



# ARKANSAS VALLEY CONDUIT MONTHLY REPORT

Thursday, March 19, 2026

This monthly newsletter summarizes activities related to the Arkansas Valley Conduit and is made available to the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District Board of Directors and Arkansas Valley Conduit stakeholders. To request a subscription to the Report, please contact [info@secwcd.com](mailto:info@secwcd.com) or view it at <https://www.secwcd.org/>



## AVC Committee

The next meeting of the Arkansas Valley Conduit Committee has not been scheduled.

## Want to learn more about the AVC?

If your organization would like a presentation on AVC, contact Chris Woodka, 719-289-0785 or email [chris@secwcd.com](mailto:chris@secwcd.com)



## Read past newsletters

For Past issues of the AVC Report:

<https://www.secwcd.org/>



Senator John Hickenlooper (left) and Keith McLaughlin, executive director of the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority, discuss the Arkansas Valley Conduit at a Water Security and Infrastructure Roundtable meeting organized by the Senator on February 18.

## Hickenlooper: Finish the AVC

Senator John Hickenlooper visited a construction site of the Arkansas Valley Conduit and conducted a Water Security and Infrastructure Roundtable meeting at Southeastern District headquarters in Pueblo on February 18, 2026.

“We’re looking at the construction that’s been done and how much there is left to do,” Hickenlooper said at the Injection Site five miles east of Pueblo. 12 miles of 30-inch pipeline has been installed and the Injection Site is being constructed.

After touring the site, Hickenlooper met with stakeholders at District headquarters.

“The Senator has been a huge proponent of the Arkansas Valley Conduit along with all of the members of the Colorado Congressional delegation,” said Leann Noga, Southeastern Executive Director. “The AVC is the answer to drinking water issues that have existed in the Lower Arkansas Valley for decades, but there is still much work left to do until we see it completed.”

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Water Security and Infrastructure Roundtable participants discuss the Arkansas Valley Conduit with Senator John Hickenlooper.

# Senator voices support for Arkansas Valley Conduit

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Along with Mrs. Noga, attendees at the meeting included:

- **Lauren Ris**, Executive Director Colorado Water Conservation Board
- **Keith McLaughlin**, Executive Director Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority
- **Alex Hawley**, Safe Drinking Water Loans and Grants Coordinator, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- **Seth Clayton**, Executive Director, Pueblo Board of Water Works and Southeastern Board Member
- **Justin Di Santi**, President Bessemer Ditch, Southeastern AVC Committee and Board Member
- **Ryan Froman**, Avondale Water and Sanitation District Board Member (AVC participant)
- **Tom Seaba**, Director La Junta Utilities (AVC participant)
- **Chris Woodka**, Senior Policy and Issues Manager SECWCD
- **Tim Knabenshue**, Otero County Commissioner

Senator Hickenlooper talked about the presidential veto of HR 131, the Finish the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act, which passed unanimously in both the U.S. Senate and House. The House fell short in getting enough votes to override the veto.



