

Project Update

Overview: Windy Gap Firming Project

In 1985, the Municipal Subdistrict, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District constructed 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 have been unable to rely on Windy Gap deliveries to meet a portion of their current water needs or to meet future requirements. The Windy Gap Firming Project was proposed as a means 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 to improve, or "firm," the reliability of their Windy Gap units.

(continued on page 2)

EIS MOVES FORWARD

AFTER LENGTHY ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION, the field of alternatives for the proposed Windy Gap Firming Project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been narrowed. Public input received during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process helped narrow the list.

NEPA progress, a summary of the purpose and need statement, the alternatives screening analysis, and the list of alternatives to be considered in detail in the EIS are discussed in this newsletter. The estimated schedule for release of the Draft EIS is early 2006.

EIS Alternatives: Narrowing the Field

At the public and agency scoping meetings in fall 2003, Reclamation and the Subdistrict presented the WGFP's seven initial alternatives. These seven alternatives were identified in the Subdistrict's *Windy Gap Firming Project Alternative Plan Formulation Report*. Comments collected from the scoping meetings identified additional alternatives.

Since January of 2004, Reclamation has developed an alternatives screening process to ensure a thorough review of the alternatives. This process also satisfies U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Clean Water Act requirements.

Screening was based on:

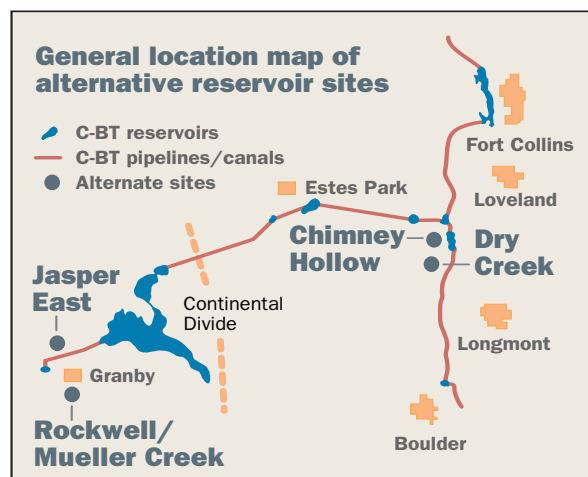
- Meeting purpose and need of the proposed project;
- Logistical factors (incompatible land uses, reservoir size);
- Technological feasibility; and
- Environmental consequences, including impacts to wetlands and perennial streams.

The seven original alternatives, alternatives identified during scoping, and the alternatives suggested by cooperating agencies and the public were all subject to the same screening. In all, over 180 alternatives were evaluated, including new reservoirs, reservoir enlargements, aquifer storage, and non-structural measures.

Final Alternatives

Through the extensive screening process, Reclamation selected four alternatives (see the illustration) for more detailed analysis in the EIS.

These are listed on page 2.



Overview *(continued)*

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.

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

The four alternatives *(continued)*

1-Chimney Hollow Reservoir (90,000 acre-feet)

2-Chimney Hollow Reservoir (70,000 acre-feet) and **Jasper East Reservoir** (20,000 acre-feet)

3-Chimney Hollow Reservoir (70,000 acre-feet) and **Rockwell/Mueller Creek Reservoir** (20,000 acre-feet)

4-Dry Creek Reservoir (60,000 acre-feet) and **Rockwell/Mueller Creek Reservoir** (30,000 acre-feet)

In addition, a No Action alternative will be evaluated based on what participants would do if Reclamation does not approve a permit to connect new WGFP facilities to C-BT facilities.

The Subdistrict's preferred alternative is a 90,000 acre-foot Chimney Hollow reservoir.

The EIS will identify an alternative preferred by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Alternatives report is now available in both electronic and hard copy.

Prepositioning

The alternative featuring a 90,000 acre-foot Chimney Hollow Reservoir includes a concept called "prepositioning." This is a method of water accounting in which C-BT water is "prepositioned," or stored in advance, in Chimney Hollow. By storing C-BT water in Chimney Hollow, additional storage space for Windy Gap water could be made available in Lake Granby. As a result, there would be fewer instances when Windy Gap water could not be diverted. Total allowable C-BT storage would not change and the existing C-BT water rights and diversions would not be expanded.

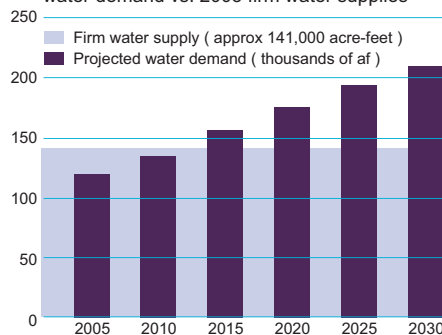
Purpose and Need of the Proposed Project

Under NEPA, the Bureau of Reclamation is required to identify the purpose and need for the Windy Gap Farming Project. With this in mind,

Reclamation evaluated the water supply and projected demand for each of the project participants.

In 2004, Windy Gap Farming Project participants supplied water to about

Predicted increases in Windy Gap Farming water demand vs. 2005 firm water supplies



425,600 people. That number is estimated to increase 56% to 754,700 by the year 2030.

As of 2005, East Slope Project participants' firm water supply is about 141,000 acre-feet, with a demand of 120,000 acre-feet, although not all of the participants have supplies in excess of their current demands. Water demand by 2030 is projected to increase to 205,000 acre-feet.

If additional water supplies are not obtained, the combined demand of all participants would exceed supplies by 2015 and result in an estimated water shortage of 64,000 acre-feet by the year 2030. An additional water demand of up to 17,000 acre-feet for West Slope communities in Grand and Summit counties, partially served by the Middle Park Water Conservancy District, is also anticipated by 2030.

Next Steps

Field studies and analysis of impacts to natural resources for the final alternatives are expected to be completed in 2005. Alternatives are being evaluated for potential effects to streamflow and reservoirs, water quality, wetlands, wildlife, threatened or endangered species, cultural resources, recreation, visual quality, socioeconomics, and other issues identified during scoping.

Information obtained from the investigations will be used to prepare the draft EIS.

Schedule

A draft EIS is scheduled for release in early 2006 for a 60-day comment period. Approximately 30 days after the release of the draft EIS, public hearings will be held to take comments.

Need More Information?

For additional information on the Windy Gap Farming Project NEPA process and the Environmental Impact Statement, please contact Kara Lamb at Reclamation by either phone, (970) 962-4326, or e-mail: klamb@gp.usbr.gov.

To obtain related NEPA documents, including the Purpose and Need and Alternatives Analysis reports, and past

public communications, please visit Reclamation's website at www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/quarterly.cfm.

For more information on the proposed Windy Gap Farming Project, or to schedule a presentation regarding the project, contact Nicole Seltzer of the Municipal Subdistrict, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, at (970) 622-2277 or nseltzer@ncwcd.org.