

Reclamation asked to begin SDS contract talks
Timetable will not be set until bureau can review the Colorado Springs letter.
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THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Colorado Springs has asked the Bureau of Reclamation to begin negotiations for the Southern Delivery System contracts "as soon as possible."

"To maintain our current schedule to begin construction on the Pueblo Dam connection in early 2010, we have requested that Reclamation move forward with the contracting process as soon as possible," said John Fredell, project director.

Reclamation has yet to review the letter sent this week, so it has not set a timetable for negotiations, said Kara Lamb, Reclamation public information officer.

The contract negotiations will provide an additional opportunity for public comment on SDS, a \$1 billion-plus pipeline project on track to be completed by 2016.

The pipeline would take up to 78 million gallons per day to Colorado Springs, Fountain and Security in El Paso County. The negotiation meetings are open to the public as well.

Pueblo West wants to tap into the pipeline at Pueblo Dam, which would add 18 million gallons a day to its capacity. The metro district is still in negotiations with Pueblo County, Colorado Springs and others about its refusal to participate in the Pueblo flow program, however.

Pueblo West is suing Pueblo County over its condition, accepted by Colorado Springs and the other SDS partners, to participate in the flow program.

"We have been meeting with Pueblo West regularly to work toward a resolution, but we don't have a projection as to when this will be complete. We still believe that partnering with Pueblo West on SDS offers benefits to both of our communities," Fredell said.

Colorado Springs Utilities also is seeking permits in El Paso County, and expects to present its case to the El Paso County Planning Commission in February, Fredell said.

The city also has scheduled meetings with the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District, its technical advisory committee and its citizens advisory group during December and January.

The district, formed this year, has some direct authority over SDS because it will construct part of the pipeline in the Fountain Creek flood plain. It also has an advisory role to the El Paso County Planning Commission since the project would affect flows into the watershed.

Some members of the board and advisory board have expressed concern about how voters' rejection of a stormwater enterprise in the November elections could affect commitments made to Pueblo and other downstream users in gaining approval for SDS.

Colorado Springs Chief of Water Services Bruce McCormick has said the city intends to fund its commitments on Fountain Creek through the SDS funding process, and the vote won't affect those commitments.