



County to make SDS decision at Tuesday meeting

Publish Date: 2/9/2009

Debbie Bell
The Daily Record

With more than \$60 million in just construction labor at stake, the Fremont County Commissioners will decide the future of the Southern Delivery System during a public hearing Tuesday.

The capital cost for the SDS facilities that would be built in Fremont County is estimated to approach more than \$230 million.

Overall, the Highway 115 route of the SDS project has an estimated capital cost of \$1.2 billion, with more than \$600 million spent in construction during Phase 1 between later this year and 2012.

"This would be a real win-win situation," SDS project manager John Fredell said late Friday afternoon, "at a time when we need that kind of thing in terms of a boost for construction projects like this to boost economic growth."

The Final Environmental Impact Statement estimated the required construction workforce project-wide during Phase 1 would average 927 people during the same timeframe, with a peak workforce of 1,193 people. Fifty to 75 percent of the labor force would come from the local region.

"We're going to hold some workshops and that sort of thing so people in your community can understand how to deal with our procurement processes," Fredell said. "You've got a very large, well-known pipeline contractor in Penrose with High Country Pipeline."

Fredell said the project would be broken up into sections to spread the wealth.

"Doing it all is going to be difficult for any one company. We're talking about breaking it up into bite-sized pieces, so companies can come in and bid on a part of it."

The community at large would benefit from a spillover effect, Fredell said, with workers spending money at stores, restaurants, hotel rooms, gas stations and much more.

"There is so much trickle down," he said. "Those kinds of things can really help to boost the economy."

In addition to the financial benefits, SDS would make major improvements to the Florence River Park, including a boat chute through the diversion, a boat ramp for access to the river, a pavilion and playground area, access bridges over wetlands, removal of weeds and non-native plants and replacement with native plants, and walkways with interpretive signage and benches.

Stakeholders also are working to finalize agreements with the Penrose Water District and the Beaver Park Water district.

“Penrose would be an additional project partner,” Fredell said. “This is really exciting. I think they can save significant dollars by partnering with us rather than building their own project.”

Those collaborations would mean the domestic Penrose Water District would obtain water through the project, while SDS would move irrigation Beaver Park Water through its pipes.

“We’re trying to work out a way they can participate and benefit,” Fredell said. “It looks pretty promising in terms of dollars. It would be a real collaborative effort to build one pipe instead of two.”

The Fremont Economic Development Corporation said the SDS would provide a “significant number of jobs and revenue into our county.”

Partners Colorado Springs, Security and Fountain are seeking to install 17 miles of 66-inch diameter pipeline, three pump stations, an intake on the Arkansas River east of Florence, and power supply facilities in a massive project that would supply water for at least the next 40 years.

Pueblo County is the first choice for the pipeline; however, Colorado Springs Utilities has worked with Fremont County as an alternate site, signing an intergovernmental agreement last April that included a \$50,000 advance to pay for fees and costs incurred during the permitting process.

Tuesday’s public hearing on the Special Review Use Permit begins at 10 a.m. at the County Administration Building, 615 Macon Ave.