

## Overview: Windy Gap Firming Project August 2006

In 1985, the Municipal Subdistrict, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District completed the Windy Gap Project near Granby, CO. Through an agreement with Reclamation, the Subdistrict diverts Windy Gap water from the Colorado River east through the Colorado-Big Thompson Project (C-BT) to Windy Gap owners.

Due to storage limitations within C-BT and other factors, Windy Gap owners haven't been able to rely on Windy Gap to meet a portion of their current water needs or future requirements. The Windy Gap Firming Project is proposed to improve the yield of water deliveries from the existing Windy Gap Project to participating Windy Gap owners.

The Windy Gap Firming Project Water Activity Enterprise of the Municipal Subdistrict is developing the Windy Gap Firming Project (WGFP). Participants in the WGFP are the cities of Broomfield, Greeley, Longmont, Lafayette, Louisville, and Loveland; the Towns of Erie, Evans, Fort Lupton and Superior; the Central Weld County Water District; the Little Thompson Water District, the Platte River Power Authority and the Middle Park Water Conservancy District. These entities requested the Subdistrict improve, or "firm," the reliability of their Windy Gap water units.

The proposed WGFP would deliver a firm annual yield of up to 30,000 acre feet of water by 2010 from the existing Windy Gap Project. The WGFP also would provide up to 3,000 acre feet of storage for the Middle Park Water Conservancy District. Reclamation is studying five alternatives to meet these needs.

Because the WGFP would deliver water through a federal project, NEPA compliance is required.

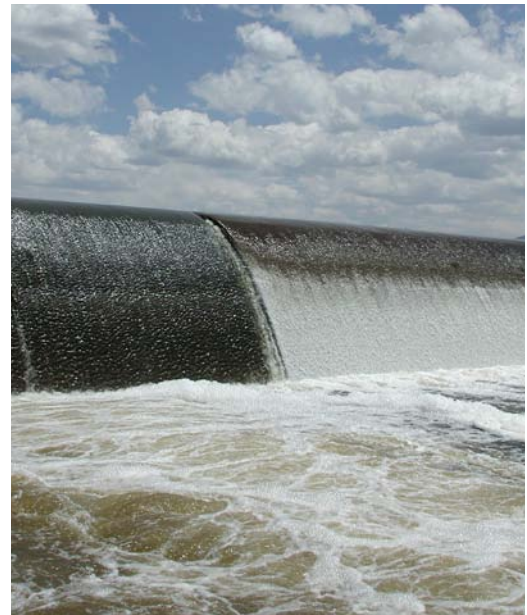
# Project Update

## PROPOSED WINDY GAP FIRING PROJECT National Environmental Policy Act, EIS Process

### Progress on the Windy Gap Firming Project Environmental Impact

**Statement continues to move forward.** Reclamation's EIS team has completed drafts of several technical reports, including hydrology, cultural and biological resources, water resources and water quality. These reports are needed to quantify the possible impacts to the human environment from the proposed Windy Gap Firming Project and its alternatives.

Reclamation had hoped to release the draft EIS that summarizes all of the studies in early 2006. It is now anticipated that Reclamation will release the draft EIS to the public by the end of 2006. At that time, Reclamation will host public meetings and invite



public comment on the draft document. After the comment period is over, Reclamation will address the comments received and the EIS will be finalized. A final EIS and accompanying Record of Decision formally announcing Reclamation's recommendation of a preferred alternative is expected in the summer of 2007.

### More Information

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## Windy Gap Firming Project Frequently Asked Questions

The questions inside are those most often asked of Reclamation staff. They are taken from recent public meetings, emails, and telephone conversations during the last year while the NEPA process has been underway. Reclamation hopes that including these questions in a newsletter will provide a better understanding of the proposed Windy Gap Firming Project and clear up some common misconceptions.



