

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

Richard Thorp, Lead Specialist, Sciences
Leslie Hill, Director Sciences
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SUBJECT

Resolution 2024-003 Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement with Various Entities Regarding the Upper Poudre Watershed Source Water Protection Plan (Phase 1 – Plan Development).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to request approval for the City, through Fort Collins Utilities (“Utilities”), to enter into an agreement for cost-sharing the development of a regional Source Water Protection Plan (“SWPP”) with the City of Greeley, Soldier Canyon Water Treatment Authority, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (“Northern Water”), and the City of Thornton.

Utilities’ Cache la Poudre River (“Poudre River”) and Horsetooth Reservoir source watersheds provide high quality raw water for water treatment. Protecting these source water supplies from pollution is key to providing our community with reliable, safe, and high-quality drinking water. There are significant challenges associated with monitoring and protecting water quality in these source watersheds. Utilities’ 2016 SWPP has guided Utilities’ source water protection activities to date but needs to be updated. The Cities of Fort Collins (through Utilities), Greeley, and Thornton as well as Soldier Canyon Water Treatment Authority and Northern Water use water from the Poudre River and Horsetooth Reservoir. Staff from Utilities’ Watershed Program and these entities are seeking to develop a collaborative SWPP to improve communication, alignment, promote cost-sharing and implementation of source water protection projects. The proposed Agreement Regarding the Upper Poudre Watershed Source Water Protection Plan (Phase 1 – Plan Development) (“SWPP Agreement”) outlines terms and conditions of developing a collaborative SWPP. On December 7, 2023, the Water Commission formally recommended that Council authorize the City Manager to sign the SWPP Agreement.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the Resolution.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

Fort Collins Utilities’ (“Utilities”) Watershed Program staff are seeking Council’s adoption of the Resolution to authorize the City entering into an intergovernmental agreement (“SWPP Agreement”) to develop a collaborative Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP) with other regional water providers. These providers include the City of Greeley, Soldier Canyon Water Treatment Authority (composing the East Larimer

County Water District, Fort Collins-Loveland Water District, and North Weld County Water District), the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (“Northern Water”), and the City of Thornton. Utilities’ source water supplies provide high quality raw water for drinking water treatment and include the Cache la Poudre River Watershed upstream of the canyon mouth and Horsetooth Reservoir Watershed. Wildfires, algae blooms, chemical spills, and other pollution events continue to threaten the quality of these water supplies. Protecting the quality of the City’s source water supplies is key to providing our community with reliable, safe, and high-quality drinking water.

The mission of the Utilities’ Watershed Program is to monitor and protect Utilities’ source water supplies and the overall health of the upper Cache la Poudre Watershed. Accordingly, staff developed Utilities’ first SWPP in 2016 with assistance from the Colorado Rural Water Association and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (“CDPHE”). The 2016 SWPP delineates the footprint of Utilities’ source water supplies, identifies and ranks threats to water quality, and provides a range of best practices intended for threat mitigation. The 2016 SWPP has guided Utilities’ source water protection priorities for eight years and needs to be updated to account for changes to the watershed following the Cameron Peak Wildfire.

Both of Utilities’ water supplies are shared by the above listed regional water providers. Although we rely on common water resources, it is important to note that very little land within these source watersheds is owned or managed by these entities. Utilities’ staff regularly collaborate with these entities on a range of cost-share water quality monitoring and protection programs and projects in cooperation with land management agencies like the U.S. Forest Service. Developing an updated and collaborative SWPP for the Poudre River and Horsetooth Reservoir will enable increased cost-effectiveness, alignment around priorities and best practices for mitigating water quality threats and facilitate the implementation of needed source water protection projects. All the identified regional water providers agree that there is significant value in moving forward with this collaborative project.

Over the past year, a project team comprised of representatives from each participating entity created a detailed scope of work for developing the SWPP. The SWPP will delineate each water provider’s source water supply boundary and identify where there is overlap between two or more partners. Water quality pollution threats within the contributing watershed areas will be identified and prioritized based on relative risk. Pollution mitigation best practices will be selected by the project team using feedback from a diverse set of watershed stakeholders. The SWPP will support and align with existing watershed protection programs and projects and, as a result, will be highly implementable. Shared watershed protection programmatic metrics will be developed to help evaluate the effectiveness of watershed protection efforts.

The project budget has been set at \$150,000, including \$10,000 from each of the five project partners; \$50,000 in grant funding from the CDPHE’s Source Water Assessment and Protection Program; and \$50,000 from the Colorado Water Conservation Board’s Water Plan Grant Program. Northern Water will be the grant recipient on behalf of the project partners. Utilities plan to dedicate \$10,000 to support this project from previously allocated funding for watershed protection. The project budget will be used to hire a consultant to facilitate development of the SWPP. The project is expected to begin in Q3 of 2024. Note that this agreement does not obligate any party to fund future project implementation.

CITY FINANCIAL IMPACTS

There are no cost impacts associated with the proposed Resolution.

BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Water Commission Regular Meeting, December 7, 2023

Commissioner Tarry moved that the Water Commission recommend Council formally approve of the Utilities’ Watershed Program entering into the agreement regarding the Upper Poudre Watershed Source Protection Plan. Vice Chairperson Herman seconded the motion. Vote on the Motion: Passed unanimously, 5-0.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

None.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution for Consideration
2. Exhibit A to Resolution