

Bennet, Hickenlooper Deliver \$60 Million from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for Arkansas Valley Conduit

Funding Will Provide Safe Drinking Water for Southeast Colorado

Denver — Today, Colorado U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper welcomed an announcement from the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) of the distribution of \$60 million in funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support the completion of the Arkansas Valley Conduit (AVC), providing Coloradans with a secure and safe supply of water. In July, the senators and U.S. Colorado Representative Ken Buck [urged](#) the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and BOR to allocate funds from the infrastructure law for the AVC. The Weeminuche Construction Authority, an enterprise of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, has been awarded the contract for this phase of construction of the AVC.

“Sixty years ago, President Kennedy came to Pueblo and promised to build the Arkansas Valley Conduit to deliver clean drinking water to families in Southeastern Colorado. Since I’ve been in the Senate, I’ve fought to ensure the federal government keeps its word to Colorado and finishes this vital infrastructure project,” **said Bennet**. “One of the first bills I passed helped to jumpstart and fund construction on the Arkansas Valley Conduit, and with this announcement, we’ve delivered more than \$140 million to help complete construction and deliver on this decades-old promise.”

“Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, long-stalled projects like the Ark Valley Conduit are moving forward. Today, we’re bringing this 60 year project over the finish line,” **said Hickenlooper**.

The AVC is a planned 130-mile water-delivery system from the Pueblo Dam to communities throughout the Arkansas River Valley in Southeast Colorado. This funding will expedite the construction timeline for the Conduit and allow for federal drinking water standards to be met more quickly. The Conduit is the final phase of the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project, which Congress authorized in 1962.

Bennet and Hickenlooper have consistently advocated for increased funding for the AVC. In May, the senators sent a [letter](#) to the Appropriations Committee to include funding for the AVC in the FY23 spending bill. In March, Bennet and Hickenlooper helped [secure](#) \$12 million for the Conduit from the FY22 omnibus bill. Bennet and Hickenlooper will continue working in Washington to ensure communities have the resources needed to complete this vital project for the region.

“We have been working hard to move this project from planning to construction. This announcement follows the first construction contract award, and is a clear indication that the District and Reclamation will continue to partner in this long-time effort to bring clean drinking water to the Lower Arkansas Valley. Our Senators were key to obtaining more than \$8 billion for the Bureau in the IIJA, and our delegation’s long-standing bipartisan support along with support from the State of Colorado have put

the conduit on Reclamation's front line for construction," **said Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District board president Bill Long.**

"The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and its construction enterprise are honored to be a partner in delivering safe drinking water to the Lower Arkansas Valley. Like other projects Weeminuche Construction Authority has been a part of, the Arkansas Valley Conduit has been a long time coming, but will provide enormous benefit. The infrastructure dollars for the Bureau of Reclamation, making this possible, are a credit to Senator Bennet's efforts to build support for Western water infrastructure," **said Michael Preston, Board President, Weenuch-u' Development Corporation of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.**

"As a regional leader in water issues in southern Colorado, Pueblo Water is proud to help push the Arkansas Valley Conduit forward. Our strong relationship with the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District, the Bureau of Reclamation, and other partners helped make it possible for this project to come to fruition. Through this partnership, communities in Southeastern Colorado will have access to clean water faster than thought possible," **said Seth Clayton, Executive Director of Pueblo Water.**

Background:

Prior to this announcement, Bennet has helped secure over \$80 million for the AVC.

In 2009, Congress passed [legislation](#) written by Bennet and former U.S. Senator Mark Udall (D-Colo.) to authorize a federal cost share and the construction of the Arkansas Valley Conduit. Bennet then worked to [secure \\$5 million](#) in federal funding for the project.

In 2013, Bennet and his colleagues [sent a letter](#) to the BOR to quickly approve the Conduit's Environmental Impact Study (EIS) in order to expedite the project's completion. In 2014, following Bennet and Udall's efforts to urge the BOR to quickly approve the Conduit's EIS, the Record of Decision was [signed](#) in February. After President Obama's budget included an insufficient level of funding for the project, Bennet [led a bipartisan letter](#) urging the administration and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to allow the Conduit's construction to move ahead as planned. Bennet successfully urged the Department of Interior to designate \$2 million in reprogrammed funding from FY14 for the Conduit. Bennet secured language in the FY15 Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act that sent a clear signal to the BOR that the Conduit should be a priority project.

In 2016, Bennet [secured \\$2 million](#) from the BOR's reprogrammed funding for FY16, after the project had initially received only \$500,000. Bennet then [secured \\$3 million](#) for the AVC as part of the FY17 spending bill. Bennet secured \$3 million for the Conduit for FY19.

In April 2019, Bennet and former U.S. Senator Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) [wrote](#) to then-Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Ranking Member Feinstein, urging them to provide funding for the Conduit. Bennet, Gardner, former U.S. Congressman Scott Tipton (R-Colo.), and Buck [wrote](#) to the Department of the Interior urging the Department to support the project. Bennet secured approximately \$10 million each year for the Conduit in the FY19 and FY20 spending bills. In 2020, Bennet [welcomed](#) \$28 million from the BOR to begin construction on the AVC to help bring clean drinking water to Colorado communities. He secured \$11 million for the AVC in FY21. He [joined](#) the ground breaking in October 2020.