

Fort Morgan well-represented at NISP rally

Fort Morgan Times

July 2, 2015

By Carl Jenni Grubbs

Fort Morgan officials, workers and residents travelled to Berthoud Thursday afternoon to represent the city at a rally in support of the Northern Integrated Supply Project.

As a NISP participant, Fort Morgan already has invested more than \$1 million toward the proposed massive water supply project. Now is the time for supporters to speak out and advocate for NISP, the rally attendees heard from U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner, U.S. Rep. Ken Buck, State Sen. Jerry Sonnenberg and others.

"If you look at the numbers ... the cities of Fort Collins, Fort Morgan, Greeley and others will see their water needs triple by the year 2050," Gardner said.

To that end, NISP is the water storage Fort Morgan is counting on, according to Fort Morgan Mayor Terry McAlister.

"If we don't have water 50 years from now, 100 years from now, we'll dwindle away," he said.

He encouraged Fort Morgan residents to actively show their support for NISP by attending and speaking at upcoming public hearings on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released June 19. The hearings will be held July 22 in Fort Collins and July 23 in Greeley.

"Fort Morgan residents definitely should go to the hearings," McAlister said. "It's been proven the Poudre's not going to be hurt. There should be no reason to stop it."

Yet, Northern Water expects to see strong opposition at the hearings from groups like Save the Poudre, so the water conservancy district is trying to drum up visible and vocal support from those in favor of NISP. The rally Thursday was part of that process.

Fort Morgan Water Resources Director Brent Nation said he was "very happy" with how Fort Morgan was represented at Thursday's rally.

Fort Morgan Water Advisory Board members Jack Odor and Bill Baker were among city officials who travelled to Berthoud Thursday, and Morgan County Quality Water District, another NISP participant, also was represented.

"It's going to allow our growth and maintaining the growth we have extending into 2050," MCQWD General Manager Kent Pflager said. "I would encourage any of our consumers to go to the meetings. Our consumers will benefit greatly from NISP."

If it gets built, NISP would "provide water for agriculture, people and protect our farms," Morgan County Commissioner Jim Zwetzig said. "This project's very important. The water is Colorado's. It would be nice to leave it here."

He pointed out that while Morgan County will use a small portion of the water in NISP, it would help meet a large portion of the county's overall water needs for many years.

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