

# NISP: Earliest Glade Reservoir could be built is 2019

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When the Northern Integrated Supply Project was first proposed, Northern Water hoped to have Glade Reservoir complete and filled by 2013.

Now as the permitting process has stretched over a decade, the earliest date that construction could begin is 2019, with water flowing in by 2021.

"In this process, we learned a long time ago that there is no set date of when it's going to be done," said Brian Werner, spokesman for Northern Water, which is spearheading the project on behalf of four water districts and 11 cities and towns.

## Northern Integrated Supply Project

- A water supply project coordinated by Northern Water that would divert water from the Poudre and South Platte Rivers in two new reservoirs, Glade and Galeton.
- The water would go to 15 participants: Dacono, Eaton, Erie, Evans, Firestone, Fort Lupton, Fort Morgan, Frederick, Lafayette, Severance, Windsor, Central Weld County Water District, Fort Collins-Loveland Water District, Left Hand Water District and Morgan County Quality Water.
- Glade Reservoir would be build north of Fort Collins and store 170,000 acre feet of water — a slightly higher capacity than Horsetooth Reservoir. The size area, however, would be 1,700 surface areas compared with 1,899 at Horsetooth.
- Galeton Reservoir would be located northeast of Greeley and east of Ault and hold 40,000 acre feet of water.
- Proponents say the project would pull water from the Poudre River only when there is an excess and would prevent water from escaping downstream in years of abundance.
- Opponents say the project would basically drain the Poudre River and hurt the tourism economy, habitat and recreational opportunities.
- More information on both sides is available at [northernwater.org/WaterProjects/NISP.aspx](http://northernwater.org/WaterProjects/NISP.aspx) and [savethepoudre.org](http://savethepoudre.org).

"The finish line keeps moving on us. It's taken longer than anybody anticipated."

## Will it happen?

Despite delays, Northern Water is convinced that NISP and its two reservoirs, Glade and Galeton, will be built and are the answer to a growing population's needs by storing water from the Poudre and South Platte rivers.

"Those 15 participants, their resolve is even stronger than ever," said Werner. "The more time that goes by, the more important it is to have that water supply."

However, an environmental group that opposes the project is just as convinced that construction will never begin and that participants are beginning to look to alternative options.

"It is our goal to make sure it never happens," said Gary Wockner, spokesman for Save the Poudre.

"There's significant concern (among participants) that the project will never get built. We are going to do everything we can to make sure it never gets built. What has changed has been increased uncertainty."

The Northern Integrated Supply Project is intended to provide additional water to the 15 Front Range providers by pulling excess water from the Poudre and South Platte rivers during plentiful years to fill two new reservoirs.

The water from the Poudre would be stored in a 5-mile-long reservoir northwest of Fort Collins. Glade Reservoir, which would be slightly larger in capacity than Horsetooth Reservoir, would hold 170,000 acre-feet of water and require relocation of seven miles of U.S. 287.

The second reservoir, Galeton, would hold 40,000 acre-feet northeast of Greeley and would be filled from the South Platte River downstream from Greeley. This water would be delivered to two irrigation companies in exchange for their Poudre River water.

Save the Poudre and other groups that oppose NISP say that science shows this project would drain the river to a mere trickle through Fort Collins, impacting habitat, wildlife, fishing, tubing, kayaking and trails that span the river corridor.

"It would impact the recreational experience for people in the community," said Wockner. "The city and the county have spent millions of dollars on trails and open space. They spent millions of dollars on recreation along what will be a muddy, stinking mess."

Northern Water says this scenario will never happen. With required minimum flows in the river, Werner has said the water would be pulled only in years when there is excess.

And as soon as a supplemental environmental impact statement is released, Northern Water will begin working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to mitigate any habitat or wildlife concerns, Werner said.

"Once the supplemental is out, we will start moving on some of these areas that have been stuck in molasses," Werner said.

### **What is the process?**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer is the lead federal agency on the permitting process for the proposed water project.

The first step of creating an environmental impact statement began more than a decade ago — in August 2004.

Four years later, the first draft EIS was opened to public comment. During that time, supporters and opponents rallied at several public hearings and community events.

The federal agency then announced in 2009 that a supplemental draft EIS was necessary to include additional studies.

The supplemental report was anticipated to be released this year but instead was pushed back to sometime in 2015. If that does indeed happen, a final decision could come in 2016. If it's approved, design would take place in 2017-2018, then construction in 2019.

Wockner said the delays prove that the federal agency is looking at the science, which he is confident will prove that the water project would destroy the Poudre River and its economy.

His group instead advocates for conservation, water recycling, growth management and water sharing with

farmers.

"Real science takes time," Wockner said. "We will continue to put real science on it."

Werner, however, said the science will show it is a good, solid project that would benefit the region, including farmers, and provide a solid water supply for growing communities.

"We need to figure out the water piece without drying up ag land," said Werner. "That is the easy way out, but we don't want that.

"We need a permanent supply."

### **How much does it cost?**

As the project timeline has stretched out over the years, the cost too has stretched.

Northern Water and the participating water providers are paying for the studies and costs associated with permitting. So far they have spent about \$14 million just for permitting, and Werner estimates that each additional year adds \$1 million to \$1.5 million to the tally.

Once a final decision is issued, and if that decision allows the project, construction is estimated at \$500 million. That, too, could change depending on the final design, the year it is built and the economy.

"We're at the mercy of the process and the federal government on this one," said Werner. "It's been an interesting ride."

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