

Front Range needs more water storage

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When a study of Colorado's future water needs was released four years ago, Greeley's water and sewer chairman said to the Colorado Water Conservation Board: "Folks, we need to build buckets. That's what got us through the drought — storage."

That statewide study — released just two years after a drought that forced many communities to adopt strict water-conservation measures — said that in 2030, the state will be able to meet about 80 percent of its municipal and industrial water needs. Even if all the planned storage projects then in the pipeline ultimately were built, Colorado could have to dry almost half a million acres of farmland to cover urban water use, the report said. That's if all the reservoirs were built, including the Northern Integrated Supply Project's two storage projects: Glade Reservoir, northwest of Fort Collins, and Galeton Reservoir, northeast of Greeley.

That's why the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must give the project the green light.

The \$405 million Northern Integrated Supply Project ensures 15 water providers — including the three Carbon Valley communities, Lafayette, Erie, Fort Lupton, Windsor and Severance — that they will have both water storage and a total of 40,000 acre-feet of water to use each year (or enough water for about 400,000 people per year).

Opponents of NISP are concerned about the environmental impacts of the project, including how changing streamflows through Fort Collins will harm the Poudre River.

Two public hearings are being held in Fort Collins and one in Greeley this month for residents to share such concerns: 6 p.m. to midnight June 16 at the Fort Collins Hilton, 420 W. Prospect Road; 6 p.m. to midnight June 17 at the Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive; and 7 p.m. to midnight June 19 at the UNC Student Center, 2045 10th Ave. in Greeley.

So residents can learn more about the environmental impacts, the federal government should split the draft study issued in late April into separate downloadable chapters on its Web site (<https://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/html/od-tl/eis-info.htm>), so people who want to know more about the specifics of the project can access the information. At 702 pages, the report is too big to download easily, even with a fast Internet connection.

The federal government also should consider extending the deadline to receive comments from concerned residents beyond the 90 days allotted after the release of the draft report.

The Army Corps of Engineers needs to listen to and address issues raised by concerned residents before it issues the go-ahead to the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District to start construction.