

# Location shift likely for proposed water storage reservoirs

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The Northern Integrated Supply Project has not yet received a decision on whether it will be permitted, let alone get built, but that has not stopped Northern Water from continuing to plan and react to changing conditions on the proposed sites of the massive water storage project.

Overall, NISP is a proposed water storage and distribution project that would supply 15 northern Front Range and Eastern Plains water partners with "40,000 acre feet of new, reliable water supplies" by building Glade Reservoir north of Fort Collins and Galeton Reservoir northeast of Greeley, according to the NISP website. Fort Morgan, Morgan County and Morgan County Quality Water District are among the 15 participants in NISP.

The latest change to plans for NISP would be potentially moving the location for Galeton Reservoir about two miles to the north and a little bit west of its previously planned site northeast of Greeley, according to Fort Morgan Water Resources/Utilities Director Brent Nation.

This would be due to all the oil wells that have sprung up recently on the site originally planned by Northern Water for Galeton, which would be the part of NISP that held Fort Morgan's 9 percent stake in the overall water storage project.

"We as participants have been well aware of the possibility of needing to move the Galeton Reservoir site," Nation said. "That's been in all of the applications, it's been in all of the engineering work. The original site that was selected for that is now, basically, it looks like a large oil field. There's well sites all over it."

But Northern Water (aka Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District) has found another possible site for Galeton, and it's not very far from the original plan, making much of the work done on studying and understanding the proposed location still useful, Nation said.

"As they were drilling more and more, it became obvious that they needed to maybe look into an alternative site," he said. "And so they're literally identifying a piece of ground that's two miles further north. It's in the same draw, it's got the same formation. None of the characteristics really change, other than a little bit of pipeline length to get the water there and (some pumping to) get the water out."

"We have found a site in the same vicinity as Galeton and believe it makes sense to make this move," stated Carl Brouwer, project management manager from Northern Water.

Northern Water is doing more studies on the proposed new location for Galeton, but the district's officials do not expect any problems with that site, according to information Nation provided to the Fort Morgan Times from both Brouwer and Northern Water General Manager Eric Wilkinson.

"We are doing 'due diligence' on Galeton North and have contacted parties that own land within the Galeton North Reservoir basin," stated Wilkinson. "We have not found a fatal flaw associated with Galeton North. ... The site will require two miles of additional pipeline, as it is further north, and (a) small amount of additional pumping. However, these additional costs appear to be more than offset by the additional costs associated with plugging and re-drilling the oil wells within the existing Galeton Reservoir footprint."

Parts of what would become plans the complicated Northern Integrated Storage Project have been in the works at Northern Water since the early 1990s. Fort Morgan's role in the water storage project has been in the works for around 12 years. And there likely are at least a dozen years left to go with NISP before it conceivably could go online and have water stored and pumped to Fort Morgan, according to information Nation presented to the Fort Morgan City Council last spring.

But that is not unusual for the process of getting such a large water storage project built, according to Nation and Northern Water officials.

"Developing a comprehensive and complicated water storage project is a challenge," Wilkinson stated. "It is not unusual for conditions to arise that could not have possibly been anticipated in the initial formulation of the South Platte Water Conservation Project (a component of NISP) when the initial water rights were filed in 1992 and additional water rights were filed in 1997. A lot of things change in 20 to 25 years, such as the advent of the oil and gas industry in Weld County."

Prior to this year, Fort Morgan had already contributed more than \$1 million toward getting NISP permitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and then built by Northern Water. In 2016, the city budgeted and approved spending \$315,000 more toward its 9 percent stake.

But city officials are aware of what having NISP get built would mean for Fort Morgan: enough water to give the city water security for the future and whatever residential, commercial and industrial growth may come.

Consequently, Nation is not too worried about the likely location change for Galeton.

"It's not a bad thing for the project," he said.

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