

Water planning a top priority for Colorado Springs Utilities
By Jerry Forte
CEO, Colorado Springs Utilities
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You've probably heard about many communities in the Western United States struggling to provide their citizens water. Providing our customers with a reliable water supply is a responsibility we take very seriously.

In fact, because we are the only large, Front Range city not located near a major river, water planning has always been a priority for Colorado Springs Utilities.

Beyond our daily routines, water supports our regional economy, military operations and recreational activities – making Colorado Springs a great place to live, work and play.

Getting water here is no small task. Colorado Springs gets 70 percent of its water from Colorado's Western Slope. It's brought here through a unique and complex delivery system, spanning seven counties, including 25 reservoirs and 200 miles of pipes.

Much of this system was built more than 40 years ago. As the pipes age, the risk of costly, unexpected repairs will increase. Just as prior citizens built and paid for the system we now use to deliver water, we must continue to invest in our community's future.

In the next 20 years, more than half the population growth in Colorado Springs will come from our children and grandchildren. People moving here from outside El Paso County will make up the balance – including families moving here due to military base expansions.

Utility customers are doing a good job conserving water – using less water per capita than most cities in the West. Yet, these efforts alone will not be enough to meet our long-term water needs.

Fortunately, we have rights to additional water from the Arkansas River. We just need a way to bring it here – a southern delivery system. This new system is vital for the future of Colorado Springs and our neighbors in Fountain and Security.

Hundreds of options have been considered. Yet, one stands above the rest from a cost, environmental, water quality and operational perspective: a pipeline from Pueblo Reservoir.

El Paso County residents have already contributed more than \$65 million in property taxes to repay the loan for this federally-owned water storage facility. A pipeline from Pueblo Reservoir will allow us to maximize these investments.

Because this reservoir is a federal facility, an extensive environmental review is required under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. The review is managed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Seven pipeline alternatives – five in Pueblo County and two in Fremont County – continue to be evaluated by Reclamation in preparation for a draft Environmental Impact Statement early next year, and an expected final recommendation in 2009.

Any of these alternatives can meet our future water needs, but each varies in the cost to build and operate. We're doing everything possible to construct the most cost-effective and environmentally-responsible option.

One thing is certain. Any pipeline we build will cross an adjacent county. So it's important to work with neighboring communities to minimize any construction impacts and address other concerns.

For instance, as a community, we have a responsibility to effectively manage our impacts on Fountain Creek.

As Fountain Creek flows through Colorado Springs and downstream to Pueblo before joining the Arkansas River, it picks up runoff from ranches, farmland and other communities, as well as from our streets, neighborhoods and businesses. The City Stormwater Enterprise demonstrates our commitment to the environment and to the safety of our own citizens.

Our wastewater collection and treatment systems also have a role in the water quality in Fountain Creek. To protect the environment, our community and our neighbors, you've invested more than \$200 million in our wastewater collection system and treatment plants – preventing spills and ensuring the water coming out of our plants is better quality than already exists in the creek.

Although we face many challenges to bring water to our community, I want to assure you that we have several options available to us. The extensive planning and environmental review processes are necessary to ensure we pursue the best option to meet our long-term water needs.

We appreciate the needed support of our community, and welcome the opportunity to talk with your business or community group about this vital and historic water delivery project. Simply call 448-4800 to arrange a presentation, or visit www.csu.org to learn more.