

NISP: Storage needed to protect ag water

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Northern Integrated Supply Project continues to garner headlines in the region. I thought it would be helpful to have some insight from a community that will be a beneficiary of this vision of creating water storage by our growing community of Frederick.

NISP is an integral part of the long-term health of our community and the other participants involved. It is the most proactive partnership to be seen by the communities and water districts and will result in an ability to meet the long-term needs of our population both current and future.

NISP involves building a storage facility called Glade Reservoir north of Fort Collins and Galeton Reservoir northeast of Greeley. The efforts of the communities involved will protect the health and use of the agricultural waters being removed from farms across northeastern Colorado at an alarming rate.

Without this project, municipalities will look to drying up productive farmlands through the purchase of agricultural water rights. One only needs to look at what Thornton, Aurora and other metro communities have done over the last 20 years to understand the negative impact

such dryup of farmland causes. Thornton alone has purchased and will dry up more than 21,000 acres of productive farmland to satisfy its water needs.

By responsibly working together we are seeking to protect the rights of farmers to irrigate their lands in northeastern Colorado and the Weld County region. At the same time, by establishing NISP for future use by communities we ensure the ability to meet the municipal demand.

Growth will continue in the Front Range communities along the Interstate 25 corridor. We must be poised to meet those growing demands of primary employers and others who desire to have their workforce live, work and play in the community in which they establish their businesses.

The NISP participants are gathering support for this project from a varied group of individual and business leaders, as well as chambers of commerce and agricultural interests. To date, the participants have spent more than \$9 million to work through review and design processes, and it is now with the U.S. Corps of Engineers to review and indicate whether the project can move forward. Many political leaders from both parties are supporting this project.

Most of the largest communities along the North Front Range were foresighted many years ago to ensure their water portfolio and participated in projects similar to NISP. It is now time for Frederick, Erie, Firestone, Windsor, Dacono

and other communities to have that same shared vision and commitment to adequate and reliable water for future use.

The NISP effort is using existing water that otherwise flows to our neighboring state of Nebraska. Had we had the NISP project built two years ago, it would have been filling rapidly with the excellent snowpack from the last two years. Despite what some naysayers indicate, NISP enhances and enlivens the Poudre River and provides for better and more predictable flows through much of the river.

Opponents have said communities can conserve to provide additional water. Over the last 20 years the participating communities have instituted a variety of conservation rules and education to encourage different water usage. This has resulted in savings of 30 percent or more as communities have continued to grow. But this cannot be the only means of securing our water future. Conservation is one tool that is utilized, and the development of water storage projects is but another.

So please learn more about NISP if your community is a participant and help your elected leaders as they work to ensure long-term water security for the region by protecting the irrigated farmlands.

It truly is a win-win for everyone.