

County purchases water to augment Fairplay Beach Reservoir

Lynda James, Senior correspondent | Posted: Friday, June 23, 2017 9:56 pm

The Fairplay Beach reservoir finally has permanent augmentation water and water losses from evaporation will be covered in the future.

The closing on 10.05 acre feet of augmentation water from Lone Rock H2O took place June 19.

Purchasing the water was a collaborative effort between the Park County, Fairplay, the Headwater Authority of South Platte and the two water conservancy districts in the county.

The districts had an option to purchase the 10 acre feet from Lone Rock.

HASP will own and manage the augmentation water for the Beach.

“This closes the loop to keep Fairplay Beach going in perpetuity,” County Manager Tom Eisenman said.

Of the 10.05 acre feet, 9.618 acre feet were purchased to augment evaporative losses from the Fairplay Beach reservoir and remaining 0.435 acre foot was purchased by the county for \$6,600.

The Beach parcel is owned by the Town of Fairplay, but the water in the reservoir is jointly owned by Fairplay, Park County and the Upper South Platte Water Conservancy District.

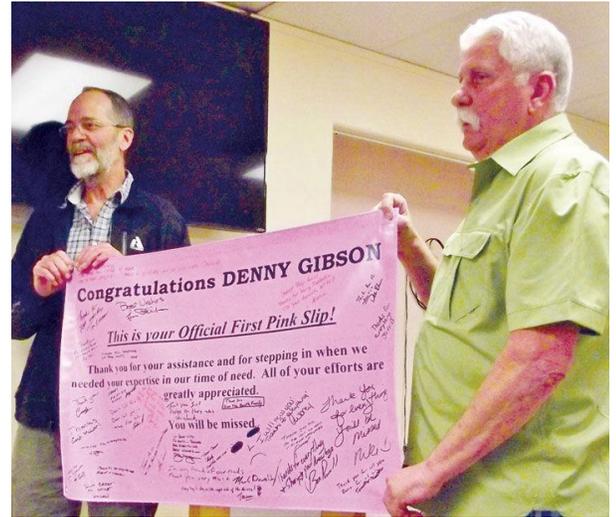
Several decades ago, the three entities joined together to build the reservoir for recreational purposes, and at that time, augmentation water was not required. Today it is required.

After Water Commissioner Graver Brown determined that 9.618 acre feet of augmentation were needed, the USPWCD asked the Center of Colorado Water Conservancy District if it would agree to using the Lone Rock option to purchase augmentation water for the Beach.

The Center agreed and then the USPWCD applied for a Land and Water Trust Fund grant to purchase the Lone Rock water. That grant was approved by the county.

The purchase price was \$13,000 an acre foot.

The entire process has taken more than two years and June 15, the commissioners signed warranty deeds and several other documents related to the purchase.



Pink Slip

Mark Dowaliby (left) and Tom Eisenman presented a pink slip banner to Denny Gibson on June 13. Gibson has been the interim director of public works for 18 months. The banner was covered with notes of appreciation from the county commissioners, administration department and public works staff. (Photo by Lynda James/The Flume)

Interim public works director

June 15 was Denny Gibson's last day as interim director of public works.

Gibson, retired Douglas County road and bridge director, was hired about 19 months ago to fill in until a new director was hired.

On his last day, he met with the commissioners to discuss public works' budget and needed equipment. He also put the recommendations in writing.

Both Gibson and Eisenman recommended the commissioners purchase a road reclaimer. The county has rented one for the past five months for \$23,000 per month.

Gibson said it was like a large rototiller plus it crushes small rocks, creating road base as it moves along the road.

"We've done more roads to date with it than we completed all last year without it," he said.

Gibson said last year a new program was started for adding magnesium chloride on selected roads. He said the key to a good road is making sure enough mag chloride was applied that it went through several inches of the road's surface.

He said the reclaimer can be used for mag chloride treatments as well.

Gibson said a new reclaimer costs about \$500,000. The rent paid to date will apply to the purchase price and bring the cost down to \$355,120.

He recommended adding an additional year's warranty for \$9,870 to the standard warranty.

He said \$205,000 could come from the operations budget because of savings from using the machine and \$150,000 from the reserves.

"There's not anything that is more important than roads to our citizens," Commissioner Mark Dowaliby said.

The commissioners agreed to the purchase.

Equipment replacement

More than one half of the graders and one half of the snow plows are 50 percent over the recommended operational hours and are costing more in replacement parts and repair than buying new ones, Gibson said.

Gibson commended the public works' mechanics for keeping the equipment operational.

Gibson said that most road equipment is used on a seasonal basis and sits doing nothing for about six months out of a year.

He recommended purchasing multi-purpose trucks where equipment, such as a snowplow, can be switched out depending on the job to be completed.

Gibson said they cost about one half the price of a grader and could be used year round for different jobs. He said some roads in the high country, such as County Road 4, would still require a grader.

He thanked the commissioners for giving public works more funding the past two years and said more will be needed each year to keep doing the kind and amount of road work that was accomplished the past two years.

Eisenman said this year \$1.5 million of Payment in Lieu of Taxes or PILT was put into the public works budget.

Gibson compared the county public works budget to Teller and Jefferson Counties. Both counties have a higher mill levy dedicated to public works than what Park County has.

Park County's public works mill levy for 2017 was 0.932 and generated \$382,787 in revenue from property taxes, according to the county website at www.parkco.us.

The majority of the revenue comes from Highway Users Tax, a state and federal tax on gasoline. It is projected to be \$5,385,800 for 2017.

