

Water district buys extra storage rights- July 13, 2001

by Brian Taylor
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The Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District last week purchased long-term storage rights in the future expansion of two area reservoirs. The district secured 1,000 acre feet of new storage rights from the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District July 2, after approving the purchase at a special meeting June 29.

UAWCD Manager Terry Scanga stressed the agreement does not provide 1,000 acre-feet of water annually, but only storage for water the district already owns. "When we have excess water, we can carry it over and store it in these spaces, rather than just spill it downstream. "This agreement allows us to obtain reoperations storage in the enlargement of Pueblo and Turquoise reservoirs," Scanga said. "Our first priority will be to use Turquoise (Reservoir storage), but we have the option of using Pueblo (Reservoir) as well. "The only way we are going to be able to plan for the future is to store water. We can't create more water, so the only way to increase your water supply is to save it when you have an abundance."

The UAWCD will initially pay approximately \$70,000 for the storage rights, and an additional \$20,000 (\$20 per acre-foot) annually.

Scanga said reoperations storage refers to space in a reservoir that is not being used by the existing owners. "(The SECWCD is) actually able to calculate those amounts, then calculate for that empty space," he said. "That space could be evacuated during low water, but it's on a pro rated (proportional) basis, and we have a priority of four on a scale of one (lowest) to six (best). I think it's going to be a really good deal for the district."

Expansion of Pueblo Reservoir is planned for 2013, while Turquoise has been slated for 2025. Scanga said any expansion is tentative, because the plans must be approved by Congress before expansion of either reservoir can begin.

"We're not sure how much reoperations storage will be available before the enlargement, but there is a possibility we could use some of this now," Scanga said.

"This is a long-term deal. We are planning for what the district will need in 2040 with this. It's just one piece of the puzzle."