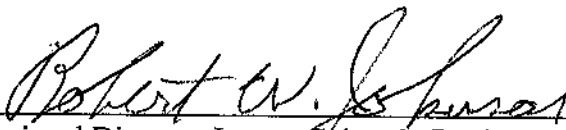


RECORD OF DECISION

CENTRAL ARIZONA PROJECT REACH 11 RECREATION MASTER PLAN Final Environmental Impact Statement

December 2002

Approved:



Regional Director, Lower Colorado Region
U. S. Bureau of Reclamation

1/14/03
Date

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I. Introduction

This document constitutes the Record of Decision (ROD) of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Lower Colorado Region, regarding the preferred alternative for the Reach 11 Recreation Master Plan. The Recreation Master Plan is the subject of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Reach 11 Recreation Master Plan, Maricopa County, Arizona, developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended; the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500 through 1508); Department of Interior policies; and Reclamation's NEPA Handbook. The FEIS, (FES-02-34, dated October 2002), was filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on October 24, 2002, and noticed by EPA in the *Federal Register* on November 1, 2002.

The Reach 11 Recreation Area (Reach 11) is located in the northeastern portion of the city of Phoenix in Maricopa County, Arizona. It consists of 1,500 acres adjacent to the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal, within the Paradise Valley Flood Detention Basin between Cave Creek and Scottsdale roads. The primary purpose of the Reach 11 area is to serve as a flood detention basin to capture floodwaters so they do not impact the CAP canal and adjacent communities of Phoenix, Paradise Valley, and Scottsdale. The land is owned by Reclamation and is managed for recreational purposes by the City of Phoenix (City) Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) under a 1986 recreation land use agreement (RLUA).

II. Recommended Decision

The recommendation is to approve the City's implementation of the Recreation Master Plan identified and described in the FEIS as the Proposed Action. Under the proposed action plan, high-demand recreation needs would be met while still providing natural and picnic areas, as well as space for other passive recreation uses. The intent of the Proposed Action plan is to optimize recreational use of Reach 11 based upon the needs of the City and community, while ensuring compatibility with the primary flood control function of Reach 11.

III. Background

The 1986 RLUA requires that the City prepare a master plan for recreational use of lands within Reach 11. An initial recreation master plan was created by PRD in 1987, which

was adopted by the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Board (Parks Board) and approved by Reclamation. Consistent with this plan, PRD has developed an equestrian facility and a series of recreational use trails within Reach 11. The growing population in the area has led to overuse of existing recreation features, lack of an adequate amount of available recreational opportunities, and a projected demand for future recreational facilities and uses. Considering the major growth expectations and because the 1987 Reach 11 master plan is out of date, the City and Reclamation determined that a comprehensive planning effort for a new master plan needed to be conducted based upon a current assessment of community recreation needs.

The formal scoping period for the NEPA process was conducted between August 11, and November 9, 1998. At the beginning of the scoping period, affected Federal, State, and local agencies, Indian tribes and interested organizations and persons were invited to identify issues or concerns that should be taken into consideration in the EIS. An open house/public scoping meeting was held on September 10, 1998.

As part of the overall master recreation planning process, two consulting firms, BRW and Dames & Moore (both now part of URS Corporation), were selected as third-party consultants to develop master plan alternatives and the EIS, respectively. BRW conducted a recreation needs assessment during the Fall 1998. 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. Three types of recreational activities were identified: Passive, active, and special event. Three maps were prepared depicting existing park sites, school sites, and golf courses in the general vicinity of the project area. An inventory of the existing and planned quantities and types of facilities located at each site was developed. Park standards and public interest in various recreation facilities were also assessed as part of the study. Based upon these data, the recommended park facilities were determined for each type of use and current levels of demand at Reach 11. The level of demand was determined based upon the inventory, design guidelines, capacity ranking, and public interest. Alternative master plan concepts were then development based upon compliance with PRD district park standards, the recreation needs assessment, identification of issues raised through scoping, and an evaluation of site opportunities and constraints conducted by BRW.

Public input was sought throughout the master recreation planning process. As noted above, a public scoping meeting was held in September 1998, to encourage the local community to identify issues and concerns regarding the development of a new recreation master plan. Two other public meetings were held at key milestones in the development of the master plan concepts, on February 10, 1999, and July 13, 1999. The purpose of these two meetings was to continue to collect public input, in conjunction with development of alternative plan concepts and eventual identification of a preferred plan. In addition to these public meetings, the community was also invited to attend and provide input at five Parks Board meetings (open to the public), during which time the project team made presentations on the status of the recreation master planning process.

At its September 1999 meeting, the Parks Board approved the master plan concept, identified in the EIS as the Proposed Action, as its preferred plan.