The 2017 projected budget will use \$921,880 from the fund reserves, leaving \$2,267,279.

Gibson said Teller County maintains about half the miles that Park County maintains and each year dedicates \$1 million to new equipment, another million to maintenance, and a third million to road improvements.

He said Park County couldn't do that right now, but should work towards getting there.

Gibson said the primary roads are being improved now and if money is available, secondary roads could be completed in four years.

He said all the bridges in the county are in good shape, so the biggest expense will be replacing culverts. Most culverts countywide should be replaced.

"I don't hear complaints about other departments like I did about the roads. Now I hear only good comments (about roads)," Commissioner Mike Brazell said. "We need to find funding to keep improving the roads."

He suggested looking at the possibility of using some of the five percent excise tax collected on marijuana cultivation facilities.

Dowaliby advocated spending down the public works reserves because counties with smaller reserves are able to receive state grants to help with county road projects.

"We need about one half a million dollars in reserves in public works to carry us through the first three months of the year," Eisenman said.

Gibson said he felt good about leaving with the new director Darrel Evig in charge. He said Evig was very knowledgeable and that the public works staff was very dedicated.

In a departing thoughts letter, Gibson wrote "I have developed a high degree of respect and appreciation for the dedication and hard work that our employees provide ... I am extremely proud of the accomplishments

of our crews in 2016 and to date in 2017.”

The letter stated “the department works as a cohesive team that is willing to support across district lines. As a result, road improvements have been made in every area of the county.”

It stated “the county hired a director with requisite skills and experience to take the department into the future. Evig’s leadership skills are great; he has already assimilated well and is highly respected by our employees.”

Eisenman and Dowaliby presented Gibson with a pink banner that said, “Congratulations Denny Gibson. This is your official first pink slip. Thank you for your assistance and stepping in when we needed your expertise in our time of need. All your efforts are greatly appreciated. You will be missed.”

The banner was covered with personal notes from the commissioners, public works staff and county administration staff.

Eisenman said the pink slip was a joke between him and Gibson. When first hired, Gibson said he had never had a pink slip and Eisenman said he might be the first to give Gibson one.

Land exchange

Eisenman said many years ago, the county inadvertently cut a road through Jamie Huffelman’s 0.19 acre vacant lot on the north edge of Hartsel. It’s across from the post office.

The property is Lot 19 in Block 16 Hartsel. The lot value on the assessor’s website is \$3,903.

Eisenman said the county wanted to make things right by exchanging county property for Heffelman’s property.

The commissioners signed a quit claim deed to Heffelman for a 5.8 acre county owned lot in Hartsel Ranch subdivision. It is in Unit 104, Lot 5580 and valued by the assessor at \$11,842.

Putting the lot into private ownership will generate more taxes than the smaller lot owned by Heffelman.

Heffelman quit claimed his lot to the county.

Release and hold harmless

The commissioners signed release and hold harmless agreements for two bicycle races using county roads. Both events were held June 17.

One was a 106 mile race sponsored by Mountain Top Cycling Club for its sixth annual Experience Ride. Riders had a choice of races: an 18, a 30, a 50, a 75, or 106 mile race.

The 106 mile race began at the Florissant Grange Hall, went through Cripple Creek, Victor, into Fremont County, up to Guffey and along CR 102 east back to Teller County 1 to Florissant. The shorter races used parts of the same route.

According to the Club’s website a portion of the proceeds will be given to Four Mile Community Church in exchange for members volunteering to help with the race.

The website states that Mountain Top Cycling Club also supports the Cripple Creek/Victor and the Woodland Park High School Mountain bike teams.

It states Mountain Top Cycling Club also partners with Woodland Park's Parks and Recreation Department to host a bike rodeo.

The other race was the HUNDO held in the Bailey-Buffalo Creek area. (See front page article in June 16 The Flume).

New ABE member and one leaving

Ann Coulter from Fairplay was appointed as a member of the Advisory Board on the Environment.

Pam Jacobus said ABE recommended the commissioners adopt the 1041 model code without delay, particularly for mining activities.

Jacobus said she was resigning from ABE and the planning commission because she and her husband Myron Morrow were moving to Delta County.

She said the pressure Park County is facing from many sides was more than they wanted, so they decided to move to a less populated part of Colorado. They have lived here over 30 years.

Dowaliby and Brazell thanked them for their involvement in the county over the past few years.

Brazell said he appreciated their desire to learn and understand all aspects of an issue, then seek a solution, not just an easy answer.

"Sometimes you made me angry, but other times after thinking about it, I came around to your way of thinking," Dowaliby said, "The most important part of being a commissioner is to listen to the other side and be willing to change your mind based on a good valid argument."

Dowaliby said he also saw the two as good liaisons between the commissioners and residents, and they will be missed.

Other

An executive session was held to discuss litigation. When asked what litigation was the topic of discussion, County Attorney Lee Phillips replied it was a summary of all current lawsuits. No other information was disclosed.

Vouchers for \$199,702 were approved for payment. Commissioner Dick Elsner said they were mostly from the general and road and bridge funds.

A separate walk through voucher was also approved for \$300.

The approved voucher page shows \$102,021 from the general fund and \$61,705 from public works.

E-911 Authority fund spent \$19,658 and fleet services spent \$9,684.

Approximately \$6,000 remaining was spent in various amounts by five other funds.

Note: Lynda James is a member of the Land and Water Trust Fund board and the Upper South Platte Water Conservancy District.