



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Phoenix Area Office  
6150 West Thunderbird Road  
Glendale, Arizona 85306-4001



JAN 20 2009

PXAO-1500  
ENV-1.10

MEMORANDUM

To: All Interested Persons, Organizations, and Agencies

From: Carol Lynn Erwin  
Area Manager

Subject: Notice of Public Scoping for Preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) on a Proposed Management Plan for the Agua Fria Conservation Area (AFCA) at Lake Pleasant Regional Park (LPRP), Maricopa and Yavapai Counties, Arizona (Action by February 20, 2009)

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to approve an amendment to Maricopa County's Lake Pleasant Master Plan (LPMP) concerning management of the AFCA. The AFCA is located in the northeastern portion of LPRP, in Yavapai and Maricopa Counties, Arizona (Figure 1). Reclamation will complete an EA prior to determining whether an environmental impact statement (EIS) must be prepared or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate for this approval. We are inviting you to offer suggestions on resources, issues, and concerns, and/or other action alternatives we should address in this EA.

BACKGROUND

LPRP is located in Maricopa and Yavapai Counties, Arizona. It encompasses 23,361 acres of land and includes Lake Pleasant, which is a man-made reservoir formed by New Waddell Dam. Reclamation acquired the lands that make up LPRP as part of the New Waddell Dam feature of the Central Arizona Project (CAP). Reclamation constructed the majority of New Waddell Dam between 1984 and 1992; the reservoir reached its new maximum water conservation storage pool elevation in spring 1994. The dam is operated for water storage and delivery of CAP water; therefore, the water level of the reservoir varies annually depending upon the timing and amount of CAP water deliveries that are made. Recreation within LPRP, both on and around the lake, is managed by the Maricopa County Parks & Recreation Department (MCPRD) pursuant to a 1990 land management agreement with Reclamation.

The agreement required MCPRD to develop a master plan for developing and operating the LPRP, which Reclamation would need to approve prior to its implementation by the County. Amendments to the master plan also must be approved by Reclamation. MCPRD developed the

LPMP which established guidelines for development of LPRP and outlined future desired conditions for, among other things, recreation and resource protection. In 1997, Reclamation prepared an EA on the LPMP and issued a FONSI approving the LPMP.

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The LPMP describes conservation areas within the LPRP as “natural, environmentally sensitive areas intended to remain relatively undisturbed to preserve the native environment.” The LPMP identified several conservation areas, indicating these areas would have relatively limited access and development; therefore, it was envisioned there would be minimal operation and maintenance costs associated with these areas. One such conservation area, the AFCA, contains about 2,405 acres; it was designated as a conservation area in recognition of the special assemblages of natural and cultural resources that occurred there.

In December 2006, MCPRD and Reclamation met with other governmental agencies (collectively called the “Partners”) responsible for land, recreation, and wildlife management of the areas within and adjacent to the AFCA to discuss how shooting, trash dumping, off-road vehicle travel, vandalism, and criminal activities were degrading cultural and natural resources of the AFCA and creating a public hazard. The Partners recognized a management plan needed to be developed and implemented that would allow access and recreational opportunities within the AFCA for responsible users while providing protection to the natural and cultural resources of the area. In September 2007, MCPRD held three public meetings to gather user input. An additional public meeting was held in November 2007 to summarize the findings from the public planning process and potential components of a management plan for the AFCA.

Based upon the input received during these public meetings, as well as feedback from and discussion among the Partners, MCPRD is proposing to amend the LPMP to incorporate a management plan specifically for the AFCA. The proposed management plan is considered to be the Partners’ Consensus Plan and consists of three phases.

#### PROPOSED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The management plan includes formal designation and use of Table Mesa Road within the AFCA as a low maintenance park road. In Phase I, access within the AFCA on Table Mesa Road would be allowed for day use only on a seasonal basis (generally November through April) with the presence of park hosts. Boat ramp(s), parking, and rest rooms would be provided. In Phase II, additional facilities to support these activities would be provided. In Phase III, “pack-it in, pack-it out” permit-only camping would be provided south/east of the Agua Fria River.

