

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Arroyos Recharge Project

San Xavier District

**Scoping
Information and
Opportunity to
Comment**



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Phoenix Area Office
Phoenix, Arizona**

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Introduction.

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), in cooperation with the San Xavier District (SXD) of the Tohono O'odham Nation, is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) on a proposal to recharge ground water with water supplied by the Central Arizona Project (CAP). The project would affect two ephemeral drainages designated Arroyos 15 and 19 that cross the CAP Reach 6 Pipeline in the southeastern portion of the SXD (Figures 1 and 2). Land use in the project area is designated by SXD as "open space." The project area is located on undeveloped and uninhabited Indian trust land allotted to members of the SXD.

The purpose of this scoping notice is to inform interested and affected parties of the pending action and to solicit comments on the potential environmental impacts of the proposal.

Background.

The primary objectives of artificial ground-water recharge and recovery on the SXD are to: (1) establish reliability of the CAP water supply for the 1,100-acre San Xavier Cooperative Farm, and (2) satisfy the CAP reliability obligation identified for SXD under the Tucson Reliability Division (TRD). Secondary objectives include aquifer restoration and riparian habitat enhancement. In accordance with TRD, Reclamation is committed to providing "as reasonably reliable a supply" of CAP water to Tucson-area CAP users (including the SXD) as is available to Phoenix area users during short-term, annually scheduled, maintenance outages on the CAP aqueduct.

Results from preliminary investigations and pilot tests indicate that conditions in the Arroyos Area are favorable for long-term ground-water recharge. The arroyos along the Reach 6 CAP Pipeline between Mission Road and the Lava Knoll exhibit conditions that appear highly favorable for long-term recharge, such as excellent storage potential (depth to water is approximately 200 feet), good access, and close proximity to a CAP water source. Based on pilot tests performed in Arroyo 19, Reclamation estimates that the combined recharge from Arroyos 15 and 19 would total approximately 2,900 acre-feet per year (AFY). When compared with other modes of artificial groundwater recharge, such as constructed basins, in-channel recharge has the decided advantage of lower start-up costs, fewer adverse environmental impacts, and potential enhancement of riparian habitat.

Purpose and Need.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a viable and efficient system for ground-water recharge within the SXD. Replenishing the aquifer with CAP water would provide a stored water supply which would be available to the San Xavier Cooperative Farm during short-term, planned CAP delivery system outages. This provision of stored water is considered by SXD to be a critical need of the Cooperative Farm.

Implementation of the project would also satisfy the CAP reliability obligation identified for the SXD under TRD.

Proposed Action.

Under the proposed project, SXD and Reclamation would install infrastructure such as pipe, valves, and flow meters between Manholes 15 and 19 on the CAP Reach 6 Pipeline and discharge points on Arroyos 15 and 19. Anticipated total capacity at the discharge outfall would be approximately 2.5 cubic feet per second, with multiple outfalls planned for each arroyo. Discharges would be regulated to limited channelized flow lengths to approximately 5,000 feet. During operation, SXD personnel would monitor CAP water delivery flow rates and volumes, the length and width of channel flows, erosion, bank wetting, soil electrical conductivity, and ground-water level and ground-water quality data. Ground-water levels and quality would be monitored at existing and proposed monitoring wells in the Arroyos Area. Check dams would be installed at appropriate locations within the arroyos to control potential downcutting and promote infiltration. Anticipated maximum recharge capacity of the system would be 2,900 AFY.

Alternative Actions to the Proposed Action

In accordance with Council of Environmental Quality Regulations at 40 CFR 1502.14 (d), no action must be considered as an alternative to the proposed action in each National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. No action also provides the baseline for comparison of environmental effects of the proposed action. If no action is taken, Reclamation would not construct the Arroyos Area recharge facility.

Other action alternatives to meet the purpose and need will be considered during the NEPA process.

Preliminary Issues

To comply with NEPA, Reclamation has determined that an EA needs to be prepared to evaluate the significance of environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the proposal.

NEPA applies to Federal actions; therefore, the first step in determining the scope of the EA is identification of key issues related to the effect of the proposed Federal action on the existing environment. Public input during this initial scoping process will help us focus the EA on relevant environmental issues.