The FEIS includes a detailed description of the methodology used in developing the recreation needs assessment and the assessment's results, as well as the public involvement component of the planning/NEPA processes.

The FEIS evaluates the Proposed Action plan and two alternative recreation master plans that were developed. All three action plan alternatives include multi-zone elements such as multi-use trails, areas of enhanced vegetation, open turf areas, irrigation ponds, and an underpass at Tatum Boulevard.

IV. Alternatives

The FEIS analyzed the Proposed Action plan, two additional alternative recreation master plans, and a No Action Alternative. To facilitate comparison of the alternatives, the park was divided into six zones that are bounded by major features within Reach 11, particularly roadways. Zone 1 consists of the westernmost portion of Reach 11, between Cave Creek Road and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) management area (which incorporates the Loop 101/State Route [SR] 51 interchange). Zone 2 consists of the ADOT management area; Zone 3 is located between the ADOT management area and Tatum Boulevard. Zone 4 is bounded by Tatum Boulevard and 56th Street. Zone 5 consists of the area between 56th Street and the planned 64th Street extension. And Zone 6 consists of the easternmost portion of Reach 11, between the planned 64th Street extension and Scottsdale Road. It is assumed that appurtenant facilities, such as parking and restrooms, are included with each plan, whether or not they are specifically identified in the EIS.

A. No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, development and management of Reach 11 would continue under the guidelines of the Reach 11 recreation master plan approved by the Board and Reclamation in 1987. The remainder of the recreational developments included in the 1987 recreation master plan would be considered and implemented on a case-by-case basis as funds become available, as has occurred over the past 14 years. A recreational development not envisioned in the 1987 recreation master plan could also be proposed for implementation. Any development not included in the 1987 recreation master plan would need to be approved by the Parks Board. NEPA compliance would also need to be completed for each of these proposed developments as determined appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Facilities that are identified in the 1987 recreation master plan include the following:

Zone 1 – Organized play fields; motor bike training area; area for canine activities; picnicking

Zone 2 – Area for youth activities; day camping area; education center. Due to the subsequent construction of the Loop 101/SR 51 interchange, these facilities would be either eliminated or relocated to other zones

Zone 3 – Equestrian center (the equestrian center has been constructed)

Zone 4 – Maintenance building and parking; overnight camping; picnic areas

Zone 5 – Wildlife area (no facilities)

Zone 6 – Wildlife and desert picnic areas

B. Proposed Action. The overall concept of the Proposed Action plan is to accommodate the primary needs for active and passive recreation, as determined in the recreation needs assessment, while conserving areas of the site that have been identified as supporting the most diverse habitat. Areas of dense xeroriparian vegetation occurring within Reach 11 were mapped, and facilities were sited to avoid these areas. Under the Proposed Action, Zone 1 would be the focal point for active recreation. The eastern half of the park would emphasize passive recreation in conjunction with conserving xeroriparian habitat areas. A special events area would be developed in Zone 3, where the equestrian center is already located. The major facilities that would be developed under this alternative include the following:

Zone 1 – Lighted softball, soccer, T-ball, sand volleyball, basketball courts, and other special courts; children's play areas, picnic areas, concession building; maintenance yard.

Zone 2 – Loop 101/SR 51 interchange

Zone 3 – Equestrian center (existing); multi-use trailhead; special events area

Zone 4 – Multi-use trailhead; administrative office; interpretive center; interpretive trail; accessible trail

Zone 5 – Desert picnic areas

Zone 6 – Turf and desert picnic areas

C. Alternative 1 (Passive Plan). The overall concept of this alternative plan is to conserve the existing natural settings and incorporate recreational facilities, needed to meet minimum City district park standards, in a manner that minimizes the impacts on those settings. As such, this alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative. Under Alternative 1, Zone 1 would be the focal point for active recreation as in the Proposed Action; however, these facilities would be provided in lower numbers and at a lower density than in the Proposed Action. The eastern half of the park would emphasize

passive recreation in conjunction with conserving xeroriparian habitat areas. The major facilities that would be developed under this alternative include the following:

Zone 1 – Lighted ball/soccer fields; playgrounds; open turf areas

Zone 2 – Loop 101/SR 51 interchange

Zone 3 – Equestrian center (existing)

Zone 4 – Interpretive center; natural habitat areas; accessible trail

Zone 5 – Natural habitat areas

Zone 6 – Desert and turf picnic areas and playgrounds

D. Alternative 2 (Active Plan). The overall concept of this alternative plan is to maximize active recreational use. Xeroriparian vegetation and habitat areas would be considered for conservation; however, the development of recreational facilities would be given the highest priority, with an emphasis on large-group activities and tournament-style play. As with the other two action alternatives, Zone 1 would be the focal point for active recreation, with even more facilities being developed in this zone than under the Proposed Action. Open space within Zone 3 would be maximized to support or complement the existing equestrian facilities. Zone 4 would focus on passive recreation use and would include an interpretive center and habitat demonstration garden. The primary element of Zone 5 would be a municipal golf course; overnight camping facilities would also be provided in this zone. Zone 6 would contain a tournament-style golf course and associated amenities. The major facilities that would be developed under this alternative include the following:

Zone 1 – Lighted softball and soccer fields, court game facilities; children's play area; picnic/open turf areas; recreation center; maintenance yard.