**Municipal Subdistrict**  
Northern Colorado  
Water Conservancy District

# FAQ's

## Windy Gap FIRMING Project

### **“What is NEPA?”**

“NEPA” is an acronym for the National Environmental Policy Act. The Act requires the federal government to publicly disclose proposed actions that involve the federal government in some way (e.g. by using federal dollars, connecting to federal projects, crossing federal properties, etc.) and to assess the impacts of those proposed actions to the “human environment,” as defined by NEPA regulations. More information on NEPA is available off of Reclamation’s website at <http://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/#NEPA>. You may also access the Council on Environmental Quality’s NEPA website at: <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm> or read their 40 most frequently-asked questions at: <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/40/40p3.htm>

### **“Why is Reclamation preparing an EIS for the proposed Windy Gap FIRMING Project?”**

The Municipal Subdistrict of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District has proposed the Windy Gap FIRMING Project (WGFP). Reclamation has an existing contract with the Subdistrict for conveyance and storage of water from the existing Windy Gap project. The proposed WGFP may require an amendment to the existing contract and could also include construction of a new reservoir that would link directly or indirectly to the Colorado-Big Thompson project (C-BT). Because Reclamation owns the C-BT facilities, Reclamation is the lead agency for the NEPA review. Reclamation chose to start the NEPA review directly at the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) level because it is anticipated that the proposed WGFP would have significant impacts to the human environment. Reclamation will identify a preferred alternative in the Draft EIS, which may be one of the five alternatives currently under consideration, or some variation. The preferred alternative and any environmental mitigation measures will be documented in a Record of Decision signed by Reclamation.

### **“Who is paying for the environmental review of the WGFP?”**

Because they proposed the WGFP, the Subdistrict is paying for the NEPA review. Payment for NEPA reviews are the obligation of the entities making the proposal, ensuring that: 1) the federal agencies do not curtail their evaluations based on their individual federal budgets; and 2) *all* federal taxpayers do not pay to analyze a proposal benefiting only a small group.

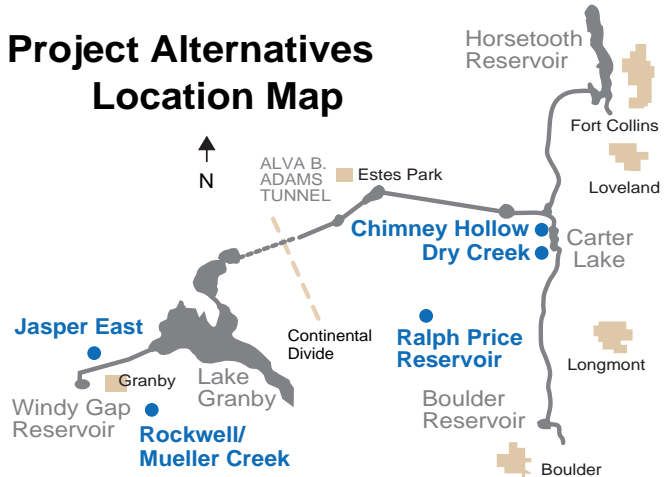
### **“Will Reclamation gain power generation if WGFP is approved?”**

The WGFP would result in the conveyance of additional water through the CB-T system and the generation of additional power. The extent of the additional generation is related to how much additional water goes through the CB-T project powerplants and will be disclosed in the EIS.

### **“What are the alternatives for the WGFP being studied in the EIS?”**

Five alternatives, including the Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative, were selected for evaluation in the EIS. All action alternatives include development of 90,000 AF of new storage in either a single reservoir on the East Slope, or in a combination of East and West Slope reservoirs.

