U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

Mid-Pacific Region
Lahontan Basin Area Office
Carson City, Nevada

Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment

Conveyance of the Newlands Project Headquarters and Maintenance Yard Facility Churchill County, Nevada

December 17, 2007

FONSI NO. LO-03-07

Prepared by: Caryn Huntt DeCarlo Date: 12/17/07
Caryn Huntt DeCarlo
Natural Resources Specialist

Recommended: Terri Edwards Date: 12/17/07
Terri Edwards
Resource Division Manager

Approved: Elizabeth Ann Rieke Date: 12/17/07
Elizabeth Ann Rieke
Area Manager

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Conveyance of the Newlands Project Headquarters and Maintenance Yard Facility Environmental Assessment

I. Background

The Newlands Project Headquarters and Maintenance Yard Facility (Project Headquarters) is located in Fallon, Nevada and is a feature of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Newlands Project. Since August 1972, Reclamation has leased the use of the Project Headquarters site to their Operations and Maintenance Contractor, the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District (District). The District uses the site for their headquarters office, administration building and operations and maintenance yard.

Reclamation has undertaken a program to transfer title of agency facilities that are not of national importance and could be efficiently and effectively managed by non-federal entities. The Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes the effects of transferring the Project Headquarters out of federal ownership to the District. Transfer of the Project Headquarters would allow the District to expand its offices and make permanent improvements to accommodate the District's growth and make more efficient the delivery of water to the water users within the Newlands Project.

The EA evaluated the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. The November 2007 EA is incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). This FONSI makes a determination of no significant adverse impacts based on the analysis in the EA evaluation. Reclamation has found that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the proposed action for the Project Headquarters conveyance.

II. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to transfer the Newlands Project Headquarters and Maintenance Facility from the Secretary of the Interior (through Reclamation) to the District. The action is needed to comply with Public Law 109–265 which directs Reclamation to implement the title transfer.

III. Alternative Descriptions

Alternative 1 - Proposed Action:

Under the Proposed Action the Secretary shall convey to the District all right, title, and interest of the United States to the Newlands Project Headquarters and maintenance Yard Facility. The District would receive title of approximately 37.03 acres of withdrawn land and Reclamation would retain approximately 3.5 acres of withdrawn land for its Fallon Field Office.

The proposed action is derived from the Public Law 109–265 and the Memorandum of Agreement between United States of America Bureau of Reclamation, United States Department of the Interior and Truckee-Carson Irrigation District – Conveyance of Newlands Project Headquarters and Maintenance Yard Facility Newlands Project, Nevada. All actions and agreements in both the Public Law and the Memorandum of Agreement are requirements for the Proposed Action. In addition, the August 2003 Lease of Reclamation Building outlines the terms of the Reclamation's lease for the mobile home residence of the District's groundkeeper located on the property to be retained by Reclamation.

Alternative 2 - No Action:

Reclamation would maintain title to the property and continue the lease of the Project Headquarters to the District. The 37.03 acres would not be conveyed to the District.

IV. Summary of Impacts

Reclamation's analysis in the EA indicates that there will be limited impacts from implementation of the Proposed Action alternative in the EA. No significant effects have been identified for any resource. A summary of the impacts for the primary resources considered in detail in the EA is as follows:

1. Soils: Fallon Soils Series (Fallon Fine Sandy Loam) consist of very deep, moderately well drained soils that formed in alluvium derived from mixed sources. No adverse effects to soils on the Project Headquarters property are expected from either the Proposed Action or the No Action alternative. It is expected that soil compaction would continue from vehicle and equipment use on the site, but continued use would have only a minor impact on the already heavily compacted soils.

2. Water Resources: Existing surface and ground water resources will not be affected by either the Proposed Action or the No Action alternatives. The quality of the drinking water for those working at the Project Headquarters site remains a health concern; it is expected that both District and Reclamation staff will continue to need to drink bottled water in the future.

3. Biological Resources - Vegetation, Fish and Wildlife: The Project Headquarters site does not support habitat for any federally listed or candidate plant or wildlife species and none of these species are known to occur in the vicinity of the site. The Project Headquarters property exhibits highly disturbed ground and is an active maintenance yard facility that is not conducive to wildlife habitation. Neither the Project Headquarters conveyance Proposed Action or the No Action would have any effect upon wildlife species or vegetation on the property. Physical conditions of the land are expected to stay the same under either alternative, though weed colonization may increase over time.

