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Federal agency releases Final Environmental Impact Statement for Northern Integrated Supply Project

BERTHOUD – Officials from the Army Corps of Engineers have released a Final Environmental Impact Statement that explores the alternatives for supplying a reliable water supply to 15 municipalities and water providers in northeastern Colorado.

The document outlines the impacts of Northern Water’s preferred alternative, the Northern Integrated Supply Project, as well as three other potential reservoir projects. It also looks at the effects to the environment if no action alternative is approved.

Northern Water officials began the formal permitting process to build NISP on behalf of the 15 participants in 2004, which resulted in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2008. A Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released in 2015.

“This is another step in the process and a very thorough one at that,” said Northern Water General Manager Brad Wind. “We’re encouraged that it shows that no new significant issues have popped up and that the impacts can and will be mitigated.”

The Northern Integrated Supply Project includes the construction of Glade Reservoir northwest of Fort Collins and Galeton Reservoir northeast of Greeley. Five pump stations and 85 miles of pipeline would convey water to communities participating in the project as well as some farmers in the Cache la Poudre River basin.

The operation of the project would include minimum guaranteed stream flows through downtown Fort Collins, bypass of peak flows in most years, improvements to stream channel and riparian areas along the Poudre River and establishment of a recreation complex at Glade Reservoir.

“The NISP participants have really come a long way and stepped up to put together one of the most-robust mitigation and enhancement plans ever,” said NISP Participants Committee Chairman Chris Smith. Smith, the general manager of the Left Hand Water District added, “We are committed to the \$60 million plan to protect and enhance the environment.”

In the 14 years since the permitting began, Northern Colorado has continued to grow at a record pace with seven of the top-growing cities within the NISP Participants Committee. Smith said, “we are the bullseye for growth in Colorado with the fastest-growing cities in the state all being NISP participants.”

In addition to NISP, which is the preferred alternative, federal officials looked at alternatives that included a different combination of reservoirs and conveyance methods. Out of 215 elements studied such as reservoir expansion, new reservoirs and groundwater storage, the Corps identified four that would meet the project purpose and need. The Corps also considered the impact of removing irrigation water from nearly 100 square miles of land in Northern Colorado, which, the FEIS illustrates, would occur if NISP is not approved.

NISP participants include the communities of Erie, Windsor, Fort Morgan, Evans, Fort Lupton, Eaton, Severance, Lafayette, Firestone, Frederick and Dacono. Also, the Fort Collins-Loveland Water District, Left Hand Water District, Central Weld County Water District and Morgan County Quality Water District are participants.

The public has 45 days to provide comments to the Corps on the FEIS. A Record of Decision based on the document and public input will be issued by the Corps and is expected in 2019.

To view the document, go to: www.nwo.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory-Program/Colorado/EIS-NISP/

Hard copies may be found at locations listed at www.nwo.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Releases/Article/1580028/final-environmental-impact-statement-for-the-northern-integrated-supply-project/

Comments about the FEIS may be sent via email to the Corps, NISP.EIS@usace.army.mil.

For more information, visit www.gladereservoir.org.

About Northern Water: Northern Water, a public agency created in 1937, provides water for agricultural, municipal, domestic and industrial uses to an eight-county service area with a population of nearly 960,000. Northern Water and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation operate the Colorado-Big Thompson Project, which collects water on the West Slope and delivers it to Northeastern Colorado through a 13-mile tunnel beneath Rocky Mountain National Park. It and the Municipal Subdistrict are currently developing the Windy Gap Firming Project and the Northern Integrated Supply Project to enhance Front Range water supplies for the future.