

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

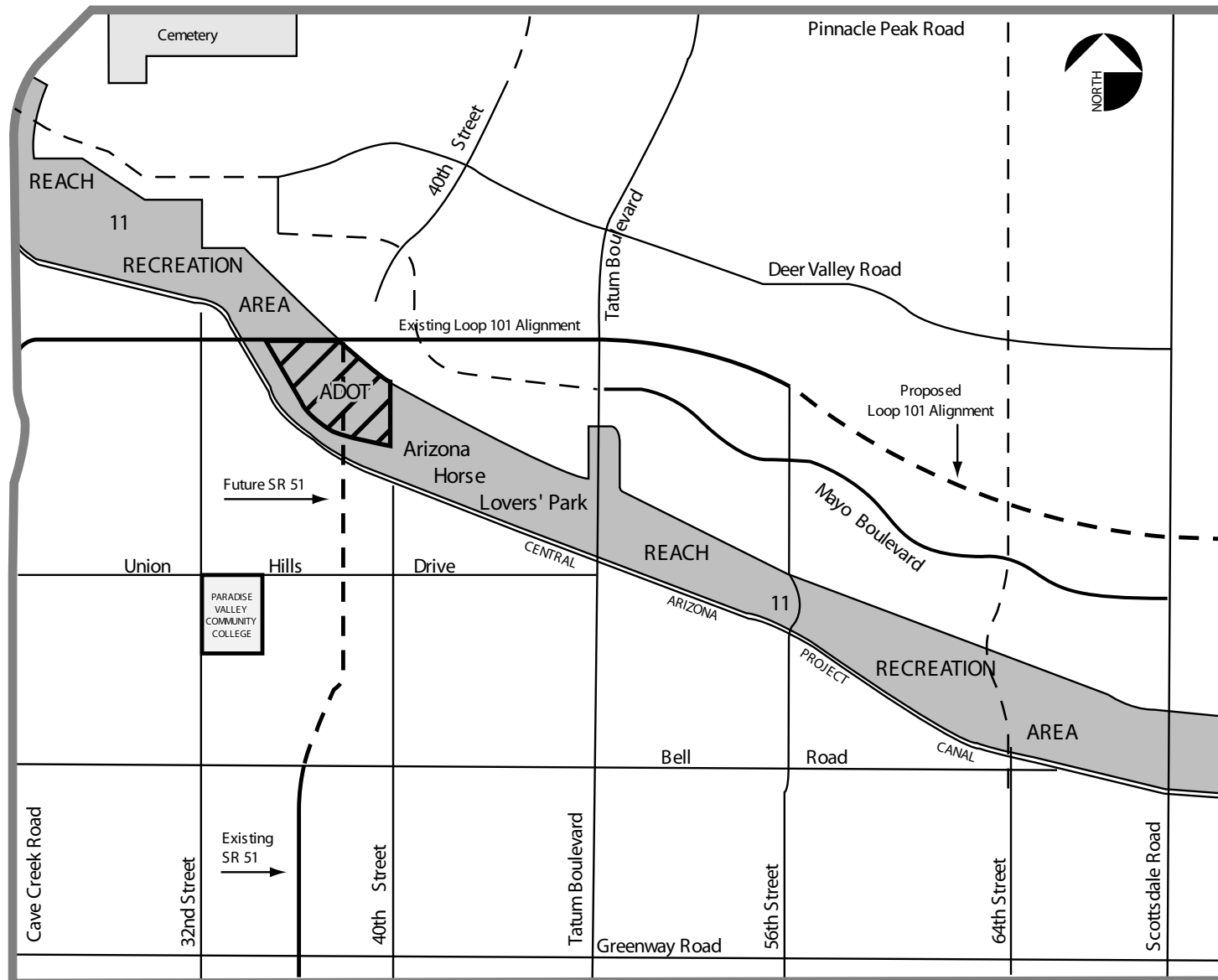
1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Colorado River Basin Project Act of 1968 authorized the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), to construct the Central Arizona Project (CAP). The CAP is a multi-purpose water project to develop water for municipal and industrial use, as well as for Indian uses and non-Indian agricultural uses, in central and southern Arizona, and western New Mexico. As part of the CAP canal in metropolitan Phoenix, a flood detention dike and the Paradise Valley Flood Detention Basin were constructed to provide floodwater protection for the CAP canal and adjacent communities of Phoenix, Paradise Valley, and Scottsdale. Within the metropolitan Phoenix area, the detention basin extends across the Paradise Valley Village area, from Cave Creek Road to 108th Street. Reclamation has entered into a contract with the Central Arizona Water Conservation District for the operation and maintenance of lands, structures, and facilities associated with the storage and delivery of CAP water and flood control.