The attached information sheet briefly summarizes the components of each of the three phases. MCPRD has prepared a document entitled, “Agua Fria Conservation Area Proposed Management Plan” that describes the planning process that was used to develop the Partners Consensus Plan and includes a detailed description of the components of the proposed plan.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This report is available at [http://www.maricopa.gov/parks/lake\\_pleasant/AguaFriameetings.aspx](http://www.maricopa.gov/parks/lake_pleasant/AguaFriameetings.aspx). To obtain a CD or hard copy, please contact Ms. Dawna Taylor, MCPRD, at 602-506-2930.

### REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Reclamation is preparing an EA to describe the anticipated environmental consequences resulting from approval and implementation of this proposed management plan for the AFCA. The EA will also consider a No Action alternative—Reclamation would not approve amending the LPMP to include a management plan for the AFCA. The vehicle closure would remain in force; no changes would be made to current management activities. Currently it is envisioned the EA will address the following resources: vegetation and habitat; cultural resources (historic and prehistoric); land ownership and use; air quality; water quantity and quality; and recreational opportunities.

This memorandum is to request your input regarding resources, issues, and concerns that you feel should be addressed in the EA. We also welcome suggestions on action alternatives you think we also should consider.

To be most helpful, comments should be as specific as possible and sent to Reclamation at the above address, ATTN: Ms. Sandra Eto, by February 20, 2009. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from public disclosure, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold a respondent's identity from public disclosure, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public disclosure in their entirety.

### PUBLIC MEETING

The Partners will be holding a public meeting to accept public scoping comments. After a brief introduction to bring the “planning process” to a close, attendees will be given the opportunity to offer their scoping comments. Comment cards will also be available for those wishing to send in written comments. Various staff from the participating agencies will be present to answer questions informally afterwards.

The public meeting will be on February 4, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Desert Outdoor Center  
41402 North 87th Avenue  
Peoria, Arizona 85383

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Ms. Eto of Reclamation's Environmental Resource Management Division, at 623-773-6254. To contact MCPRD for

directions to the Desert Outdoor Center, or information about the AFCA, please contact Ms. Dawna Taylor, MCPRD, 602-506-2930.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Attachment

WBR:SEto:rjk:01/20/2009  
NEPA \* M-AFCA EA Scoping 2.1 (SE).doc  
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1500 File \* LPRP - AFCA

## PROPOSED AGUA FRIA CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Phase I:

- Designating Table Mesa Road within the AFCA as a low maintenance park road, including installation of barriers along the north and south sides of the river to keep the public from traveling off the designated route;
- Maintaining roads with no permanent improvements and only to the level that they are passable;
- Developing a park host compound to house two to four couples and providing the needed infrastructure;
- Constructing a primitive parking lot and information kiosk;
- Reinforcing existing gates, including upgrading to the Arizona Game and Fish Department standards, if needed;
- Constructing a primary launch ramp at the high-water mark;
- Providing alternative launch ramps for use as the water level drops; and,
- Providing parking, port-a-johns, picnic area, and signage in areas of launch ramps.

### Phase II:

- Installing portable structures such as a contact station for visitors, storage facility for maintenance equipment and vehicles, and,
- Installing port-a-johns, portable picnic tables, grills, and fire rings.

### Phase III:

- Installing permanent restrooms, including the septic system to sustain them;
- Constructing ramadas and covered picnic areas with limited recreational components near entry;
- Providing, with minimal enhancements and improvements, an area for “pack it in, pack it out,” permit-only camping (south of the Agua Fria River, near an old air strip);
- Developing interpretive areas for archaeology, natural history, cultural history, etc.; and,
- Completing the trails master plan to include multiple use of AFCA.

# Proposed Agua Fria Conservation Area Management Plan

