

**SDS: Fremont County Won't Pay**

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**By John Fredell**

Colorado Springs Utilities is exploring the possibility of building the Southern Delivery System pipeline through Fremont County.

From the beginning, we've approached SDS with a commitment to ourselves and others that we will minimize the impact of SDS on the environment and those who are affected by the project. Based on questions we've heard from residents of Fremont County, I want to reiterate and put in writing for all to see four commitments related to SDS that reflect what we've communicated in face-to-face discussions.

**Commitment No. 1: Fremont County won't have to help pay for SDS**

In April, Colorado Springs signed an intergovernmental agreement with Fremont County Commissioners establishing a well-defined process for us to work with the County for the review of permit applications associated with SDS.

Under the agreement, Colorado Springs will reimburse the County for any costs related to reviewing SDS permit applications. And we made a \$50,000 deposit up front, which the County will use to cover its fees and costs. If the fees are more than \$50,000, we'll pay them. If costs are less, Fremont County will reimburse the balance.

The payments will cover the cost of public hearings, compiling of public comments, obtaining legal, engineering or other consultant assistance and any other activities the County has to perform related to SDS permits.

**Commitment No. 2: We'll restore any land we disturb**

Our first choice is to build the SDS pipeline from Pueblo Dam through Pueblo County because it is the most direct route and therefore least costly to our customers. But there's a real possibility we may need to build the pipeline through Fremont County instead.

Pursuant to our agreement with the County, we'll mitigate or address any impacts we have on private or public land or the environment. We'll mitigate impacts to affected roads, other infrastructure, river banks and parks. And, in some cases, we'll improve the current condition.

**Commitment No. 3: Landowners will be fairly compensated**

We've met with many landowners along the proposed Fremont County route of the SDS pipeline to open a dialogue and make sure they're informed of our plans.

Although a final decision has not been made on where the pipeline will be built, we need to be in a position to be able to begin construction once the Bureau of Reclamation issues its Record of Decision on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SDS, likely next year.

With that in mind, we've begun evaluating the potential alignment through Fremont County and drilling to test soil and geologic conditions.

In addition to obtaining owners' permission to enter their property, we are notifying each landowner in advance when we plan to be on their property, giving them the opportunity to be present while our crews are there, if they choose.

If the pipeline is built through Fremont County, we'll make sure all landowners are informed before and during construction on their property.

Any owner whose land is impacted by construction will be fairly compensated.

#### **Commitment #4: We won't harm your water**

If we build the SDS pipeline through Fremont County, we'll take water from the Arkansas River near Florence. That's downstream from the municipal water intakes in Fremont County.

SDS water impacts in Fremont County will be negligible. So, we won't increase water or wastewater treatment costs for your communities.

We already own rights to the water we will use for SDS. We won't injure anyone else's water rights.

Colorado Springs participates in the Upper Arkansas Voluntary Flow Management Program — a program that establishes target minimum water flow rates in the river to assure fishery and recreational needs are met. Additionally, we will manage SDS operations to honor a minimum flow of 190 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the Fremont County Rainbow Park Wastewater Treatment Facility outfall near Florence.

An early version of the plans for the Highway 115 Alternative for SDS, the alternative that means building the pipeline in Fremont County, envisioned a return-flow pipeline that would have discharged some of our treated wastewater into the Arkansas River above Pueblo Reservoir.

The Bureau of Reclamation modified this alternative to send the return flow to Fountain Creek. A return-flow pipeline that would discharge water into the Arkansas River above Pueblo Reservoir is not a component we're interested in building.

Colorado Springs needs SDS and will pay for it

Colorado Springs needs the Southern Delivery System. Our future depends on it. We can't maintain our quality of life or our healthy economy without it.

But we also recognize you shouldn't have to pay for it — either financially or because of negative impacts to your water. And you have our commitment we will pay for our project, minimize impacts to your community and look for economic and other opportunities to partner with you if we build SDS in your county.

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