



Natural Resources
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**MEMORANDUM
FROM THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS
NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY BOARD**

Date: December 15, 2010
To: Mayor and Council Members
From: Liz Pruessner on behalf of the Natural Resources Advisory Board
Subject: Poudre River Floodplain Regulations

The NRAB, fulfilling its role to evaluate matters pertaining to natural resources and environmental protection and management issues of concern to the City has listened carefully to Stormwater staff's presentation regarding the options they considered and their recommendation for limiting development within the Poudre River's 100-year floodplain. The options are: (1) The Poudre River floodplain regulations be revised to adopt a 0.1 foot rise floodway; (2) The Poudre River floodplain regulations be revised to not allow any structures in the 100-year floodplain; (3) No change to the Poudre River floodplain regulations (null alternative); and a No Adverse Impact possibility.

Building in the floodplain is not in the best long-term ecological interest of the Poudre River, one of our region's key environmental features, because it may:

- (a) significantly disturb the native or semi-natural river corridor's habitat,
- (b) interfere with the river's ability to migrate within its floodplain,
- (c) isolate one portion of the corridor from another via constrictions or other encroachments, and/or
- (d) be a source of hazardous materials or other damage-causing debris.

On the other hand, we recognize that some areas within the river's 100-year floodplain are already considerably developed and have little or no current environmental value. Fortunately, there are administrative ways to mitigate any hardship that may be associated with continued occupancy and further improvement of these parcels.

We recognize too that the chosen floodplain regulation may have far-reaching consequences in terms of human safety, protection of or encroachment on private property rights, and public liability and expenditures for reasonably foreseeable floods. Fortunately, eliminating 100-year floodplain encroachment may serve well to minimize negative consequences in all of these areas, bolstering the City's Triple Bottom Line accounting. We look forward to seeing the economic analysis of each of these options.

Options 1 and 3 do not offer the full level of protection afforded by Option 2, and the "No adverse impact" option, though showing potential for the future, needs an operational definition.



In addition, Option 1 would require considerable expenditure of public funds, estimated to be as much as \$250,000 for mapping, which would be unnecessary if Option 2 were adopted.

Finally, the NRAB notes that flooding is a natural and inevitable phenomenon, with restorative benefits to both the river and riparian ecosystems. The wisest course of action is to let the river do what it does best without interference. Time and again, rivers show their enormous power to foil man's best efforts to control them.

Accordingly, the NRAB recommends (on a 6 to 1 vote) that Council adopt staff Option 2 – No New Structures in the 100-year Floodplain.

Please feel free to contact me regarding the NRAB's comments on this issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Pruessner, Chair
Natural Resources Advisory Board

cc: Darin Atteberry, City Manager
John Stokes, Director, Natural Resources Dept.
Susie Gordon, Staff Liaison