal that would allow Fort Collins to meet its future water supply needs without building a huge new dam and reservoir. These alternatives include:

- > Investing much more money in indoor water conservation and efficiency - scientific studies suggest that up to half of all indoor water can be conserved through upgrades to more efficient appliances.
- > Promoting xeriscaping and low-water outdoor landscapes - lawns use more than one-third of all the water in Fort Collins. Xeriscaping and low-water landscapes can save more than half of outdoor water use.
- > Leasing water from farmers during drought years - the city of Fort Collins, in fact, used this alternative to successfully get through 2002, which was the worst one-year drought in recorded history in the Poudre River basin.
- > Storing water in underground aquifers - the state of Colorado has determined that up to 291,000 acre-feet of aquifer storage exists in the Cache la Poudre basin, which is more than 10 times larger than the proposed Halligan Reservoir.
- > Building gravel pit storage ins-tead of large, expensive, environment-ally destructive dams and reservoirs.

The Shared Vision Planning process offers some hope that the above alternatives can find room for discussion and be chosen as outcomes. Save The Poudre is committed to trying to collaborate and compromise with stakeholders who share our vision - to protect and restore the beautiful Cache la Poudre River through Fort Collins and beyond.

If you'd like to have input into this process, contact your Fort Collins City Council members. Send an e-mail to [cityleaders@fcgov.com](mailto:cityleaders@fcgov.com).

A meeting with the cities and the corps will be March 8 to discuss the future of the SVP process. Fort Collins can seek an alternative path forward, with collaboration and compromise, that might help promote peace on the Poudre for everyone involved.

Gary Wockner, Ph.D., is the director and "Poudre waterkeeper" for Save The Poudre. Visit [www.SaveThePoudre.org](http://www.SaveThePoudre.org) for more information.