



Wyo., Colo. entities seek public solution to entrepreneur's proposal

Groups study water pipeline

By STEVEN K. PAULSON - Associated Press writer | Posted: Friday, March 26, 2010 12:45 am

DENVER -- Hoping to shore up future growth, a coalition of water users in Colorado and Wyoming announced a two-year project Thursday to study building a pipeline from the Flaming Gorge Reservoir on the Wyoming-Utah border to the Front Range of Wyoming and Colorado.

The goal is to make sure other users on the Colorado River, including Las Vegas, Phoenix and Los Angeles, don't beat them to it.

The water providers' service area covers more than a half million Wyoming and Colorado water users and hundreds of thousands of expected new residents over the next two decades.

If deemed viable, the project would provide a pipeline running more than 500 miles from the reservoir across southern Wyoming and dipping down along Colorado's Front Range, costing an estimated \$3 billion. Communities along the pipeline that participate could tap in to supplement current water supplies.

The project, if it goes forward, would require permission from Congress, but participants don't believe they would have to renegotiate the Colorado River Compact, which allocates the river among Arizona, California, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

Although it would be drawn from Wyoming, the water would come from Colorado's allocated share of water in the Colorado River system.

"The state of Colorado's own State Water Supply Initiative clearly says that even with all the water projects currently in the pipeline, the Front Range and Platte River Basin will face significant water shortages in just a few decades," said Frank Jaeger, general manager of Parker Water and Sanitation District, who organized the coalition.

Leroy J. Schafer, mayor of Torrington, and a member of the coalition, said the project faces opposition from other Wyoming communities like Rock Springs and Green River that depend on the Colorado River Compact to ensure they get the water they need, but he believes they will support the project if it can be shown that it will allow them to use more water in drought years.

The pipeline proposal mirrors one already under consideration by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps of Engineers is preparing an environmental study of a proposal by Fort Collins, Colo., entrepreneur Aaron Million. He has applications pending with the Wyoming state engineer's office to pipe up to 250,000 acre feet of water a year from the Green River to communities as far away as Pueblo, Colo.

Jaeger said last year his district was meeting with entities in Colorado and Wyoming trying to start a similar, competing project to Million's proposal. Jaeger said he believed that such a large project should be built by the public and he was concerned about the possibility of water speculation.

The study will cost \$160,000, with each of the eight participants putting up \$20,000.

Bruce Lytle, president of Lytle Water Solutions heading up the study, said the goal is to evaluate the ability of Flaming Gorge Reservoir to provide the water needed, identify possible temporary storage along with pipeline and estimate the cost.

Flaming Gorge Reservoir was a federal project created for the benefit of the Colorado River Upper Basin states. Transporting water from the reservoir for use along the Front Range of Wyoming and Colorado was first mentioned in the 1950s.

Participants and their projected water needs include the Parker Water and Sanitation District (Colo.), 125,000 people; Castle Rock, Colo., 85,000; the South Metro Water Supply Authority (Colo.), 190,000; Douglas County (Colo.), 45,000; the Donala Water and Sanitation District (Colo.), 7,000; Cheyenne, 55,000; Torrington, 5,000; and Laramie County, 20,000.

Associated Press writer Ben Neary also contributed to this report.