



# NISP NEWS

A Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District publication

## The South Platte Water Conservation Project A partnership with agriculture

**C**olorado currently loses an average of 690 acres of farmland per day. Each year, a greater percentage of this loss is due to “buy and dry,” when a water provider purchases and permanently transfers water from irrigated farmland. The State of Colorado predicts that, unless other water is made available, the South Platte Basin could lose up to 225,000 acres of farmland to water transfers in the next 25 years. This will impact Colorado’s economy and the standard of living in many northeastern Colorado communities.



some of this water to the NISP partners, who will place it into Glade Reservoir. The water will then be diverted upstream from the farmers’ historic diversion points. In exchange for placing water into Glade Reservoir, the farmers will receive an equivalent amount of water from the South Platte River via Galeton Reservoir. By exchanging their historic Poudre River diversions for water from Galeton Reservoir, farmers

will help fill Glade Reservoir with high-quality water.

Farmers will be compensated for their willingness to partner with NISP. Incentives may include financial compensation, ditch and canal

upgrades, and assistance replacing aging infrastructure. Northern Water will also monitor water quality to ensure the farmers receive water of adequate quality for their crops.

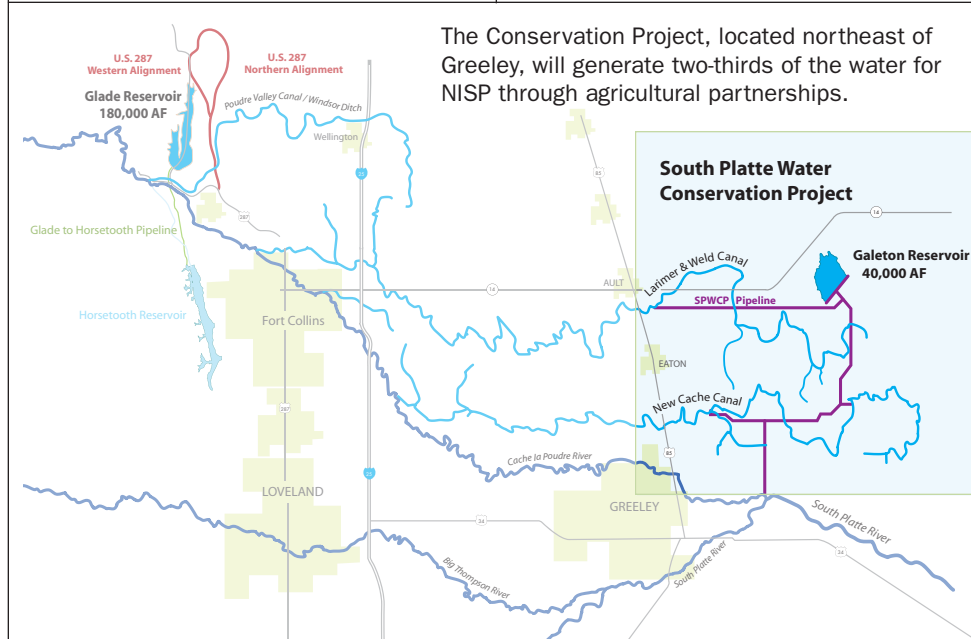
### NEW NISP VIDEO

The 16 partners building NISP recently released a short video that tells the story of the Northern Integrated Supply Project. Prominent Northern Colorado figures, ranging from former Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture Don Ament to elected officials from Eaton and Fort Morgan, reflect upon what the project means for the future of water in Northern Colorado. The video, filmed and produced by Treeline Productions in Fort Collins, is available on Northern Water’s website ([www.ncwcd.org](http://www.ncwcd.org)) or by calling 970-532-7700.

The Northern Integrated Supply Project, through the South Platte Water Conservation Project, will reduce the amount of water transferred from agriculture in Northern Colorado without limiting farmers’ rights to sell their water. NISP will allow many residents of Larimer, Weld, Morgan and Boulder counties to receive some of their water from partnerships with agriculture. It will do this by combining traditional water supply infrastructure, such as reservoirs, with innovative agricultural water-sharing agreements.

