



News Release

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Governor endorses water project aligned with Colorado Water Plan

Chimney Hollow Reservoir close to reality

BERTHOUD – Today the State of Colorado officially endorsed the Windy Gap Firing Project and Chimney Hollow Reservoir.

John Stulp, Governor John Hickenlooper’s Water Policy Advisor, made the announcement at Northern Water’s Spring Water Users meeting in Loveland. Reading a letter signed by Gov. Hickenlooper, Stulp told the 200 attendees that this is the state of Colorado’s first endorsement of a water project under the Colorado Water Plan, which was finalized last November.

“Further, the WGFP aligns with the key elements of the Colorado Water Plan...” Hickenlooper wrote.

Hickenlooper continued, “Northern Water and its many project partners have worked diligently, transparently and exhaustively in a collaborative public process that could stand as a model for assessing, reviewing and developing a project of this nature.”

Northern Water’s Municipal Subdistrict President Dennis Yanchunas spoke for the project’s participants in saying, “It’s really exciting to have that endorsement, the first ever by the state.”

Colorado’s endorsement came on the heels of state water quality certification in late March.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment issued its 401 water quality certification for the Windy Gap Firing Project on March 25, bringing the project permitting process nearer to completion.

“This is the next to the last step in getting the project permitted,” said Project Manager Jeff Drager. “The final step is the federal 404 wetlands permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which we believe will be forthcoming in the next few months.”

(Over)

The state's endorsement of the WGFP culminates 13 years of diligent effort and lengthy negotiations to permit and authorize a project that will assure a reliable water supply for more than 500,000 northern Front Range residents.

The federal permitting process began in 2003 under the National Environmental Policy Act. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation served as the lead federal agency and issued a final Environmental Impact Statement in 2011 and a Record of Decision in 2014 for Chimney Hollow Reservoir.

In addition, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission and Colorado Water Conservation Board approved a fish and wildlife mitigation plan in 2011. The following year the Grand County Commissioners issued a 1041 permit and reached an agreement with Northern Water's Municipal Subdistrict on a mitigation and enhancement package.

A wide variety of organizations, including Trout Unlimited, support the CDPHE's long-awaited ruling.

"This permit is another step toward fulfilling the Windy Gap Firming Project's potential to be part of a balanced water supply strategy for Colorado Front Range," said Drew Peternell, director of TU's Colorado Water and Habitat Project.

"Through a balanced portfolio – including responsible supply projects like WGFP – along with stronger conservation and reuse programs and ag-urban water sharing -- Colorado can meet its diverse water needs..." Peternell added.

The Windy Gap Firming Project is a collaboration of 12 Northern Front Range water providers and the Platte River Power Authority to improve the reliability of their Windy Gap water supplies. Windy Gap began delivering water in 1985.

The participants include 10 municipalities: Broomfield, Erie, Evans, Fort Lupton, Greeley, Lafayette, Longmont, Louisville, Loveland and Superior; two water districts: Central Weld County and Little Thompson; and one power provider: Platte River. They currently provide water to 500,000 people.

The current cost estimate for WGFP is \$400 million. To date the participants have spent \$15 million on associated permitting costs.

Chimney Hollow Reservoir will store 90,000 acre-feet of water and will be located just west of Carter Lake Reservoir in southern Larimer County.

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