



ARKANSAS VALLEY CONDUIT MONTHLY REPORT

Thursday, November 21, 2024

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 or view it at <https://www.secwcd.org/>



AVC Committee

The Arkansas Valley Conduit Committee of the Southeastern Colorado Water Activity Enterprise holds monthly meetings at District Headquarters, 31717 United Avenue, Pueblo, CO. Check <https://www.secwcd.org/> for Zoom information. Next meeting:

10 a.m. Thursday, January 23, 2025

No December Newsletter

We will not publish a December 2024 Newsletter due to the holiday season. The Newsletter will resume publication on January 16, 2025.

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



Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District President Bill Long testifies on Wednesday, November 20, 2024 in Congress for the “Finish the AVC Act.”

‘Finish the AVC’ bill gets House hearing

The “Finish the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act,” a bill that would reduce interest and extend the repayment period for the Arkansas Valley Conduit, was heard Wednesday in the U.S. House Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries.

Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District Bill Long testified in support of the bill, which is sponsored by U.S. Representative Lauren Boebert.

“Given the poor quality of groundwater sources, the resulting inability to meet safe drinking water standards, the severe public health impacts that has, the depressed economy of the Lower Arkansas River Valley, and the very substantial increase in the estimated construction cost of the AVC resulting from a May, 2024, updated cost estimate, the District believes that the amendments which H.R. 9514 will make are fully justified,” Mr. Long said.

Mr. Long outlined the need for the project, as well as the need for changing the authorizing legislation for the AVC. A 2009 law, PL 111-11, provided use of miscellaneous Fryingspan-Arkansas revenues for the

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AVC Progress, Funding ‘Toolbox’ Shared at Rocky Ford meet

The affordability of the Arkansas Valley Conduit and the steps needed to prepare water systems to receive AVC water were front and center at a participants meeting last month.

About 70 people attended a special AVC meeting at the Colorado State University Extension Office at Rocky Ford on October 24, 2024. Another 20 people signed in on-line to listen to the meeting.



Members of the audience listen to presentations about the Arkansas Valley Conduit at a special meeting at the CSU Extension Office at Rocky Ford on October 24, 2024.

Executive Director Leann Noga reviewed the June AVC Participants Meeting and the progress of federal legislation introduced that will help keep the AVC affordable. The primary purpose of that meeting was to explain the updated cost estimate for the AVC.

She praised U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper for moving ahead a proposal by the Southeastern Colorado Water Activity Enterprise Board to decrease the interest rate and extend the AVC repayment period.



Leann Noga

“I have to take a minute and talk about our senators,” Mrs. Noga said. “They understand the need and they understand the importance. We cannot move forward without thanking them for their hard work.”

Mrs. Noga also highlighted:

- ◆ Upcoming meetings with individual AVC participants on water resource portfolios, estimated costs

of operations and other issues.

- ◆ An AVC governing authority that is needed to represent the interests of the lower Arkansas Valley. Right now, the Enterprise Board, which has members from counties outside the AVC service area, is the governing authority, but more input from the participants geographic area is needed.
- ◆ Upgrading the District web site to provide updated information about the AVC, in the same way that the Newsletter that is published monthly.

Federal Update

Derrick Mickle, AVC Project Manager for the Bureau of Reclamation, and Jeff Rieker, Area manager of the Eastern Colorado Area Office, gave an update on the federal side of the AVC Project.

Mr. Mickle spoke about the ongoing design efforts for AVC. Reclamation is using both in-house resources at the Denver Federal Technical Services Center and outside contractors to complete the design all the way to Lamar.

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“We’re trying to work in parallel so that when funding becomes available, we’re ready on design to get that pipe moving further east,” Mr. Mickle said.

Mr. Rieker discussed federal funding for the AVC for the AVC trunk line. So far the AVC Project has received more than \$320 million



Jeff Rieker

through the annual appropriation and the bipartisan infrastructure law. The federal funding varies by year, and the AVC has been a priority for Reclamation in the past five years.

“We’re working to build on the success of the project so far and moving into the future,” Mr. Rieker said. “There is a tremendous amount of energy in our agency around this project.”

