

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

06/01/04 TUE 08:56 FAX 3039696740

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## United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, D.C. 20240



ER-04/0250

MAY 20 2004

Mr. William C. Jones  
Federal Highway Administration  
Colorado Federal Aid Division  
555 Zang Street, Room 250  
Lakewood, Colorado 80228

Dear Mr. Jones:

1.....Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment and Draft Section  
2 4(f) Evaluation for I-25 Improvements through the Colorado Springs Urbanized Area in El Paso  
3.....County, Colorado. The Department of the Interior (Department) has reviewed the document, and  
4 hereby submits these comments to you as an indication of our thoughts regarding this project.

5.....  
6 The Department recognizes and appreciates the extent of public and agency participation with  
7.....affected parties on this project including various Federal, State, and local agencies,  
8 organizations, and the general public. We particularly acknowledge the amount of Native  
9.....American consultation conducted including the preparation of a Programmatic Agreement  
10 between Federal Highway Administration, Colorado State Department of Transportation,  
11.....Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, and five Native American tribes. We are also  
12 pleased that the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office concurs with your findings  
13.....regarding the historic properties affected by this project and we encourage you to continue  
14 consultation with them throughout project implementation, as needed.

15.....  
16 Following our review of the Section 4(f) Evaluation, we concur that there is no feasible or  
17.....prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative and that all measures to minimize harm to  
18 affected resources have been taken.

19.....  
20 **Specific Comments**

21.....  
22 **Page 3-73, Chapter 3, Impacts and Mitigation, Section Water Resources and Issues:** This  
23.....section does not include a discussion of ground water. The subsection on Wetlands  
24 acknowledges the contribution of ground water (Page 3-91, first sentence), but no follow up  
25.....discussion on the subject is provided in the section. We recommend that the document include a  
26 brief description of ground water in the study area. We also recommend that the document

RESPONSE

Lines 16-18: This concurrence by the U.S. Department of Interior is noted in the Final Section 4(f) Evaluation.

Lines 25-26: Groundwater was not discussed in the EA because it is not a major source of drinking water in the region. According to Colorado Springs Utilities, only about three percent of the water supply for the City of Colorado Springs water service area comes from groundwater. CSU reports that its well water supplies meet all drinking water standards. Additional information about groundwater is available online in the region's *Section 208 Water Quality Management Plan*, updated in 2003 by the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments.

Appendix 9 of the EA, *Sustaining Nature and Community in the Pikes Peak Region*, includes a discussion of water quality and quantity in the region, including drinking water sources, a figure depicting groundwater well locations and a brief discussion of groundwater contamination issues.

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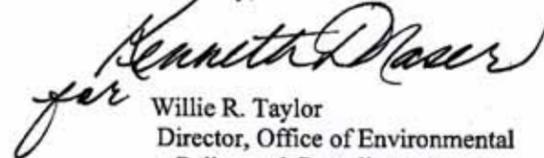
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## RESPONSE

1.....describe the following impacts of the proposed project: (1) increase in paved area can decrease  
2 infiltration and ground-water recharge; and (2) retention basins (Page 3-89, fifth bullet point) can  
3.....provide a pathway for the introduction of water of poor quality, such as highway washoff or  
4 spills, to ground water.

5.....  
6 We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

  
for Willie R. Taylor  
Director, Office of Environmental  
Policy and Compliance

Lines 1-2: The fact that increased impervious surface results in decreased infiltration is explained and illustrated in EA Appendix 9 at page 2-63 (Figure 2-42).

Lines 2-4: The shallow water detention facilities mentioned on EA page 3-89 are intended for surface water quality mitigation, not for groundwater recharge. It is recognized that accidental spills may occur. Since accidental spill locations cannot be predicted, there is no practical way to assure that such spills would not reach the groundwater. However, Federal, State and local governments all have hazardous-material response teams trained to contain spills and to assure prompt cleanup.