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Cost of SDS outlined by CSU

By **MARY BARRON**

Water service in Colorado Springs is likely to become much more expensive in the next several years as the city takes steps to ensure adequate supply.

Possibly as soon as 2009, water rates are projected to begin a steady climb that would more than double the typical 2007 residential water bill by 2015 and triple the 2007 expense by 2025. Executives at Colorado Springs Utilities say the rate hikes will be needed to pay for construction of a southern delivery system to bring Arkansas River water here, to provide the water supply Colorado Springs will need

for the next 40 years and beyond.

The only alternative, they say, is acceptance that there will be critical water shortages and ever-more stringent usage restrictions applied in a city whose residents already do a good job with conservation. And even in that scenario, shortage conditions would also lead to price hikes.

"We really don't have a choice," said Southern Delivery System Project Director John Fredell. "This is a project we've got to build."

With no natural source of water running through Colorado Springs, the city-run utility has looked at hun-

dreds of different combinations of projects to create a water source to back up the supply piped in along the Homestake pipeline from the Arkansas River near Buena Vista.

Back in 1966-1976, water rates doubled to pay for the Homestake project, which the current system relies on for up to 70 percent of its supply, said Keith Riley, planning and permitting manager for the southern delivery system project.

The most cost-effective option available now, Fredell said, is the proposed southern delivery system – 43 miles of pipeline from Pueblo Reservoir leading to new water storage near Colorado Springs.

The projected financial impact on Springs Utilities' water customers was stated in the "Socioeconomic Effects Analysis" of the southern delivery system, which was among the 2,300 pages of technical reports recently released on the project from the federal Bureau of Reclamation. The reports are part of the supporting documentation for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the project scheduled to be released Feb. 29.

Supposing that existing conditions could continue, the average annual cost for Colorado Springs residential water service, which was \$307 in 2007, would rise to \$421 in 2015 and \$555 in 2025, Reclamation stated in the "Water Bills and Affordability" section of its report.

Building a delivery system of the type Springs Utilities has asked Reclamation to approve means the average annual per-household water cost would instead rise to \$693 in 2015 and \$933 in 2025, the report said. Alternate formations of the project, which Reclamation is also considering, would cost even more.

The 2015 projected household expense is a 65 percent increase over the price water would be that year under existing conditions, and in 2025, the difference is 68 percent, said William Cherrier, general manager of financial services for Springs Utilities. The rate hikes would be likely to be phased in at about 11 percent per year until 2015 and at 3 percent per year thereafter until 2025, he said. The City Council, sitting as the Utilities Board, usually decides

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Adoption

from page 1

ing Victoria's grandmother.

They were in Kemerovo six days arranging for official approval and visiting the orphanage. Then, taking Victoria with them, the two women traveled to Moscow where they spent another six days attending to the details of the birth certificate, adoption certificate, and passport and adoption decree.

During their time in Moscow, between rounds to the US Embassy and the Russian Consulate to complete the official documentation, they hired a driver to take them sightseeing around the city. The weather was very cold so they couldn't do as much as they would have liked but they did see the famous Red Square and St. Basil's Cathedral.

When the adoption became official, the trio embarked on the trip home. Hooper's father, Max Hooper, who stayed in her home to dog-sit and wait to welcome his new granddaughter, greeted them back in Colorado Springs. Max and Jane Hooper live in Birmingham, Alabama. Victoria is their seventh grandchild.

Jill Hooper said, "There were challenges, problems and disappointments in the adoption process, but now that we're home and I have this wonderful baby, none of that matters."

A family friend, Mary Lou Vaughn, ordered the flock of pink plastic flamingos to welcome Victoria to her new home.

SDS

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utility rate cases towards the end of each year and would need to approve any rate hikes.

Cherrier said the impact on people's pocketbooks would translate to the average household paying \$3 more per month to finance construction of the project in the first year, with similar hikes in succeeding years until 2015 and smaller hikes thereafter.

Growth is coming to Colorado Springs "whether we're prepared or not," Fredell said. About 47 percent of projected growth is internal growth, "from our own kids and grandkids," he said. In addition, Fort Carson expects 12,000 new soldiers - or 30,000 more people in military families - by 2013. Peterson Air Force Base also plans to expand, and any big businesses the city hopes to attract won't locate here without a dependable water supply, he said.

"We need additional increments of dependable supply to ensure that we can maintain the quality of life we have here in Colorado Springs and maintain the economy," Fredell said.

Colorado Springs Utilities has asked the Bureau of Reclamation for a 40-year contract, the longest the bureau allows, to routinely store river water in Pueblo Reservoir and then pipe it here.

That request triggered the environmental review. Riley, the permitting manager, said the 40-year contract is also the reason the project is discussed as providing supply for 40 years, not that the system wouldn't last beyond that.

The Reclamation reports, available online at www.sdseis.com, are required under the full-disclosure provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Those reports will also be summarized in the Draft EIS on the southern delivery system, which may or may not completely winnow the field of seven alternative formations of the project down to one that is definitively judged best, said Kara Lamb, public involvement specialist for the Bureau of Reclamation. After a public comment period, the final EIS, likely to be issued by year's end, will need to settle on a single best plan.

The release of the Draft EIS will be followed by a 60-day review period during which the public can submit comments and concerns over the impacts of the alternatives that remain viable in the draft document. Reclamation will hold informational open houses, and comments also can be submitted by mail, email and fax. Addresses and a fax number are available at the www.sdseis.com website.

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For information contact the public relations department at Memorial Health System at 365-5235.

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