Construction Progress

Gordon Dillon , AVC construction manager for the Enterprise, spoke briefly on the current status of the Enterprise Project.

Avondale and Boone lines have been constructed, and the other lines have been designed. He invited anyone who has questions to visit the District office in Pueblo.

Funding “Toolbox”

Kevin Meador, Project Manager for the Enterprise, discussed state funding for the Enterprise and a Funding Guidance Document, or “Toolbox” that the Enterprise has developed to help participants navigate through funding sources for projects in their own water systems.

Copies of the Funding Guidance Document were distributed at the meeting. A description of the document appears below.

Funding Guidance Document helps navigate resources

The Southeastern Colorado Water Activity Enterprise has developed a Funding Guidance Document to help participants navigate funding resources for water system improvements.

Preliminary Engineering Reports identified the Enterprise-funded spurs and delivery lines (Group 1), improvements funded by participants needed to connect with the AVC (Group 2), and improvements needed to reduce water loss (Group 3) funded by participants. The reports have been shared with participants.

While the Enterprise is not responsible for funding or building the Group 2 and Group 3 improvements, these are needed to assure the success of the AVC in its goal to bring clean drinking water to the communities along the Arkansas River east of Pueblo. Water treated by the Pueblo Board of Water Works for AVC

represents a cleaner source than wells in the Arkansas Valley, which either have high natural levels of radiation from deep wells or are contaminated from surface sources in shallow wells.

The Funding Guidance Document outlines which funding sources are available for these Group 2 and Group 3 improvements, and provides contact information for agencies involved with programs such as the Colorado State Revolving Fund, Emerging Contaminants Revolving Fund, Colorado Department of Local Affairs and U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

During the Participants Meeting presentation, Kevin Meador explained that the document will be periodically updated to assure that current contact information is included and to make changes when new sources of funding are available.



Rocky Ford gets funding for sewer upgrades

Nearly two decades after its wastewater system was first cited for violations by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), the City of Rocky Ford has secured funding to fix the problems by 2029.

“This is a \$29 million project, but it had to be done,” said Rick Long, Rocky Ford Public Works Director.

Rocky Ford had CDPHE permit violations from 2007 and 2010 that had gone unanswered for years and was facing \$365,000 in fines when Long took over water and sewer operations about six years ago.

The problems stemmed from infiltration of the sewer system by groundwater, which he described as a river running through the city. In one line, there was so much water coming in that it couldn’t be cleared despite two months of continuous pumping.

The city began taking proactive steps to test, clean and video the pipes. It launched community programs that helped lower the fines to \$45,000. And, it cycled through three engineering firms before finally hooking up with Element Engineering Group, which provided both technical and financial expertise to develop a master plan.

“My advice is to find a good engineering firm,” Long said. “They were instrumental in getting us where we’re at now — where we needed to be.”

In October, USDA Rural Development announced a \$20.3 million loan and \$8 million grant, which will allow Rocky Ford to make repairs to the 100,000 linear feet of pipe in its wastewater collection system. The city is seeking another \$1 million grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

City Manager Stacey Milenski said the project will go out for bid in 2025, and upgrades are expected to be completed by 2029. This will include identification of the pipes that are most problematic, lining or replacing damaged pipes and in some cases upsizing pipe to meet the load.



Rick Long works at his office in Rocky Ford.

As important as this project is, it is not the only water problem Rocky Ford has to tackle.

The city also has an aging water system with 45 miles of distribution pipe that experiences as much as 50 percent water loss.

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Many pipes in the Rocky Ford wastewater system are subject to infiltration and in need of replacement.

