



Hot Sulphur Springs breaks ground on new water treatment plant

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Contractors, townspeople and town and state officials gathered on the bank of the Colorado River in Hot Sulphur Springs on Wednesday to mark the beginning of the end of the town's water problems.

“We'll call this more than shovel-ready,” said Mayor Hershel Deputy — as he stood holding a shovel. “We'll call it shovel-started.”

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, in the amount of \$3.3 million to the town, is paying for a new state-of-the-art water plant, a new clear well, a second 230-gallon storage tank, a new water intake system and related river restoration work.

The existing water plant will be retrofitted to be used as a pre-treatment facility, while the new neighboring plant will boast the latest technology in water filtration.

Three of the town's contracted water engineering consultants — Curt Thompson, Ed Duerr and Geoff Elliott — said the two plants combined will make “cutting-edge” technology.

“It's among the best and most modern water filters in Colorado,” membrane-treatment technology expert Duerr said.

It's a 180-degree turn from the town's fortunes in spring 2008, when the Colorado Department of Health and Environment issued a boil order to all residents and slapped an enforcement order for the town to replace its cracked and insufficient clear well. Hot Sulphur Springs' total water fund budget at the time was \$160,930.

The new system, said Thompson, water program manager for Merrick & Company engineering of Aurora, should satisfy the needs of Hot Sulphur Springs consumers for the next 15 to 20 years. The town will have the option to add a second membrane to the system in the future which, depending on how much Hot Sulphur Springs grows, would make the system sufficient for the next 40 years.

In effect, the town's system will be designed to supply better quality water and more water, more efficiently.

“Eighteen months ago, we thought we'd be lucky to have a clear well and keep operating for another year,” said the mayor in his groundbreaking speech, during which he thanked a long list of people who helped the town during its crisis.

“This money has been a godsend to us. And it is going to allow us to jump ahead of the curve a little bit and to help us to improve our systems and our services to the community in the future,” he added.

Low bidder Garney Companies Inc. of Littleton starts work on the new plant and system improvements this week with a completion date set for October 2010. In statements, Garney outlined that it aims to “use local work forces when available, hire local subcontractors and suppliers whenever possible, and contribute to the businesses of the community.”

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