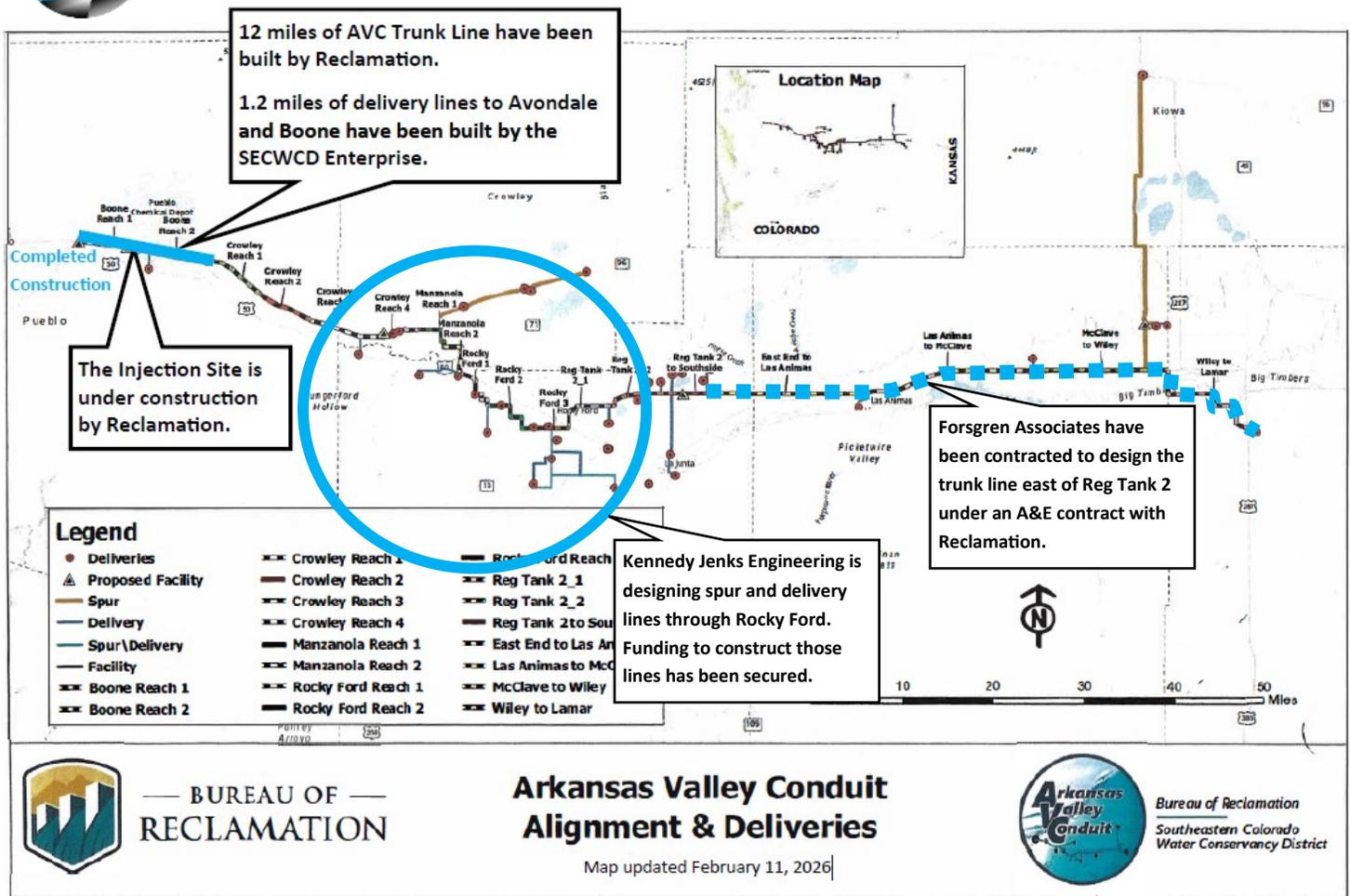
Ryan Froman and Tom Seaba spoke on behalf of AVC participants.

The focus of the HB131 was to keep the AVC affordable for participants, which was discussed by those at the meeting. Hickenlooper said he will continue to work to get legislation passed.

The AVC also is the preferred method for helping AVC communities meet federal water quality standards.



## AVC PROJECT UPDATE



## AVC FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# Affordability bill gets support in Congress

Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper and Representatives Lauren Boebert and Jeff Hurd have submitted a formal request to the committees drafting the Water Resources Development Act of 2026 (WRDA 2026), asking them to include the language in H.R. 131.

H.R. 131, vetoed by President Trump after passing the House and Senate unanimously, sought to reduce interest rates and extend the repayment period for the non-federal 35 percent cost share for the Arkansas Valley Conduit.

Our elected leaders share the Southeastern District's commitment to make the AVC affordable and the cost share repaid with miscellaneous revenues

generated by the Fry-Ark Project in Colorado.