### **Project Alternatives Location Map**



The five alternatives are:

- Alternative 1: No Federal Action, contract not amended for use of C-BT facilities. Instead, enlargement of Ralph Price Reservoir and acquisition or construction of other unidentified reservoir storage is proposed as well as maximizing delivery of Windy Gap water using existing infrastructure and agreements.
- Alternative 2: Proposed Action, Chimney Hollow Reservoir (90,000 AF) with Prepositioning
- Alternative 3: Chimney Hollow Reservoir (70,000 AF) and Jasper East Reservoir (20,000 AF)
- Alternative 4: Chimney Hollow Reservoir (70,000 AF) and Rockwell/Mueller Creek Reservoir (20,000 AF)
- Alternative 5: Dry Creek Reservoir (60,000 AF) and Rockwell/Mueller Creek Reservoir (30,000 AF)

To read about the first round of evaluations that narrowed the field of alternatives, please view the Alternatives Report at [http://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca/wgfp\\_alternatives0905.pdf](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca/wgfp_alternatives0905.pdf)

### **“What is prepositioning and what is Reclamation’s role in deciding if it can be implemented?”**

“Prepositioning” is a component of Alternative 2, the Subdistrict’s Proposed Action, that would place, or “preposition,” C-BT project water in a new East Slope reservoir that is not part of the C-BT Project. Putting C-BT water in this reservoir would make room in Lake Granby

for WGFP water. This available storage in Lake Granby improves the yield of the WGFP in a manner similar to providing a storage reservoir (such as Jasper East or Rockwell/Mueller) on the West Slope. Windy Gap water pumped into Granby would be exchanged for the C-BT water stored in the new East Slope reservoir. Prepositioning does not change the total amount of C-BT storage or delivery, but it would affect the location of storage and increase the Windy Gap Project's firm yield.

It is Reclamation's responsibility to determine whether or not prepositioning can be implemented in a manner that does not conflict with the operating principles that govern operation of the C-BT project. It has already been determined that prepositioning is within the exchange/substitution authority granted to Reclamation by the Reclamation Project Act of 1939. Reclamation has not determined whether prepositioning can be implemented without adversely affecting the project purposes as outlined in Senate Document 80, the governing document for the C-BT.

### ***"What is the study area for the EIS?"***

The study area for the WGFP EIS includes all areas potentially affected by the alternatives being considered in the EIS. On the West Slope, this generally includes the Colorado-Big Thompson system including the Three-Lakes area, Willow Creek, the potential Jasper East and Rockwell/Mueller Creek Reservoir sites, and the Colorado River downstream of Granby and Windy Gap reservoirs to Gore Canyon. On the East Slope this includes C-BT storage facilities at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir, streams receiving Windy Gap water, and potential new reservoir sites at Chimney Hollow and Dry Creek. In addition, the study area for the No Action alternative includes Ralph Price Reservoir and North St. Vrain Creek and St. Vrain Creek.

### ***"What studies are being done to evaluate the effects of the WGFP?"***

As part of the EIS, five alternatives, including a No Action alternative, are being studied to evaluate effects on various resources including hydrology, fisheries, water quality, land use, endangered species, wildlife, and socioeconomics.

### ***"How will effects to water quality be evaluated?"***

Water quality in the Colorado River is being evaluated using a QUAL2K model developed by the Environmental Protection Agency. The model will evaluate effects of the alternatives on temperature, nutrients, dissolved oxygen, and conductivity, including dilution effects on the Hot Sulphur Springs wastewater treatment plant. Potential water quality effects in Lake Granby, Shadow Mountain Reservoir, and Grand Lake are being evaluated using the Three Lakes water quality model developed in 2003 to address changes in water quality for these reservoirs. Water quality in other streams and reservoirs in the study area will be evaluated using the results of the above model outputs and other sources of data. The Draft EIS will present the anticipated effects on water quality from the proposed WGFP and its alternatives.

### ***"How will effects to fisheries and other aquatic resources be evaluated?"***

Fishery effects in streams and reservoirs are being evaluated using output from hydrologic and water quality modeling and other available data. Potential effects to aquatic resources in the Colorado River are being evaluated using streamflow measurements and modeling of changes in aquatic habitat. Reclamation is consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to address Recovery Program obligations for endangered fish species in the Colorado River near Grand Junction.

