



October 30, 2012

Signe Snortland, Reclamation Environmental Specialist
Bureau of Reclamation
Dakotas Area Office,
PO Box 1017, Bismarck ND 58502
jsnortland@usbr.gov

RE: Arkansas Valley Conduit Long-Term Excess Capacity Master Contract Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Ms. Snortland,

Colorado Springs Utilities is submitting the attached comments on the Arkansas Valley Conduit (AVC) / Master Contract Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We are supportive of the AVC and appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the modeling and work done to date to facilitate completion of the EIS, to meet National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for the project. Colorado Springs Utilities desires to work closely with the Bureau of Reclamation, the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District, and other stakeholders on the proposal moving forward and reserve the right to provide additional comments in the future as new information comes to light or as further analysis is conducted.

In reviewing the modeling documentation, we noticed a fairly significant error in the assumed "mean annual exchanges" for Colorado Springs Utilities. The modeling has the exchanges valued at 6,150 Acre-feet to 6,750 acre-feet. The current Fountain Creek exchanges levels are closer to 24,000 acre-feet. We would like to see this issue resolved and the impacts re-calculated. We would be happy to work with you and your NEPA contractor to resolve this issue.

The remainder of our comments are attached. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions (719) 668-8748.

Thank you,

Abigail Ortega, P.E.

Water Rights Administration Supervisor

cc: Jim Broderick, SECWCD

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Page 2-14 – The text in the box states that the 2006-2010 Environmental Assessment showed no significant impacts for excess capacity contracts up to 80,000 acre-feet. Reclamation has current long term contracts with entities for contracts of 67,000 acre-feet of the excess capacity – the proposed Master Contract storage of 29,938 puts this amount at 96,938 acre-feet. There is no analysis of impacts to levels in Pueblo Reservoir nor is there any reference to spill frequency and impacts of this to streamflow.

Page 2-25 – If no new supplies are to be conveyed through the interconnect, and any user would have an existing conveyance contract for the appropriate outlet works, why is there an assumption that any user of the interconnect would be required to negotiate new contracts for the interconnect? Colorado Springs Utilities believes this could be accomplished through an addendum to the existing conveyance contracts which allows for use of the interconnect if Reclamation has either the North or South Outlet works not operational for any reason (e.g., planned or unplanned outage, etc.).

Page 2-38 – Table 2-14, were the impacts from the increased exchanges evaluated?

Page 3-18 – Please reword “Turquoise Reservoir is generally drawn down... to meet streamflow requirements...” should say “to meet voluntary streamflow targets...”

Page 3-31 – Colorado Springs Utilities would appreciate a more thorough discussion of any ongoing or planned water quality monitoring that may be necessary to fulfill the requirements of this EIS.

Appendix A – Many of the supplies contemplated to be conveyed through the Arkansas Valley Conduit are speculative, will a supplemental EIS be required as new sources are identified and “firmed up”? If the participants do not know how much supply they currently have how can they quantify or demonstrate a need for the project?

Page A.1-17 – Para. 2 states that Southeastern approved the conservation plan, do you mean CWCB?

Page A.1-41 – Colorado Springs Utilities believes that the correct the decree number for the SECWCD is 06CW08.

Page A.1-47 – Para. 3, - Colorado Springs Utilities understands that Fountain will be exchanging water from the confluence of Fountain Creek and the Arkansas River to Pueblo Reservoir? Please list the decrees under which these exchanges will occur.

Page A.1-48 – Colorado Springs Utilities would appreciate clarification on whether the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District (LAVWCD) will be limited to leasing supplies only to the entities listed in the EIS? Will LAVWCD be approved to convey leased water to others outside the SE District boundaries (Cherokee and others?) through USBR facilities?

Page A.1-74 – Please reference where data on Colorado Springs Utilities and Fountain Valley Authority was obtained.

Page A.2-8 – Table is missing decrees for many of the exchanges

Page A.3-5 – (row 11) What action is needed for Fountain’s FMIC shares?

Page A.3-6 – (rows 16-18, rows 21-26) No decrees listed and no explanation given?

Page A.3-16, 17 – formatting issues in rows 65-67?

Appendix D.1 – Table formatting issues

Page D.1-8 – Upper Arkansas Voluntary Flow Program; these are the recommendations as of 2012 but are subject to change – should they really be laid out in the EIS or should there just be a general reference to the flow targets?

Page D.1-9 – Para. 2, The target flows only curtail exchanges by entities that are party to the agreement and are senior in priority to the Pueblo RICD.

Page D.1-10 – Para. 3, Equitable Hours – exchanges are actually curtailed from 7 a.m on Friday through 7 p.m. on Monday

Page D.1-13 – Why is the Homestake Project collection system is even evaluated in the EIS as it has no impact to the AVC or the Master Contract and the Homestake space in Turquoise is separate from the Project space? Colorado Springs Utilities would prefer if this section was removed.

Page D.1-29 – Same comment as above

Page D.1-31 – Left out the fact the Colorado Springs owns 17,416 AF of Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. space in Turquoise.

Page D.1-45 – Homestake Reservoir, same comment as above – why is it included?

Appendix D.4, Table 17 – Direct effects mean annual spills are surprising, would like to see actual modeled results

Appendix D.4, Table 18 – The mean annual river exchanges into Pueblo is confusing; Colorado Springs current exchanges are closer to 24,000 acre-feet – currently shown as 6,140 AF

Appendix D.5-58 – Again, not sure how any of the alternatives would affect Homestake Reservoir or Homestake Creek when neither Aurora nor Colorado Springs Utilities are participants in the projects