WRDA will be developed through the spring and summer. It is a measure passed by Congress every two years with a big margin and bipartisan support.

Meanwhile, we are anticipating the release of the Administration's FY2027 budget. It is important that the AVC maintain a line item in the budget, and that amount is expected to be small until all \$500 million the AVC has received in Bipartisan Infrastructure Act funding has been obligated to project construction. In FY2026, the project received a \$3 million appropriation.

Watch for more updates in the April newsletter!



# AVC Committee reviews progress of project

The Arkansas Valley Conduit Committee met on February 24, 2026 to hear updates on the AVC Project from staff. There was no action taken at the meeting. This report updates some of the items that were discussed.

## AVC Reclamation Sub-Project

Testing of the Boone Reach 2 line is complete. Thalle Construction is behind schedule on the Injection site, and completion is expected in April 2027. Reclamation is meeting frequently with Thalle management to find ways to improve the schedule. Crowley Reach 1 will go out for bid soon, with award of the bid expected later this year and construction commencing in 2027. Forsgren Associates have been awarded a contract to design the AVC trunk line from Regulating Tank 2 to Lamar.

## Federal Funding

The AVC has received \$613 million in federal appropriations, which includes \$500 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and \$113 million in standard appropriations since the 2014 Record of Decision. Reclamation has spent \$182 million, and \$249 million has been obligated or spent, according to the Administration.

## AVC Enterprise Sub-Project

Executive Director Leann Noga explained that the 60-percent design for the spurs and delivery lines was completed on a short schedule in order to finish in time to apply for BIL funds available through the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority (CWRPDA).

On January 29, the CWRPDA approved a \$45 million loan for construction of spur and delivery lines to 18 water systems at its January meeting in Denver. This will be enough funding to reach Rocky Ford, including the four water systems located south of Rocky Ford on what is referred to as the Hilltop Spur. The construction loan will be funded under a four-party agreement between the Enterprise, SWRPDA, CWCB and Otero County and is expected to be complete within 2-3 years.

The District intends to hire a Project Manager by April who will work on AVC as well as other projects. Other AVC team members will remain and at least one staff member will be added at a later date.

### Arkansas Valley Conduit Committee

The Arkansas Valley Conduit Committee is a standing committee of the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District and makes recommendations to the District Board of Directors. Meetings are held periodically and are open to the public.

Members of the AVC Committee are:

- ◆ Chairman: Kevin Karney, At Large
- ◆ Vice-Chairman: Justin DiSanti, Pueblo County
- ◆ Matt Heimerich, Crowley County
- ◆ Mike Bartolo, Otero County
- ◆ Dallas May, Prowers-Kiowa County
- ◆ Bill Long, Bent County, Board President
- ◆ Leann Noga, Executive Director

## Participants Update

The District hosted a participants meeting via Zoom on January 26, 2026. The meeting was to answer questions about the Presidential veto of HR 131 that participants might have. About 57 people attended the meeting and there were no major questions after facts were explained.

The Town of Eads passed a resolution to withdraw from the AVC at its February 10, 2026 meeting.

Mrs. Noga and Mr. Woodka met with the Eads Town Board on February 4, 2026 in a work session to explain that the line to Eads would not be designed and would not be built if Eads dropped out. Also, Eads would have to pay its own costs if they decided to join later.

Details and terms of the Eads withdrawal have not been negotiated, but legal discussions have been initiated.

The Enterprise is planning upcoming meetings with participants on water resources. The AVC is meant to supplement existing water supplies, not replace them. All AVC participants now rely on groundwater, and most will have to use at least some well water after AVC is built. The AVC Committee and Allocation and Storage Committee will have a joint meeting in the near future to discuss options .



