

NISP Reservoirs Would Have Lessened Flooding

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FORT COLLINS, Colo. – Flooding along the Cache La Poudre River damaged nearly two dozen homes and businesses in Greeley last week, and according to officials at the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, the Poudre River does not have any dams or reservoirs specifically for flood control. But there is an effort underway to change that.

The Poudre River is full of melted snow — so much so right now that levels are well above average in Larimer and Weld counties, spilling over banks, and flooding homes and businesses.

“We could fill a reservoir in a year like this,” Brian Werner with the Northern Colorado’s Water Conservancy District said.

He points out farmers’ irrigation dams inside the Poudre Canyon, but says water cannot be diverted to those to prevent flooding. He says there is no reservoir along the river because the idea was unpopular in the past.

“I think the general public is more aware when they see these flows and saying, ‘Boy, couldn’t we just store a little bit of that?’ Which is what this proposal does,” Werner said.

Northern Water wants to build two reservoirs off stream that could store water during high flow times. Planners estimate the project would cost \$500 million, including \$40 million to re-route Highway 287 to make room for Glade Reservoir, and build a smaller one north of Greeley.

But the federal approval process is moving slowly.

“We’ve been working on this in some form for over 20 years, taking some of the flood flows here on the Poudre and storing it,” Werner said.

They do expect to get some news on the status of studies being conducted on the project by the end of this year. It’s unlikely building would start before 2018.