



New Mexico Unit of the Central Arizona Project Environmental Impact Statement

Issue No. 2, April 2020

New Mexico Unit of the Central Arizona Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Now Available

You are invited to review and comment on a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) analyzing the environmental effects of constructing a New Mexico Unit (NM Unit) of the Central Arizona Project (CAP) in southwestern New Mexico as proposed by the New Mexico CAP Entity. The proposed NM Unit would include water diversion, storage, conveyance, and delivery components, in accordance with the Arizona Water Settlements Act of 2004 (AWSA), Public Law 108-451. It would divert water from the Gila River and/or the San Francisco River and underground water sources and convey it for storage in off-river sites in the Cliff-Gila Valley, in the Virden Valley, and/or along the San Francisco River in New Mexico. The NM Unit would deliver water allotted under the AWSA to users in southwestern New Mexico in compliance with the Consumptive Use and Forbearance Agreement (CUFA). The CUFA describes the terms and conditions that must be met for New Mexico users to be able to divert the AWSA water.

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Lower Colorado Region and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC), acting as Joint Lead agencies (Joint Leads), prepared the draft EIS in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, San Carlos Irrigation and Drainage District, Catron County, and the San Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District.

The draft EIS was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the AWSA. A 45-day public comment period is open from April 24, 2020 to June 8, 2020. The draft EIS analyzes the proposed action and alternatives for the NM Unit.

Alternatives to the Entity's proposed project were developed in collaboration with stakeholders, including cooperating agencies, and using engineering and feasibility analyses.

Summary comparisons of alternatives analyzed for the NM Unit are included on the following page. The draft EIS describes the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts that would result from each alternative for the NM Unit. It includes analysis on key resource topics, including surface water and groundwater, vegetation, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife (including special status species), threatened or endangered species, cultural resources, geology and soils, land use (including land use and ownership, recreation, and special designation areas), socioeconomics, Indian Trust Assets, environmental justice, and public health and safety. It also lists the recommended mitigation measures that would be implemented to lessen or eliminate any negative effects of the project.

The Joint Leads have not identified a preferred alternative in the draft EIS. However, on October 21, 2019, the Entity sent a letter to the Joint Leads requesting "...that the joint leads designate Alternative D, the 'Virden only' alternative, as the Preferred Alternative in the final EIS. The NM CAP Entity is not requesting a change to its [July 2019] proposed action." The Joint Leads will consider public comment before identifying a preferred alternative in the Final EIS in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations.

Purpose of and Need for Action

The **purpose** of the proposed action is to develop a NM Unit of the CAP to allow for consumptive use of water from the Gila River, its tributaries, or underground water sources in southwestern New Mexico, diverted in accordance with the CUFA and pursuant to the terms of the AWSA.

The **needs** for the proposed action are to (a) develop water for delivery at the times, locations, and in quantities that will improve agricultural use, and (b) provide capability for future expansion for authorized beneficial purposes.

Summary Comparison of NM Unit Alternatives

Alternative A is the No Action Alternative under which the NM Unit would not be constructed and New Mexico's rights to access AWSA water would not be legally affected.

Total Consumptive Use = Measured diversions pursuant to the CUFA, minus return flows and evaporation

Alternative	Cliff-Gila Location	Virden Location	San Francisco Location
Alternative B (Proposed Action) Total Consumptive Use = 1,782 acre-feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One fixed crest weir diversion with 60-foot-long riffle rundown above the Upper Gila Diversion location replacing the three existing push-up diversions Various conveyance improvements and extensions Four new gravity-fed, clay-lined storage ponds (combined surface storage capacity of 1,890 acre-feet) Five production wells, 120 feet deep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use existing Sunset and New Model Diversion structures with no modifications Use existing canals with no modifications Two new clay-lined, gravity-fed storage ponds (combined surface storage capacity of 551 acre-feet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New fixed crest weir diversion with 20-foot-long engineered fill boulder riffle rundown, replacing the existing Spurgeon Diversion and Thomason Flat push-up diversion Various conveyance improvements and extensions
Alternative C Total Consumptive Use = 1,845 acre-feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three rock vane weir semi-permanent diversions (no engineered fill) to replace sediment push-up diversions at the existing Upper Gila, Fort West, and Gila Farms Ditch headings Existing ditch configurations and capacities for conveyance Four gravity-fed, clay-lined storage ponds (combined surface storage capacity of 1,890 acre-feet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alternative B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One new rock vane diversion to replace the existing Thomason Flat push-up diversion Various conveyance improvements and extensions Earthen embankment dam and unlined reservoir with a storage capacity of 600 acre-feet in Weedy Canyon
Alternative D Total Consumptive Use = 349 acre-feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No project components would be constructed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alternative B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No project components would be constructed
Alternative E Total Consumptive Use = 1,459 acre-feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pneumatically adjustable Obermeyer gate diversion, replacing the existing Upper Gila Diversion Various conveyance improvements and extensions Two new pump-fed, unlined ponds as aquifer and storage recovery (ASR) basins and surface storage in Winn Canyon (combined surface storage capacity of 1,820 acre-feet). One new gravity-fed, clay-lined pond for surface storage in the Cliff-Gila Valley (surface storage capacity of 258 acre-feet) Three ASR wells, 60 feet deep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as Alternative B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New fixed crest weir diversion with 20-foot-long engineered fill boulder riffle rundown at the existing Spurgeon Diversion push-up diversion site, replacing the existing Spurgeon Diversion and Thomason Flat push-up diversion Various conveyance improvements and extensions Unlined earthen embankment dam and reservoir with a storage capacity of 1,610 acre-feet in Weedy Canyon

