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WATERNEWS

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New NISP Studies Answer Water Quality Issues Raised by Fort Collins and EPA *Judged Not Significant and Easily Addressed*

A newly released study by nationally known engineering firm Black & Veatch concludes that water quality and treatment issues raised by the City of Fort Collins and the Environmental Protection Agency are not significant and can be easily addressed.

Eric Wilkinson, general manager of the Northern Water District, said the 15 participants in the Northern Integrated Supply Project authorized the study to cooperate with and help expedite the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement process being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The study has been provided to the Corps, EPA, the Colorado Department of Health and Environment and other interested agencies.

The report examines each of the three issues raised by Fort Collins and the EPA, and draws much different conclusions.

Issue: NISP will increase total organic carbon levels in Horsetooth Reservoir, requiring Fort Collins to invest \$50 to \$90 million in infrastructure and increasing its operational costs to treat water by \$3 million annually.

Conclusion: Any increase in TOC concentrations in Horsetooth Reservoir caused by introducing Glade Reservoir water would be very small. Fort Collins' own research shows it can treat the concentration. Improvements of \$50 to \$90 million (as suggested by Fort Collins) would not be required, nor would the \$3 million in annual operating costs.

Issue: NISP will cause lower flows in the Poudre River requiring Fort Collins to spend \$75 to \$125 million in upgrades to its wastewater treatment plants based on less dilution capability of the river.

Conclusion: NISP will have no impact on existing or future infrastructure or operating requirements for the City's wastewater treatment operations.

Issue: Contaminated groundwater near the Glade Reservoir could possibly co-mingle with Glade water and be delivered to Horsetooth Reservoir or the Poudre River.

Conclusion: The concentration of Trichloroethylene (TCE) 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.

Wilkinson said, “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 offered, “The NISP participants are fully committed to assuring that NISP is a carefully designed and environmentally sensitive project. The participants represent more than 200,000 residents in Northern Colorado and believe that NISP is the best way for their communities to meet their future water needs.”
