

Windy Gap Firming Project

Facts:

What is Windy Gap Firming?

The original Windy Gap project was built in 1985 by the Municipal Subdistrict of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District on behalf of five northern Colorado cities and Platte River Power Authority. The project diverts water from below the confluence of the Colorado and Fraser Rivers and delivers it through Colorado-Big Thompson Project facilities to Windy Gap owners in northeastern Colorado.

The project was originally anticipated to provide an annual average of 48,000 acre-feet of water to the Windy Gap owners. However, the expected yield has not been realized due to several factors:

- Upstream and downstream senior water rights on the Colorado River must be satisfied before the Windy Gap Project can divert water. This limits the amount of water Windy Gap can divert during drier years in the upper Colorado River Basin. For example, in 2002, Windy Gap was unable to divert;

The Windy Gap Firming Project is an effort by 14 entities to improve the reliability of, or "to firm", the water supplies developed by the original Windy Gap project.

- In wetter years, the Colorado-Big Thompson system is sometimes full and does not have excess capacity to carry or store Windy Gap water. During the period 1995-2000, there was water available to Windy Gap, but the project did not divert because Lake Granby was full of C-BT water;

- In other years when Windy Gap water is stored in Lake Granby and the reservoir is full, Windy Gap Project water must be released from the reservoir to make room for Colorado-Big Thompson Project water as it flows into the reservoir during the runoff season. In both 1995 and 1996, Windy Gap water was released from Granby for these reasons.

The Windy Gap Firming Project is an effort by 14 entities to improve the reliability of, or "to firm", the water supplies developed by the original Windy Gap project. This will allow the Participants to satisfy water demands during both wet and dry years.

The Firming Project participants are Broomfield, Erie, Greeley, Longmont, Louisville, Loveland, Superior, Evans, Little Thompson Water District, Lafayette, Fort Lupton, Central Weld County Water District, Platte River Power Authority and Middle Park Water Conservancy District.

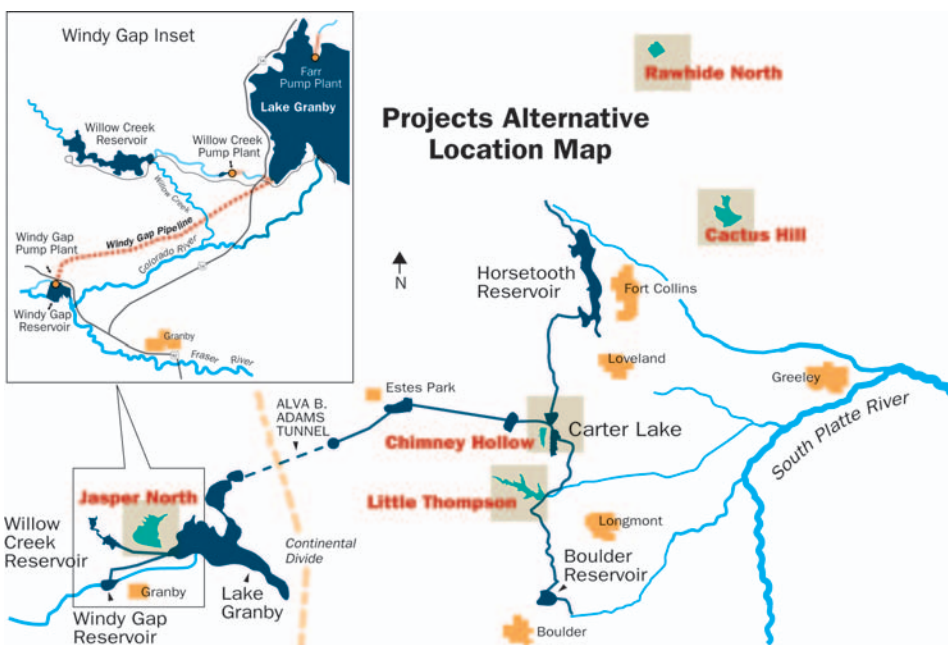
Initial Steps: The Alternative Plan Formulation Report

In 2003, the Municipal Subdistrict completed the Windy Gap Firming Project Alternative Plan Formulation Report. The study's purpose was to assess the range of reasonable alternatives for firming the Windy Gap water supply. Alternative plans included structural options such as new or enlarged

reservoirs and non-structural options such as coordinated operation with the C-BT Project.