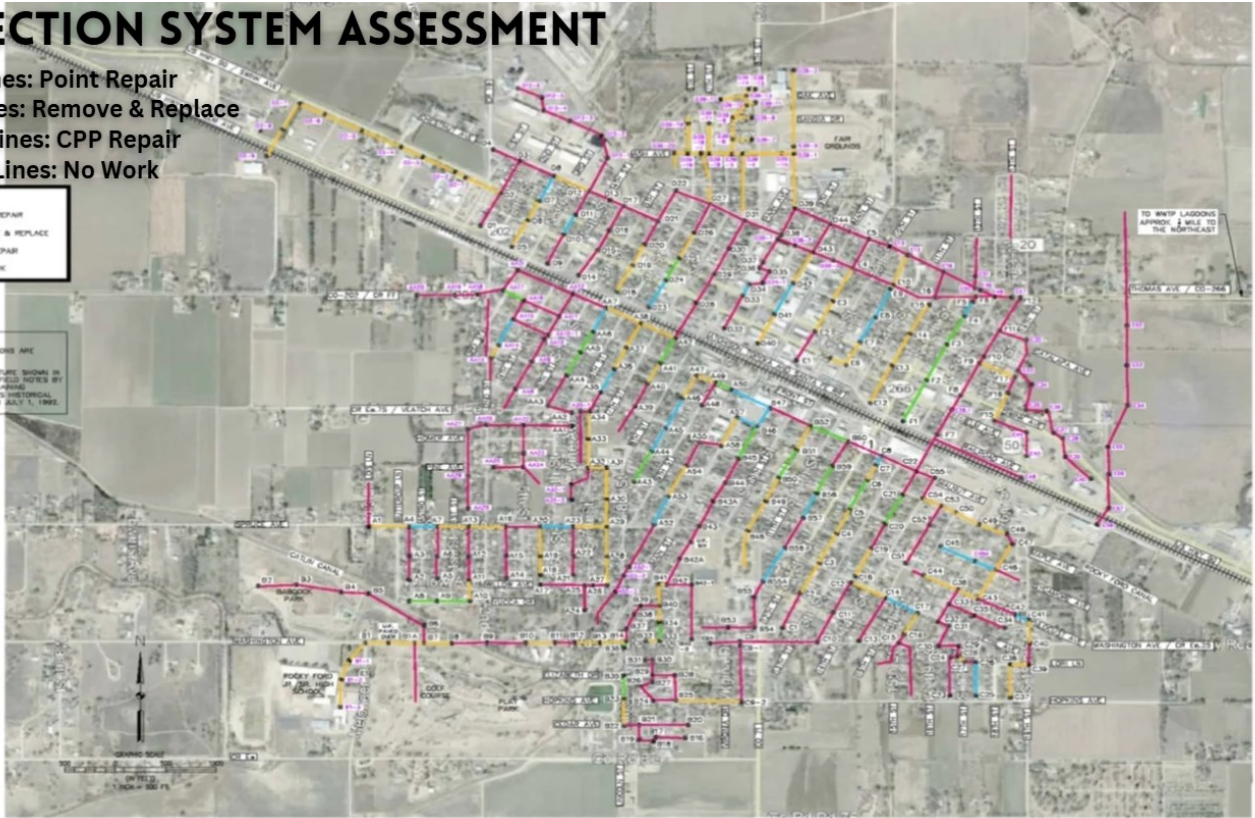


COLLECTION SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

- Blue Lines: Point Repair
- Red Lines: Remove & Replace
- Green Lines: CPP Repair
- Yellow Lines: No Work



NOTES:
 1. MANHOLE AND PIPE LOCATIONS ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY.
 2. MANHOLE SOME NOMENCLATURE SHOWN IN COLOR POINT TAKEN FROM FIELD NOTES BY CLARENCE ENGINEERING. PIPELINE NOMENCLATURE FROM CITY'S HISTORICAL RECORD SENSOR MAP DATED JULY 1, 1988.



All of the red lines on this map of Rocky represent wastewater lines that must be totally replaced.

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The city installed smart meters in past year that should help reduce unaccounted-for water either by replacing malfunctioning equipment or metering accounts that were not previously measured.

