

Northern Colorado BUSINESS REPORT

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Reservoir environmental impact statement released

By Staff

FORT COLLINS -- The proposed Glade Reservoir project could divert anywhere from 26 percent of Poudre River flow in August of dry years to 71 percent in May of average years, according to a long-awaited report.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Wednesday released a draft environmental impact statement on a proposed water storage project that would divert water from the Poudre River northwest of Fort Collins to fill a 170,000-acre-foot storage and supply reservoir.

The report, available for public review on the Corps Web site at <https://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/html/od-tl/eis-info.htm>, details the effects of diverting river flows in high water months to fill and maintain the proposed Glade Reservoir, which would be constructed just outside of Poudre Canyon if the project is ultimately approved.

Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District's Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP, would also include a second reservoir northeast of Greeley that would draw water from the South Platte River. Galeton Reservoir, if built, would hold about 40,000 acre-feet of water. Together, the two reservoirs would annually provide 40,000 acre-feet of water to 15 Front Range cities and water providers who are funding the proposed \$400-million-plus project.

The water district claims the project would not significantly impact the aesthetics of the Poudre River as it flows through Fort Collins nor reduce river flows within Poudre Canyon. The district also claims the project will add about \$17 million annually to the region in recreational use of Glade Reservoir and will prevent dry-up of agricultural land otherwise needed to enable future growth.

"It's very important that everyone understands the consequences if this project is not built," said Eric Wilkinson, water district general manager. "We can't operate under the false assumption that if we don't build NISP, the region will not change. If NISP isn't built, a lot more farmland will be dried up, which has significant environmental and economic impacts. And if we do not build NISP, that certainly does not mean someone else won't take the Poudre River water."

Gary Wockner, a spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition, said nothing he's seen in the EIS changes the opposition that has been expressed by the coalition.

"We've just done a cursory review because it's such a long document, but it causes us to say we see nothing there that changes our minds," he said. "It will be very bad for the Poudre River and our goal is to stop the project."

Wockner said the proposed project would further drain an already degraded Poudre River, threaten the Fort Collins downtown economy and future plans for development along the river and "bathe in debt" the communities who have signed up for the project.

The NISP project has been planned since 2000 to help meet the water needs of growing northern Front Range communities.

A 90-day public comment period that ends July 29 has begun on the project with the release of the draft EIS. Larimer County released a statement on April 29 listing its process for reviewing the

report prior to issuing formal comments to the Army Corps of Engineers, which will ultimately decide if a permit is issued for the project.

The county's information gathering process is described on its Web site at http://www.larimer.org/list_calendar.cfm.

Copies of the draft EIS are available for public review at the following locations:

- Colorado State University's Morgan Library
- Fort Collins Library, 201 Peterson St.
- Fort Collins Library, Front Range Community College Larimer Campus, 4616 S. Shields St.
- University of Northern Colorado's James Michener Library
- Greeley city manager's office, 1000 10th St.
- Windsor Recreation Center, 250 11th St.
- Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District office, 220 Water Ave., Berthoud
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Denver Regulatory Office, 9307 S. Wadsworth Blvd., Littleton.

Public hearings have also been set for June 17 at the Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive, at 6 p.m. and on June 19 at UNC's University Center, 2045 10th Ave. at 7 p.m.