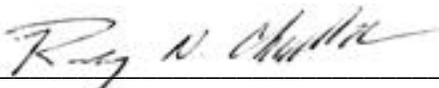


United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Lower Colorado Region
Phoenix Area Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Geotechnical Investigation
Black River Diversion Tunnel**

**San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation
Gila County, Arizona**

Approved: 
Randy N. Chandler, Area Manager
Phoenix Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation

Date: 2/28/2011

FONSI No.: PXAO-11-02

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190, as amended), the Bureau of Reclamation issued an environmental assessment (EA) (Reclamation 2011) on February 1, 2011, to disclose the potential environmental impacts resulting from geotechnical investigations along the alignment of the proposed Black River Tunnel (BRT) on the San Carlos Apache Reservation, Gila County, Arizona.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Reclamation considered the no action and the proposed action alternatives in the EA.

No Action. Under the no action alternative, the geologic investigation would not be implemented and Reclamation would have insufficient information to complete a Phase 1 technical evaluation of the BRT.

Proposed Action. Under the proposed action, Reclamation will drill 4 boreholes (DH-BRT 9, 11, 12, and 13). Three of the holes (DH-BRT 11-13) will be drilled near the proposed outlet portal of the BRT, adjacent to Rocky Gulch. The fourth hole (DH-BRT 9) will be drilled along the alignment of the BRT, approximately ¾-mile south of the Black River. A 3.4-mile long route would be cleared through pinyon-juniper habitat to provide vehicular access to DH-BRT 9 from the closest existing road. The proposed action will provide needed geological data to complete a Phase 1 technical evaluation of a possible Black River diversion as a delivery alternative for the Tribe's 12,700 acre-foot per annum allocation of Central Arizona Project water.

CONSULTATION, COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The EA was posted on Reclamation's Phoenix Area Office web site and distributed to the San Carlos Apache Tribe, San Carlos Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, White Mountain Apache Tribe, The Hopi Nation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Concurrent with development of the EA, Reclamation consulted with the San Carlos Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) and the San Carlos Apache Recreation and Wildlife Department. Reclamation received no public or agency comments in response to the EA.

MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS

The following issues that were addressed in the EA have been taken into consideration in Reclamation's deliberation whether a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate, or an environmental impact statement should be prepared:

1. The EA demonstrates that there will be no significant adverse or beneficial impacts on the quality of the human environment including water, air, land use, soil, and cultural and biological resources. Impacts to physical and biological resources will be limited to the project area.
2. Public health and safety will not be affected by the project. The project area is unpopulated and isolated. There will be no disproportionate direct or indirect effects on populations defined in Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice).
3. The project area is not unique within its geographical setting, and is similar to many other areas of tribal land in the region. There are no wetlands, prime farmland, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, refuges, park lands, or other unique or rare characteristics of the land and aquatic environs that will be significantly affected.
4. There are no known scientific controversies over the effects of the proposed project on the human environment.
5. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Effects of the proposed action are expected to be similar to the effects of past geotechnical investigations implemented by Reclamation on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation and elsewhere.
6. The action does not set a precedent for similar projects that may be implemented by Reclamation or other agencies.
7. There are no known incremental effects of the action that become significant when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions that have affected, or will affect, the project area.
8. A Class III (intensive) survey of the area of potential effect indicated that no significant historical or archaeological sites will be affected by the proposed project. A finding of *no adverse effect* was submitted to the THPO on December 17, 2010. No traditional cultural properties or sacred sites have been identified in the project area.
9. The EA demonstrates that federally listed species will not be affected by the proposed action.
10. The proposed project will not violate any Federal, State, or Tribal environmental laws or requirements.
11. Impacts to Indian trust assets will not be significant.
12. The mitigation requirements identified in the final EA will be implemented by Reclamation.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon consideration of the impacts presented in the EA, I have determined the proposed action will not significantly impact the human environment and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not warranted. It is my decision to authorize the proposed action identified in the EA.

Documents cited above.

Bureau of Reclamation. 2011. Environmental assessment for geotechnical investigation.
Black River Diversion Tunnel. Phoenix Area Office, Phoenix, AZ.