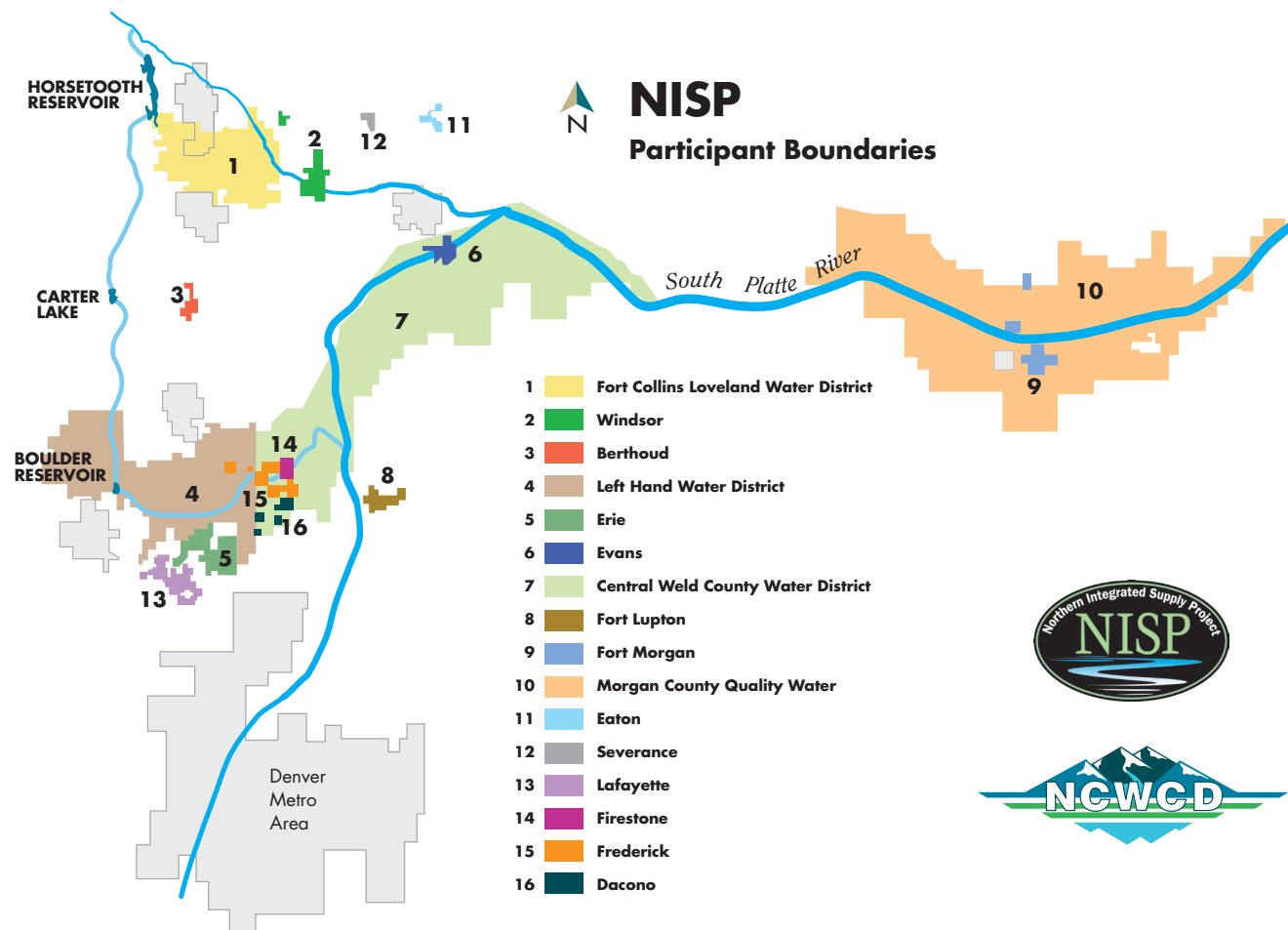
The Conservation Project portion of NISP will generate almost two-thirds of the project’s ultimate yield of 40,000 acre feet. The facilities include Galeton Reservoir, east of Ault, and more than 30 miles of pipeline to deliver water to local farmers.

