



Improving and Protecting Fountain Creek

Much of the discussion about Fountain Creek focuses on past problems — not what the creek is or what it’s becoming. And concerns that the Southern Delivery System (SDS) will aggravate problems on Fountain Creek are largely based on misperceptions rather than facts.

Colorado Springs has acted aggressively to resolve past problems with Fountain Creek. We’re also part of several exciting regional efforts underway to improve the creek and make it an amenity for many communities to enjoy. And while SDS doesn’t create significant impacts to the creek, we’re committed to addressing those that do occur.

Our accomplishments over the past five years demonstrate the potential for improving Fountain Creek. But we also recognize we have a ways to go. That’s why we’re teaming up with others in the region who also care about the future of Fountain Creek to help fund and create a vision that will maximize the creek’s full potential. As the region’s largest city, Colorado Springs has a significant responsibility for Fountain Creek. And our community is stepping up to do our part.

Colorado Springs Actions to Improve Fountain Creek

State-of-the-art treatment facilities help ensure that we treat the water we use to a high standard – meeting and often exceeding state and federal regulations – before returning it into Fountain Creek.

In the mid 1990s, Colorado Springs Utilities spent more than \$40 million to upgrade our wastewater treatment plant. And since 2000, we’ve spent more than \$100 million upgrading our wastewater

collection system. The net result: The water we put into Fountain Creek today is cleaner than the water already there for most constituents. And we’re not done. By 2025, we will have invested \$250 million over 20 years in our wastewater collection system.

Colorado Springs has also made big investments to control wastewater spills that could affect the creek. We’re the only utility in Colorado and one of the few in the country that has a wastewater spill-recovery program that protects the environment in the event of an accidental wastewater spill and prevents it from reaching downstream neighbors. In 2007, we spent \$10 million on a wastewater spill-recovery project on Fountain Creek. As a result of these efforts, wastewater spills per miles of pipe in our system are among the lowest in the country.

And we will be able to contain the vast majority of the few wastewater spills that do occur — although, to date, we haven’t had to make use of this wastewater spill-recovery capability.

Additionally, the City of Colorado Springs is investing \$17 million annually from the Storm Water Enterprise, inaugurated in 2006, to further reduce flooding severity, reduce stream erosion and sedimentation and improve water quality.

Regional Cooperation

Meaningful, long-term solutions for the Fountain Creek Watershed will come from continued regional cooperation. By working together on regional solutions, we’ll turn our waterways into amenities we can all be proud of and enjoy. Colorado Springs Utilities has made a major investment in staff time, expertise and funding on the following programs to improve the creek:



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- The Fountain Creek Vision Task Force is studying strategies for addressing issues related to improving Fountain Creek. One early benefit has been to bring concerned parties from communities throughout the watershed together to work on coordinated solutions – something that didn't happen in the past. Colorado Springs supports the creation of a regionwide watershed entity to further the strategies of the Vision Task Force.
- The Fountain Creek Foundation was formed by several individuals committed to the watershed to attract private funding for outreach and educational purposes. But that entity alone won't shoulder the entire burden of funding and implementing the goals of the Vision Task Force. For that reason, Colorado Springs supports the Vision Task Force's goal to form a regional organization to improve the Fountain Creek watershed.
- The Fountain Creek Corridor Master Plan is a joint \$600,000 project of Colorado Springs Utilities and the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District (LAVWCD) to develop a master plan that will turn Fountain Creek into a showcase park and recreational amenity. The master plan, to be unveiled in Fall 2008, will provide a blueprint to improve the health of the watershed, create ecosystems that support native wildlife and plants, sustain productive agricultural lands and lay out a trail between Colorado Springs and Pueblo with recreational, educational and tourism opportunities.
- The Fountain Creek Watershed Plan Technical Advisory Committee is composed of technical representatives from the cities and counties along the Fountain Creek Watershed, including Colorado Springs. The group reviews and provides input on technical issues. This group is sponsoring a \$3 million Fountain Creek Watershed Study by the Army Corps of Engineers to define common watershed concerns and to make recommendations to address them. This study will be completed by Fall 2008.

SDS and Fountain Creek

As proposed, SDS will use a 43-mile-long underground pipeline connected to Pueblo Dam to deliver water to Colorado Springs, Fountain, Security and Pueblo West (visit www.sdswater.org for more details). Several of the alternatives will discharge treated wastewater from Colorado Springs to Fountain Creek. SDS will have some impact on Fountain Creek due to increased flows that result from the discharge of these treated return flows. However, according to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for SDS, none of these impacts will be significant and they will be appropriately mitigated.

The biggest concerns expressed about SDS and Fountain Creek are deteriorating water quality and the increased threat of flooding from an increased discharge of water to the creek. SDS alternatives that discharge water into Fountain Creek will increase water flowing down the creek, but not enough to increase the risk of flooding. To put this into perspective, near Pueblo the water we discharge to Fountain Creek keeps typical water levels slightly above ankle level today. At that same location, the water would only rise another inch and a half after SDS is fully operational. The flooding that occurs along the creek comes from the runoff during major storms. The Colorado Springs City Storm Water Enterprise is aimed specifically at improving the city's ability to control stormwater runoff. And the Army Corps of Engineers is conducting a study to develop a potential flood-control program for Fountain Creek. We support their efforts and look forward to seeing their recommendations.

Some additional water in the creek is beneficial because it dilutes compounds naturally found in the creek, such as naturally occurring salts and selenium.

We will be required to mitigate the impacts SDS does create for Fountain Creek. The Bureau of Reclamation will outline those requirements in its Record of Decision for the Environmental Impact Statement for the project.