

# Northern Colorado Water Providers Survey

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## Survey of Northern Colorado Residents on Water Issues Analysis of August 2008 Survey of Northern Colorado Voters

The following analysis reflects the results of two surveys conducted in Larimer and Weld counties in August 2008. The surveys were sponsored by a consortium of water providers proposing the Northern Integrated Supply Project.

- Most residents are satisfied with Larimer's and Weld's direction. But about one-half are concerned about growth.
  - 53% growth too fast – Larimer; 40% about right
  - 49% growth too fast – Weld; 42% about right
- Local government is favorably thought of among local residents.
  - Larimer and Weld county governments are highly rated, with more than 5 to 1 positive to negative ratio
  - More than one-third are not familiar with Northern Water, but it has a positive ratio
  - More than one-half don't know the Corps of Engineers
  - Greeley and Fort Collins have positive ratios, but higher negatives
- Most residents believe the drought continues, water shortages threaten area and more storage is needed.
  - Still in drought: 70% Larimer; 73% Weld
  - Water shortage in 10 years: 65% Larimer; 71% Weld
  - Need more storage: 65% Larimer; 75% Weld
- Top water issues in open-ended question: water conservation, water shortage and water for agriculture.
  - Water conservation: 22% Larimer; 14% Weld
  - Water shortage: 20% Larimer; 17% Weld
  - Water for agriculture: 3% Larimer; 24% Weld
- Most residents believe the cost of water is about right and service and quality are excellent or good.
  - Home water service excellent or good: 85% Larimer; 72% Weld
  - Weld residents are somewhat more concerned about cost, service and quality

- NISP has considerable public awareness (“great deal”/“some information”) and support among residents (“strongly” and “somewhat” favor).
  - 52% awareness – Larimer; 63% favor the project; 24% oppose
  - 28% awareness – Weld; 81% favor the project; 8% oppose
- Need for water and storage are top reasons for support of NISP, with growth a factor. Opposition concerned about impact on Poudre River, the environment, the necessity and the plan.
- Residents use Poudre River for recreation and relaxation. About two-fifths will use Glade Reservoir.
  - 73% picnic Poudre River – Larimer; 53% Weld
  - 33% raft Poudre River Canyon – Larimer
  - 39% will use Glade Reservoir – Larimer; 41% Weld
- NISP major policy themes highlighted. Significant agreement with:
  - Protecting agriculture, farm economy and open space
  - Cooperation on water issues among communities
  - Protecting northern Colorado water for local purposes
  - Water management aspects of Poudre River and Big Thompson
  - Water management, drought protection and recreation aspects of Glade Reservoir
  - Less agreement and less firm opinion about Poudre River flows
- When offered choice, public prefer:
  - Sustain agriculture and keep water: 84% Larimer; 89% Weld
  - Conservation not enough; need storage: 73% Larimer; 87% Weld
  - NISP will not dry up Poudre: 49% Larimer; 50% Weld
- Water supply policy main themes cited. Significant support for development of:
  - Conservation/reuse programs: 93% Larimer; 94% Weld
  - Storage for agriculture: 87% Larimer; 94% Weld
  - Storage to keep water in area and for shortage and drought: 87% Larimer; 95% Weld
  - Supply for residential growth: 77% Larimer; 86% Weld
- Public has formed opinions on water policy, but:
  - One-third not aware of Colorado-Big Thompson water contribution to Poudre River flows: 35% Larimer; 40% Weld
  - There is confusion on location of wild and scenic designation among Larimer residents
- About one-fifth of residents are active in environmental movement, and about one-half are sympathetic.

- About one-half of residents in both counties have significantly or somewhat reduced their water usage last two years.
  - Drought, correct behavior and lowering the bill was main motivation
  - One-third believe there should be more conservation action from water providers. Two-fifths believe local conservation action is sufficient.
  - Public supports public education, variable rates, water regulations and lawn limits for conservation. They are more cautious on tap fee increases.
  
- Research design.
  - Conducted by: Ciruli Associates
  - Sample: Random samples of active Larimer and Weld counties' registered voters
  - Sample size: Larimer: 500, Weld: 300.
  - Margin of Error: Larimer:  $\pm 4.4$  percentage points, Weld:  $\pm 5.7$  percentage points
  - Date in Field: Larimer: August 8-11, 2008; Weld: August 11-14, 2008