

Fountain funding plan gets approval Move clears the way for watershed exec's hiring. October 2, 2009

**By CHRIS WOODKA
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN**

An administrator for a newly formed district on Fountain Creek could be hired by the end of the year.

Pueblo County commissioners Tuesday approved applying Colorado Springs funds from the Fountain Creek Corridor Master Plan effort toward its conditions on a 1041 permit for the Southern Delivery System.

"All three commissioners were in support of the proposal," said Commissioner Jeff Chostner.

The move clears the way for hiring an administrator by the end of this year, according to a timeline presented at earlier meetings of the newly created district. Chostner is the vice-chairman of the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District, formed earlier this year by the Legislature to improve Fountain Creek. The new district, Colorado Springs and the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District reached an intergovernmental agreement to provide \$100,000 for each of the next two years to hire an administrator and fund office expenses.

The money would be part of \$600,000 committed jointly by Colorado Springs and the Lower Ark to complete the Corridor Master Plan.

Colorado Springs' \$300,000 for that effort will be credited toward the \$50 million the city would pay over five years once SDS is completed. Colorado Springs will pay another \$300,000 over the next three years for a study of a dam or other means of flood control on Fountain Creek.

SDS, a \$1 billion-plus water delivery project that also would serve Security, Fountain and Pueblo West, is expected to be completed no sooner than 2016.

The district has not worked out how it would fund any operations from 2012-16.

"We're at the first step of hiring an executive director, who then might be able to get grant money as well," Chostner said. "We don't know if that's possible in today's climate."

Chostner cautioned against expectations of having Colorado Springs pay more money forward, recognizing the current decision sets a precedent.

"There are already too many people trying to get a piece of that," Chostner said.

The \$50 million was included in conditions of the 1041 permit to mitigate the impacts projected to be created as more flows are put into Fountain Creek because of growth from the water project.

At full capacity, the SDS pipeline will carry up to 78 million gallons of water daily from the Arkansas River into El Paso County through a pipeline from Pueblo Dam. An exchange reservoir would eventually regulate flows down Fountain Creek, but would not be built until several years after other parts of SDS are complete.

Colorado Springs also has commitments to fortify its sanitary sewer system, make improvements at Clear Springs Ranch, assist with sediment removal in Pueblo and preserve flows in the Arkansas River as part of the county conditions.

Chostner also wants the district's offices in Pueblo County.

"I've made it clear to everybody that I want the office in Pueblo County, and I think they're agreeable to that," Chostner said. "We do have space in the Pueblo County Courthouse."

The district has direct land use authority in the Fountain Creek floodplain from Fountain to Pueblo, but will make recommendations on pertinent land use matters throughout the watershed.

In its first three months, the district has recommended approval for a 62-unit subdivision that will be annexed into the city of Fountain, and denial of approval for a gravel-pit operation proposed near Pikes Peak International Raceway.