

Pipeline may meet regional water needs **Colorado Springs looking at supplying other users in El Paso County.** **July 23, 2009**

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COLORADO SPRINGS - Before it's even built, the Southern Delivery System pipeline is being looked at as a way to move water to other parts of El Paso County.

"If Colorado Springs Utilities doesn't become the regional water supplier, someone else will step in and do it," said Tony Elia, chairman of the Utilities Policy Advisory Council.

Elia was giving a report from UPAC's meeting earlier this month, where the concept was discussed in general.

His comments resonated during the discussion about SDS by Colorado Springs City Council Wednesday, although nothing was decided. Mayor Lionel Rivera said participation by other water providers could be a way to move up the timetable for the project and help pay some of the costs.

"One water supplier could deliver water more efficiently," Rivera said. "But I'm more concerned about our ratepayers." Later, Rivera was more direct about the benefits of becoming a regional supplier: "Willing partners could move the construction up earlier."

Vice Mayor Larry Small and Councilman Darryl Glenn also suggested the pipeline could be built sooner and paid for more easily by letting others into the project.

Councilman Tom Gallagher, the lone vote against SDS, spoke against the idea of enlarging the pool of users on the pipeline, saying council's first obligation is to supply water to its own service area.

"They're asking us to support their growth," Gallagher said. "Do we have the supply to support their growth? If we're not using the proper supply to make our decisions, we are risking our ability to serve our ratepayers."

The pipeline proposal has been a suggested route for using water purchased upstream along the Arkansas River by El Paso County communities in recent months.

The Donala Water District north of Colorado Springs has purchased a ranch in Lake County and Widefield has teamed with Fountain, an SDS partner, to buy a ranch in Custer County for water rights.

The pipeline could also be used to move leased agricultural water from the Super Ditch or other interests to Colorado Springs or other El Paso County water providers.

Under Pueblo County land use regulations, any partners in SDS would have to agree to the same conditions as other partners, including provisions to participate in the Pueblo Arkansas River flow management program and agreeing not to use the pipeline to move water out of the Arkansas River basin.