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Pro vs. con: Glade meeting divided

BY KEVIN DUGGAN

KevinDuggan @coloradoan.com

A hearing Tuesday on the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project and Glade Reservoir turned into two hearings.

While the first 90 minutes of testimony on the controversial project was dominated by proponents of the vast water-storage proposal, the latter two hours featured a steady stream of its foes.

Dozens of speakers extolled the potential virtues and problems of the project, which has been proposed by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District in partnership with 15 regional cities and water districts. The city of Fort Collins is not part of the project.

Their comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, will be included in the public record and seriously weighed, said Chandler

Peter of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who is overseeing the lengthy EIS process.

Opponents appeared to outnumber supporters. But the decision on whether to issue a permit to build the \$426 million project will not come down to a popularity contest, Peter said before the hearing.

The Corps' decision will be based on unbiased scientific analysis, Peter said.

"I understand that people are for this and against it," he said. "What I want to know is why they are for it or against it.

"What is it that I have in that document or don't have in that document that led them to make that determination? I want to know what we need to take a hard look at to make the document better."

Peter received an earful on the document from both sides Tuesday at the Fort Collins Senior Center. The verbal comments will combine with written comments as a final EIS for the project is crafted.

The Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP, would consist of Glade Reservoir, which would be built north of Ted's Place, and Galeton Reservoir near Greeley.

Glade would draw from the Poudre River almost every month of the year, but most of its water would be taken during times of above-average flows. Galeton would draw from the South Platte River.

Supporters, including several elected officials from Weld County, said Glade would prevent an estimated 70,000 acres of agricultural land from drying up to provide water for projected residential growth.

Former U.S. Sen. Hank Brown said agreements that went into designating a portion of the Poudre as a federally protected wild and scenic river included knowing more storage would be needed.

Turning down Glade would have statewide ramifications for other agreements, he said.

"It would be a tragedy, it would be an environmental tragedy, if this project is turned down," he said.

Brown said being able to capture and store water from the Poudre and the South Platte rivers is the reason agriculture has thrived in the region. More storage space is needed, he said.

But opponents said farm land around the region would be dried up and paved over anyway through development. Sentimentality about agriculture "and living like our grandfathers" shouldn't drive the NISP proposal, said Christopher Fry of Fort Collins.

Growth does not have to be inevitable, he said.

More of the state's water could go to uses other than agriculture, he said.

"This is a value change, and Colorado has to be ready for it," Fry said.
