



Army Corps of Engineers begins new SDS evaluation **Few impacts are seen in the initial findings by the federal agency.** **May 17, 2009**

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THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Colorado Springs Utilities has filed with the Army Corps of Engineers for a permit to build the Southern Delivery System in watersheds controlled by the federal government.

The Corps will accept comments on SDS through June 4, according to information posted on its Web site last week.

The permit is required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of any project that affects waters of the United States. The permit is needed anytime there is work within the the flood plains of major rivers or their tributaries.

In this case, Colorado Springs and its SDS partners - Security, Fountain and Pueblo West - are proposing to alter the river outlet at Pueblo Dam and to build new structures in Fountain Creek - two reservoirs on Williams Creek and a return pipeline from the lower reservoir.

Less than an acre of land would be permanently disturbed and 14 acres would be temporarily affected, according to the initial review of SDS. "Our preliminary review indicates this project will not impact any threatened or endangered species or critical habitat," said Lt. Col. Kimberly Colloton, commander of the Albuquerque district of the Corps.

The Corps also has found no disturbance of historic or cultural resources and said the SDS partners are in compliance with state water quality regulations.

The Corps review can look at a wide range of impacts including stream conditions, safety, flood hazards, fish, wildlife, land use, property ownership and "in general, the needs and welfare of the people," Colloton said.

The review is separate from the five-year study by the Bureau of Reclamation that led to the release of a record of decision in favor of the project earlier this year.

So far, the only alternative being looked at by the Corps is the pipeline coming from Pueblo Dam. Colorado Springs is proposing a \$1.1 billion pipeline that would take water 50 miles north to a storage reservoir on Upper Williams Creek southeast of Colorado Springs. The water would enter the Colorado Springs system through a new treatment plant on the city's eastern side.

Pueblo West would tap into the new connection at the dam to increase the volume of water it takes from Lake Pueblo.

Pueblo County and Fremont County both have approved the project. The Fremont County alternative would cost more to build and operate, but there are fewer regulatory costs.

The Fremont County option still includes terminal storage at Jimmy Camp Creek, which was questioned in Corps comments on Reclamation's environmental impact statement.

Colorado Springs Utilities is now doing a business evaluation to decide which route to recommend to Colorado Springs City Council sometime this summer.