



July 12, 2012

To: Chandler Peter, Army Corps of Engineers
Jim Martin, U.S. EPA

From: Save The Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper

Re: Fire impacts need to be analyzed in NISP SDEIS

Dear Mr. Peter and Director Martin,

The recent wildfires that have charred the foothills west of Fort Collins have significantly impacted the Cache la Poudre River watershed in a brief period, changing the landscape and hydrology of the area for years to come. These dramatic events have led to a need to address certain issues in the Supplemental DEIS for the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) in order for the SDEIS to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act. Although the environmental review for the project has been underway for several years, the fires have fundamentally undermined key elements of earlier analyses, leading to the need for a revision in the analyses of the impacts of the project.

1. Rains falling on the fire-disturbed landscape are pushing dramatic amounts of sediment, ash, and fire debris into the Poudre River. This transport may continue for years or even decades. This sediment, ash, and fire debris is coating the bottom of the river downstream through Fort Collins and beyond. As you know, the ecological system that provides for healthy aquatic life depends on flushing flows—high flows during peak runoff periods—to clean and scour the river bed. Without flushing flows, aquatic insects may be imperiled and fish spawning may be negatively impacted. The SDEIS for NISP needs to examine the impact of NISP's proposed removal of flushing flows (up to 72% in some months in some years) in light of the additional load of sediment, ash, and debris that is occurring because of the recent fires in the Cache la Poudre River basin.
2. Land slides and mud slides have already occurred in Poudre Canyon due to the fires. The SDEIS for NISP needs to analyze the potential for these mass wasting events to impact water quality, water flow in the river, and NISP's diversion structure as they relate to NISP's proposed diversion of water from the Poudre River.
3. The fires have dramatically increased the amount of Total Organic Carbon (TOC) – already a major issue in NISP's water quality analysis – available to the river. Fire-augmented TOC loading of the river may occur during peak runoff, exactly when NISP would be diverting water into Glade Reservoir if the project is built. This TOC loading could pollute Glade Reservoir – and Horsetooth Reservoir due to the Glade to Horsetooth pipeline – with higher levels of TOC. The NISP SDEIS needs to analyze the potential for fires to increase the TOC that is transferred into Horsetooth Reservoir through the Glade to

Horsetooth pipeline, and the increase in TOC of water transferred back to the Poudre River for downstream water users throughout the year.

4. For the reasons cited above, the fires have dramatically decreased, and will continue to decrease, water quality in the Poudre River through Fort Collins and beyond. The NISP SDEIS needs to analyze the potential impact of decreased water quality due to fires and its combined impact with the reduction in flows that are proposed by NISP on:

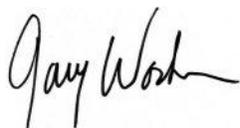
- wastewater treatment plants' water quality permits
- aquatic species
- health and human impacts associated with swimming and recreation
- fishing
- recreational potential downstream of NISP's proposed diversion structure
- water quality impairment in Glade and Galeton Reservoirs.

5. The week of July 9, 2012, both Fort Collins and Greeley stopped diverting water out of the Poudre River due to severely impaired water quality from the fires. The NISP SDEIS needs to analyze the impact of potential NISP diversion curtailment due to the same severe water quality impairment. As noted in #3 above, NISP may be diverting at exactly the same time that water quality impairment would be the worst, thus negatively impacting the effective yield of the project, the likelihood of Glade Reservoir being full enough to be functional, NISP's water rights, and the increase in need to use Colorado River (West Slope) water to fill Glade and Galeton Reservoirs.

6. The fire may have impacted habitat and designated critical habitat for the threatened Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse, as well as habitat for the Arapahoe Snowfly, a species proposed for Endangered Species Act protection. These species and their habitat may also be impacted by NISP's construction, reservoir, water diversions from the Poudre River, and diversion structures. The SDEIS for NISP must include an analysis of the impacts of the fire on the species' habitat and its status in order to fully evaluate the impacts of NISP on federally-protected species and species proposed for federal protection in the area. The impacts caused by the fire must also be reflected in the analysis in any Biological Assessment prepared for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review in compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

We believe that the SDEIS for NISP must analyze the above issues in order to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

Thank you,



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Gary Wockner, PhD, Director
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