

es

water
along
river

Gallons
per day

457
333
300
293
283
280
260
228
218
208
207
204
179
167
137
137
131
126
118

20 Water

Water divides Pueblo, Pueblo West

By DENNIS DARROW

The Pueblo Chief

Seldom mentioned in the ongoing talks on government consolidation within Pueblo County are the area's two biggest water utilities: Pueblo and Pueblo West.

Even though cordial in most matters about water, the two entities appear to act like forks in the river when the issue comes to water administration.

As a result, Pueblo now controls enough water for 350,000 people while Pueblo West controls enough for 60,000 people.

Their combined population is less than 120,000.

Appearances can deceive.

In the mid-1970s, the Pueblo Board of Water Works engaged in detailed talks with Pueblo West about combining water utilities, water utility director Alan Hamel said.

The proposal died when independent-minded Pueblo West residents reacted coolly to the notion.

The talks resurfaced again last year.

In the process of a major water treatment plant expansion, Pueblo extended a second invitation to Pueblo West to consider a merger, thus saving Pueblo West from the need for its own larger plant.

The city awaits a response.

A similar fractured setup exists in Colorado Springs.

The city of Colorado Springs and its suburbs of Fountain, Security, Widefield, Stratmoor Hills and some other small districts all maintain separate water administrations.

In the case of Pueblo and Pueblo West, the initial dividing line was drawn from the moment developer Robert McCulloch announced his plan to build a master-planned community outside the city limits.

Suzie Morgan, the interim manager of the Pueblo West Metro District, said the new community set out on its own to secure water after the announcement.

"McCulloch believed in standing on his own," she said.

She also noted that asking for Pueblo's help wasn't much of an option at first. "When he (McCulloch) came and shared his vision to the forefathers of Pueblo, they laughed at him," she said.

McCulloch first tapped ground water to supply Pueblo West.

Water quality concerns caused the switch to Arkansas River water.

