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Ball reminds us of what's important

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On Nov. 3, Friends of the Poudre will hold the first annual Poudre River Ball. It'll be an eclectic event for the public - black tie, blue jeans or masquerade costume - but it has more significance than a jovial gathering of people who love the river.

More than in any other period of our history, the attention of people is stretched so thin because of our busy lives that we sometimes have difficulty recalling the basics of what's important to our existence.

That's a reason why Friends of the Poudre is holding the ball, and why over the last two decades we've held the annual Poudre River Fest in the summer - to help you remember the importance of the river to your way of life.

We're in a time when challenges facing the river are more significant than ever. Consider:

The proposed Glade Reservoir would have huge impacts on the river.

Glade would affect the river downstream of where Poudre water would be diverted near the mouth of the Poudre Canyon. The diverted water would be moved to Glade Reservoir that would be built a mile north of Ted's Place.

Save the Poudre, an alliance of local groups, has compiled well-founded research that heavily underscores problems with the water storage project. Glade, for instance, would cause an extreme reduction in downstream peak flows that support a healthy, vibrant river and riparian community. Less peak flow could give birth to many problems by turning the river into an algal-clogged stream.

The river through Fort Collins could be drastically altered - for the worse.

Glade, by the way, would be built for other communities and water districts, not as a water storage project by the city of Fort Collins.

The Poudre's current water quality has evolved into a major challenge that is now fiercely staring us in the eyeball.

A decade ago, Friends of the Poudre began worrying about water quality and tried to warn people that all is not as pure as it seems. Some folks snickered at us because, after all, the river is pristine as it flows out of the mountains.

Yes, pristine it is, but once it hits civilization, quality dissolves. For the last several years, federal agencies have tagged the Poudre as Colorado's worst polluted river.

Recently, there was a positive step forward with the formation of the Cache la Poudre Water Quality Monitoring Agreement. The alliance brings together players historically responsible for varying degrees of water pollution in the Poudre. They are the ones who will be the major players in creating the solution.

Overuse of the river is a rapidly emerging problem.

On warm-weather weekends, river use in the Poudre Canyon has reached unprecedented levels of overcrowding. This creates pollution from auto emissions, left-behind trash, potential for water-carried diseases, and a host of other problems.

Considering the issues of personal freedom and how much we all enjoy the river, this is a challenge that may be difficult to solve. Yet, it's one that we face.

These, then, are issues for you to think about, and they're some of the reasons why Friends of the Poudre holds festivals and balls-to remind you to:

Enjoy your way of life.

But don't forget the Poudre.