The study team initially identified 170 elements that could, alone or in combination, firm the Windy Gap supply. They then used a two-phase screening process to identify 18 plans that had the

best potential of successfully achieving the project's goals. The study team evaluated the 18 plans based upon environmental impacts, economics, permit requirements, and operational considerations. From that analysis, seven plans were selected for more detailed study and modeling.



The 7 Alternative Plans

- Chimney Hollow (110,000 af)
- Chimney Hollow (84,000 af) & Jasper North (36,500 af)
- Chimney Hollow (110,000 af) & Rawhide North (13,000 af)
- Chimney Hollow (44,500 af) & Jasper North (36,000 af)
- Cactus Hill (110,000 af)
- Little Thompson (110,000 af)
- Jasper North (79,000 af) & Jasper North (36,000 af)



Colorado River water flowing over the Windy Gap spillway

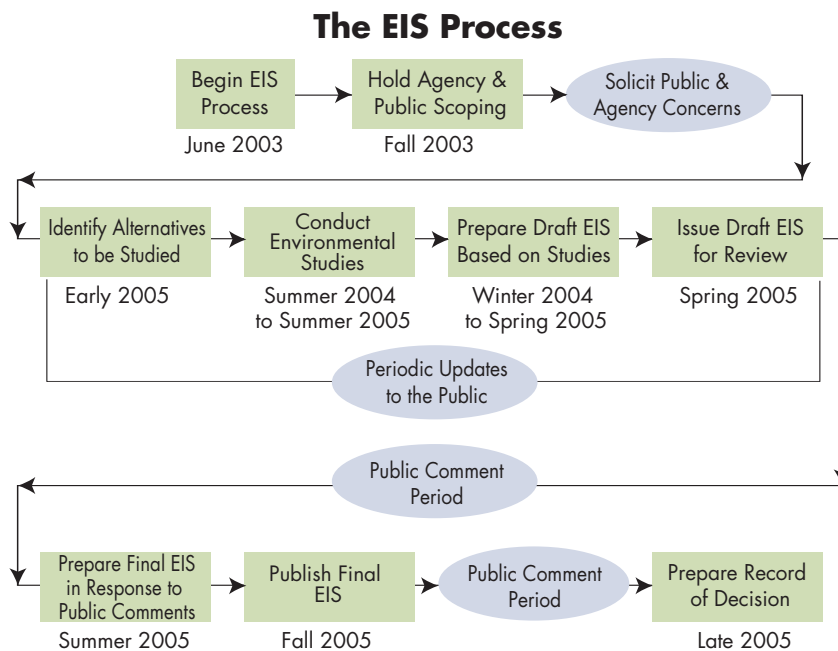
Next steps: the NEPA process

Each of the seven alternative plans would require a physical connection of Windy Gap FIRMING Project facilities to C-BT Project facilities. This connection requires permission from the United States Bureau of Reclamation and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by conducting an environmental review of the alternatives that culminates in the creation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) report. The Municipal Subdistrict and Reclamation began the NEPA process in Spring 2003.

One of the first steps in NEPA's environmental review process is to determine the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement report. To accomplish this, Reclamation and the Municipal Subdistrict held three public meetings and one agency meeting to obtain comments on what information the EIS should include. More

than 250 people and five agencies attended the meetings and submitted 161 written comments on over 900 separate issues.

During the next year, Reclamation and the Municipal Subdistrict will refine the project purpose and need, assess the environmental impacts of the alternatives, and document the process in the EIS report. The draft EIS is scheduled to be distributed in Summer 2005. At that time, Reclamation will hold a second set of meetings to take public comment on the document. The figure at left shows the steps involved in writing the Windy Gap FIRMING Project EIS and the associated schedule.



More information on the NEPA process is available at the Council on Environmental Quality's website: <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm>

For more information....

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The Windy Gap FIRMING Project website:

www.ncwcd.org