### ***"What reasonably foreseeable actions are being considered in the cumulative effects analysis?"***

"Reasonably Foreseeable" is a term used to describe future actions that are considered likely to occur regardless of the implementation of any of the WGFP alternatives. As such, they are included in the NEPA study under a "cumulative effects analysis." For the WGFP EIS, reasonably foreseeable actions include:

- The expansion of Denver Water's Moffat Collection System to develop 18,000 acre-feet of new, annual firm yield
- Changes in the delivery of the East and West slope water users commitments to deliver 10,825 acre-feet of water to the 15-mile reach on the Colorado River as part of the Upper Colorado River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery Program. It will be assumed that water will not be released from Wolford and Williams Fork Reservoirs in the future, but will be delivered from some point downstream of Grand County
- Changes anticipated by Denver Water in management of the Big Lake Ditch near Williams Fork Reservoir
- Relaxation of the Shoshone Power Plant water rights call under certain dry year conditions per the agreement between Denver Water and Excel Energy
- Additional growth and demand for water in Grand and Summit counties

### ***"Where does water conservation fit in?"***

Each participating municipality in the Windy Gap Firming Project currently uses water conservation measures to extend their supplies and reduce overall demand. However, as discussed in the Purpose and Need Report for the WGFP published in September 2005, even with these measures in place, water demand will exceed the available firm supply in the near future. Consequently, the declared Purpose and Need of the WGFP is to provide up to 30,000 acre-feet of firm water supply from the existing Windy Gap water rights.

### ***"What are the minimum flow requirements in the Colorado River and what will the impact of WGFP be on those flows?"***

In accordance with the Windy Gap project water rights, there are 3 places where minimum instream flows must be met before the existing Windy Gap project can divert water.

*(continued on back page)*

## FAQ's continued

They are:

- 90 cfs immediately downstream of the Windy Gap diversion
- 135 cfs at the mouth of Williams Fork
- 150 cfs at the mouth of Troublesome Creek

Additionally once every three years the Subdistrict must provide a 450 cfs flushing flow for 50 hours unless equivalent flows occur naturally for fish.

These requirements would not be affected by the proposed WGFP, but there would be changes in Colorado River flows as a result of the WGFP. The extent of these effects is being developed as part of the hydrology modeling effort and will be discussed in the EIS.

### ***“Will WGFP Participants and the West Slope receive more water from the Windy Gap Project than they currently get?”***

None of the East Slope participants in the WGFP would receive any more water than they are currently entitled to from the existing Windy Gap Project. However, their water would be delivered on a more reliable basis. In accordance with existing agreements between the Subdistrict and the Middle Park Water Conservancy District, Middle Park is entitled to 3,000 acre-feet of water annually from the Windy Gap project when Windy Gap diverts water to Lake Granby. However, this water is not always available depending upon hydrology and availability of storage space in Lake

Granby. As with the East Slope participants, Middle Park is participating in the WGFP to make their Windy Gap water more reliable.

### ***“What role does Grand County’s 1041 permitting have in the EIS process?”***

Grand County has regulatory authority under Colorado H.B. 1041, which allows counties to regulate activities designated as matters of state interest, such as municipal and industrial water projects. County permitting requirements are outside of the jurisdiction of Reclamation. As a result, Reclamation takes no position on whether or not a 1041 permit will be required for the WGFP. Reclamation has suggested that Grand County discuss their 1041 requirements with the Municipal Subdistrict. Depending on the outcome of those discussions, a 1041 permit may or may not be required for the Windy Gap Firming Project. The EIS will explain the status of those discussions. Grand County is a cooperating agency in the EIS. As such, Reclamation has encouraged the County to identify any specific impact assessments from the 1041 permit process for consideration of inclusion in the EIS.

### ***“How will mitigation be determined for significant effects?”***

Mitigation will be determined after the effects are identified. Any mitigation will be based on the magnitude and extent of adverse effects.



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