

# Conway: Drought Shows Need for NISP

Windsor Beacon

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*By Sean Conway, Weld County Commissioner*

The current drought throughout Northern Colorado has brought home a stark reality — we need more water storage and soon! Without it, our children's and grandchildren's future will be at risk.

Today in Northern Colorado, we enjoy tens of thousands of acres of irrigated farmland that puts food on our table, provides open space between our growing towns and has made Weld County one of the most productive agricultural counties in the United States. These benefits were made possible by those who preceded us.

In the 1930s, visionaries such as W.D. Farr and others led the effort to build the Big Thompson Water Project at the height of the Dust Bowl. This project today provides an invaluable supply of water to our farmers, ranchers and our growing Northern Colorado communities. This project has served us well, but we have been living on borrowed time.

Over the past 30 years, the population of Northern Colorado has more than doubled, yet no new significant water supply facility has been built. In addition, growing cities in the Denver metro-area are looking north to find the water supply their communities need, and they have their sights on thousands of acres of irrigated farmland in Northern Colorado. A recent environmental study done by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers showed that without a new significant water project, more than 100 square miles of currently irrigated productive farmland in Weld and Larimer County will be dried up forever. The result of this dry-up would be an environmental and economic disaster for Northern Colorado.

The agricultural economy annually in Weld County alone is a \$1.5 billion industry. An ag dollar turns over seven times, meaning an almost \$9 billion impact to the Colorado economy if we do nothing.

What can we do to save our valuable ag economy? Build NISP, the Northern Integrated Supply Project. NISP is a water storage project proposed by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. It is almost three decades in the making and involves building two reservoirs, one in Larimer County named Glade and the other in Weld County named Galeton.

The proposed Glade Reservoir location above Fort Collins is an off-stream facility that would draw water from the Poudre River during the high spring runoff. The project's location protects the Poudre River as a Wild and Scenic River and ensures a minimum stream flow in the Poudre for fishing, rafting and other recreational activities year-round.

The Galeton Reservoir, which will get its water through a pipeline from the South Platte River in Weld County, will allow delivery of water for agricultural use to two ditch companies. This part of the project is critical to the future of farmers and ranchers in Weld County.

If we are going to ensure that Northern Colorado remains one of the most agriculturally productive areas in the U.S., we must act. We need to stand up and support our farmers and ranchers by supporting more water storage.

You can help in this effort by attending a rally in support of NISP in Fort Lupton from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday at the Historic Fort Lupton, located west of U.S. Highway 85 and County Road 14½, also known as 14th Street in Fort Lupton.

Please come join Weld and Larimer County farmers and ranchers as they rally to send a message to our local, state and federal elected officials: we need NISP now!

Sean Conway is a Weld County commissioner.

[>NISP Rally in Fort Lupton July 24](#)