

Northern Colorado Business Report

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NISP study contradicts Fort Collins' claims

By Northern Colorado Business Report Staff

BERTHOUD - The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District has released a study that contradicts conclusions reached by the city of Fort Collins and the Environmental Protection Agency regarding the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project.

The city, in its comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on a draft Environmental Impact Statement on NISP -- which includes a proposed Glade Reservoir near the mouth of Poudre Canyon northwest of Fort Collins -- said the project might cost the city hundreds of millions of dollars in water treatment improvements.

The study by engineering firm Black & Veatch concluded that water quality and treatment issues raised by the city and the EPA "are not significant and can be easily addressed."

Black & Veatch looked at three issues raised by the city and EPA:

- That NISP would increase total organic carbon levels in Horsetooth Reservoir that would require the city to invest \$50 million to \$90 million in new infrastructure and increase operational costs to treat water by \$3 million annually. The study concluded that any increase in TOC in the reservoir would be "very small" and the suggested infrastructure improvements would not be required.

- That NISP would cause lower flows in the Poudre River that would require the city to spend \$75 million to \$125 million in upgrades to its

wastewater treatment plants. The study concludes that NISP will have "no impact" on existing or future infrastructure or operating requirements for the city's wastewater plants.

- That contaminated groundwater near the proposed Glade Reservoir could possibly co-mingle with Glade water and be delivered to Horsetooth Reservoir or the Poudre River. The study concludes that the concentration of trichloroethylene in the groundwater is so low that "even without any collection and treatment system, the TCE levels in either Glade or Horsetooth reservoirs would be undetectable."

Eric Wilkinson, general manager of the water district, said the study affirms the district's stance that the NISP project is needed and will not cause water treatment and water quality problems.

"After several years of study and \$5.5 million spent on the EIS process to date, it is the NISP participants' hope that the Corps will be able to finalize the EIS and issue its permit for the project as soon as possible," he said. "The (15) NISP participants are fully committed to assuring that NISP is a carefully designed and environmentally sensitive project."

The Army Corps of Engineers is currently reviewing comments to the draft EIS. The district is hoping to address all of the Corps' concerns and begin construction of NISP in 2010.

Copies of the Black & Veatch study summaries and other related information is available on the NISP Web site at www.gladereservoir.org/ on the Water Quality Information page.