

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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY CAP WATER DELIVERY
TO THE FICO GROUNDWATER SAVINGS FACILITY
FREEPORT-MCMORAN SIERRITA INC.
PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA

Approved: 
Acting For _____
Leslie A. Meyers, Area Manager
Phoenix Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation

Date: 12/21/18

FONSI No.: PXAO-18-04

Introduction

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the potential environmental effects of plans to connect a water delivery pipeline to the Central Arizona Project (CAP) and use the water leased from the Gila River Indian Community (Community) at an existing Groundwater Savings Facility (GSF) owned and operated by the Farmers Investment Company (FICO). Use of the renewable CAP water at the GSF would allow for the accrual of long-term storage credits for future use by Freeport-McMoRan Sierrita Inc. (Freeport-McMoRan). The final EA for the proposed project is incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

A 36-inch diameter, gravity-driven pipeline would connect to the CAP canal near its terminus at an existing vault, west of Interstate 19 on the north side of Pima Mine Road. The pipeline would be constructed along Pima Mine Road to the east for approximately 2.5 miles, and then turn south into the FICO pecan orchard. Approximately 3 miles to the south, the proposed pipeline would split at Sahuarita Road, directing CAP water east and west to connect to 3 discharge points within the existing FICO irrigation system infrastructure for delivery to the orchard. The approximately 6.6 miles of overall pipeline distance would be entirely constructed on previously disturbed land within existing water line easements, roadway rights-of-way, and private agricultural land owned by FICO.

Review by Reclamation is needed to ensure the proposed action complies with appropriate Federal environmental requirements for the use of CAP water leased by Freeport-McMoRan from the Community. In addition, review and approval by Reclamation is needed for the substantial change to the CAP system from the point of connection to the CAP mainline and within the CAP easement.

Public Involvement

Reclamation distributed a Notice of Availability to the project stakeholders and posted the draft EA on the Phoenix Area Office website for public and agency review from September 27, 2018 to October 27, 2018. No comments were received on the draft EA.

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 actions would impact resources as described in the EA and would take place in areas that are frequently disturbed. Generally, impacts to soil, air, biological, land use, and transportation resources would be negligible/minor and short-term, and best management practices and additional applicant proposed measures would be

implemented as part of the proposed actions to reduce impacts, as described in Section 2.1.3 of the EA. Beneficial effects to water resources would include groundwater conservation and reducing aquifer overdraft and land subsidence. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant.

2. The proposed actions would not affect public health or safety. Where appropriate, construction activities associated with Segment 3 would be coordinated with the Town of Sahuarita, and traffic control measures designed to minimize impacts on local traffic would be implemented.
3. Park lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas are not present in the project area and would not be impacted. The proposed actions would have no effect on eligible or listed historic or cultural resources. Portions of the proposed pipeline would be constructed within areas mapped as prime farmland when irrigated and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season. However, the area proposed for construction represents less than 0.3 percent of the Sahuarita Farm, and there would not be an irreversible conversion of prime farmland to nonagricultural uses (Section 3.1.2.1 of the EA).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no scientific controversy over the nature of the impacts identified during the analysis.
5. The project does not have highly uncertain and potentially significant effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
6. The proposed action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and do not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. No potentially significant effects were identified. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in Chapter 3 of the EA.
7. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.
8. The proposed action would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A cultural inventory has been completed for the project area. Three previously documented historic sites and one newly recorded historic site were identified in the Area of Potential Effect.

Impacts to these resources would be avoided through construction via horizontal/directional drilling using the jack and bore method or existing casing. Reclamation determined that there would be no adverse effect to historic properties.

9. The proposed actions would have no effect on endangered or threatened wildlife species or their habitat, as none are known to occur in the project area. This is further outlined in Table 8 of the EA. One endangered plant species, Pima pineapple cactus (*Coryphantha scheeri* var. *robustispina*) may occur within a portion of the project area that is previously disturbed. This area was surveyed for the Pima pineapple cactus; no individual plants were located. Hence, there would be no effect to federally listed endangered or threatened plant species from implementation of the proposed actions.
10. The project does not violate any known Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Section 2.1.1.2 of the EA describes permits, easements, and licenses to be obtained in advance of construction in areas subject to the regulatory or permitting authority of a public or private entity.
11. The proposed action would not adversely affect Indian trust assets or limit access to, or ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon the attached Final EA, Reclamation has determined that the proposed use of the renewable CAP water at the FICO GSF, including the construction and operation of a water delivery pipeline and its connection to the CAP system would not have a significant effect on the human environment, and an environmental impact statement is not warranted.