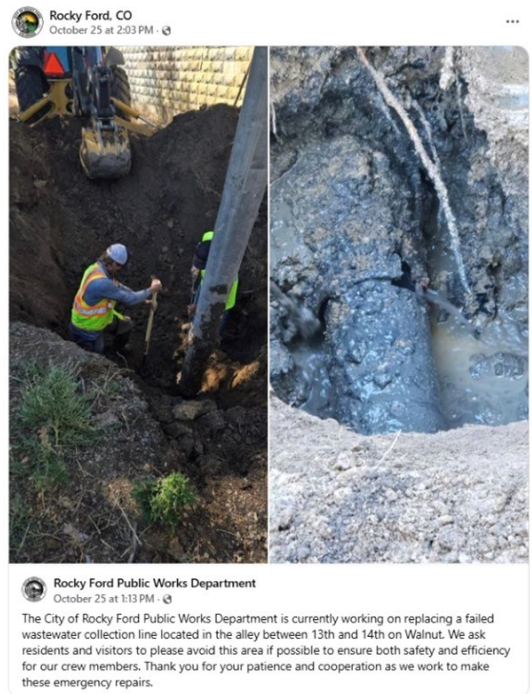
“We had one woman who was losing 12.5 gallons per minute that went undetected for three weeks,” Long said. “When we can find big leaks like that, it will save the customers money too.”

But Long acknowledges that the city’s plumbing is in need of major repairs. Although the wastewater loan will add about \$40 per month to customers’ bills, those water projects need to happen as well.

“I wouldn’t expect you’d want to give us any water through the AVC if we’re losing 50 percent of it,” he said.

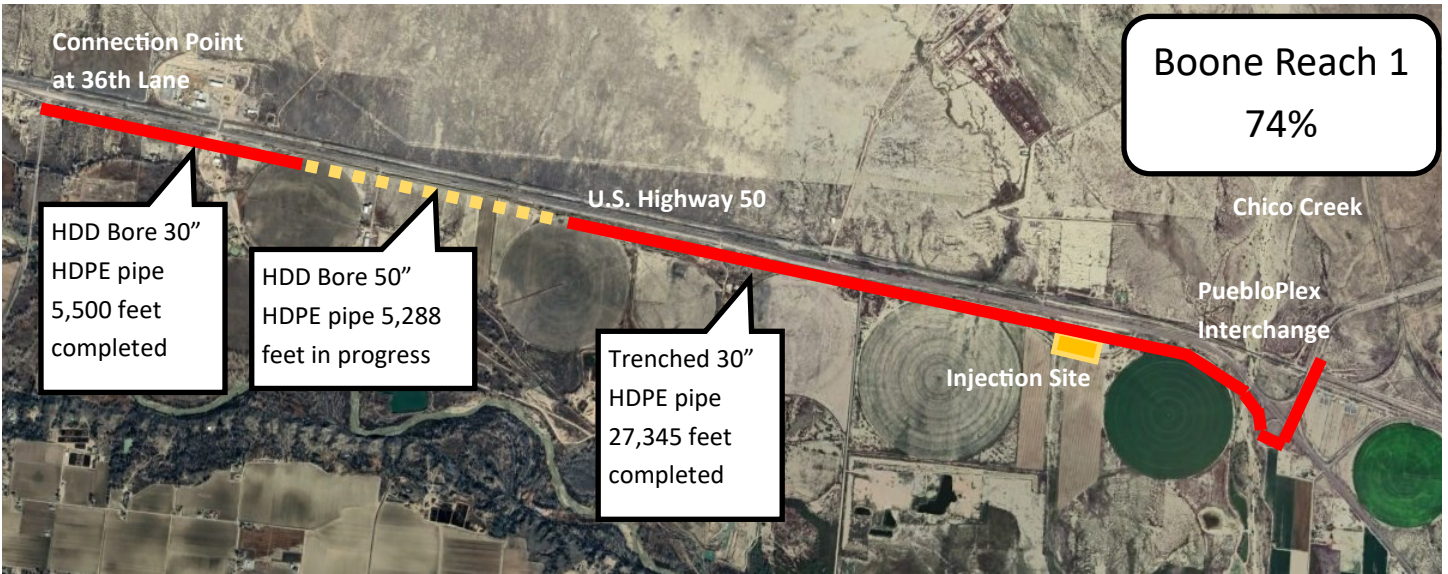
Right now, Rocky Ford is working with another engineering firm to prioritize water system improvements in advance of AVC reaching the area. It could mean more expense for customers and more time to make sure money is well spent. While there are headaches while making the improvements, Long says it’s worth it.

