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Water Conservancy District Waiting for NISP Permit

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By Sandy Barnes Berthoud Recorder

A controversial water project designed to bring 40,000 acre-feet of water to 11 Front Range cities and towns and four regional water districts in the coming years can't begin without a federal permit.

And while the Army Corps of Engineers has not delayed the Northern Integrated Supply Project for further environmental impact study, the necessary permit for it may not be granted until early to mid-2009, said Brian Werner of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. "There have been some delays," Werner said, which he described as "part of the process."

"NISP is the answer" to ensuring future water needs, states the water conservancy's online information about it. Citing growth projections of 2 million people in Northern Colorado by the year 2030, the Northern Water Web site justifies NISP and other projects as necessary to meet anticipated demands.

However, the \$426 million project that will create the Glade Reservoir northwest of Fort Collins and the Galeton Reservoir northeast of Greeley is facing not only a permit delay but also strong criticism from environmental groups and recently the City of Fort Collins Council, which passed a recent resolution objecting to it.

Critics of the NISP projects, including the Save the Poudre group and the Poudre Canyon chapter of Sierra Club, say that the Glade Reservoir will have a negative impact on the Cache la Poudre River and water quality in the Horsetooth Reservoir.

"I guarantee Northern Water has no intention of doing anything that would adversely impact the quality of water in the Horsetooth Reservoir," said Northern water General Manager Eric Wilkinson in response to criticism of NISP.

Fort Collins officials also stated in their resolution that NISP will increase water costs for residents because the project will make it necessary for the city to take extra measures in treating its drinking and waste water. However, Wilkinson has said that NISP participants, rather than the City of Fort Collins, would pick up the costs as part of the permit conditions.

Fort Collins is one of 11 cities and towns listed as participants in the NISP. Windsor, Erie, Evans, Fort Lupton, Fort Morgan, Eaton, Lafayette, Severance and the Carbon Valley towns of Frederick, Firestone and Dacono also have allocations in NISP along with four water regional districts, including Central Weld near Berthoud.

Werner said that the Town of Berthoud originally was going to be a NISP participant, but decided against it because of financial considerations. Even though NISP would not directly affect Berthoud, Werner said that regional water issues should be a concern for everyone in the region.

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