We anticipate the following issues will be addressed in the EA:

- effects to biological resources (including threatened and endangered species);
- effects to cultural resources;

- effects to water resources (including ground water and surface water);
- effects to land use;
- effects to soil;
- effects to Indian Trust Assets.

Decision to be Made.

Reclamation is the lead Federal agency responsible for preparing the EA, and the SXD is a cooperating agency. If Reclamation determines that the effects of the proposed action are not significant, it will prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The FONSI would allow Reclamation and SXD to proceed with the project without preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

How to Comment and Timeframe

You are encouraged to offer comments on the scope of the upcoming EA, including potential issues, concerns, and alternatives to the proposed project. Reclamation and SXD will accept comments until September 7, 2008. Please include your full name and address and project title (Arroyos Recharge Project) with your comments. Comments should be submitted to Mr. John McGlothlen, Bureau of Reclamation, 6150 West Thunderbird Road, Glendale, Arizona 85306. Facsimiles may be sent to Mr. McGlothlen at 623-773-6486. Hand-delivered written comments may be submitted to the above address, Monday through Friday, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., excluding Federal holidays. Electronic (e-mail) comments may be submitted to jwmcglothlen@lc.usbr.gov. Please include your full name and address with your e-mail.

By law, the names and addresses of those providing comments are available for public review. However, individuals may request that their name and/or address be withheld from the record. These requests will be honored to the extent allowable by law. If you wish your name and/or address withheld, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment letter. All comments from organizations or businesses will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

For additional information concerning the proposed project, please contact Mr. McGlothlen at the address above, by telephone at 623-773-6256, or by e-mail at jwmcglothlen@lc.usbr.gov.