“I love what we’ve done, and what we’re doing,” he said. “I intend to keep doing it until I can’t.”





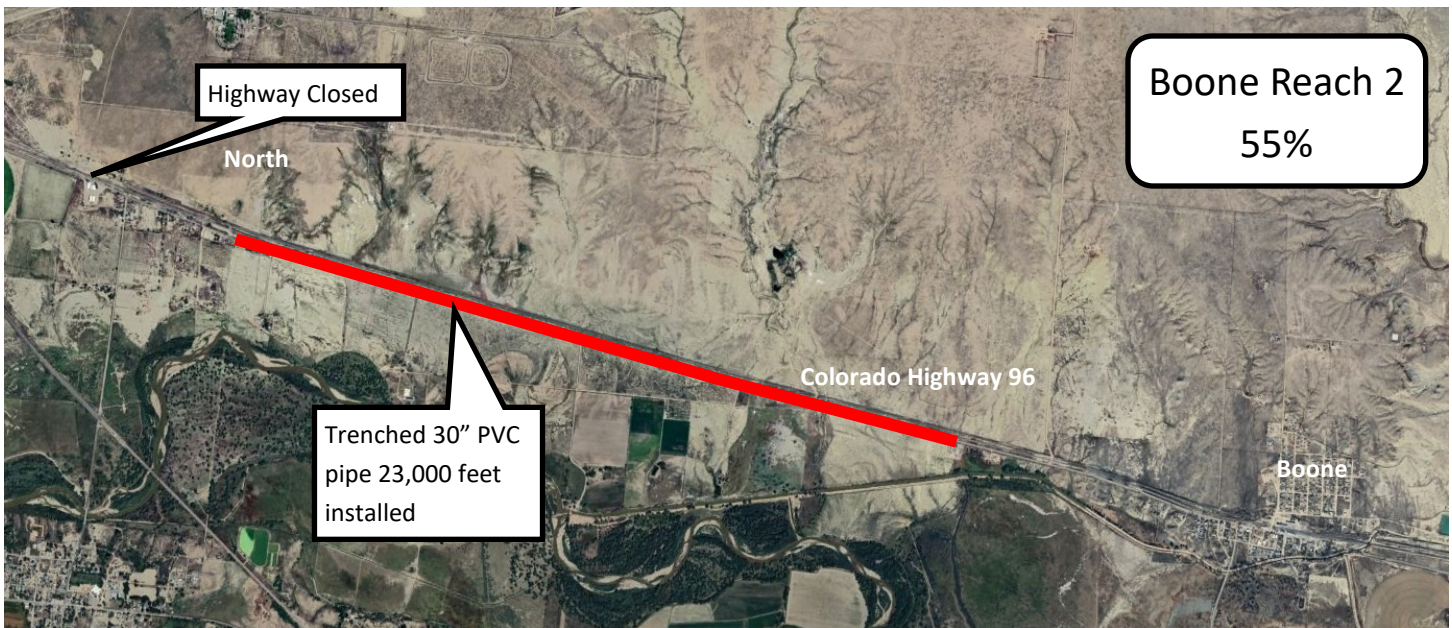
Federal AVC Construction Details



Boone Reach 1

The second leg of the horizontal directional drilling (HDD) is continuing. The pilot hole is complete and 4,800 feet of 5,288 feet for the 50-inch ream pass is complete. The entire length of

30-inch HDPE pipe for the second leg of the HDD has been fused and tested. A total of 27,345 feet (5.2 miles) of trenched 30-inch pipe has been installed. Crossings at 46th Lane and the PuebloPlex interchange are complete.



Boone Reach 2

As of November 20, 2024, Pate Construction has laid 23,000 linear feet of 30-inch PVC pipe in along Colorado Highway 96 and is starting to decommission some dewatering wells. The Colorado Department of Transportation has approved a full road closure on Highway 96 until the summer of 2025 as work continues.

