

SOUTHERN DELIVERY SYSTEM | eNews
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Bureau of Reclamation Issues Record of Decision for Southern Delivery System; Milestone Completes NEPA Review: The Bureau of Reclamation today announced its release of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Southern Delivery System (SDS) – completing its review of the \$1.1 billion water project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

“This is a critical milestone toward making the Southern Delivery System, and the water it will provide for our future, a reality,” said Colorado Springs Mayor Lionel Rivera. “Reclamation’s review of SDS was lengthy, thorough and complete and we will construct a better project as a result.”

“With the approval of our land use permit in Fremont County and approval by the Pueblo County Commissioners of the conditions for the Pueblo 1041 Permit, the issuance of the ROD brings us even closer to making SDS a reality,” said John Fredell, SDS Project Director.

Reclamation’s review of the project under NEPA included the publication last year of a Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that analyzed seven potential alternatives for the project – including the Project Participants’ Proposed Action, a 53-mile pipeline originating at Pueblo Dam.

The Project Participants have narrowed their focus to two of the seven alternatives included in the EIS. The Proposed Action has been the preferred option for Colorado Springs Utilities because it the most direct route, less expensive to construct and has the least environmental impact.

Additionally, Pueblo Reservoir would provide a more stable source of water which allows the greatest flexibility for managing our water supply and requires less water treatment. Given the choice, municipal water providers prefer connecting to a reservoir for these reasons. Reclamation has identified the Proposed Action as its Preferred Alternative.

The other alignment being considered – the Highway 115 Alternative – involves a pipeline originating in Fremont County that would draw water from the Arkansas River near Florence. If the SDS project participants opted to build the Fremont County alignment, they would ask for the ROD to be modified.

The ROD is a separate document that describes Reclamations’ environmental review, the alternatives they analyzed and some of required mitigation. The ROD was signed by Michael Ryan, Regional Director for Reclamation’s Great Plains Region. The ROD clears the way for the Project Participants to negotiate SDS-related water storage, conveyance and exchange contracts with Reclamation for the Preferred Alternative. Although the Project Participants own rights to the water they will obtain through SDS, the contracts with Reclamation are required because the project will make use of water stored and managed by Reclamation as part of the federal Fryingpan-Arkansas Project, which includes Pueblo Reservoir.

The water contracts between Reclamation and the Project Participants will incorporate comprehensive mitigation requirements outlined in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The mitigation requirements will require the Project Participants to monitor and offset potential impacts in eight categories: surface water, vegetation, wildlife, recreation, wetlands, stream bank and channel stability, water quality and others.

NEPA Review Milestones

The Record of Decision by the Bureau of Reclamation completes a lengthy review required by the federal National Environmental Policy Act that began more than five years ago with a review of a number of potential alternatives, including the seven ultimately included in the environmental impact statement for the project.

Some major milestones in the NEPA review, beginning with the publication last year of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

2008

• February 29 – Draft Environmental Impact Statement • April 1-10 – Open houses for public education and public input • June 13 – End of public comment period for Draft Environmental Impact Statement • October 3 – Supplemental Information Report (SIR) • November 24 – End of public-comment period on SIR • December 12 – Final Environmental Impact Statement

2009

• March 20 – Record of Decision

For more information on the Southern Delivery System, visit www.sdswater.org.

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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