

Commissioners urge approval of water project

By Bill Jackson, *The Greeley Tribune*, June 5, 2008

The Weld County commissioners have unanimously lent their support of the Northern Integrated Supply Project, which would supply an additional 40,000 acre-feet of water to northern Colorado.

Commissioners signed the a resolution of support on Wednesday.

The environmental impact statement on the project was released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers April 30 and public hearings on the project are scheduled June 16-17 in Fort Collins and June 19 at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. Written comments also may be sent to the corps by July 30.

Commissioner Rob Masden called the project, commonly known as NISP, a "real win-win for Weld County" and said it will prevent the dry-up of a minimum of 45,000-60,000 acres of agricultural land in Weld and Larimer counties.

NISP includes the Glade Reservoir, northwest of Fort Collins, which would store 170,000 acre-feet of water and the Galeton Reservoir, east of Ault, which would hold 40,000 acre-feet of water. The project is forecast to yield 40,000 acre-feet of water annually. An acre-foot is enough water to supply two families with a year's supply of water.

The proposed project, however, has meet opposition from some groups -- such as Save the Poudre -- that say it would effectively kill one of Colorado's last free-flowing rivers and the state's only federally protected Wild and Scenic river.

Officials from the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which is administering the project on behalf of 13 northern Colorado municipalities and water districts and two irrigation companies, said the entire project relies on the cooperation between those entities and agriculture.

The commissioners, in their resolution urging the Army Corps of Engineers to issue a positive record of decision on the project, said the proposed Glade Reservoir would divert about 10 percent of the Poudre River flow of about 300,000 acre-feet, which are all under the requirement of maintaining in-stream flows through Laporte and Fort Collins.

Commissioners further stated they are convinced the NISP participants have, "through their study of all reasonable alternatives, put forth the best alternative for water supply for their citizens." In addition, the project, the commissioners said, will not "adversely affect the recreational needs of Weld County citizens in their use of the Cache la Poudre Trail," as it passes through Weld, Windsor and Greeley.

"And that doesn't include return flow the area will get from this project," Masden said. Conservatively, he said, it has been estimated there may be an additional 16,000 acre-feet of water available to agriculture once municipalities get first use on the water coming from Glade Reservoir.

"That will go a long way toward preserving agriculture," he said.

Have your say

Public hearings on the Northern Integrated Supply Project hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are scheduled for 6 p.m. June 16 at the Fort Collins Hilton, 425 W. Prospect Road, at 6 p.m. June 17 at the Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive in Fort Collins, and at 7 p.m. June 19 at the University of Northern Colorado University Center, 2045 10th Ave., Greeley.