

Fort Collins Coloradoan

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Fort Collins still has Glade concerns

By Kevin Duggan

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The potential impacts of Glade Reservoir on Fort Collins' drinking water supply might not be as significant as once feared, city officials say.

But the proposed reservoir, which would draw water from the Poudre River as part of the controversial Northern Integrated Supply Project, still raises many concerns that Fort Collins officials say must be addressed through an extended federal environmental review of the project.

A recent study issued by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which has proposed NISP, contained illuminating data about the project, said John Stokes, director of Natural Resources. But it didn't provide enough information to alleviate all of the concerns raised by the city's analysis of the project.

Fort Collins officials are "pleased" the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has decided to pursue a supplemental draft Environmental Impact Statement for NISP based on issues raised by the city, as well as entities such as the city of Greeley and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"I think it's a testament to the work we did before and the work of others that the Army Corps decided to go ahead," Stokes said.

The study responding to the city's issues was done for Northern Water by the engineering firm Black & Veatch, or B&V.

Worries cited by the city included whether bringing water from Glade to Horsetooth Reservoir would affect the quality of water in Horsetooth by raising the level of total organic carbon, or TOC, in the reservoir.

With Glade drawing on the Poudre during spring runoff, the amount of debris in the water is likely to be higher than what's typically found in Horsetooth and would force the city to ramp up its treatment practices.

The B&V study claims much less water would be transferred from Glade to Horsetooth than the city had assumed in its studies of the project and TOC levels would be significantly lower.

The city didn't have detailed data when preparing its comments on NISP, Stokes said. And it's still looking for answers to some of its questions about how water transfers would be handled.

(2 of 2)

"We're glad that B&V and Northern have brought to the table some new operational details and some new information to help alleviate our concerns at some level, but we continue to believe that there are a number of issues related to drinking water quality and TOC in particular that need examination," he said.

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Northern Water spokes-man Brian Werner said the agency is looking forward to working through details of NISP with city staff.

"We're pleased that they are pleased" about the supplemental EIS process for the project, Werner said.

"We're going to do all we can to alleviate the city's concerns," he said. "We want to get to the bottom of their issues and make them as comfortable as possible with this project."

The process will be helped by a requirement of the supplemental EIS for the project that a "common technical platform" be used in evaluating proposed water projects that would affect the Poudre River, including the city's proposal to expand Halligan Reservoir, Werner said.

Everyone studying NISP and other projects will be using the same data and assumptions when drawing their conclusions, he said.

Other issues raised by Fort Collins on NISP include the affect the project would have on a plume of chemical contamination from a former missile silo near the mouth of Poudre Canyon and whether reduced flows on the river would force the city to make expensive upgrades to its wastewater-treatment facilities.

The B&V study claims the city's concerns about both issues are overstated. But, the information provided through the study and technical documents in the draft EIS do not answer all of Fort Collins' concerns, said Kevin Gertig, water resources and treatment operations manager for the city.

"We still need more specifics on the operational plan," Gertig said. "We're saying show us the data because right now there are gaps in the data."

The supplemental environmental study of NISP is expected to be completed in summer 2010, Werner said. If NISP is permitted by the Corps, construction on the \$426 million project could start by 2013.