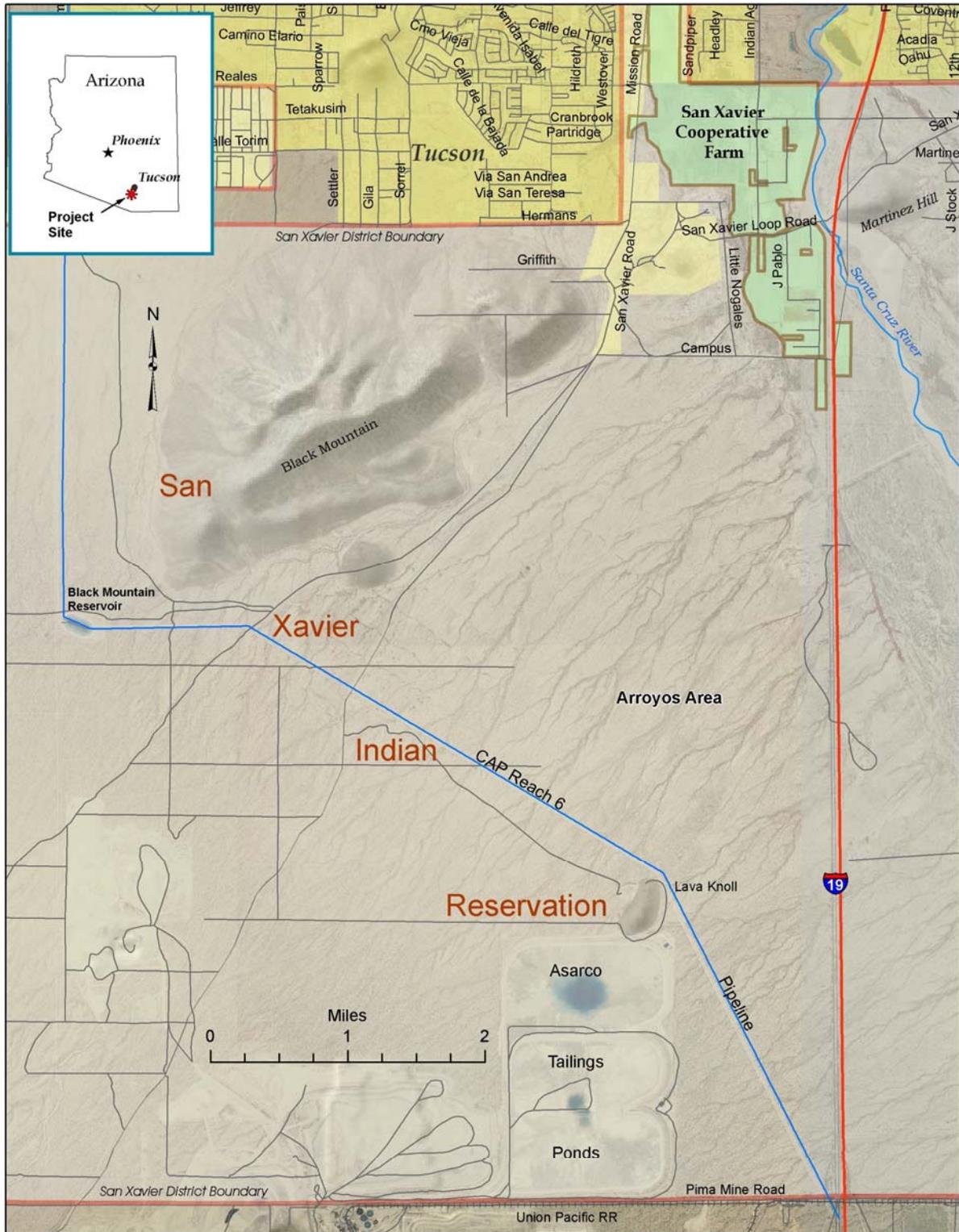


Figure 1. Project Location Map

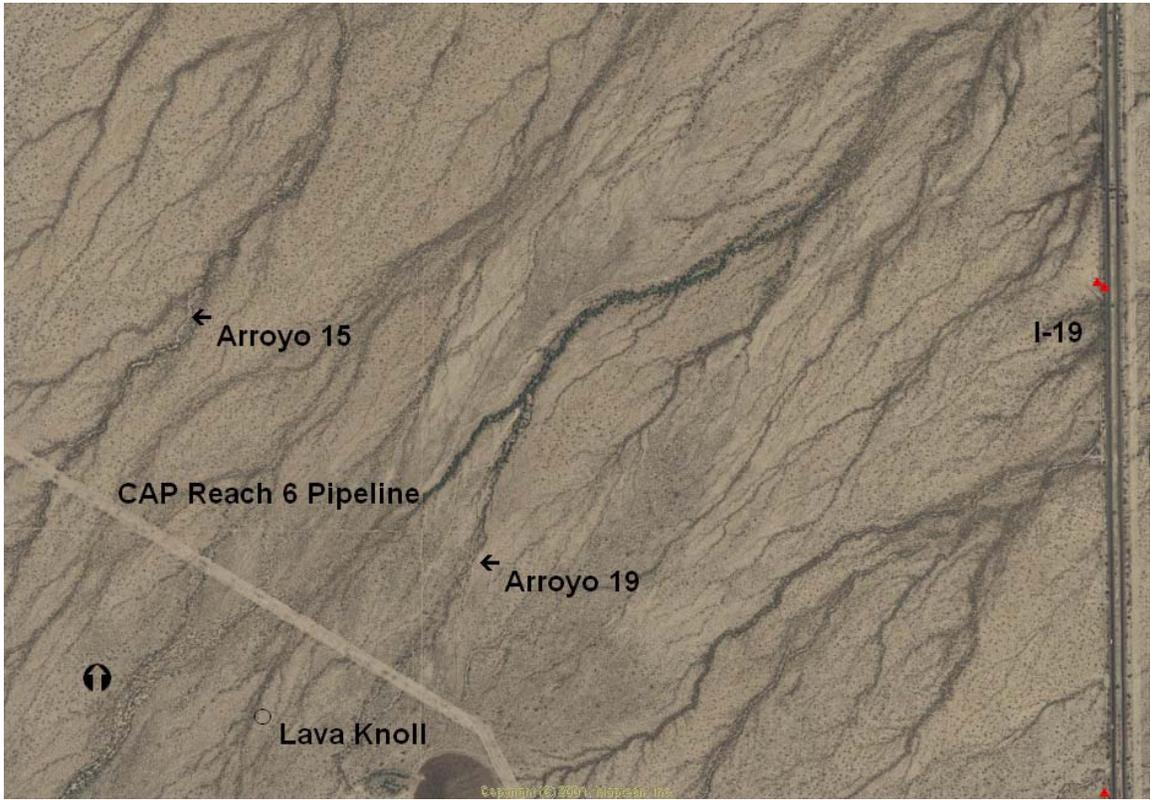


Figure 2. Location of Arroyos 15 and 19.