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Poudre River makes 'most endangered' list

Group cites Glade plan as reason for designation

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A national environmental group Thursday designated the Poudre River one of the most endangered rivers in the country, saying the river is imperiled by the proposed Glade Reservoir.

American Rivers ranked the Poudre third on its Top 10 list of threatened rivers, claiming the proposed reservoir would drain the river before it reaches Fort Collins.

The Washington, D.C.-based group called on communities and water districts that would store water in Glade to pursue ramped-up conservation programs before resorting to building a dam.

"Water will be the oil of the 21st century," Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers, said in a prepared statement. "Yet all across the country, water mismanagement is on full display as politicians resort to placing another straw in their rivers, or outright stealing water from their neighbors, instead of adopting water policies that will make our communities more resilient in the face of global warming."

At a morning news conference/rally on the Poudre near Legacy Park, opponents of Glade said the designation represented a "sad" day for the city but also one of hope.

"The fact is the river is not yet dead, citizens can speak out and make a difference, and we must do that," said Gary Wockner, spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition, which nominated the river for inclusion on the list.

A draft environmental impact statement, or EIS, on the project is expected to be released April 30 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A public comment period of at least 90 days will follow.

The Corps will then decide whether to issue a permit for the reservoir.

Wockner urged the public to get involved in the EIS process.

In a telephone interview, a spokesman for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which has proposed the project, said Glade Reservoir would not damage the river as critics claim.

Minimum stream flows would be maintained through Fort Collins, Brian Werner said.

Glade is part of the Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP, which would store 40,000 acre feet of water for use by 15 communities and water district participating in the project.

An acre foot of water is enough to meet the needs of two urban families for a year.

Water would be taken from the river near the mouth of Poudre Canyon through an existing diversion structure.

The communities with shares in NISP already have conservation programs, he said.

"They talk about the need for 21st-century solutions for water," Werner said. "A true 21st-century solution is a combination of conservation and water storage."

American Rivers solicits nominations for its annual most-endangered rivers list, said Amy Kobler, communications director. A technical advisory team reviews 50 to 100 nominations each year.

The goal is to draw national attention to rivers that are threatened by specific issues or projects, she said, not to list rivers that are in the worst environmental shape.

This is the first time the river has made the list.

Criteria for receiving a designation are facing an imminent threat, having an upcoming "decision point" when the public can have a say on the outcome of an issue and being a significant river.