4. Land Use:

Commencing on August 31, 1972, Reclamation has leased to the District use of 40 acres of withdrawn land as a site for office headquarters, administration building and an operations and maintenance yard. The District signed a repayment contract for the Project Headquarters with the United States in 1926 and fulfilled that obligation in 1996.

Proposed Action: The District has indicated that they intend to continue using the Project Headquarters land and facilities in the same manner as current use. The District may make improvements to the office and the facilities, however operations will continue in the same manner as they have in the past. The District will continue to observe rules, guidelines, and procedures required of all public agencies in the State of Nevada. No change or adverse effects to land use are expected from the conveyance of the property to the District.

No Action: The United States would retain title to the property. It is likely that Reclamation would continue leasing the Project Headquarters site to the District indefinitely.

5. Cultural Resources: Reclamation performed a cultural resource inventory of the maintenance yard facility and no prehistoric or historic cultural resources were identified within the Area of Potential Affect. Reclamation consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office and received concurrence that the transfer of the facility will not affect any historic properties. Pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.4(d)(1), no historic properties will be affected by either the Proposed Action conveyance or the No Action alternatives.

6. Economics:

Proposed Action: Under the proposed conveyance, the United States would no longer receive lease funds from the District. The amounts received by the United States for the sale of Newlands Project land comprising the Fallon Freight Yard are treated as consideration for the Project Headquarters conveyance. No change in employment numbers for either Reclamation or the District are expected from the proposed conveyance.

No Action: The United States would continue to receive funds from the lease of the Project Headquarters to the District and expend funds to administer the lease. No change in employment numbers from present would occur for either Reclamation or the District.

8. Hazardous Materials: A Level I survey of the TCID Headquarters was conducted on December 13, 2006 as part of the process to convey the Project Headquarters to the District. The survey findings did not indicate contaminants on site or obvious effects of contamination. Neither the Proposed Action of conveying the Project Headquarters or the No Action alternatives are expected to have any effect on hazardous materials or contamination of the property. The District has indicated that when the property is conveyed they will continue operations in the same manner as current and will comply with all rules, guidelines, and procedures required of all public agencies in the State of Nevada.

9. Indian Trust Resources: There is one Tribe in the vicinity of the city of Fallon and the Project Headquarters, the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe (Tribe). The Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation is located in Churchill County in west-central Nevada, approximately 10 miles northeast of Fallon. Trust resources of this Tribe include land, water rights, and wildlife; incomes are derived from these resources. There are no trust resources of the Tribe within the affected area or vicinity of the Project Headquarters conveyance and the conveyance would not affect trust resources of the Tribe.

10. Environmental Justice: As identified in the EA under section 1.5 Public Involvement, Consultation and Coordination, public involvement has occurred throughout the NEPA process for the proposed action. The proposed conveyance does not involve facility construction, population relocation, health hazards, hazardous waste, property takings or substantial economic impacts. Consequently, it is concluded that implementing the Project Headquarters and Maintenance Yard Facility conveyance would have no adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations as defined by environmental justice policies or directives.

11. Cumulative Impacts: Conveyance of the Project Headquarters from the United States to the District has no known adverse cumulative impacts on the environment when considered with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

12. Short-term Uses of the Environment and Long-term Productivity: The proposed action to convey title of the Project Headquarters to the District is an administrative action that would not result in a direct physical change to the environment. No effect to short term uses of the environment or long-term productivity would occur from the proposed action.

13. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources: The proposed conveyance will not result in any permanent reduction or loss of a resource. Therefore, no irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources would occur under the proposed action.

V. Comments Received on the EA

Informational letters on the EA were sent to a mailing list of interested parties and press releases were provided to local newspapers and posted on the Reclamation's website. The proposed conveyance project information was also placed on the District's website, the Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance website calendar, and the Newlands Water Protective Association website.

Four comment letters were received on the Project Headquarters conveyance: State of Nevada Clearinghouse, Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, City of Fallon, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex. All four entities were in support of the conveyance and did not provide any issues or concerns on the conveyance.

Consultation letters were sent to the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe pursuant to federal legislation and executive orders concerning Native American government-to-government consultation,

including NEPA and Indian Trust Assets. Reclamation did not receive comments from the Tribe on the proposed Project Headquarters conveyance.

VI. Decision and Findings

Reclamation's decision is to implement Alternative 1, identified as the Proposed Action in the EA. Based on the environmental analysis contained in the attached EA (November 2007) completed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act there is no evidence to indicate that the Proposed Action will significantly affect the quality of the human environment or the natural resources in the area. In addition, the proposed action is not a major federal action. An environmental impact statement is not required for the Proposed Action.