Farmers in this area have used Poudre River water to grow crops for more than a century. They will voluntarily provide



The Conservation Project, located northeast of Greeley, will generate two-thirds of the water for NISP through agricultural partnerships.

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## NISP and the environment

**NISP is an example of how water projects can evolve to meet future water needs in an environmentally sensible manner.**

Twenty-five years ago, plans for the Poudre Project included a large dam on the Poudre River within the canyon. Today, the proposal involves an off-stream reservoir coupled with innovative agricultural partnerships that will provide 40,000 acre feet of new water supplies to Northern Colorado.

The Poudre River is an important asset to Northern Colorado. It is Colorado's first congressionally designated Wild and Scenic River. This designation protects more than 90 percent of the Poudre's mainstem above the canyon mouth from new development. At the same time, its historic contribution to our economy is celebrated through a National Water Heritage Area designation. The Poudre River also provides significant social and economic benefits to the region.

NISP includes several features that will protect the Poudre River and other parts of the environment:

- **Glade Reservoir is located off-stream on land primarily owned by Northern Water. There will be no new dam on the Poudre. In addition, water will enter the reservoir through an existing diversion structure and canal.**



The Poudre River through Fort Collins provides scenic, recreational and economic benefits to area residents.

- **NISP will not cause the Poudre River to go dry. NISP is committed to meeting three in-stream flow requirements through LaPorte and Fort Collins. The project will not take water from the river when those flows are not met.**

- **Two-thirds of the water to be stored in Glade Reservoir comes from exchanges with century-old river diversions. The majority of water needed to fill Glade Reservoir will come from water that's already being diverted from the Poudre.**



The proposed Glade Reservoir site will provide 40,000 acre feet of needed water supplies to Northern Colorado, while minimizing impacts to the environment. This photograph shows the Glade Reservoir site looking to the south, towards Horsetooth Reservoir.

- **NISP will not divert new water from the Poudre every year. Modeling indicates that NISP's right to divert unappropriated water from the Poudre River to fill Glade Reservoir will be in priority approximately four out of every 10 years.**

- **Glade Reservoir will divert only about 10% of the Poudre's annual flow of 300,000 acre feet. Of this, 5% is new water diverted from the river, while the other 5% is from agricultural partnerships.**

- **Without NISP, the 16 partners will likely build**



**separate projects and dry up 25,000 acres of agricultural land to meet their needs through 2050. By building NISP, they are pooling their resources and creating economies of scale.**

Northern Water is committed to working with area stakeholders to maximize NISP's environmental benefits. Northern Water is exploring ways to improve the river through riparian corridor enhancements, channel improvements, and the creation of better fish habitat. In addition, Northern Water is working with local water users to increase the river's flow through Fort Collins by moving existing diversion structures downstream of the city's downtown area.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Environmental Impact Statement, due out this fall, will explore other ways that the project can benefit the river. Input from numerous state and federal agencies, combined with public comment, will result in a project that plans for the region's future in a cost-effective manner while also protecting natural resources.

## Frequently asked questions

**Q. Can more stringent water conservation measures eliminate the need for NISP?**

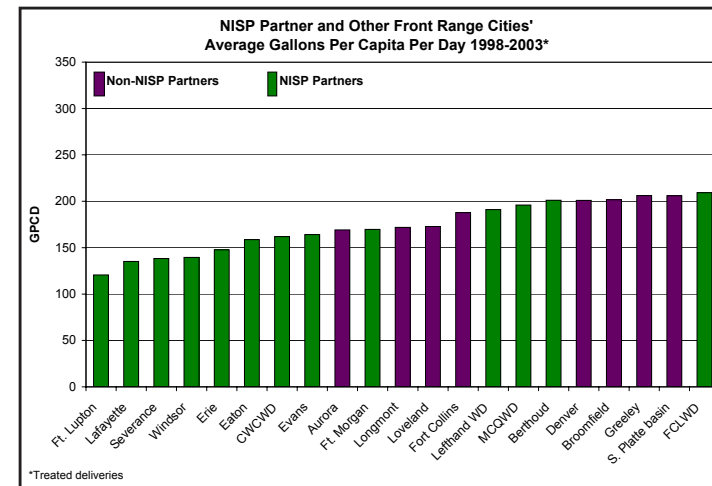
**A.** Improved water conservation is important, but it cannot eliminate the need for NISP. Water conservation measures already in place have reduced many Northern Colorado cities' water use by one-third since 1991. This trend is likely to continue. But conservation is not the sole solution to growing water demand. Water needs of the NISP partners will nearly triple by 2030, and many face shortages as soon as 2010. Additional water conservation measures can and will be implemented, but

