

Utilities secures key permit for Southern Delivery System

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PUEBLO - After five months of hearings, and more than a decade of planning, Colorado Springs Utilities has the permit it needs to build a \$1.1 billion water pipeline from Pueblo Reservoir.

Pueblo County commissioners voted 3-0 today to issue a 1041 land-use permit, named for the legislation that gives counties authority over multi-jurisdictional projects, for the Southern Delivery System. The permit requires Utilities to begin construction within three years.

While Utilities still needs numerous other permits for the project, Pueblo County approval was considered the most difficult, considering the history of contention between the two communities on water issues. Some in Pueblo blame Colorado Springs for flooding, erosion and water quality problems on Fountain Creek, and they worried sending more treated effluent downstream will exacerbate the problems.

Colorado Springs sued that county to challenge whether it could require a 1041 permit, and received approval from Fremont County to build a backup route.

But this morning, officials from both communities shook hands and posed for photographs on what was termed a "historic" day.

"You've got a convert here, somebody who four or five years ago had a lot of skepticism about where we were going," said Pueblo County Commissioner Jeff Chostner.

To address the county's concerns, Utilities has agreed to spend \$50 million on projects along the creek, by funding the new Fountain Creek watershed district, to spend \$75 million to upgrade its own wastewater or water reuse systems, and to dredge the creek at the Pueblo levees, at a cost of \$2 million.

None of the other permits will involve such a high level of review, said Utilities project manager John Fredell.