

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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Construction of
Reaches WS-1E and WS-1F (MC-1, MC-2, and MC-3)
Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project
Gila River Indian Community
Pinal County, Arizona**

Approved: _____

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INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Reclamation has issued a final Environmental Assessment (EA) that describes the potential environmental effects of construction of WS-1E and WS-1F (and associated laterals MC-1, MC-2, AND MC-3) of the Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project (P-MIP) on the Gila River Indian Community (Community). The final EA for the proposed project was issued in October 2015, and is incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (Reclamation 2015).

The current service area for WS-1E and WS-1F is 4,947 gross acres for the Komatke and Maricopa Colony areas. The majority of this area was farmed at various times in the past; however, currently there is not an adequate water supply to support production agriculture for the entire 4,947 acres at the same time. Several wells in the study area are providing an adequate water supply to support production agriculture for 1,610 acres.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a reliable water supply to agricultural lands in the West Side Area through the P-MIP system. Extending the P-MIP system to the West Side Area will allow for more efficient use of Community water resources and expand agricultural production opportunities in this area. More specifically, the purpose of the project is to conserve Community water resources such as CAP water, ground water, Salt River Project (SRP) surface and stored water, and other water supplies, and reduce long-term O&M costs, and improve irrigation water delivery service to community farmlands on the West Side Area of the Community.

To address this purpose, the proposed project will construct new primary laterals (pipelines) and construct new secondary laterals (pipelines) to more efficiently deliver irrigation water to the agricultural lands. Primary activities of the proposed construction include new alignments, new pipelines to serve the planned acreage, and modern measurement and control amenities (e.g., control gates, turnout structures, water meters) to improve delivery and accountability services. Modernization of the irrigation system in the West Side Area will improve the reliability of deliveries and pool water supplies to better serve the total needs of the Community.

BACKGROUND

Congress passed the Colorado River Basin Project Act (Public Law 90-537, as amended) on September 30, 1968. The act authorized the Secretary of the Interior, through Reclamation, to construct the Central Arizona Project (CAP), a water resource development and management project with the primary purpose of furnishing Colorado River water for irrigation, and municipal and industrial uses in central and southern Arizona. Section 403 of the act directs Reclamation to pay the costs associated with construction of CAP water delivery facilities on the Community.

By the 1990s, the Community determined that the maximum benefit of its CAP water entitlement could be obtained by integrating CAP water resources into a common-use irrigation system. When fully constructed, this common-use irrigation delivery system, known as Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project, will be capable of conveying irrigation water from all available

sources to all lands identified for agricultural development in the Community Master Plan for Land and Water Use. On May 15, 2006, the Secretary of the Interior entered into an amended water service contract with the Community for the annual delivery of 311,800 acre-feet of CAP water.

The final EA is tiered from the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the P-MIP completed in 1997. The PEIS addressed Community plans to construct and operate a common-use irrigation system and place up to 146,330 acres of land into agricultural production. The PEIS allowed for a programmatic-level evaluation of the P-MIP at full implementation. Rehabilitation of WS-1E and WS-1F is a sub-element of the broader action that was considered in the PEIS.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Reclamation distributed a Notice of Availability and posted the draft EA on the Phoenix Area Office website for public and agency review on August 14, 2015. The required response date was October 2, 2015. There were no comments from the public or agencies on the draft EA.

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Based upon the final EA, Reclamation has determined that construction of WS-1E and WS-1F will not have a significant effect on the human environment, and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. This decision is based upon the following considerations.

- (1) The proposed project will not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. Rehabilitation of the specified laterals will improve efficiency of operation, conserve water, and reduce the cost of operation. Project implementation will not have a significant effect on water resources, floodplains and flooding, land use, soil, noise, air quality, and biological resources.
- (2) The proposed project will not have significant impacts on public health or safety. During construction, OSHA standards will be employed, as necessary, to ensure public and worker safety. Following construction, proposed improvements to the West Side Area laterals would enhance operational controls.
- (3) The proposed project will not have significant impacts on unique geographical or ecological characteristics such as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; natural national landmarks; sole source aquifers; wetlands; floodplains; prime farmlands; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. Practically all of the construction impact area is situated on lands previously affected by agricultural development or altered by other use.
- (4) The proposed project will not have highly uncertain, unique, or unknown environmental risks. The majority of the service area for WS-1E and WS-1F has been farmed at various times in the past.

(5) The proposed project will not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant effects. Construction of WS-1E and WS-1F is a sub-element of a broader effort to develop and modernize the canal system on the Community under P-MIP. Effects of this comprehensive modernization and expansion of the canal system were previously considered in the P-MIP PEIS.

(6) The proposed project will not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects. Cumulative effects of the project were considered in the EA and determined not to be significant.

(7) The proposed project will not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places. Reclamation consulted with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office regarding potential impact to eligible or potentially eligible cultural resources. To mitigate potential effects, a treatment plan was developed for each of the cultural resources within the area of potential effects for the project in accordance with the 2012 revised Programmatic Agreement among the Community, Reclamation, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding the development of P-MIP. No ground disturbance would begin until the requirements of the plan have been fulfilled.

(8) The proposed project 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.

(9) The proposed project will have no effect on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. There is no designated critical habitat in the project area.

(10) The proposed project will not violate Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. As a sovereign nation, the Community is not subject to State or local (non-tribal) environmental requirements for actions that are implemented on tribal lands.

(11) The proposed project will not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or result in actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. To prevent the introduction and establishment of invasive weed species, all construction equipment would be power-washed at the contractor's storage facility prior to entering the construction site.

(12) The proposed project will not adversely affect Indian Trust Assets. As the primary Indian Trust Asset of concern, water that is conserved from improved operating efficiencies would be put to beneficial use to irrigate cropland, much of which is allotted to individual Community members.

(13) The proposed project will not have significant and disproportionately high and adverse effects on low income or minority populations. Improvements to WS-1E and WS-1F will have

minor short-term effects (primarily dust, noise, and disruption of traffic associated with construction) on minority and low-income populations that live along the lateral canal alignment.

(14) The mitigation measures identified in the final EA will be implemented by P-MIP.

DOCUMENTS REFERENCED

Reclamation 1997. Final programmatic environmental impact statement. Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project.

Reclamation 2015. Final environmental assessment, Reaches WS-1E and WS-1F (MC-1, MC-2, AND MC-3), Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project. Gila River Indian Community. Maricopa County, AZ. Issued October 2015.