Injection Site

Thalle Construction Company is on site, setting up offices. Stripping of the site has started.

Design

A contract for design from Reg Tank 2 to Lamar is being prepared.



Environmental Pre-construction Surveys

The AVC final planning documents require using best management practices and taking steps to avoid or reduce environmental impacts. To the extent possible, construction avoids wetlands; federal, state, and local wildlife areas and refuges; designated critical habitats; migratory bird habitat during nesting brood-rearing season; known historic properties; rare plants, hazardous material sites; and other resource sensitive areas.

Pre-construction surveys by trained staff help identify sensitive habitats and wildlife use before construction to allow for best management practices, time and space restrictions, and migratory bird management planning. Pipelines, water treatment plants, and pump station facilities are adjusted during final design, where feasible, to avoid sensitive areas.

As an example, removal of vegetation occurs outside of the bird breeding season (which is typically between April 1 and August 15 in Colorado) to the maximum extent possible, or clearance surveys are done immediately before construction.

For the AVC Trunk Line, Reclamation completed environmental preconstruction surveys for the Boone Reach, and has initiated preconstruction surveys for the upcoming major crossings and Crowley Reaches.



Staff from SECWCD and Reclamation discussing potential routes for an underground crossing of the Arkansas River.

If you have any questions for the Bureau of Reclamation about the Arkansas Valley Conduit project, please contact:

- Adam Ortega, Environmental Specialist, aortega@usbr.gov
- Matt Schultz, Environmental Specialist, mjschultz@usbr.gov
- Joe Gomori, Project Coordinator, jgomori@usbr.gov
- Anna Perea, Public Affairs Specialist, aperea@usbr.gov

Federal AVC Funding

The AVC received \$90 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding on May 30, 2024. Total federal funding since 2020 totals \$321.23 million.

The AVC annual allocation in the President’s FY2025 budget increased to \$13.06 million, which was approved earlier this month by the U.S. Senate.

The updated cost estimate for the Reclamation AVC Sub-Project was updated to \$1.3 billion in June.

Reclamation Sub-Project Construction at a Glance

Federal Sub-Project	Design	Construction Contract	Construction	Completion Estimate
Boone Reach 1	✓	✓	In Progress	4/17/25
Boone Reach 2	✓	✓	In Progress	8/25/25
Injection Site	✓	✓	NTP issued	3/11/26
Reg Tank 1	In Progress			10/5/27
Design to Lamar	In Progress			12/31/27



Finish the AVC gets hearing in Congress

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AVC. With the revised cost estimate for the AVC, more time and reduced interest rates are needed for those revenues to be sufficient to pay the AVC costs. Mr. Long noted the AVC communities are far below state and national income levels and the problems of

Boebert also spoke in favor of the bill, saying it is needed because needed water improvements could otherwise triple water bills in the Lower Arkansas Valley. She lauded the District and Reclamation for seeking modifications to the AVC that have reduced costs by \$200 million.

“Access to clean water is not a luxury, it is a necessity, and Southeastern Colorado families deserve a sustainable and reliable water supply,” Boebert said.

Reclamation Deputy Secretary Roque Sanchez said the AVC has benefitted from \$320 million under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

“It demonstrates our commitment to providing a safe and reliable source of drinking water for all Americans,” Sanchez said.

The same legislation was also introduced in the Senate by U.S. Senators Micheal Bennet and John Hickenlooper and was heard in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee on September 11, 2024. Final congressional action on the bill will come at a later date.

The Southeastern Board of Directors asked the lawmakers to sponsor the legislation after the Revised Cost Estimate announced in June by the Bureau of Reclamation significantly increased the estimated cost of the AVC. The legislation puts forward changes that will ensure that the AVC can be completed.



Representative Lauren Boebert testifies in support of her bill to finish the AVC.



Deputy Commissioner Roque Sanchez of the Bureau of Reclamation talks about the need for drinking water projects across the United States.

The hearing can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@NaturalResourcesGOP>

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For Past issues of the AVC Report go to:

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

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