Northern Water participates in training and certifying landscape professionals, while educating and providing assistance to numerous municipalities. Hands-on Xeriscape demonstrations are a staple of the program. The Conservation Gardens at Northern Water contain 2.5 acres of model landscapes, irrigation best management practices and native turf study plots.

**Q. Is NISP an affordable option for the 16 water providers?**

**A.** NISP is an affordable option, making participation a simple decision for many of the 16 partners. With water demands exceeding supplies as soon as 2010, a collaborative project to ensure adequate future water supplies was desperately needed. NISP will provide this for less money than what many communities in Colorado currently pay for water.

In most cases, growth already adopted in master plans will pay for the project. A mixture of cash, bonds and low-interest loans will finance the project, which is estimated at \$400 million, or \$10,000 per acre foot of water. An equivalent amount of Colorado-Big Thompson water is \$12,500 per acre



conservation savings alone are not enough to meet the needs of these growing Northern Colorado communities.

The water providers relying on NISP currently save millions of gallons of water through conservation programs. The average per-capita consumption of the NISP partners is well below that of many Front Range cities, as well as the South Platte Basin as a whole. Conservation practices they utilize include metering, increasing block rate structures, education programs, leak detection and repair, irrigation audits, and watering restrictions.

Urban landscapes account for approximately half the water used in cities. Through its Landscape Water Management and Conservation Program, Northern Water is at the forefront of water conservation efforts.

Communities in the Denver metropolitan area are paying significantly more for new water supplies.

In addition, NISP water will be an asset that will increase in value over time. The NISP partners have seen the price of C-BT water supplies increase from \$1.50 to \$12,500 an acre foot in the last 50 years. This trend will continue, causing water providers that buy water on an "as needed" basis to pay more for future supplies. It would also result in larger environmental impacts as the water providers could dry up 25,000 acres of prime agricultural lands to meet future needs.

**Q. What impact will Glade Reservoir have on area recreation?**

**A.** Glade Reservoir, just like Horsetooth or Carter Lake reservoirs, will be an



amenity to Northern Colorado. While the specifics are yet to be defined, Glade will offer myriad recreational opportunities, from fishing to boating to hiking on nearby lands. Glade is a municipal water supply reservoir and will therefore fill and empty over a period of years. The water level in Glade will fluctuate less than neighboring Horsetooth Reservoir. Details on recreation at Glade will be worked out with management agencies after the project is permitted.

The vast majority of recreation on the Poudre River occurs within Poudre Canyon. NISP will not impact rafting, kayaking and other recreation in Poudre Canyon. Northern Water's plans have evolved significantly since the 1980s, when a dam on the Poudre River was first proposed. NISP may actually improve flows through Poudre Canyon by allowing for the trading of water with high mountain reservoirs.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Northern Water conducts extensive public education and outreach programs. If you have questions about NISP or would like a presentation, contact Nicole Seltzer, Public Affairs Coordinator, at 970-622-2277, or [nseltzer@ncwcd.org](mailto:nseltzer@ncwcd.org).

Visit: <https://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/html/od-tl/eis-info.htm> for information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' permitting process.

For general NISP information, to download previous copies of NISPNews, or to view project maps, visit Northern Water's website at [www.ncwcd.org](http://www.ncwcd.org) and click on the NISP button. For additional information on Northern Water's conservation programs, visit [www.ncwcd.org/ncwcd\\_about/water.asp](http://www.ncwcd.org/ncwcd_about/water.asp)