Consistent with Title 28, Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-72, as amended), in December 1986, Reclamation and the City of Phoenix (City) entered into the Recreation Land Use Agreement (RLUA) under which approximately 1,500 acres within the Paradise Valley Flood Detention Basin would be managed by the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) for recreational purposes compatible with their primary purpose as a flood detention basin. This area is located between Cave Creek Road and Scottsdale Road north of the CAP canal, and is commonly known as the Reach 11 Recreation Area, or simply as Reach 11 (Figure 1-1). PRD's responsibilities include the planning, design, operation, and maintenance of recreational developments in Reach 11, although Reclamation retains ownership of the land and flood protection remains the primary purpose. The City of Phoenix is responsible for maintaining Reach 11 from the toe of the dike upslope to the property line. Any structures or improvements constructed on lands managed by the City of Phoenix are the responsibility of the City for operation and maintenance.

A conceptual recreation plan was developed in 1974 by an ad-hoc committee of representatives from the City, Maricopa County, and Federal and State agencies. At that time, it was anticipated Reclamation would enter into a recreational land use agreement with Maricopa County to manage Reach 11 for recreational purposes. The plan was submitted as part of the plans for the CAP and accepted by Reclamation in 1975. In 1985, Maricopa County returned responsibility of Reach 11 to Reclamation citing inadequate funding to implement facilities and plans. At that point the City entered into the 1986 RLUA with Reclamation to manage Reach 11 for recreation purposes. The PRD created a master plan, per conditions established in the RLUA, and the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Board (Parks Board) adopted the plan in January 1987. This plan, which was approved by Reclamation, depicted and identified the types of recreation-related facilities that would be constructed within Reach 11. PRD revised the master plan in 1995; although approved by the Parks Board, the master plan was not forwarded to Reclamation for approval.



This map is for reference purposes only. Not to scale.

LOCATION MAP
 Reach 11 Recreation Master Plan and EIS
 Figure 1-1

Consistent with the 1987 master plan, an equestrian facility and an accessible interpretative trail have been developed within Reach 11; no other developments identified in the plan adopted by the Parks Board have been implemented. Other facilities within Reach 11, not specifically identified in the 1987 master plan, have been approved. These include the Tatum Boulevard and 56th Street crossings (already constructed), the Loop 101/State Route (SR) 51 interchange (under construction), and the 64th Street crossing (approved).

Residential and commercial development has occurred primarily to the south of Reach 11. Construction and/or planning for large master planned residential and commercial developments have begun on land to the north of Reach 11, which is primarily State of Arizona land or privately owned property. Population and employment projections for Paradise Valley and Desert View Villages, the two City of Phoenix planning areas that are located adjacent to Reach 11, indicate major growth expectations, particularly north of Reach 11. These projections are described below in Table 1-1. Given the planned construction of a major freeway and population growth projections for the area, it is anticipated that Reach 11 will become increasingly important in providing open space and recreational opportunities to the surrounding current and projected population. The City and Reclamation recognized that the 1987 approved master plan is outdated and that a comprehensive planning effort for a new master plan needed to be conducted based on a current assessment of community recreation needs. The PRD has primary responsibility for determining the recreational needs for the City of Phoenix; therefore, Reclamation has deferred to PRD's and the City's expertise in determining the appropriate recreational uses for the Reach 11 area.

TABLE 1-1 CURRENT (1995) AND PROJECTED (2020) POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT			
Year	Population	Households	Employment
Desert View Village			
1995	7,400	2,900	800
2020	123,164	48,800	21,800
Percent Change	1564%	1583%	2625%
Paradise Valley Village			
1995	155,200	58,100	39,000
2020	192,800	73,200	47,900
Percent Change	24%	26%	23%

Source: City of Phoenix 1997a

In 1998, as a result of public interest, the City and Reclamation concluded that an environmental impact statement (EIS) should be prepared for the overall master recreation planning process. Two consulting firms, BRW and Dames & Moore (now URS Corporation), were selected as third-party consultants to develop master plan alternatives and the EIS, respectively. As one of the initial steps in the development of master plan alternatives, BRW conducted a recreation needs assessment. The objective of this assessment was to identify the available recreational opportunities in the study area, determine the existing recreational requirements for residents of the study area, and evaluate how population growth will affect the existing facilities and demands for future recreational facilities and uses in the future. A more detailed description of the recreation needs assessment is provided in Chapter 2.

