



CONTACT: 668-3848
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Mayor Rivera says delay for SDS would be a mistake

Colorado Springs Mayor Lionel Rivera today questioned Rep. Mark Udall's (D-Colorado) call for a delay in the Southern Delivery System (SDS) Environmental Impact Statement stating "it would be a mistake for Colorado Springs and its partner communities (Fountain, Security and Pueblo West)."

"The Southern Delivery System is absolutely critical to the future of Colorado Springs," Rivera added. "We need SDS. We can't sustain our quality of life or our healthy economy without it. But it's not just the future of Colorado Springs that's at stake. If we delay SDS until water shortages occur, the economy of the entire Arkansas River Basin will suffer. We need one another."

"We've encouraged a collaborative and less contentious process all along," Rivera said. "Over the past four years, we have proactively reached out to our customers, Pueblo officials, environmental groups, Arkansas Valley communities and others to better understand their concerns and seek their input." (see attached public involvement activities)

He noted that Colorado Springs has formed a partnership on Fountain Creek with the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District and signed intergovernmental agreements with Fremont County Commissioners on SDS permitting and with the Pueblo City Council on flows in the Arkansas River.

Rivera said the Proposed Action outlined in the Draft EIS published by the Bureau of Reclamation reflects extensive public input and is a cost effective, environmentally responsible and dependable way to deliver the water we need for our future

Rivera urged the Bureau of Reclamation to complete work on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project so construction can begin in time to avoid water shortages that would damage the region's economy and quality of life. This has impacts beyond Colorado Springs. Security and Fountain need the water to be provided from SDS even sooner than our community.

"We believe a delay would be an unnecessary and costly mistake given that the Draft EIS was a thorough and robust environmental review and delays can only mean added costs to our customers and could jeopardize our ability to deliver water when needed," he said.

"The kind of review Rep. Udall suggested in his letter is exactly what is already being done as part of the federal review process. Under that process, Reclamation is required to review and consider all comments made by the public – including comments from supporters and critics,"

Rivera noted. "This is the time when issues can be resolved. A delay at this point would hinder these positive efforts."

Reclamation received 375 comments during the 4 1/2-month public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. More comments were submitted supporting SDS from Pueblo Dam (Alternative 2) than any other option.

Udall sent a letter to the Bureau of Reclamation this week urging it to slow down work on the final EIS for SDS "so that public comments and concerns can be seriously considered." (see attached Udall letter)

"Unfortunately, Rep. Udall hasn't discussed the issue with us," Rivera said. "We learned of his request to the Bureau of Reclamation from the news media. And I'm concerned that he based his request for delay on comments submitted by the most vocal critic of SDS, who also has a long-standing animosity toward our city."

In his letter to the Bureau of Reclamation, Udall cited comments by *Pueblo Chieftain* Publisher R. H. Rawlings as justification for delaying completion of the EIS for the project.

Udall also suggested that the project could make its way into the House Natural Resources Committee and the Subcommittee on Water and Power.

"We can't afford to have our project get caught up in election-year politics," Rivera said. "SDS is simply too important to our future, and to the future of our partner communities, for that kind of posturing."