## Bennet, Hickenlooper, Boebert, Hurd Push for Passage of the AVC Act

Washington, D.C. — Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet led Senator John Hickenlooper and U.S. Representatives Lauren Boebert and Jeff Hurd in urging U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Ranking Member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, U.S. Representative Sam Graves, Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and Representative Rick Larsen, Ranking Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, to include the Finish the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act (H.R. 131) in the forthcoming 2026 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

“H.R. 131 passed both the House and Senate in 2025 without objection, but has not been signed into law. The bill would adjust the non-federal cost share financing for the Arkansas Valley Conduit (AVC), which is the final, unfinished component of the Fryingpan–Arkansas Project authorized by Congress in 1962. More than six decades later, over 50,000 residents across 39 communities in southeastern Colorado continue to rely on groundwater sources contaminated with naturally occurring pollutants, including carcinogens. These predominantly rural and economically vulnerable communities have waited generations for the federal government to meet its commitment,” **wrote the lawmakers.**

While the AVC has garnered overwhelming bipartisan support, rising material and labor costs have threatened the project's completion. The Finish the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act provides measures that ensure the project's finalization without additional taxpayer burden by adjusting financing terms, reducing interest rates, and providing greater repayment flexibility.

WRDA regularly authorizes water infrastructure projects, and WRDA 1992 authorized constructing a component of the Arkansas Valley Conduit. WRDA has long served as a popular solution for critical water infrastructure and has a history of supporting the AVC. Including H.R. 131 in the 2026 WRDA is not only backed by precedent, it also supports the tradition of using the WRDA to adapt and support authorized water resource projects.

“Given WRDA’s established role as Congress’s bipartisan water infrastructure package, we believe 2026 WRDA is the appropriate legislative vehicle to secure completion of the AVC. We respectfully urge the Committee to include H.R. 131 in the 2026 Water Resources Development Act and help ensure that southeastern Colorado communities finally receive the safe, reliable drinking water they were promised,” **concluded the lawmakers.**

Text of the letter:

*Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:*

*We write to respectfully request that H.R. 131, the Finish the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act, be included in the forthcoming 2026 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Incorporating this legislation into WRDA would ensure Congress fulfills a long-standing federal commitment to deliver clean, affordable drinking water to tens of thousands of rural Coloradans, while advancing a project with strong bipartisan support without increasing federal spending.*

*H.R. 131 passed both the House and Senate in 2025 without objection, but has not been signed into law. The bill would adjust the non-federal cost share financing for the Arkansas Valley Conduit (AVC), which is the final, unfinished component of the Fryingpan–Arkansas Project authorized by Congress in 1962. More than six decades later, over 50,000 residents across 39 communities in southeastern Colorado continue to rely on groundwater sources contaminated with naturally occurring pollutants, including carcinogens. These predominantly rural and economically vulnerable communities have waited generations for the federal government to meet its commitment.*

*WRDA has long served as the primary vehicle for advancing critical water infrastructure and honoring federal project authorizations. In fact, the 1992 WRDA included a Section 219 authorization supporting the AVC, recognizing its importance as a regional water supply project. Including H.R. 131 in the 2026 WRDA is consistent with this precedent and with Congress’s bipartisan tradition of using WRDA to strengthen, modify, and complete authorized water resource projects.*

*Although administrations of both parties have supported the AVC, rising material and labor costs now threaten its completion. H.R. 131 provides a practical solution by adjusting financing terms to reduce interest rates and provide greater repayment flexibility—measures that enable completion of the project without imposing additional costs on taxpayers. These targeted updates are well suited for inclusion in WRDA, which routinely refines existing authorizations to reflect changing economic conditions and ensure project viability.*

*Given WRDA’s established role as Congress’s bipartisan water infrastructure package, we believe 2026 WRDA is the appropriate legislative vehicle to secure completion of the AVC. We respectfully urge the Committee to include H.R. 131 in the 2026 Water Resources Development Act and help ensure that southeastern Colorado communities finally receive the safe, reliable drinking water they were promised.*

*Thank you for your leadership and consideration.*