We Want to Hear From You!

The Joint Leads will not hold any in-person public meetings on the draft EIS as a direct result of the following: (1) The National Emergency declared by the President on March 13, 2020 in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the United States; (2) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations for social distancing and avoiding large public gatherings; and (3) Executive Orders related to COVID-19 issued by the states of New Mexico and Arizona.

In lieu of the in-person public meetings, the Joint Leads have set up an interactive virtual public meeting website to share information, solicit comments on the draft EIS, and provide a forum to answer relevant questions. The virtual public meeting can be accessed anytime through the project website at: <https://www.nmuniteis.com/>.

We encourage you to visit the website to learn more about the project, view informational materials and interactive maps, and submit comments. The Joint Leads are seeking feedback concerning the alternatives, the adequacy and accuracy of the analysis of the alternatives, and any new information that would assist in developing the final EIS. All substantive comments received will be reviewed and considered for incorporation into the final EIS. Comments can be provided in writing by email, by US mail to the Bureau of Reclamation, or through the virtual meeting website. Please submit comments by **June 8, 2020**.

For those who do not have ready access to a computer or the internet, the draft EIS and related materials posted to the website will be made available upon request. Inquiries, requests for the draft EIS and related materials, and comments regarding the draft EIS may be submitted via email to NMUnitEIS@empci.com or by mail (postmarked by June 8) to:

US Bureau of Reclamation
Attn: NM Unit EIS
6150 W. Thunderbird Road
Glendale, Arizona 85306-4001

You can also contact Sean Heath, Bureau of Reclamation at (623) 773-6250 or Ali Effati, ISC at (505) 827-5801.

How to Provide Useful Comments

You are invited to submit comments on the draft EIS. Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail are most useful. **Substantive comments** do one or more of the following:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the EIS
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis
- Present new information relevant to the analysis
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the EIS
- Suggest changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives (based on the rationale provided)

Comments that are **not substantive** include:

- Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives without reasoning that meet the criteria listed above
- Comments that only agree or disagree with Reclamation or ISC policy or resource decisions without justification or supporting data that meet the criteria listed above
- Comments that do not pertain to the project area or the project
- Comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions
- Comments without justification or supporting data

Be aware that your entire comment, including personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. If you request that your personal identifying information be withheld from the public, the Joint Leads will attempt to do so, but they cannot guarantee that it will be possible.

Notice of Intent
Published in the
Federal Register

June
2018

Public Scoping
Period

June–July
2018

Prepare Draft EIS

April 2020

Draft EIS
Public Comment
Period

April–June
2020

Final EIS and Issuing
of Record of Decision

June–December
2020

This is the second in a series of newsletters regarding the proposed design and construction of the New Mexico Unit of the Central Arizona Project. This edition of the newsletter announces the availability of the draft EIS for public review and comment, gives a description of the action alternatives, and provides information on the public comment period. Contact us at NMUnitEIS@empci.com if you would like to be removed from the mailing list or to receive future mailings via email.

Want More Information?

Get on the mailing list: Send a request to NMUnitEIS@empci.com

Visit the project website: www.NMUnitEIS.com

Submit comments: Submit comments by using one of the methods listed below. The deadline for submitting comments is June 8, 2020.

Online (preferred): www.NMUnitEIS.com

Email: NMUnitEIS@empci.com

Postal Mail: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
ATTN: NM Unit EIS
6150 West Thunderbird Road
Glendale, AZ 85306-4001

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HERE

EMPS!
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