

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Interior Region 8: Lower Colorado Basin
Phoenix Area Office

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

EXCHANGE OF CENTRAL ARIZONA PROJECT WATER
BETWEEN
THE GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY
AND
ROOSEVELT WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA

Approved: LESLIE MEYERS Digitally signed by LESLIE MEYERS
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FONSI No.: PXAO 20-02

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 the Gila River Indian Community's (Community) proposed agreement to store excess Central Arizona Project (CAP) water in the Roosevelt Water Conservation District (RWCD), an Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) permitted Groundwater Savings Facility (GSF). The RWCD seeks to use the Community's CAP water in lieu of pumping groundwater and the Community desires to obtain Long-Term Storage Credits. The Community could choose delivery amounts up to 85,000 acre-feet annually (afa) of CAP water. Pursuant to Arizona state law, the Community would receive pumping credits for the groundwater "saved" (not pumped) as a result of the agreement. Those credits can then be sold or "recovered" later.

Public Involvement

Reclamation solicited input from the public on the proposed action to assist in identifying key issues and defining the scope of the project and environmental analysis. Reclamation conducted scoping via email and internet publication. A 15-day comment period was initiated April 21, 2020 and closed on May 6, 2020. No comments were received. A Notice of Availability for the draft EA was issued on July 2, 2020, with comments due on July 17, 2020. No comments were received.

Major Considerations

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

1. No land disturbing activities will occur as a result of the proposed action. Therefore, there will be no direct adverse impacts resulting from the proposed action. CAP water would be delivered through existing infrastructure to an ADWR permitted GSF. The exchange would not cause additional growth and development beyond what was described in the no action alternative. Indirect and cumulative impacts from the proposed action, mostly related to urbanization of non-developed land, will be identical to the no action alternative.
2. The proposed action will not result in any negative effects to public health or safety. The recharge of the leased CAP water is not anticipated to result in substantial changes to the current local groundwater quality.

3. No direct adverse impacts will occur from the proposed action to unique characteristics of the geographic area such as park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. Land development would be subject to compliance with local, state, and Federal laws and ordinances protecting environmental resources.
4. No adverse effect on the quality of the human environment is anticipated. No disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and/or low-income populations would result from the proposed action.
5. The proposed action 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 does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. Significant adverse cumulative effects are not anticipated for the proposed action. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 2 of the final EA.
8. The proposed project would not result in additional ground disturbance beyond what would occur under the no action alternative. Therefore, the proposed action would not cause any adverse effects to cultural resources, including historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
9. The proposed action would have no adverse effect on federally-listed threatened or endangered wildlife species or critical habitat.
10. The project does not threaten to violate any known Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.
11. The Community's right to CAP water is an Indian Trust Asset per Section 204(a)(2) of the Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act. 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 plans for the Community to reach agreements to store up to 85,000 afa of CAP water at RWCD would not have a significant adverse effect on the human environment, and an environmental impact statement is not warranted.