

SDS Won't Harm Fountain Creek

[Southern Delivery System](#) (SDS) impacts to water quality and quantity on Fountain Creek were evaluated as part of the Bureau of Reclamation's [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#) (DEIS) for the project. Additionally, water quality also was re-analyzed in its [Supplemental Information Report](#) (SIR).

The SIR concluded the amount of E. coli in the creek will not increase as a result of SDS, and in fact, the concentrations could even be slightly less during the operation of SDS due to additional water in the creek. Additionally, the study found SDS won't increase levels of selenium, a naturally occurring metal, in Fountain Creek. These findings are significant because the water-quality impact of SDS has now been analyzed using two different scientific methods, and they have on both drawn similar conclusions.

The SIR also conducted a dam failure analysis for the two reservoirs that will be built in El Paso County to store water used for SDS. These reservoirs would be designed and constructed according to the dam safety criteria specified by the Colorado State Engineer's office, resulting in a low probability of actual dam failures. The dam safety rules require the dams to be built to withstand failure in a storm that would produce 37 inches of rain and withstand a flood of 150,000 cubic feet per second (1.2 million gallons per second). To provide a comparison, a storm this size would produce three times the amount of water generated during the 1965 flood of Fountain Creek. The SIR discussed that in the event of an "unlikely dam breach," flooding would occur downstream. The *Pueblo Chieftain* referenced this information on the dams to draw the erroneous conclusion that "SDS won't control flooding." This information is misleading.

Here are the facts:

SDS was never intended to be a flood control project. The volume of water the project will return to Fountain Creek will not be enough to increase peak flood flows in creek. Peak flood flows are the maximum amount of water flowing down a stream during a rain storm event.

The SDS DEIS study on Fountain Creek actually showed none of the SDS alternatives studied increased flood risks; they all have negligible or minor benefits to reducing flooding. This is because both reservoirs planned to store water for the SDS project will actually decrease flooding along Williams Creek, which in return, will decrease the amount of the peak flow water migrating into Fountain Creek during storm events.

The flooding that has occurred on Fountain Creek has been caused by stormwater run-off and the amount of rain that falls during a storm. Floods on Fountain Creek have been recorded back as far as 1864. A flood in 1965, which had a peak water flow of 47,000 cubic feet per second (351,584 gallons per second), remains the most significant flood of record on Fountain Creek in Pueblo, and occurred long before Colorado Springs was a large city. The flood added approximately 20 feet of water (240 inches) to the creek. For large storms like this that are likely to occur only once in 100 years, the volume of rain is the largest contributing factor to flooding.

The depth the creek will raise when SDS is operating will vary based on the width of the creek. For example, at a location near Pueblo, the project will contribute base flows to Fountain Creek

on average of approximately 50 cubic feet per second (374 gallons per second) of water, or up to three inches of added depth in the creek. In other areas where the creek is wider, the depth would be even less.

This amount of water, coupled with the incidental flood-control benefits the SDS reservoirs provide, negates flood risks from SDS.

To control stormwater run-off, Colorado Springs practices stormwater abatement practices. Additionally, regional planning efforts, in which Colorado Springs participates, are examining other measures to control flooding along the creek.

For more information about Fountain Creek, please attend a **public information session from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Oct. 30**, which is hosted by the SDS project participants. Additionally, two open houses hosted by the [Fountain Creek Vision Task Force](#) are scheduled to discuss findings of a two-year study on the creek. The meetings will be held on Nov. 12 at the Pueblo Convention Center, 320 Central Main St. and Nov. 13 at the Leon Young Service Center in Colorado Springs, 1521 Hancock Expressway. Both events run from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Southern Delivery System / eNews is an electronic newsletter designed to keep interested public officials and members of the public up-to-date on developments associated with the Southern Delivery System. Please forward it to anyone you think would be interested. Contact us at sdsinfo@csu.org to subscribe or unsubscribe.

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