This final EIS (FEIS) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to describe the environmental consequences anticipated to result from implementing a recreation master plan for Reach 11.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

The Federal action being considered is Reclamation's approval of a new recreation master plan that will identify the types and quantities of recreational features to be developed, operated, and maintained within Reach 11. The 1987 recreation master plan is outdated and does not reflect the overuse of existing recreation features in the area, lack of an adequate amount of available recreation opportunities, and the projected demand for future recreational facilities and uses based upon population growth estimates. Phoenix ranks as the sixth largest city in the country with a population of 1.24 million (Arizona Department of Economic Security 1999), and has consistently been one of the top 10 cities in the nation for rate of growth. While the amount of dedicated open space has increased continually within the City and Maricopa County, the acreage per capita has decreased (Morrison Institute 1998). As growth continues, allocation of additional open space and developed recreation areas is needed to maintain the quality of life that the City desires for its residents.

The purpose of the updated master plan is to ensure that development of Reach 11 will satisfy the current standards established for a district park, while depicting and identifying the types and quantities of recreational features needed to serve the existing and projected needs of the area population. By completing environmental clearances for, and approving, a new recreation master plan, Reclamation would be able to more adequately ensure there is a balance among various, and oftentimes competing, recreational interests, while addressing anticipated environmental consequences of developing and operating Reach 11 for recreation in a comprehensive manner. The City would be allowed to construct, operate, and maintain developments identified in the master plan in an expeditious manner, as opportunities present themselves and funds become available, as long as environmental conditions and anticipated environmental consequences have not changed significantly from what has been considered during this NEPA process. At the time specific components are proposed to be implemented, the need for additional NEPA clearance would be evaluated. This evaluation would be based upon the degree to which each particular component is addressed in the master plan and this EIS, and the degree to which the existing conditions and anticipated environmental consequences are consistent with what is described in this EIS.

Before any portion of the recreation master plan can be implemented, the Parks Board must approve the content of the final master plan, and both the Parks Board and Reclamation must approve the master plan. Reclamation's primary concerns are to ensure that the NEPA process is carried out properly and provides opportunity for public involvement; the proposed plan is consistent with the goals of the existing RLUA; and the Reach's primary purpose as a flood detention basin is protected. The Parks Board establishes policies for park facilities and advises the City Council on park and recreation needs. The Parks Board has functioned as a steering committee for the Reach 11 Master Plan. Both the Parks Board and Reclamation seek a plan that reflects the desires of park users and the needs of the community, taking into consideration the opportunities and constraints defined by the physical features of the site and surrounding area.

1.3 SCOPING PROCESS

Scoping is conducted early in the NEPA process to identify the range of issues and concerns to be addressed in the EIS. It is an open process intended to incorporate the views and concerns of Federal, State, and local agencies and the public regarding the project. Objectives of scoping include the following:

- Identify significant issues related to the project.
- Determine the range of alternatives to be evaluated.
- Identify environmental review and consultation requirements.
- Develop the environmental analysis process and technical studies to address scoping issues within the EIS.
- Identify the interested and affected public.
- Provide information to the public about the project and planning process.

The formal scoping process began with the August 11, 1998 publication in the *Federal Register* of Reclamation's Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS and conduct a public meeting and open house in September 1998. Additional means to inform the public of the project and solicit input throughout the process are detailed in Chapter 4, and included the following:

- Media coverage
- Newsletters and mailing list
- Posted notices
- Community open houses and public scoping meetings
- Parks Board meetings
- Interviews with community leaders and groups, recreation user organizations, and agency and developer representatives

The formal scoping period ended on November 6, 1998. However, comments from the public and agencies have continued to be received and considered throughout the master planning process and the preparation of the EIS.

1.4 ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE EIS

The comments received throughout the public scoping period were compiled and summarized in the Scoping Report completed in March 1999 (which is available for review from the offices of Reclamation and City of Phoenix). In general, the need for recreational opportunities for children and families was noted repeatedly. The comments indicate an overall desire for both active developed recreational uses (e.g., soccer and other ball fields) and passive recreational uses (hiking or equestrian trails). Several individuals expressed a desire to maintain the existing desert habitat in Reach 11. Concerns were raised regarding water use, pollution, night lighting, and increased traffic and noise levels. Specific comments have been organized into eight categories of issues addressed in this FEIS, as described below.

