

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*



## Newsletter Arkansas Valley Conduit Long-Term Excess Capacity Master Contract Environmental Impact Statement Fryingpan-Arkansas Project, Colorado

**December 2010**

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Arkansas Valley Conduit (AVC), a proposed water supply project to serve the needs of communities in the lower Arkansas Valley, and the Long-Term Excess Capacity Master Contract (Master Contract) which would allow water storage in existing Reclamation reservoirs. This newsletter is the first of several planned periodic updates on EIS activities.

### AVC to Serve Lower Arkansas Valley Communities

The proposed AVC would consist of a pipeline, water treatment facility, and other components to convey water about 135 miles from Pueblo Dam or a downstream diversion point to water providers in the lower Arkansas River basin. AVC would be a feature of the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project (Fry-Ark).

The Fry-Ark Project is an existing Reclamation project that was signed into law in 1962 and constructed from 1964-1982. It conveys water from the western slope of Colorado to the upper Arkansas River Basin near Leadville, where it is stored and delivered to water users within the Southeastern Conservancy District's (Southeastern) boundaries.

Southeastern is the local agency responsible for repayment of the reimbursable costs of the Fry-Ark Project, and allocates water to various ditch companies for irrigation use and to municipal and domestic water suppliers that directly serve Southeastern's constituents.

AVC was not constructed after Fry-Ark was originally authorized primarily because of the inability of the communities who would benefit to repay the allocated construction costs. Federal legislation passed in 2009 amended the original Fry-Ark authorization, allowing for annual appropriations necessary for the construction of the AVC and included a cost-sharing plan. Recently, water users in the lower Arkansas Valley have expressed renewed interest in the AVC due to both higher water treatment costs and changes to the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Colorado Water Conservation Board and State Legislature have approved a loan to meet part of the local share of the AVC project costs.

AVC would provide water for municipal and industrial use in Southeastern's service area (see following page). The water would supplement or replace poor quality water and meet a portion of the project water demands through 2070 for those entities participating in AVC.

### Master Contract for Storage

The master contract is being pursued by Southeastern to provide about 28,000-32,000 acre-feet of excess capacity storage space in Fry-Ark Project reservoirs for non-Fry-Ark Project water. Non-project water would be used to meet existing and future municipal, domestic, industrial, and agricultural demands throughout the participants' service areas. The participating entities include upper and lower Arkansas River Basin, Fountain Creek, and AVC participants within Southeastern's service area boundaries.

### EIS to Address Both Projects

A single EIS is being prepared for AVC and the Master Contract because both proposed actions would serve some of the same participants, have the potential to affect the same environment, and share a similar timeline. The EIS will analyze the effects associated with both construction of the AVC and the issuance of a long-term Master Contract to Southeastern.





Attendees participate in the public scoping meeting in La Junta at the Koshare Indian Museum

## August Public Scoping Meetings Helped Identify Focus of EIS

Public involvement is a key component of the National Environmental Policy Act and is a significant step in the development of the EIS for the proposed actions. The first phase of public involvement is called “scoping.” Scoping helps Reclamation identify early in the process the issues the public feels are most important, the scope of issues to be addressed through the EIS, and possible alternatives to the proposed actions. During the public scoping phase of this project, Reclamation actively solicited comments from the public as well as interested organizations and agencies in the geographic areas that would be directly affected by the proposed actions. The scoping activities were conducted July 30 through September 13, 2010.

Reclamation hosted five public scoping meetings to provide the public, interested organizations and agencies information about the proposed actions and the opportunity to ask questions as well as to submit both verbal and written

comments. In addition, one meeting was held on August 17 with 13 federal, state, and local cooperating agencies that are assisting Reclamation with the EIS.

A number of written and verbal comments were received at the meetings and additional comments submitted following the meetings. A complete record of comments received throughout the public scoping phase is contained in the Public Scoping Report. That report can be accessed through the AVC/Master Contract website at [www.usbr.gov/avceis](http://www.usbr.gov/avceis).

### Issues Identified Through Scoping Process

Reclamation reviewed and considered every comment received during the scoping process. The comments were then grouped for consideration into the following general categories:

- \* Mitigation measures
- \* NEPA process
- \* Purpose and need
- \* Recreation
- \* Social and economic
- \* Transportation
- \* Vegetation
- \* Water conservation
- \* Water quality
- \* Wildlife
- \* Wetlands

These scoping issues will be augmented by other issues identified by Reclamation to be analyzed and documented in the EIS.

### Public Scoping Meetings

Salida	August 16, 2010
La Junta	August 17, 2010
Lamar	August 18, 2010
Fountain	August 19, 2010
Pueblo	August 19, 2010

- \* Alternatives
- \* Aquatic resources
- \* Climate change
- \* Clean Water Act
- \* Cumulative effects
- \* Endangered Species Act
- \* Environmental justice
- \* Historic properties
- \* Hydrology
- \* Invasive species



Reclamation Team Leader Signe Snortland answers questions at the Pueblo meeting

## Next Steps in the Process

Information gathered during the scoping process will assist Reclamation in the development of alternatives and environmental issues for further study through the EIS process. Reclamation will prepare and issue a Draft EIS providing thorough analysis of all the alternatives evaluated in detail. Following release of the Draft EIS, Reclamation will host a series of public hearings to gather comments. The times, dates, and locations of those meetings will be published on the AVC/Master Contract website.

For information and updates about the planning process please visit the project website at [www.usbr.gov/avceis](http://www.usbr.gov/avceis).

### For Questions...

For questions specific to the proposed actions or the EIS please contact:

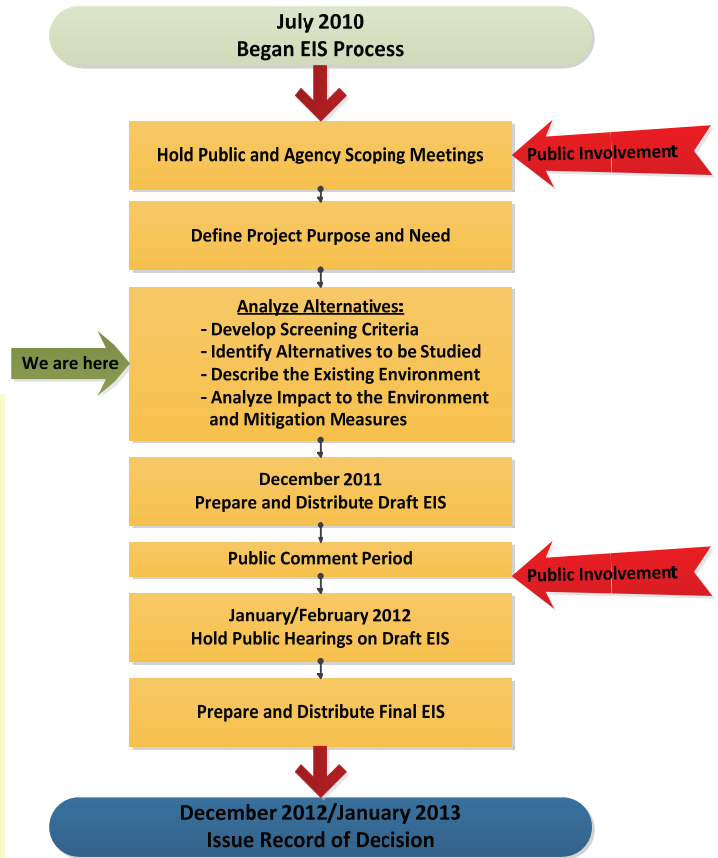
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## Environmental Impact Statement Process\*



\* Dates in the time line are approximate

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