

Corps briefs Larimer County officials on Glade EIS

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Larimer County officials Monday received their first taste of what will be a flood of information about Glade Reservoir and an environmental analysis that will decide its fate.

Chandler Peter of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers briefed the county commissioners and representatives of several county boards and commissions on the recently released draft Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, for the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project and the summer-long process that will determine whether permits will be granted to build the project.

The county is a cooperating agency in the EIS, and its comments will have an impact on whether the project and its various components are built and how they would be operated, Peter said.

To reach this point in the EIS process, the proposal by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, or Northern Water, to build the reservoir has to have met regulatory requirements, Peter said. Its overall environmental impacts can be mitigated.

But its approval is not a foregone conclusion, he said. Issues could come up during the public comment period on the document that could require a change of course.

"Something could come up that we didn't think of," Peter said in an interview following the meeting. "When that happens it means digging a little deeper and putting more time and money into it."

The Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP, would include Glade Reservoir, which would be built north of Ted's Place, the proposed Galeton Reservoir near Greeley and about 30 miles of pipeline to carry pumped water.

NISP would provide 40,000 acre feet of water a year for the 15 regional communities and water districts that would fund its construction. An acre foot is 325,900 gallons, enough to meet the needs of two urban families for a year.

Glade would draw water from the Poudre River using the existing Poudre Valley Canal, which diverts near the mouth of Poudre Canyon. When full, the reservoir would hold 170,000 acre feet and Galeton would hold 40,000.

But the project's water would not be enough to meet the region's projected future needs, Peter said.

That is a concern, said Commissioner Randy Eubanks following the meeting.

"Really this is quite a project that may only provide a short-term fix for the applicants," Eubanks said. "We'll have to look really closely at approving something or recommending something that will change the landscape so significantly in Larimer County."

Some water for Glade would be drawn from the river every year. But most of its water could be taken only during periods of high flow during the spring runoff from May through July.

Commissioner Glenn Gibson said he needs to learn more about NISP, but he supports the idea of building more water storage facilities.

"I believe that when the water is high, we need the ability to store that water," he said.

The draft EIS took four years and \$6 million to produce. It looks at four options for the project, including taking no action. Building Glade and Galeton, which would draw water from the South Platte River, is the preferred alternative identified in the document.

Various county boards and commissions, including the planning commission and the environmental advisory board, will study the document in the coming weeks and send their comments to the county commissioners.

The commissioners are expected to send their comments on the draft EIS to the Corps before the end of the comment period July 30.

