

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

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

CENTRAL ARIZONA PROJECT CANAL TRAIL:  
PINAL-PIMA COUNTY LINE to PARK LINK DRIVE  
(PARK LINK SEGMENT)

Approved: Leslie Meyers Date: 10/4/18  
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FONSI No. PXAO-18-02

## **INTRODUCTION**

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law 91-90), Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR §§ 1500-1508), Department of the Interior NEPA regulations (43 CFR Part 46), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has issued a final Environmental Assessment (EA) to disclose the potential environmental impacts that would result from implementation of a proposed recreational trail along the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal within Pinal County. The final EA is incorporated by reference (Reclamation 2018).

The proposed trail would begin at the Pinal-Pima County line and extend north towards Park Link Drive, a distance of approximately 10.5 miles. The trail would be located along 9.8 miles of the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal maintenance road and would include the construction of 0.7 miles of new trail to connect existing maintenance roads. The proposed CAP Trail would be designated for pedestrian, equestrian, and bicyclists use only; no motorized recreational vehicles would be allowed. The project includes construction of a 1.5-acre trailhead and its associated parking lot on the north side of Nona Road between the road and the CAP canal security fencing. The operation and maintenance of the trail and trailhead would be conducted in accordance with the Operations and Maintenance Agreement between Reclamation and the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, signed in June 2000, and the proposed Management and Development Plan between Pinal County and Reclamation.

## **BACKGROUND**

As part of the original plan for the construction of the CAP canal, Reclamation anticipated the development of a recreational trail along the entire 336-mile length of the canal that would accommodate walking, bicycling, jogging, and equestrian use. The trail was considered before portions of the CAP canal were constructed and included in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the CAP Granite Reef Aqueduct (January 1974). It was revisited in subsequent EISs for the Tucson Aqueduct Phases A and B. The Records of Decision were issued February 1983 and August 1984, respectively. The EISs examined a proposed trail along the downslope corridor of the canal. In 2003, the recreation trail along the CAP was designated as a National Recreation Trail by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

More than 100 miles of the CAP canal are located in Pinal County, Arizona, and the proposed trail alignment would run adjacent to the CAP canal. The proposed CAP canal Trail (herein referred to as the CAP Trail) was first discussed in the Pinal County Trails Plan in 2005 and was later incorporated into the Pinal Open Space and Trails Master Plan in 2007 as one of three primary trail corridors in Pinal County. In 2008, Pinal County prepared a CAP Trail Master Plan in partnership with Pima County that included plans for the section of the CAP Trail that extends from the south Pinal County border to Picacho Peak. The CAP Trail was also identified in the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan in 2009, and in the Master Plan for the Pinal County Segment of the CAP National Recreation Trail in 2015.

In 2016, the County entered into a Recreational Land Use Agreement with Reclamation to develop, operate, and maintain the portion of the CAP Trail within Pinal County. The agreement

breaks the Pinal County portion of the CAP Trail into eleven segments, each of which will have a different set of partners that will work with Pinal County over the long-term to construct the CAP Trail. The proposed trail alignment discussed in this EA is the Park Link Segment and is the first segment of the CAP Trail planned for construction within Pinal County. The remaining segments will undergo NEPA evaluation as the site-specific project details are developed.

The CAP canal is managed under the CAP Operations & Maintenance Agreement (O&M Agreement) between Reclamation and Central Arizona Water Conservation District, which includes environmental commitments that are summarized in Appendix A of the EA. One of the environmental commitments includes an Interim CAP Right-of-way Land Use Policy. The Land Use Policy designates areas upslope of the CAP canal as mitigation areas, which were set aside to offset impacts associated with the construction of the canal. Lands within 25 feet or more of the upstream toe of any upslope embankment are jointly used for the embankment and mitigation. The proposed alignment for the trail is located just west of the CAP mitigation property.

