

SDS DEIS Issues Paper

SDS Impacts on Recreation

Because recreation resources are important amenities and economic generators for communities in the Southern Delivery System (SDS) project area, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) analyzed the effects of the project on recreation in the area by studying: (1) changes in Arkansas River flows; (2) changes in reservoir volume; (3) changes in water quality and fisheries; (4) physical impacts to parks and trails; and (5) physical impediments to recreation access.

The DEIS evaluated existing recreation conditions and those anticipated under a number of possible future scenarios. All the Alternatives are compared to the No Action Alternative, which is used as the “baseline.” The No Action Alternative is compared to Existing Conditions or the current conditions that exist in the environment.

Key DEIS Finding: The Action Alternatives would have no major adverse impacts on recreation compared to the conditions that exist today. There would be major benefits for all alternatives because of increased recreational opportunities at the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek or Upper Williams Creek Reservoirs.

Existing Conditions

The main recreation resources that exist today are water-based – boating in Pueblo Reservoir, and rafting, kayaking and fishing on the Arkansas River – and land-based – hiking, camping and biking in the parks, trails and open space and strolling along Pueblo’s Historic Arkansas Riverwalk.

No Action Alternative (Alternative 1)

- The proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Park and Reservoir would have beneficial effects because of new opportunities for boating and fishing.
- There would be a temporary minor adverse effect on boat access to the BLM’s Blue Heron property during construction.
- There would be a minor adverse effect on boating opportunities on the Arkansas River through Pueblo because the Pueblo Flow Management Program targets would be met 11 days less than Existing Conditions during the 245-day boating season.

Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative 2)

- The proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Park and Reservoir would have beneficial effects because of new opportunities for boating and fishing.
- Between Florence and Pueblo Reservoir, compared to Existing Conditions, there would be moderate to major benefits to boating because of an increase in streamflow during the fall that would extend the boating season.
- There would be minor to moderate benefits to boating opportunities through Pueblo because the Pueblo Flow Management Program targets would be met 15 more days during the boating season compared to the No Action Alternative, and 4 more days than Existing Conditions.
- There would be moderate adverse effects to fishing in Lake Henry, due to decreased water storage in dry years compared to Existing Conditions, and minor to moderate benefits on water-based recreation on Lake Meredith, due to increased water levels in dry years compared to Existing Conditions.
- There would be minor adverse temporary effects (i.e., 400 feet out of 17 miles of trail) on the Pueblo Reservoir trail during construction of the Pueblo West intake and western untreated water pipeline.

Highway 115 Alternative (Alternative 7)

- The proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Park and Reservoir would have beneficial effects because of new opportunities for boating and fishing.
- Between Florence and Pueblo Reservoir, compared to Existing Conditions, there would be moderate to major benefits to boating because of an increase in streamflow during the fall that would extend the boating season.
- There would be a temporary minor adverse effect on boat access to the BLM's Blue Heron property during construction.
- There would be a minor adverse effect on boating opportunities through Pueblo because the Pueblo Flow Management Program targets would be met 22 days less during the boating season compared to the No Action Alternative, and 33 days less than Existing Conditions.
- There would be moderate adverse effects to fishing downstream of Pueblo Dam because of the anticipated water changes (i.e., more zero-flow days, lower winter water flows, and higher maximum water flows) that would stress fish and reduce habitat availability.

No Action, Proposed Action and Highway 115 Alternatives

All of the alternatives discussed above would have the following similar impacts compared to Existing Conditions:

- The changes in the volume of water in Pueblo Reservoir would be too small to measurably affect the quality of the recreation experience or visitation numbers.
- Hunting in the Upper Arkansas Valley would not be affected.
- There would be minor adverse effects to Fountain Creek Regional and Clear Spring Ranch parks, because:
- The new water intake and return flow conveyance facilities would affect 13 acres (3 percent) of the total acreage at Fountain Creek Regional Park.
 - Between 10 and 19 acres (1 and 2 percent) of the total park area at Clear Spring Ranch Park would be impacted, depending on the Alternative. There would be a facilities complex with the No Action and Highway 115 Alternatives, and a pump station and return flow pipeline with the Proposed Action.
- No conflicts with existing recreational plans or policies are anticipated.