

**SDS decision: An early holiday present, or a giant lump of coal**  
**CSBJ staff | November 14, 2008**

Dec. 9 of this year may be remembered as one of the most significant dates in the long history of our city.

On that day, a public hearing will be held before the Pueblo County Board of Commissioners, who will decide whether to approve the 1041 permit process, and allow the Southern Delivery System to be constructed from Pueblo Reservoir.

The potential impacts of SDS have been exhaustively analyzed by the city-financed Environmental Impact Statement. After multiple modifications, including replacing the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek reservoir with an impoundment on Upper Williams Creek, no significant environmental impacts are expected from the construction of the project.

There will, however, be significant other effects — and most of them should be positive for both Pueblo and Colorado Springs.

Under the terms of previous agreements with Pueblo, Colorado Springs is required to maintain minimum flows in the Arkansas River through Pueblo, provide water from the project to Pueblo West and cooperate with our southern neighbor in mitigating storm water flows and pollution on Fountain Creek.

It should be particularly encouraging to Pueblo that Springs voters decisively rejected Douglas Bruce's irresponsible attempt to abolish the storm water enterprise fee. Their decision means that Colorado Springs can pay for meaningful storm water improvements — and that our promises to Pueblo are not simply hollow statements of intent, but will be investments made with the assent of city residents.

To reject Colorado Springs' application would, in our opinion, serve the interests of neither city.

The Springs cannot simply write off the \$82 million that Colorado Springs Utilities has already invested in SDS and abandon its water rights in the Arkansas. Rejection of the preferred alternative would force utilities to take water from a river intake in Fremont County, transporting raw water through a pipeline that would avoid Pueblo County altogether.

This alternative would be more expensive both to build and to operate. Previous agreements with Pueblo entities would become inoperative, and Colorado Springs would no longer be obliged to maintain minimum flows in the Arkansas below Pueblo, or to deliver SDS water to Pueblo West.

We have been encouraged by intergovernmental cooperation during the last two years, as elected officials from Pueblo, Colorado Springs and other regional governments have joined together in the Fountain Creek visioning process. We applaud the idea that has animated the participants, which is that of transforming Fountain Creek from a flood-prone, polluted stream into a major regional amenity — a refuge for wildlife, and a living link between Colorado Springs, Fountain and Pueblo. We're pleased to see our state leaders, including Gov. Bill Ritter and Sen. Ken Salazar, lend their support to this vital project.

We trust that utilities and city leaders will present our application in the same hopeful spirit — cooperative, conciliatory and emphasizing the very tangible benefits of SDS to both cities. By approving the project, Pueblo commissioners also will encourage future regional agreements and initiatives, and closer links between our two municipalities.

We hope that Pueblo commissioners will not be unduly influenced by the project's opponents who, we sense, are less guided by facts than by an instinctive and unreasoning dislike of Colorado Springs. The cities, and their leaders, need to come together to shape a common destiny — as equals and partners, not as angry rivals.

We'd ask the commissioners to decide the application simply on its merit, or lack thereof.

And should they do so, we're confident of the outcome.