## **MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS**

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

1. The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse or beneficial environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment including land use and recreation, cultural resources, and biological resources.
2. The Proposed Action will not result in any adverse effects to public health or safety.
3. The project area is not unique within its geographical setting, and is similar to many other areas of federal and private land in the region. There are no wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, refuges, park lands, or other unique or rare characteristics of the land and aquatic environs that will be affected by the Proposed Action.
4. There are no known scientific or environmental controversies over the effects of the Proposed Action on the human environment.
5. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain, or involve unique or unknown risks. Project activities will involve standard construction methods and conventional engineering technologies.
6. The Proposed Action involves construction of a 1.5-acre parking lot and the establishment of 10.5-mile recreation trail along the CAP Canal, and will not establish a precedent for future actions.

7. Cumulative effects of the Proposed Action were considered in the EA. 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. The Proposed Action will not significantly affect districts, sites, objects, or structures listed on, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), or cause loss of significant cultural resources. A Class III survey of the project identified three sites eligible or recommended eligible for inclusion in the NRHP within, or immediately adjacent to the area of potential effects (Stone and King 2018). The majority of the Proposed Action is located on the berm of the CAP canal, which consists of fill material that was likely excavated during the construction of the CAP canal. As such, it is highly unlikely that *in situ* artifacts or archaeological features would be present within the berm or that implementation of the Proposed Action would have a direct impact on any potentially NRHP-eligible components of the three sites identified. Indirect impacts to the archaeological sites that occur immediately adjacent to the Proposed Action could include damage by off-trail travel. In order to reduce potential impacts to adjacent cultural sites, the Proposed Action includes the posting of signs to indicate the prohibition of off-trail use and the implementation of a monitoring program for unauthorized visitation and/or disturbance to the archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity of the project.
9. The Proposed Action will have no significant effect on federally listed threatened or endangered species or critical habitat.
10. The Proposed Action will have no significant effect on special-status species. The Sonoran desert tortoise has a minimal likelihood of being impacted because the extent of the ground disturbance is localized and short-term. The burrowing owl would only be disturbed if an active burrow is identified along the 0.7-mile new segment or the trailhead parking area. If, in the unlikely instance that burrowing owls are present, passive or active exclusion measures will be employed to minimize effects from potential human disturbances associated with the trail. Restricting recreationists to the trail will also help minimize future contact and impacts to the species.
11. A Pinal County CAP Trail Management Plan and associated Maintenance Manual will be developed for this portion of the CAP trail (Park Link Segment) and will include the mitigation requirements identified in the EA. The mitigation requirements identified in the EA will be implemented by Pinal County, Central Arizona Water Conservation District, Reclamation, and any third party agreement entity.
12. The Proposed Action will not violate any Federal, State, or local environmental laws or requirements.
13. The Proposed Action will not affect any Indian trust assets.

14. The Proposed Action will not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007).
15. There will be no disproportionate high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations, as defined in Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice).

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Based upon the information presented in the Final EA, Reclamation has determined that the opening of approximately 10.5 miles of recreational trail along the CAP canal maintenance road and the installation of a 1.5-acre trailhead parking lot within Pinal County will not significantly impact the human environment, and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not warranted.

### **DOCUMENTS REFERENCED**

- Pinal County. 2007. "Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan." *First adopted in 2001, updated in 2007.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015. "Pinal County Comprehensive Plan." *First adopted in 2009, updated in 2015.*
- Stone, Bradford W. and Anna M. King. 2018. *Cultural Resources Inventory for a Proposed Multi-Use Trail along the Central Arizona Project Canal, Pinal County, Arizona.* Cultural Resources Report 2017-104. WestLand Resources, Inc., Tucson.
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). 1974. Environmental Impact Statement for the CAP Granite Reef Aqueduct: A Feature of the Central Arizona Project.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1983. Environmental Impact Statement for Tucson Aqueduct Phase A.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. Environmental Impact Statement for Tucson Aqueduct Phase B.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. Operating Agreement between the United States of America and the Central Arizona Water Conservation District for the Operation and Maintenance of the Central Arizona Project.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2018. Draft Environmental Assessment - CAP Canal Trail: Pinal-Pima County Line to Park Link Road (Park Link Segment). U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Region, Phoenix Area Office.