



Denver Office
1580 Lincoln Street
Suite 1080
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: 303-468-8860
Fax: 303-468-8866

Keystone Office
1628 Sts. John Road
Keystone, CO 80435
Phone: 970-513-5800
Fax: 970-262-0152
www.keystone.org

Washington, DC Office
1730 Rhode Island Ave.,
NW, Suite 509
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-452-1590
Fax: 202-452-1138

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El Paso and Pueblo Counties Approve Joint Fountain Creek Governing Board to Manage Major Flood Control, Water Quality and Recreational Improvements

-- New Board Will Seek Approval from Colorado Legislature to Create Special District

Tuesday, December 16, 2008—In an historic collaborative move, El Paso and Pueblo County Commissioners signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) and demonstrated their cooperative efforts to make major improvements to Fountain Creek. The agreement will create a Fountain Creek Watershed Governing Board, responsible for managing projects to control flooding, improve water quality and create recreational facilities along the creek.

The agreement is the culmination of a two-year effort by the Fountain Creek Vision Task Force, a broad coalition representing local governments and other stakeholder interests from throughout the Fountain Creek Watershed. Over the last two years, the Task Force developed a cooperative framework and strategic plan for addressing broad based issues related to Fountain Creek.

The Pueblo Board of County Commissioners approved the IGA today, just one day after it was ratified by the El Paso County Board of Commissioners. The action by commissioners from the two counties is the first of several steps aimed at creating a Fountain Creek Watershed District. The District would have the ability to establish revenue and manage other funding to pay for improvements and maintenance of Fountain Creek as permitted under Title 32 and as authorized by the State of Colorado.

El Paso County Commissioner Sallie Clark and Pueblo County Commissioner Jeff Chostner said in a joint statement, “This is the beginning of a new era for Fountain Creek.” Both Clark and Chostner helped to create the Fountain Creek Vision Task Force in 2006. “The Governing Board and the Special District we hope to create next year pave the way for meaningful cooperative efforts to address and fix problems that have plagued Fountain Creek for decades,” they stated. “While we still have a lot of work to do, we’re well on our way to transforming Fountain Creek into a tremendous amenity for the residents of Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Fountain, and the many other communities along the creek. This is a truly an historic day.”

The IGA permits other municipalities to be included as signatories and participate on the board. Once ratified by other eligible entities, the new Governing Board will have nine members – four each from El Paso and Pueblo counties and a ninth member from the Citizens Advisory Group of the Vision Task Force. The four members from El Paso County will represent El Paso County, Colorado Springs, Fountain, and either a small municipality or a citizen of the County. The four

members from Pueblo County will represent Pueblo County, the City of Pueblo, a citizen of the County, and a representative from the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District.

One of the Governing Board's first acts will be to lead an effort to work with the Colorado Legislature when it convenes next month for legislation authorizing the creation of a special district with the authority to manage funds for Fountain Creek-related improvements. Supporters of the effort are encouraging legislators from both Pueblo and El Paso Counties to co-sponsor the legislation.

“Both Counties have worked to overcome different regional perspectives to forge a combined vision for Fountain Creek that will be an amenity to both communities,” Chostner and Clark noted. “So we’re optimistic that a bill sponsored by legislators from both Counties will gain broad support within the Legislature.”

If the District is approved, the Governing Board created by the action of the two County commissions will become the initial governing board for the new district. The District would manage, administer, and fund capital improvements and maintenance projects to mitigate flooding, sedimentation, and erosion; address water quality issues; and improve drainage along the creek. It also would develop open space, parks, trails, and other recreational facilities within the Fountain Creek Watershed.

For more information:

Visit: www.fountain-crk.org

Contact: Niki Koszalka, The Keystone Center (303) 468-8860