Removing the Josh Ames Diversion Dam from the Cache la Poudre River

The Cache la Poudre River is the focus of an ambitious Fort Collins community vision to enhance river corridor and its connections with the community, local businesses, CSU, and visitors.

Over 25 multi-purpose Poudre River Projects are planned to benefit stream flow, water quality, parks, recreation, natural areas, wildlife, riparian and aquatic health, flood control, roadway and pedestrian safety. The first projects are underway!

The North Shields Ponds/Josh Ames Diversion project includes the restoration of a ½ mile of the riparian corridor, wetlands and aquatic habitat as well as reconnection of the floodplain to the river and the removal of the Josh Ames Diversion Dam, an unused structure that spans the Poudre River.

The Josh Ames Diversion is just upstream of the North Shields Avenue Bridge. The structure has been unused for 30 years. The concrete diversion stretches from bank to bank, creating a dam approximately six feet high. This dam collects sediment and backs up water, increasing water temperatures and evaporative water loss and creating a barrier to fish passage. The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department is partnering with the Colorado Water Trust to facilitate the fundraising, engineering and final deconstruction of this structure.

North Shields Ponds/Ames Project Details

The abandoned diversion structure will be removed and the unnaturally steep river bank on the left/north side of the Poudre River will be lowered which will enable the river to reconnect with the floodplain during high water without flooding nearby homes. The project includes extensive restoration of the river channel, as well as the riparian and wetland habitat throughout North Shields Ponds Natural Area which will provide a range of water resource benefits to the community. All appropriate permits are being sought and will be available for review.

Josh Ames Agricultural Diversion Dam proposed for removal from the Poudre River near North Shields Avenue

MULTI-PURPOSE BENEFITS of DECONSTRUCTION OF THE AMES DIVERSION

- **The diversion removal will lower water temperatures and minimize evaporative losses** now experienced because of the shallower ponding of water stored behind the dam.

- **The diversion removal will eliminate the barrier to fish migration as well as lower the water level to enable the restoration of three additional riffle-pool sequences** to the natural stream channel. The result of a healthy substrate will improve macro-invertebrate habitat and ensure the streambed will no longer be encased with fine sediments.

- **The diversion removal will provide cost savings and material efficiencies** to the restoration of the North Shields Ponds Natural Area. Sediment behind the diversion structure will be used to create the riffle-pool habitat in the river channel.

- **The diversion removal will enhance public safety for recreational float boating.** The dam is a serious safety obstacle that requires portaging to avoid injury to floaters. Because of the thick, deep sediments and cobbles, egress from the stream during portage is awkward and hazardous.

- **The diversion removal will enable seamless expansion of the North Shields Ponds Natural Area project onto a downstream project led by Larimer County.** Plans include new recreational trailhead parking access and most significantly, the replacement of the North Shields Avenue Bridge.

- **The North Shields Bridge replacement will provide significant reduction in flood risks** to public and private property in the area. With the addition of 42 trailhead parking spaces, there will likely be an increase in recreational use of the pedestrian paths and stream by river and fishing enthusiasts.