

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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

SAN XAVIER COOPERATIVE FARM EXTENSION

Approved: Leslie A. Meyers Date: 1/30/19
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FONSI No. PXAO-19-01

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law 91-90), Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR § 1500-1508), Department of the Interior NEPA regulations (43 CFR Part 46), the Bureau of Reclamation in cooperation with the San Xavier District (District) of the Tohono O'odham Nation (Nation) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), have issued a final Environmental Assessment (EA) to disclose the potential environmental impacts that would result from the proposed San Xavier Cooperative Farm Extension within the San Xavier District of the Tohono O'odham.

As described in the final EA for the project, the proposed action includes the construction of a water delivery system on 1,094 acres of land proposed for agricultural use. Other associated features of the farm extension project include center pivot and flood irrigation fields, roads, on-site drainage features, flood protection measures, fencing and two contractors use areas. Within the 1,094-acre footprint for the farm extension, 835 acres will be irrigated. An additional 43 acres will be equipped for flood irrigation and planted in native plants that have been traditionally harvested by the Nation. The farm extension would be implemented in accordance with the Section 304(c)(2) of the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA; Public Law 108-451). The proposed action would meet Reclamation's requirements under the AWSA to design and construct an extension of the irrigation system for the San Xavier Cooperative Farm (Farm). An expansion of the Farm would allow San Xavier Cooperative Association (SXCA) to beneficially use a greater portion of the District's available Central Arizona Project water. The farm extension would require BIA approval on the land appraisals, lease agreements, and granting of temporary and permanent easements for rights-of-way associated with the Farm.

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 EA demonstrates that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the quality of the human environment including water, soils, air, noise, land use, biological and cultural resources. Effects of the proposed action on these resources will be primarily localized.
2. There will be no disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income, minority, or Native American populations, as defined by Executive Order 12898 - Environment Justice.
3. The project is part of an overall plan to revitalize agriculture within the District and apply the District's water right under Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act (SAWRSA) to further benefit community members. In order to encourage allottee input under the planning process, BIA, Reclamation, the District's SAWRSA Office, and the SXCA have reached out to the community through various means. Under the proposed action, BIA would not approve the land appraisals, lease agreements, and granting of temporary or permanent right-of-way for the farm extension unless they get consent from

the majority of the allottees, the District, and Nation. The Nation, as well as the allottees effected by the proposed project, would be adequately compensated for the use of their land. Therefore, Indian Trust Assets would not be adversely impacted by the proposed action.

4. The proposed action is consistent with cultural and historic land use and would not impact adjacent lands or managed rangeland.
5. There will be no major adverse short-term or long-term impacts to soils. The incorporation of sinkhole remediation and best management practices (BMPs) will reduce the erodibility of soils in the project area.
6. The proposed action would not have a significant adverse effect on jurisdictional waters. The armoring of the western bank of the Santa Cruz River and the road crossings over the West Branch of the Santa Cruz River and the Arizona Department of Transportation's flood channel, would result in a discharge of dredge and fill material within the waters of the United States (WOTUS) that will need to be covered under an individual permit. Both activities are unavoidable, so they have been designed to minimize their adverse effects on the WOTUS. The construction proposed within the WOTUS would comply with Section 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act. Unavoidable impacts to the WOTUS will be offset through compensatory mitigation. There are no wetlands or special aquatic sites within the project area.

The on-site drainage and flood protection features would facilitate improved drainage and reduce the overall flood threat. The potential for degradation of groundwater from expanded agriculture will be minimized through the development of a salt management plan. No substantive change in groundwater quality is anticipated. A portion of the irrigation application in excess of evapotranspiration would provide recharge to the local groundwater aquifer.

7. The loss of habitat associated with the construction of the farm extension is not considered significant. Under the proposed action, approximately 1,039 acres of low to high quality Sonoran Desertscrub and Sonoran Riparian Scrubland habitat would be converted to farmland and supporting infrastructure. Of the 1,039 acres that would be cleared, approximately 10 acres are classified as high-quality habitat. To mitigate for the habitat loss while also providing additional harvesting opportunities, 43 acres within the farm extension footprint would be supplementally planted with mesquite and other native plant species.
8. The proposed action will not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, and will not promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112). Mitigation measures have been adopted to prevent or limit the spread of noxious weeds or non-native species.

9. The proposed action will have no significant adverse effect on wildlife and/or special-status species. The proposed action will have no effect on federally listed threatened or endangered species or critical habitat. If burrowing owls and/or active bird nests are identified within the project area during the surveys scheduled before ground disturbance, passive or active exclusion measures will be employed to minimize the effects to these species.
10. The proposed action will not cause the loss of significant cultural resources nor significantly affect districts, sites, objects, or structures listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. A Class III cultural resource survey identified 49 cultural resources within the project area. The proposed action would have an adverse effect on 31 historic properties and sites for which National Register of Historic Places eligibility is undetermined. The effects to these sites will be mitigated through the implementation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and Historic Properties Treatment Plan (HPTP) developed between Reclamation, BIA, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), and the District. Mitigation measures agreed upon in these documents include avoidance, eligibility testing, data recovery, monitoring, and curation. Reclamation consulted with the THPO and the Hopi Tribe on the project.
11. The proposed action will not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners, or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007). Within the project area, one isolated occurrence, a modern memorial, has been identified as a sacred site by the Nation and will be avoided.
12. Construction vehicle operation and related soil-disturbing activities will have a short-term minor effect on air quality. The project is located within a Limited Maintenance Plan area for carbon monoxide (CO). The CO emissions associated with construction and operation of the farm extension are estimated to be below the de minimis threshold; therefore, a conformity determination is not required. To further reduce the CO emissions associated with the construction and operation of the farm extension, BMPs will be employed.

Farming operations will have a long-term, adverse effect on the local air quality, as it relates to particulate matter. No air quality permits are required for farm operations under the Clean Air Act, but the Farm has committed to implementing BMPs to help reduce or contain agriculturally related dust emissions. With the implementation of BMPs, the fugitive dust emissions for the farm extension will be substantially reduced.
13. The proposed action will have no significant adverse environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment. There are no known scientific controversies over the effects of the proposed action on the human environment.
14. The proposed action will not result in any adverse effects to public health or safety. Appropriate hazardous materials management and waste disposal associated with

construction will minimize any potential risks to public, health, safety and the environment.

15. The proposed action will not establish a precedent for future actions. The farm extension was identified in Section 304(c)(2) of the AWSA.
16. Cumulative effects of the proposed action were considered in the EA. There are no known incremental effects of the action that become significant when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions that have affected, or will affect, the project area. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 3 of the Final EA.
17. The mitigation identified in the EA will be implemented during the construction and operation of the farm extension.
18. The project does not violate any known federal, state, or tribal law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Chapter 4 of the EA describes permits and licenses to be obtained in advance of construction in areas subject to regulatory authority.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon a review of public comments and consideration of the effects analyzed in the Final EA, Reclamation has determined that the proposed action will not significantly impact the human environment, and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not warranted.