

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Albuquerque District

CORPS PROVIDES UPDATE ON WATERSHED STUDY

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Fountain Creek Watershed Study Update

Bruce A. Estok – EDITORIAL FOR THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

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The Corps of Engineers Fountain Creek Watershed Study, in partnership with thirteen local project sponsors, is ongoing and will be complete in September 2008 based on its expected Federal funding level. It analyzes the entire watershed to identify a suite of projects addressing flood damage reduction, ecosystem restoration, and channel stability. It will not directly construct specific projects, but will culminate with a Watershed Management Plan defining delivery vehicles for the suite of projects, and general recommendations for improvement. The team recently met a significant milestone by prioritizing 46 potential projects, delineating thirteen for further conceptual study, a level of analysis consistent with a watershed study. A dam on the Fountain is

among them. Its conceptual study will serve as an appropriate start point for potential follow-on comprehensive study or detailed design efforts.

As Commander of the Corps' Albuquerque District, and more importantly as a steward of taxpayer dollars, it is my responsibility to ensure the work we do is within the authority granted by the Administration and Congress. The authority under which this study is being conducted precludes advancing any of the projects to detailed design or construction at the present time. However, it does allow developing alternatives to the extent necessary for deciding which warrant further action, either by the Corps or another entity. The thirteen projects identified by the team will now be sufficiently developed to determine eligibility for further action, that is, detailed design and construction. I should point out that the decision to focus on these thirteen projects does not preclude further consideration of the remaining 33, or any project thus far not identified.

Alternative development specific to the potential dam north of Pueblo will entail using prior studies and the recently completed Fountain Creek Watershed Study baseline conditions. This approach is the right level for identifying what future action is warranted, serves as a solid foundation for potential follow on comprehensive study or detailed design efforts, and optimizes Watershed Study funds. The primary studies that will be relied on are the 1971 Initial Review Survey and the more detailed 1981 General Design Memorandum, which led to construction of the Fountain Creek Levees.

It is important to note that the Watershed Study will serve as a foundation for both the potential projects identified in the Watershed Management Plan, and other efforts outside the Corps' purview, such as the the Fountain Creek Vision Task Force . I am confident that the Watershed Management Plan, if broadly implemented, will positively

impact the Fountain Creek Watershed by reducing flood risk, minimizing the effects of erosion and sedimentation, and restoring a valuable ecosystem.

The Corps is working to expedite completion of the Fountain Creek Watershed Study as directed by Congress in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act for the benefit of Southern Colorado's citizens. We stand ready to collaborate within our authorized mission areas on further endeavors in the region.

About the writer: Lieutenant Colonel Bruce A. Estok is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' District Commander.