

Colorado not taking Wyoming water

A Proposed pipeline from Flaming Gorge to the Front Range would only use water already belonging to Colorado.

By Bill McCarthy

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CHEYENNE -- The Wyoming Water Development director said Wednesday that many people misunderstand a proposal to divert water from Flaming Gorge Reservoir to Colorado.

"There was a lot of hysteria and bad information," Mike Purcell told a joint meeting of the Water Development Commission and the Legislature's Select Committee on Water Development.

Colorado entrepreneur Aaron Million is proposing to divert water from Flaming Gorge Reservoir to the heavily populated Colorado Front Range, according to The Associated Press.

Purcell said a group in south metro Denver also is promoting the idea.

But he said the water that would be diverted already belongs to Colorado under the Colorado River Compact.

"Read the press, and they're 'taking our water,'" Purcell said. "It's not Wyoming's water."

The state of Colorado has not committed to the \$3 billion project, either, he said.

If Colorado were to commit to the project, Wyoming would have to cooperate.

"I do not see that happening in the near future," he added.

Purcell told the two boards that there likely will be people at today's meeting who want to be heard on the issue.

The Water Development Commission and the Legislature's Select Committee on Water Development meet again at 8:30 a.m. today.

"We like Colorado water flowing through our state" because it adds to things such as recreational activities and wildlife habitat, he said. But Colorado could call for the water it is entitled to under the seven-state compact.

The Army Corps of Engineers will host a public meeting Tuesday in Rock Springs about the proposal.

Previous meetings were held in April in Green River and Laramie.

Army Corps officials also extended the written public comment period for an environmental impact statement through July 27. The environmental study is expected to take at least three years.

"Colorado has invested millions and millions of dollars in" water project environmental impact statements, Purcell said. "This is just one more going into the morass of projects."