

Water experts' analyses on Glade Reservoir differ

By Pamela Dickman

The battle over whether a new reservoir should be built northwest of Fort Collins could be called a battle of the experts.

The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, the agency that has applied to build Glade Reservoir for 15 towns and water districts, released findings Wednesday of a commissioned study that directly contradict claims of the city of Fort Collins and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The experts behind each analysis are saying different things; ultimately, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will decide if Northern Water can build Glade Reservoir and pull water from the Cache la Poudre River.

The participants in the Northern Integrated Supply Project, the effort to build Glade Reservoir and another reservoir in Weld County, paid engineering firm Black and Veatch \$50,000 to study water quality and treatment concerns raised by Fort Collins and the EPA.

The district chose that engineering firm because of its past experience with water quality and its familiarity with Fort Collins.

"They're one of the top two or three in the country," said Brian Werner, spokesman for Northern Water. "And they're familiar with the Poudre and its issues."

The study addresses three topics:

• **Would the water project increase organic carbon levels in Horsetooth Reservoir?**

The city says yes: The project would degrade the water so much it would affect quality for residents and businesses. To counteract this, Fort Collins says in its

report, the city would have to spend \$90 million on improvements plus \$3 million in operating costs each year.

Black and Veatch says no: Any increase in organic carbon levels would be so small it could be treated by current facilities.

• **Would the project cause lower water flows in the Poudre River, thereby forcing the city to spend millions to upgrade its wastewater treatment plant?**

Again, the city says yes: The plan to reduce the flow of the river by 25 percent to 71 percent at times would — in addition to affecting fishing, boating and wildlife — reduce the amount of water to dilute wastewater. That means city taxpayers would have to upgrade treatment facilities to the tune of \$75 million to \$125 million.

Black and Veatch disagrees: The city's requirements for being able to treat wastewater are based on set low flows within the river. Northern Water has agreed to always maintain water levels that are above that threshold.

• **Would an abandoned missile site near the proposed reservoir contaminate the water?**

Black and Veatch says no: The company reports that any trichloroethene, the chemical of concern, would be so diluted by the amount of water held in the forebay that it would be virtually "undetectable." In fact, it would be one-one-hundredth of the level considered to be a contaminant. But, if deemed necessary, a drain system to treat the water could be built.

The city of Fort Collins claims: The "cancer-causing solvent" could get into and contaminate the water and spread into the river. "It could result in significant human and wildlife exposure to this hazardous chemical for which the EPA has set a preferred exposure level of zero."