

Glade Reservoir would pose a wildfire risk

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On Oct.16, the Cameron Peak Fire became Colorado's largest-ever wildfire This summer's Pine Gulch, Cameron Peak, and East Troublesome Fires are the three most massive wild fires in Colorado's recorded history.

In sum, the wildfires that started in the summer of 2020 have already exceeded 600,000 total acres burned and \$200 million in response costs.

We support the firefighters who work tirelessly to protect personal property and preserve our public lands. And we express our solidarity with the evacuees forced from their homes, schools, business, and hospitals.

We applaud Larimer County's recognition that current resources are inadequate for wildfire response. But we ask, "How can Larimer County effectively mitigate future wildfire risks and reduce response costs that are primarily borne by taxpayers?"

More broadly, "Are the county's land-use decisions consistent with wildfire risk mitigation and environmental stewardship goals in the county's Comprehensive Plan?"

Scientists point to this season's devastating wildfires, along with below-average runoff in portions of southern Colorado (despite an apparently normal winter snowpack) as evidence of regional climate warming.

For Brad Udall, a water and climate researcher at Colorado State University, this moment is "a good indicator of what our future is, unfortunately."

Instead of the new normal, Udall sees this trend as "the new abnormal." Udall adds: "Frankly, our climate is not stable. It's changing underneath us. And as bad as this is, it could get worse."

We believe that the recent vote by the Larimer County Board of County Commissioners to approve Glade Reservoir, which is part of the Northern Integrated Supply Project, or NISP, runs counter to the county's vision for hazard mitigation and resiliency.

In the rare years it actually fills, a new flatwater recreation reservoir would bring an estimated 379,000 boaters, campers, and others to the fire-prone wildland/urban interface of Larimer County every year, especially in the high fire danger summer months.

Thousands of visitors would be from outside the county and quite possibly unaware of how quickly a wildfire can start and spread. It would only take one careless act to touch off a devastating blaze. According to Summit County, 80% percent of wildland fires are started by people.

Prolonged droughts, hotter summers, and decreased runoff will become the "new abnormal." Reduced water supplies will have adverse impacts on multiple NISP components, at times curtailing proposed streamflow enhancements on the Poudre River and reducing flatwater recreation opportunities at the proposed Glade Reservoir.

We congratulate our newly seated commissioners and trust they will work with residents to protect Larimer County's most treasured natural resources. We encourage the BoCC to revisit the decision to approve the NISP 1041 permit application in light of the potential for destructive fires that would impact citizens and strain the county's valued but limited emergency services resources capabilities.

The overwhelmingly unpopular project will have irreversible adverse impacts on Larimer County's treasured Poudre River, and it will unnecessarily increase the risk of human-caused wildfires in the county's forests and grasslands.

The "Healthy Rivers Alternative" developed by Western Resource Advocates and Save the Poudre is a viable alternative to NISP,

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