

# Oil wells may force Galeton Reservoir relocation

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Northern Water might change the location of a proposed reservoir northeast of Greeley because the site is home to about 24 active oil and gas wells, spokesman Brian Werner said Monday.

The wells, operated by Noble Energy, could lead to water contamination risk if left uncapped.

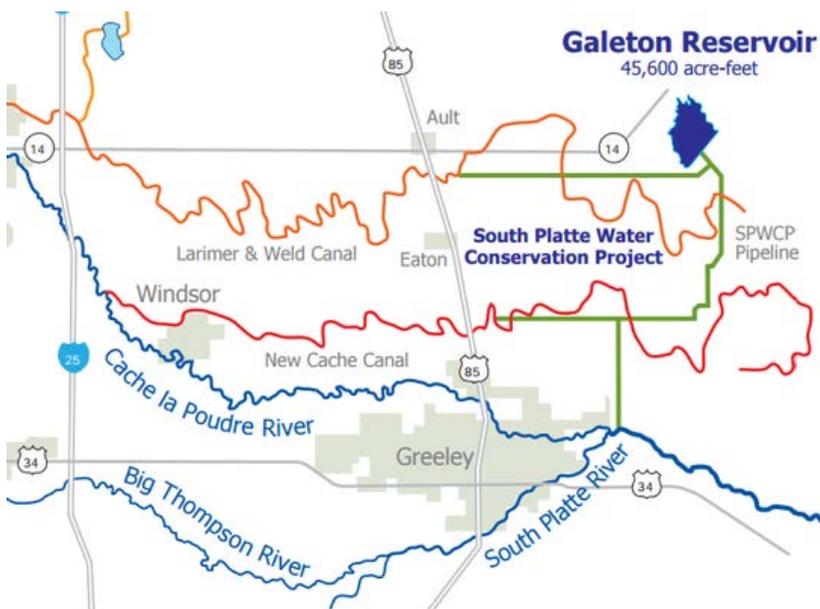
The reservoir in question, Galeton Reservoir, is the smaller storage component of the controversial [Northern Integrated Supply Project](#). NISP would funnel Poudre River and South Platte River water into two reservoirs for use by 15 participants, including Windsor and the Fort Collins-Loveland Water District, at a projected cost of close to \$1 billion over 13 years.

Northern Water picked the spot for Galeton Reservoir before Noble built wells there, Werner said. The agency couldn't do anything to stop the wells from being built because it didn't own the land.

"We just hadn't gotten that far yet," Werner said.

The wells were drilled within the last decade. If Northern Water wanted to keep the reservoir location, the wells would have to be capped before construction, which could be costly.

That's why Northern Water is now leaning toward a different location across Colorado Highway 14 to the north. The location doesn't contain any wells but still needs to be vetted, Werner said. He added the move wouldn't be much more expensive than first plan because the new spot is nearby the original proposal.



(Photo: Northern Water)

Reservoir opponent and [Save the Poudre](#) director Gary Wockner argued there are as many as 30 wells on or near the current proposed site and estimated that drilling them again elsewhere would cost more than \$100 million.

Northern Water has "had discussions" with the well operators about potential solutions, Werner said. It's also possible the wells won't be in operation by the time Northern Water begins building the reservoir, which won't happen for at least a few years — and that's only if the project gets approval from the Army Corps of Engineers and survives a potential battle in court.

The decision to move the proposed reservoir site is up to project participants, Werner said, but he added the move "probably" won't happen if it would mean a significant cost increase or extension of the project's timeline. He couldn't provide an estimate of when participants will decide what to do.

Project opponent Save the Poudre named the wells at the proposed Galeton site one of NISP's 10 "fatal flaws" in a September response to the Army Corps' most recent environmental impact statement for the project and has long been aware of the issue, Wockner said.

"Over the last 12 years, everything we've said about this disastrous project has been proven true," Wockner wrote in an email to the Coloradoan. "And now here's another issue we brought up years ago about these oil and gas wells, and it's now proven correct. The only alternative that NISP subscribers should realistically consider is stopping the project."

### **About Galeton Reservoir**

- Galeton Reservoir would take water from the South Platte River, while Glade Reservoir would take water from the Poudre River. The Poudre flows to join the South Platte near Greeley.
- Galeton Reservoir could hold up to 45,600 acre-feet of water, roughly one-fourth of Glade Reservoir's projected capacity of 170,000 acre-feet.
- For reference, one acre-foot is enough water to meet the needs of two to three households a year, and Horsetooth Reservoir holds 157,000 acre feet.
- The current proposed location for Galeton Reservoir is just east of Ault on the southeast side of Colorado Highway 14.
- "Galeton" is pronounced "gale-tin." (Pronounce "gale" as in "rail.")