

# RIVER NOTES

A Newsletter of the Pecos River Supplemental Water and Exchange EA  
October 2006

## Environmental Assessment to be Prepared *Reclamation Seeking Supplemental Water for the Pecos River*

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the effects of water exchanges to obtain sources of supplemental water to conserve the Carlsbad Project water supply and to keep the Pecos River continuous. This includes leasing with water pumpers along the river and may include the transfer of private water rights. The project is needed to comply with the 2006-2016 Biological Opinion for the Carlsbad Project Water Operations and Water Supply Conservation Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), August 2006.

The Biological Opinion and EIS commit Reclamation to operate the Carlsbad Project with a target flow of 35 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the Taiban Gage and to avoid river intermittency in order to conserve the federally protected Pecos bluntnose shiner.

To accomplish this, Reclamation needs the flexibility to release about 2,500 acre-feet of water out of Sumner Reservoir per year, while also ensuring that there is enough water at Brantley Reservoir to meet the contracted irrigation needs of the Carlsbad Project. The EIS affirmed that a variety of supplemental water sources would have to be obtained to provide this water. Reclamation has since formalized a supplemental water program, making it ripe for additional environmental analysis. Under the supplemental water program, Reclamation is proposing the following actions:

- Commit up to 400 acres of ground water rights to be pumped into Brantley Reservoir in exchange for being able to store and withdraw water from Santa Rosa or Sumner Reservoirs.
- Obtain leases with water pumpers along the river, which could include the transfer of private water rights.

The EA will evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts from these actions, from taking no action, and from any alternative actions that may be identified.



### Mark your Calendar! *Upcoming Public Meetings*

Reclamation will host two public workshops to provide information on the project and collect public input.

**Carlsbad, November 15, 2006**  
Stevens Inn, Conference Rm 2  
1829 South Canal

**Ft. Sumner, November 16, 2006**  
Ft Sumner Community Center  
US Hwy 60

*Both meetings will be from  
5:30pm – 7:30pm*

### How to contact us!

To submit comments or if you have questions, please contact:

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## What is public scoping and how can you participate?

Public involvement is an integral part of the EA process, allowing decision-makers to fully understand the concerns and interests of individuals, organizations, and agencies. Scoping is conducted at the beginning of the EA process to help identify relevant environmental and socioeconomic issues, collect data, and allow for the refinement of the proposed action and alternatives. We want to hear from you! Two scoping meetings will be held on November 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> in Carlsbad and Ft. Sumner, respectively. This is an opportunity for the public to learn more about the project and to provide their comments. Reclamation is also soliciting written comments, including letters, faxes, or e-mail. While Reclamation will collect input throughout the process, receipt of your comments by the end of November will ensure that they are fully considered in preparing the EA.

To keep you informed, newsletters will be distributed periodically. Copies of the Draft EA will be made available for public review and comment, likely around March 2007. Public meetings may also be conducted during this review period.

## Cooperative Effort

### *Reclamation invites cooperating agencies*

The preparation of an EA requires the participation and expertise of many federal, state, and local agencies. The **New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission** has agreed to be a cooperating agency in this effort, building on past partnerships between Reclamation and the State in the Pecos River basin. The following agencies have also been invited to participate as cooperating agencies:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- NM Department of Game and Fish
- Carlsbad Irrigation District
- Fort Sumner Irrigation District

**Types of comments that are most useful** are written and substantive, that provide specific values, numbers, or criteria, and that explain your concerns and issues and changes that you think will improve the EA. The more specific the comments, the better.

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#### **Commonly Used Acronyms**

cfs	Cubic feet per second
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
NM	New Mexico
US	United States