1.4.1 Issue 1 – Purpose and Need for the Project Plan/Change in Existing Use of the Area

A number of Reach 11 users enjoy the area in its current state and are concerned that improvements will detract from their current use of the park. Others emphasized the need to identify the most pressing recreational demands in northeast Phoenix and develop new facilities to meet those needs.

1.4.2 Issue 2 – Recreation Opportunities

Various preferences for different recreational uses in Reach 11 have been identified. Most frequently requested recreational amenities include hiking and/or biking trails (with desert vegetation and unpaved paths), equestrian trails, soccer fields, and paved paths for walking, biking, or skating. Other common responses regarding preferences include playground/picnic areas, equestrian show/arena facilities, baseball/softball fields, and both support for and opposition to golf courses. A lack of sufficient facilities to meet demand was noted for soccer fields, equestrian areas, and canine activities. In addition, some comments call for improved trail access for people with physical disabilities (refer to Section 3.8 for a discussion of recreation opportunities).

1.4.3 Issue 3 – Project Financing

Questions have been directed toward the amount, method, and timing of financing Reach 11 improvements. Specific comments focus on the potential effects on taxes due to plan implementation, how development capital would be raised, and the costs of park improvements and operation and maintenance activities (refer to Section 3.9 for a discussion of project financing).

1.4.4 Issue 4 – Access and Circulation

A key concern expressed through public comments has been the need to provide safe pedestrian, bicycle, and horse access over the CAP canal and throughout Reach 11, particularly over and under Tatum Boulevard. Comments also call for the consideration of impacts on traffic congestion and parking that would result from increased use of Reach 11 facilities. It has been suggested that establishing trails between Reach 11 and other parks or open space in the vicinity would allow for lengthier exercise and transportation through a network of parks. Many individuals noted the need to buffer multiple uses, especially the planned traffic interchange and other street crossings. Many people also expressed concern about safety issues on multiple-use trails (refer to Section 3.7 for a discussion of access and circulation).

1.4.5 Issue 5 – Biological Resources

People have expressed concern that existing vegetation and wildlife habitat be preserved or maintained. Others would like to see the clustering of developed areas or the separation of developed and natural areas considered as ways of minimizing habitat disturbance and fragmentation. Some have noted that the habitat resources are most valuable between Tatum Boulevard and 56th Street, and therefore warrant special consideration. However, it should be noted that critical habitat only exists after it has been officially designated by the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service (FWS); no portion of Reach 11 has ever been designated as critical habitat for any species (refer to Section 3.6 for a discussion of biological resources).

1.4.6 Issue 6 – Water Resources

Concerns have been raised over the connection between recreation facilities and water use; the amount, quality, and source of water to be used in Reach 11; and the impacts of increased water use. Specific issues include water quality, impacts on groundwater, and the potential for land subsidence. Other related issues include the potential for increased humidity and the possible increase in the mosquito population if additional standing water were to exist in Reach 11 (refer to Section 3.4 for a discussion of water resources).

1.4.7 Issue 7 – Cultural Resources

There is some concern regarding damage to cultural resources that may exist in the area and the process for handling those resources. Cultural resources, such as archaeological resources, exist north of Reach 11, suggesting the possibility of similar resources being present in Reach 11 (refer to Section 3.11 for a discussion of cultural resources).

1.4.8 Issue 8 – Adjacent Land Uses

The primary concerns related to land uses adjacent to Reach 11 include the following: potential for vandalism and security problems; night lights; potential increased noise levels from public address systems that accompany sports facilities or horse shows; and pollution that may result from recreational use (e.g., fertilizer use and littering). The potential for noise impacts on the National Memorial Cemetery also was raised as a concern (refer to Section 3.7 for a discussion of adjacent land uses).

1.5 PLANNING REQUIREMENTS AND RELATED REGULATIONS

This FEIS has been issued by Reclamation in compliance with Federal regulations and guidelines, principally NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), Reclamation's NEPA Handbook (1997c), and other environmental statutes and policies. The anticipated permitting requirements and authorizations are similar for all the alternatives under consideration. Compliance with these other statutes and policies is described in detail in Chapter 4.