

FAQs | Continental Hoosier System project



What is the Continental Hoosier System (CHS) project?

This project will allow us to fully develop our existing water rights from legally and physically available supplies in our Continental Hoosier (Blue River) System. It will give us the ability to effectively collect and convey an expected additional average annual yield of 4,000 acre-feet (ac-ft)* of water through the Blue River pipeline.

Storage is critical to our system. It helps us manage through variable conditions that can affect our water supply. The CHS project calls for the enlargement of Montgomery Reservoir in Park County, CO from 5,699 ac-ft capacity to a total storage volume of approximately 13,799 ac-ft.



Montgomery Reservoir, Park County

The project will also improve our operational resiliency through:

- increased carryover capacity to allow for water storage during years of high runoff;
- more efficient timing of water deliveries (e.g., over longer periods of time due to constraints on Blue River pipeline capacity);
- a place to stage water when maintenance on the pipeline is required;
- improved water management and the ability to serve customer needs when our Homestake pipeline is out of service.

**an acre-foot of water is 325,851 gallons.*

How does this project benefit our customers?

Our 50-year planning forecasts the need to reliably meet customer demand of 129,000 ac-ft to support growth through full city buildout. The CHS project will meet a portion of that demand through more efficient use of our existing water rights and infrastructure. Our [Integrated Water Resources Plan](#) details our balanced portfolio approach for securing adequate water supply for future generations through continued conservation, storage, agricultural water sharing and reuse.

Why has Colorado Springs Utilities decided to pursue a permit for CHS at this time?

The CHS project is one of multiple options identified in our long-term planning, all of which are in varying stages of implementation. This project is desirable because:

- enlarging the reservoir at some point in the future was contemplated when it was originally built more than 60 years ago;
- it makes sense to leverage existing water rights and complete an enlargement while we are conducting necessary life-cycle infrastructure upgrades;
- high elevation storage minimizes evaporation losses;
- the system's gravity delivery pipeline is very efficient in bringing water to Colorado Springs.

Further, a Memorandum of Agreement reached in 2024 with six West Slope parties regarding conditional water rights we hold in the Blue River resolves outstanding issues and sets a pathway forward for project permitting in Summit County. Permitting in Park County will also be required.

Project timeline

2025: Permit applications submitted | **2026-27:** Federal, state, local permit review/decisions
2027: Construction mobilization | **2028-30:** Construction

If Colorado Springs only needs 4,000 ac-ft of new supply, can it come from somewhere other than the Colorado Basin?

We are pursuing approximately 25,000 ac-ft of new water supply to meet the city's anticipated buildout needs. The CHS project will help us meet a portion of that goal by leveraging existing water rights to develop supplies that are legally and physically available to us in a way that provides redundancy to other components of our integrated raw water system.

We continue to diversify our system to provide better water security for our customers, including water sharing with agricultural users in the Lower Arkansas River basin. At the same time, we've implemented multiple programs that reduce water consumption to manage long-term need for new supply. Our community has done a good job so far and we're working to achieve additional savings. Continued successful implementation of conservation programming over our 50-year planning horizon will give us the potential to reduce our full city buildout need of 129,000 acre-feet of water to 121,000 acre-feet.

With construction of the Southern Delivery System (SDS) Phase I complete, why does Colorado Springs need another water supply project?

SDS is a *delivery system* for raw water that improves our efficiency for reuse. It doesn't supply new water but serves as a critical conveyance and treatment system to reuse water as our region grows. CHS supplies are reusable because they originate in another river basin.

How does Colorado Springs Utilities calculate its need for projects like this?

Multiple factors are considered when deciding the right time to pursue a project. Our water resource planners conduct an evaluation of the mix and customer types (e.g., business, residential, industry), growth patterns and probable risk scenarios (e.g., drought) to assess the long-range demand and reliability needs of our system. Also considered is the length of time it takes to plan, permit and construct projects, and when they have the best chance of being realized over a 50-year planning horizon.

Visit csu.org/chsproject for more information.

Project questions may be directed to projectinfo@csu.org or (719) 668-8504.