

# Larimer approves outline for NISP agreement

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Larimer County and Northern Water plan to have an intergovernmental agreement about construction of Glade Reservoir in place before the federal government issues its decision on whether Northern Integrated Supply Project can be built.

The Larimer County commissioners voted 3-0 on Tuesday to approve a memorandum of understanding laying out the procedure for an intergovernmental agreement.

Northern Water already has approved the same document, which says that the two entities will have the basics in place within 60 days to start drafting an agreement, and the first draft of an intergovernmental agreement complete within another four months.

Northern Water is proposing building two water storage reservoirs to hold 42,000 acre-feet of water, primarily from the Poudre River, for use by 15 different towns cities and water districts.

The Northern Integrated Supply Project proposes pulling water from the river for storage during non-drought years, and proponents say it will help cities and towns, preserve farms and result in steady flows within the Poudre River.

Opponents disagree and argue that, no matter what, draining 42,000 acre-feet of water will dry up the Poudre River, a precious natural resource that affects recreation, the local economy and the quality of life.

The largest of the two storage reservoirs, Glade, would be located northwest of Fort Collins and would require moving a section of U.S. 287.

Because it is being built in Larimer County, the local elected board will work with Northern Water to address any potential county, including agreements on recreation, neighboring lands and the highway.

The smaller Galetton Reservoir is slated to be built in Weld County.

Before the reservoir can be built, Northern Water must complete a federal permitting process that includes an environmental assessment. That process has stretched out for more than a decade as more information and detailed evaluation has been requested along the way.

Currently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is in the process of writing a final environmental impact statement that will cover water quality and other environmental issues as well as proposed changes to the plan to include a pipeline. Northern Water proposed that change earlier this year as a way to guarantee minimum river flows at all times, according to the agency.

That final report is expected to be released in 2017, after which the federal agency will take public comment that will factor into the final decision on whether the project can be built and what mitigations Northern Water is required to make to address any environmental concerns.

Then, a final decision is expected sometime in 2018.

Before that, Larimer County and Northern Water should have an intergovernmental agreement. The process laid out in the memorandum of understanding approved Tuesday dictates that the final agreement should be approved in about 15 months.

That process also includes public comment along the way.

If NISP is approved, the soonest Glade could open would be 2024.

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