Thornton Water Project

The Poudre Runs Through It

Study/Action Workgroup

November 20, 2015
Project Overview

55 to 65* miles-long pipeline

47% OF WSSC
17% JDC
(initially only a portion of this water will be delivered to Thornton)

Native water rights
Transmountain water rights
Existing storage

No change in point of diversion from the Poudre River

* Current estimate
Project History

• Acquired water rights/farms 1985 – 1986
• Agreement with WSSC 1986
• Farm and House Leases
• PILT
• Local Vendors
• Revegetation
• Aug Plan support
• Property sales
• Good neighbor, good steward
Water Court

- Applications Filed 1986, 1987
- Water Court trial 1991, 1992 – 57 days
- Water Court Decree 1994 – Appealed
- Supreme Court Opinion 1996
- Final Decree on Remand 1998
- Two subsequent diligence filings
Delivery Timing

- Current Thornton Population about 124,000 – Another 17,000 in CSA
- Effective conservation programs
- Reuse – Gravel pit development
- Current water supplies good for 150,000 pop.
- Expect to reach 150,000 in mid-2020’s
Preparing for Delivery

Farm Property Overview
Thornton Water Project Study Area
THORNTON WATER PROJECT
SCHEDULE

Select Project Elements:
- Project Development
- Option Analysis and Selection
- Exploring Partnerships

Project Design, Permitting:
- Design, Permitting
- Alignment Selection, ROW

Project Infrastructure:
- WSSC System
  - River Diversion
- Pipeline
- Pump Station(s)
- Reservoir (Storage)
- Treatment Plant

2013-2015 • Select Project Elements

2014-2019 • Design, Permitting, ROW

2016-2025 • Construct Infrastructure
Going forward

• Farms will remain in irrigated agriculture until additional water is needed in Thornton
• 5 to 7 year transition from irrigated to self-sustaining cover
• Decree Limitations
  – Can’t re-irrigate farms once converted
  – Prescribed uses, places of use
Brainstorming Other Possibilities

Alternatives/Suggestions for Thornton’s Consideration

Benefits and Tradeoffs of Alternatives
And now for something completely different*

*With apologies to Monty Python
What If…

• The *Poudre Water Holding Authority* had acquired 18,000 acres of irrigated farmland, and sufficient water to irrigate that land, and the water has yet to be changed to other uses:

• How should the PWHA manage these assets to promote the values of The Poudre Runs Through It?
For Example:
Agricultural Uses?

- Lessee operational requirements?
- Long-term (i.e., 20-year) leases?
- Who decides when water is removed for other uses?
- Who pays compensation to lessee when water is removed?
- Who directs and pays for the land management (weed, dust control) when water is removed?
Environmental Uses?

• Dry up agricultural land to provide environmental flows?
• Change the use in Water Court?
• Charge for environmental uses?
• Who pays for new/additional uses (legal, engineering, administrative, transaction costs)
Municipal Uses?

- Who takes change of use through Water Court – PWHA or end user?
- Transfer title to muni user, or long-term lease?
- Require diversion lower on the river?
- How to deal with competing requests?
- Who pays for “mitigation” for farm dry-up – PILT, weed control, etc.
- In-basin use only?
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION