

Speculative plan

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A PROPOSAL to suck large amounts of water out of the Arkansas River near Lamar by way of a 150-mile pipeline to Elbert County is outright speculative and should not be allowed.

Unfortunately, the Elbert County commissioners are complicit in this scheme, for they are considering whether to allow a small local water district to expand. That district, the Elbert and Highway 86 Commercial Metro District, was created in 2002 to serve residential and commercial needs in the 39-acre Wild Pointe subdivision, and now it wants to expand its scope to statewide projects rather than local sources of water.

The Elbert-86 metro district manager is Karl Nyquist. He is also part owner of an investment group that has purchased water rights in the Arkansas. He also is chief executive of C & A Co., a development company that is negotiating with the metro district to handle some of its infrastructure needs.

There are those in Elbert County who wonder if he intends to supply water to oil and gas companies that are exploring that county. Mr. Nyquist has denied that the district plans to sell water to those companies, but he has said his investment group "could undertake such a project."

Alan Hamel, executive director of the Pueblo Board of Water Works and a member of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, opposes such a pipeline to dry up farms in the Lower Arkansas Valley. And he is rightfully concerned that this scheme has been developed secretly until it was exposed last week at a meeting of the Elbert County commissioners.

This latest scheme typifies the attitude of many north of the Arkansas Valley. It should be strongly opposed by all in the Valley.

This proposal is an echo of a similar one by the Colorado Interstate Gas Co., which wanted to suck Arkansas River water north by pipeline to the Denver metro area. Thankfully, then-Gov. Roy Romer drove a stake through the heart of that plan.

We would hope that Gov. John Hickenlooper can likewise intercede. This proposal reeks of conflict of interest on the part of the organizations controlled by Mr. Nyquist, just as it reeks of water speculation that the courts have found to be illegal.