

# Pact to look at river, recreation

## Northern Water, Larimer County to address issues with proposed reservoir

Reporter-Herald

July 23, 2016

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The proposed Glade Reservoir, with a new pipeline that proponents say would keep more water in the Poudre River through Fort Collins, is still at least five years from construction if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approves the project.

However, Larimer County and Northern Water, which is managing the project, are getting started on an intergovernmental agreement to address any issues the two entities anticipate, including recreation.

The agreement, which will be drafted in the coming months, will be to address local issues that are not already included in the federal permitting process, which has been underway for more than a decade and focuses on environmental impacts.

"Rather than reinvent the wheel with stuff that was done in the EIS, we will focus on local issues that haven't been picked up," said Rob Helmick, senior planner for Larimer County.

On Tuesday, the commissioners will vote upon a memorandum of understanding that kicks off a 60-day window to start developing an intergovernmental agreement. Within four months of when those negotiations

begin, a draft agreement will be developed, which will then be open for input from county officials, board members and ultimately the community.

Gary Wockner, executive director of Save the Poudre, said members of his nonprofit will be sharing, at any community forum, the opinion of thousands of residents and businesses that Glade Reservoir would basically dry up the Poudre River and hurt the economy, the habitat and the community.

His nonprofit has been working for nearly 12 years to stop the Northern Integrated Supply Project, which involves building Glade Reservoir northwest of Fort Collins and Galeton Reservoir near Greeley to hold about 42,000 acre-feet of water from the Poudre River for use by 15 different towns, cities and water districts.

"We're going to take it to the wall and do everything we can to keep this river alive for future generations," said Wockner, who noted that, no matter how you spin it, the project will drain about 13 billion gallons of water from the river every year.

"That river needs to be kept alive, and we're going to stand up and swing the bat and do the best we can to do that."

Colorado State University researchers estimate the average output of the Poudre at the mouth of Poudre Canyon is nearly 300,000 acre-feet, or about 97 billion gallons.

Northern Water, which is managing the project for the participants, has said the project will simply provide a way to save water from times when the river has plenty for times when water is in need. Proponents have said that the agency can mitigate any environmental issues so it will not harm the river.

And a new change to the plan is construction of a pipeline that would pump about 14,000 acre-feet of the water being taken out of the river back in where it flows through Fort Collins, then divert it out again on the east side of the city. Brian Werner, spokesman for Northern Water, said this will actually boost flows in the city, which will help the economy and provide better habitat for fish.

And the plan also includes building fish passageways that will allow fish to migrate both directions of the river, again boosting habitat, Werner said.

"We're guaranteeing some minimum flows that are going to make the trout happy," Werner said. "We're basically building a tail water fishery in Fort Collins."

Wockner doesn't buy that. The plan still drains water from the river, and it would involve building a massive pipeline, according to the Save the Poudre.

"The new plan cuts off part of the beautiful, live-giving June rise in the Poudre River and trades it for a very small year-round flow," Wockner said in a press release. "That would be like taking all of those bursting beautiful tulips out of your yard in late spring and trading them for a small potted geranium in your windowsill the rest of the year."

For Larimer County Commissioner Tom Donnelly, the proposal to put water back into the river through Fort Collins is a positive for the river habitat.

"This should give us a lot more opportunity to keep water in the Poudre for a much greater time," Donnelly said. "That's a real good thing for fishermen ... I look at it as a balance."

The decision on whether Northern Water can build Glade and Galeton reservoirs is expected sometime in 2017. If approved, design would take several years, construction could begin in 2020-21, and the reservoir could open in 2024-25.

When it opens, Larimer County is expected to manage the waters and surrounding area for recreation much like it does at Horsetooth Reservoir, Carter Lake and Flatiron and Pinewood Reservoirs.

That recreation piece is key for Larimer County and will be a big part of the intergovernmental agreement, noted Donnelly.

"That could be a great opportunity for us to take a lot of pressure off Horsetooth Reservoir," said Donnelly, pointing out that Horsetooth is full most weekends and campsites are booked six months in advance.

"Having some other options for recreational use that close to Fort Collins is very important," Donnelly added.

The county also will want to discuss effects on neighboring properties, the plan to relocate a stretch of U.S. 287, and the pipeline placement, according to officials. Discussions, Donnelly said, will also focus on how the pipeline plan could affect all forms of recreation.

"It's a balancing act," Donnelly said, "and finding that sweet spot."

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