

Northern Colorado BUSINESS REPORT

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Poudre among 'Most Endangered Rivers'

By Staff

FORT COLLINS -- The Cache la Poudre River has been listed as one of the nation's most endangered rivers by American Rivers, a national organization that promotes river health.

The Poudre ranked No. 3 on the 2008 list because of the threat the organization cited from a proposed water storage project called Glade Reservoir, which would be built just outside Poudre Canyon and be filled by diverting river water during high-flow periods.

Opponents of the project held a press conference in Legacy Park on April 17 with the Poudre River as a backdrop. Gary Wockner, spokesman for the Save the Poudre Coalition, said the proposed project would essentially drain the river and harm the economy of Fort Collins' downtown and the region.

"What's happening today is Ground Zero for the next stage of the West's water wars," Wockner told a group of about 40 people. Wockner said the dam proposal "won't solve our long-term water challenges" and added that "draining the Poudre is not the answer."

Fort Collins City Councilwoman Lisa Poppaw said the American Rivers designation marked "a sad day for Fort Collins."

"Receiving this negative publicity about the river that flows through the heart of our town tarnishes (the city's) image," she said, adding that the city has invested millions in bike trails along the river and in economic programs that highlight the river as a city attraction.

Glade Reservoir is part of a \$400 million project proposed by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District to help meet water needs in the region for the next 20 years or more. A draft Environmental Impact Statement on the project is expected to be delivered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for public review and comment on April 30.

Water district spokesman Brian Werner has said the proposed Glade Reservoir will be designed not to dry up the river.

Wockner said the Save the Poudre Coalition will closely study the EIS report and speak out against it during an expected 90-day review period.