Zone 2 – Loop 101/SR 51 interchange

Zone 3 – Equestrian center (existing); multi-use trailhead; polo grounds/special events area

Zone 4 – Multi-use trailhead; interpretive center; demonstration garden; picnic areas; interpretive trail; accessible trail

Zone 5 – Municipal (youth-oriented) golf course and training center; overnight camping facilities

Zone 6 – Tournament-style golf course and clubhouse

There was support expressed by many members of the public to retain Reach 11 in its current state, and discontinue any further development within the park other than habitat enhancement. This, however, would not meet the City standards established for a district park, nor would it provide the range of active, passive, and special events activities deemed to be needed by the recreation needs assessment.

V. Issues Evaluated and Basis for the Decision

The major issues that were taken into consideration during action plan formulation, preparation of the EIS and development of mitigation measures, include the following:

A. Primary purpose of the detention basins. The primary purpose of flood control of the detention basins cannot be jeopardized by the design, construction or operation of the recreational facilities within the basin.

B. Access and circulation. Public input included concerns regarding the need to provide safe pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian access over the CAP canal and throughout Reach 11, particularly over and under Tatum Boulevard. Many people also expressed concern about safety issues regarding the multiple-use trails.

C. Biological resources. Public input included concerns regarding preservation and protection of existing vegetation and wildlife habitat, and separation of active and passive uses of the park to minimize disturbance to wildlife.

D. Cultural resources. Potential impacts to cultural resources must be identified and consultation regarding mitigation conducted consistent with applicable Federal rules and regulations.

E. Water resources. Public input included concerns regarding potential impacts to water quality from application of chemicals and use of effluent for turf irrigation, increased humidity, and the potential for an increase in the mosquito population.

F. Adjacent land uses. Potential impacts to adjacent land uses include noise and light interference, vandalism and security problems, and traffic control problems.

The FEIS addresses these issues with regard to each of the alternatives considered. Under any of the alternatives considered, the integrity of the detention basins would not be affected. Access and circulation would be improved under any of the three action alternatives due to the construction of an underpass at Tatum Boulevard. Vegetation and habitat protection would be greatest under Alternative 1 (Passive Plan); impacts to habitat would be avoided under the Proposed Action plan. Each of the alternatives considered in the FEIS would affect remnants of the Rio Verde Canal that are located in the eastern portion of Reach 11, that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Due to the depth to groundwater, there would be no impacts to groundwater quality from application of chemicals for turf management or vector control within Reach 11. Regardless of alternative implemented, turf irrigation within Reach 11 would need to

maximize use of effluent due to requirements of the 1980 Groundwater Management Code, and Phoenix City Code requirements regarding water conservation. All alternatives considered in the FEIS would generally experience similar impacts to adjacent land uses and neighbors; lighted ball fields are included in each of the action alternatives but not explicitly addressed in the 1987 Master Plan (the No Action Alternative in the EIS). There could be additional noise-related impacts generated by a motor bike training facility in the western portion of Reach 11 under the No Action Plan, or from public address systems for the golf courses in the eastern portion of Reach 11 under Alternative 2 (Active Plan). A scenic drive along the northern boundary of Reach 11 identified in the No Action Alternative could also encourage cut-through traffic or introduce more noise and activities to areas of passive recreation.

Reclamation selected the proposed action as its preferred alternative based upon the following primary considerations: (1) Reclamation has determined the Proposed Action provides the best balance between active and passive recreation needs of the community, based upon the recreation needs assessment and taking into consideration the opportunities and constraints defined by the physical features of the site and surrounding area; (2) based upon the evaluation included in the FEIS, Reclamation has concluded approval and implementation of any of the action alternatives will not result in unacceptable environmental impacts, based in part on the City's commitment to implement mitigation measures, included in the FEIS in Table 3-15, and also provided as Attachment 1 to this ROD; (3) the Proposed Action has the largest support of the four plans evaluated in the EIS, based upon feedback received during the scoping period and the limited feedback received during the public review and comment period for the draft EIS; and (4) the Proposed Action Alternative has been endorsed by the Parks Board, which is responsible for establishing 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 Recreation Master Plan process.

