

## Suthers: Flood funding needed

### Springs mayor wants to head off Pueblo lawsuit

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Colorado Springs Mayor John Suthers made a strong statement for stormwater funding in his state of the city speech Wednesday.

In doing so, he prominently highlighted the reason it is needed is to reduce the harmful impact to Pueblo from increased flows on Fountain Creek caused by growth in Colorado Springs. Spring rains caused millions of dollars in damage in both counties this spring.

“As recently as the late 1960s, our neighbor to the south, Pueblo, was larger than Colorado Springs. Since then Colorado Springs has grown to be about four times the size of Pueblo and that means considerably more impervious surfaces contributing to stormwater flow into Fountain Creek, with impacts on Pueblo,” Suthers said.

The mayor carefully reviewed the history of the stormwater enterprise approved by Colorado Springs City Council in 2005. It generated about \$15 million per year until 2009, when council abolished the fee on a 5-4 vote in an interpretation of a public vote.

In the meantime, Colorado Springs negotiated a 1041 permit with Pueblo County for the Southern Delivery System that included reliance on the stormwater enterprise.

“Pueblo contends that in issuing the permit they were relying on the fact Colorado Springs would continue funding a stormwater enterprise and is considering a lawsuit to revoke or amend the permit,” Suthers said. “I and members of the City Council, which also serves as the utility board, have been negotiating with Pueblo in an attempt to resolve the matter.”

Pueblo County has hired Wright Water Engineers to document the relationship of higher impact flows on Fountain Creek and growth in Colorado Springs.

“We would like to avoid litigation that would delay SDS from going online in 2016,” Suthers said.

Suthers and council are proposing a plan to provide \$19 million annually for at least 10 years, and highlighted specific budget areas where the money would come from. He also referred to last year’s vote where Colorado Springs and El Paso County voters narrowly rejected a regional drainage authority.

“While Pikes Peak area voters declined to pass a stormwater proposal in November 2014, this is a complex problem that is not going away and needs to be addressed,” Suthers said. “And I emphasize that this is a public safety issue for the citizens of Colorado Springs as well as those of Pueblo.