

## **SDS work on Fountain to begin next year**

**Colorado Springs separates phasing out of stormwater enterprise from its pipeline project commitments.**

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**By CHRIS WOODKA  
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Colorado Springs plans to begin Fountain Creek improvements under the Southern Delivery System next year, despite the City Council's plans to phase out a stormwater enterprise.

The stormwater enterprise, which is expected to be phased out over eight years after Colorado Springs voters passed Doug Bruce's Issue 300 last week, was linked to the Bureau of Reclamation's environmental impact statement.

"We need to read the language carefully," Bruce McCormick, Colorado Springs water chief, said Friday. "While the enterprise is losing funding over time, SDS is still going to be funded according to the commitments in the EIS."

If necessary, Colorado Springs would pay for those commitments through the rate structure associated with building the \$1 billion-plus SDS project, McCormick said. The EIS, released earlier this year by Reclamation, says Colorado Springs is responsible for improving storm drainage in the city as it grows, so that it will not exacerbate problems associated with runoff into Fountain Creek - erosion, sedimentation and pollution.

Reclamation considered the enterprise a "reasonably foreseeable action," although voters last year considered a similar ballot question to abolish it.

In replies to concerns about the future of the enterprise, Reclamation responded that the actions promised by Colorado Springs are independent of the enterprise.

The EIS talks about the purposes for forming the enterprise in 2005. Colorado Springs sought to address a 20-year backlog of \$300 million in stormwater improvements and strengthen planning with \$17 million annually in new revenues.

Some of those improvements were tied to correcting conditions that led, in part, to more than 100 sanitary sewer spills between 1998 and 2005, which were cited in a federal lawsuit by the Sierra Club.

Colorado Springs has promised Pueblo County it would make \$75 million in improvements to fortify its sanitary sewer system, pay \$50 million to the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District and make other improvements as a condition for a 1041 permit.

“We plan to begin dredging in the channel through Pueblo and enhancing wetlands in 2010,” McCormick said. “Those actions have nothing to do with the stormwater enterprise. The commitments are a separate component.”

Colorado Springs already has issued some revenue bonds associated with SDS, although it still needs a contract from Reclamation and El Paso County land-use permits to begin construction of the pipeline itself.

SDS would serve Colorado Springs, Security and Fountain, and allow Pueblo West to tap into the line at the base of Pueblo Dam. It would divert up to 78 million gallons of water daily to El Paso County, increasing return flows into Fountain Creek.