VI. Implementing the Decision and Environmental Commitments

Once Reclamation has issued its ROD and the Parks Board has approved the Recreation Master Plan and its contents, the PRD will be allowed to construct, operate and maintain developments identified in the Recreation Master Plan in an expeditious manner, as opportunities present themselves and funds become available, as long as environmental conditions and anticipated impacts have not changed significantly from what was considered and addressed in the FEIS.

In addition to ensuring the City implements the mitigation measures identified in Attachment 1 to this ROD, Reclamation's environmental commitments include the following: Ensuring native species are utilized when revegetating any natural landscape; pre-approving construction access, and construction limits; and coordinating with the City and State Historic Preservation Officer during site development in considering interpreting portions of the Rio Verde Canal that remain intact, as appropriate and to the degree determined practicable by the City and Reclamation.

ATTACHMENT 1
RESOURCE-SPECIFIC MITIGATION MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY
CITY OF PHOENIX

Resource	Mitigation Measures to be Incorporated into the Project
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design construction activities in such a manner that a minimum amount of fugitive dust will be created and will be kept within the project boundaries by barriers or absorbent materials. (A dust control plan will be completed and implemented in accordance with Maricopa County Permit requirements.) • Implement habitat and vegetation enhancement measures. • Place gravel or asphalt on parking areas. • Spray water as needed to control dust levels in the equestrian areas and ball fields.
Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid water pollution through control of sanitary facilities and proper storage of fuels and other contaminants. • Obtain appropriate permits, including Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, for any portions of project implementation in the event that jurisdictional waters are crossed or disturbed. • Avoid discharge of pollutants into waters of the U.S. • Irrigate at night, to the degree practicable, to minimize evaporation. • Use drought-tolerant grass species in turf areas such as Bermuda grass, to the degree practicable. • Incorporate use of an oil-water separator for high-use, paved parking areas, where appropriate.
Vector Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharply angle the edges (90 degrees) of irrigation ponds. • Ensure that water does not stagnate, and drawdown on the irrigation ponds occurs regularly. • Allow little to no vegetation growth along the pond's edge. • Implement the existing action plan for applying insecticides in a timely manner after storm events, during breeding conditions, with an emphasis on primary treatment in the larval stage. • Ensure that an operation and maintenance road is available to provide treatment to flooded areas where practicable. • Provide for vector control in the operation and maintenance budget for the park.
Earth Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct all construction and maintenance activities in a manner that minimizes disturbance to xeroriparian vegetation and wash channels. • Revegetate disturbed areas as appropriate. • Obtain appropriate permits, including Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, for any portions of the implementation in the event that drainages are crossed or impacted.
Land Use	Pre-approve construction access, and construction limits. These will be shown on construction drawings.
Recreation	Provide signage to educate trail users on minimizing conflicts among horses, bikes, and hikers.
Visual Resources	Select lighting fixtures and locations to minimize impacts on adjacent residences where practicable.
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to construction, instruct all supervisory personnel on the protection of cultural resources in the eastern portion of Reach 11. • Stop construction activities if previously unknown cultural resources are encountered, and notify Reclamation • Consider interpreting portions of the Rio Verde Canal that remain intact as appropriate and to the degree practicable.

ATTACHMENT 1
RESOURCE-SPECIFIC MITIGATION MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY
CITY OF PHOENIX

Resource	Mitigation Measures to be Incorporated into the Project
Biological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow AGFD's <i>Guidelines for Handling Sonoran Desert Tortoises Encountered on Development Projects</i>, should any Sonoran desert tortoise be encountered prior to or during construction. • Salvage and/or transplant large trees, such as ironwood, palo verde, and mesquite within Reach 11, to the greatest degree practicable. • Prior to final design, re-inventory habitat to avoid disturbance to xeroriparian habitat to the extent practicable. • Include a buffer distance between turf recreational areas and wash corridors to minimize increase of invasive exotic vegetation species in design of recreational developments. • Separate turf recreation areas from natural landscape by mow curbs. Any spread of turf past mow curbs into the buffer regions will be eradicated by maintenance staff. • Minimize construction envelopes. Non-recreational areas impacted during construction will be revegetated using a native seed mix approved by Reclamation. Areas will be monitored to ensure successful re-establishment of native plants. • Instruct construction personnel to not harass or molest wildlife. • Place barbeque grills and picnic areas within improved recreational areas and site them to decrease fire hazard from wind. • Include reducing fine fuel loads within wash corridors, in areas adjacent to commercial and residential areas, into maintenance practices, if they exceed minimum safety levels as determined practicable and with guidance from the fire department. • Pursuant to Phoenix City code 24-25, the Parks and Recreation Director can declare a fire ban. The site would be posted accordingly. • During site development, incorporate access for fire trucks at gated locations and fire lanes in high access recreation areas.