

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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

SAN XAVIER FARM REHABILITATION  
PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA

Approved: 

Date: 8-02-05

Acting For Carol Lynn Erwin, Area Manager  
Phoenix Area Office  
Bureau of Reclamation

FONSI No. PXAO 05-02

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and based upon the analysis presented in the attached *San Xavier Cooperative Farm Final Environmental Assessment*, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has determined that construction of the proposed water conveyance systems, field irrigation systems, flood control structures, roads, farm administration building, and operation of the rehabilitated San Xavier cooperative farm will not result in a significant impact on the human environment.

## BACKGROUND

The San Xavier District (District) of the Tohono O'odham Nation is allocated 50,000 acre feet of Central Arizona Project (CAP) water through three primary legal instruments: (1) a CAP water service contract between the United States and the Tohono O'odham Nation, (2) the Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act (SAWRSA) of 1982, and (3) the Arizona Water Settlement Act of 2004. SAWRSA authorizes Federal funds to rehabilitate the existing San Xavier cooperative farm and develop infrastructure for conveyance of CAP water to agricultural fields within the farm.

In May 1998, the Tohono O'odham Legislative Council formally requested that Reclamation initiate action to assist the District with rehabilitation of the San Xavier cooperative farm. A planning group consisting of the District, San Xavier Cooperative Association Board, San Xavier Cooperative Association, Reclamation, and a consultant was established to guide the planning process and develop a rehabilitation strategy that best suited the needs of the community. During the early stages of planning, the group evaluated the farm's potential agricultural production based on improvements to on-farm distribution and irrigation systems and constraints on water supply. Decisions about operation and maintenance costs, water use, desired crop mixes, and the scope of flood protection guided the planning process. Consideration was also given to design details that would protect significant cultural resources and riparian habitat. After considerable study and review coupled with input from community members, the San Xavier Cooperative Association Board passed a resolution to select the preferred conceptual design for rehabilitation of the farm. This design is presented in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) as the proposed action.

The draft EA was distributed for 30-day public review on June 17, 2005. Those receiving the EA included public agencies, tribal governments, and interested individuals. One letter (e-mail) of comment was received from the Tohono O'odham Legislative Water Committee requesting clarification of CAP water impacts on groundwater. A copy of the letter and Reclamation's responses are included in Appendix J of the final EA.

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Reclamation has determined that the proposed rehabilitation and operation of the San Xavier cooperative farm will not significantly impact the environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. This decision is based upon the following considerations.

1. The project will improve water delivery service to approximately 949 acres of agricultural land in the existing farm. Revitalization of the farm is consistent with the District's long-term plan for land development and CAP water use.
2. Surface water impacts will be limited to engineered floodways. The potential for degradation of groundwater from expanded agriculture will be minimized through the application of best management practices and development of a salt management plan. The District is also preparing a comprehensive water resource management plan that will assist planners in developing strategies for reducing potential adverse impacts on groundwater quality over the long term. No substantive change in groundwater quality is anticipated.
3. There will be no major adverse short-term or long-term impacts to soils. Incorporation of best management practices will reduce erodibility of soils in the project area.
4. The project will not adversely affect federally listed species. Surveys for cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl were conducted in all suitable habitats within ¼ mile of the project area from 2001 through the 2005 breeding season. Surveys for Pima pineapple cactus were also conducted in suitable areas of the project. Surveys for these species were negative.
5. A Class III cultural resource survey of the project area has been conducted. The project is covered by a Memorandum of Agreement and monitoring plan developed among Reclamation, the State Historic Preservation Office, the District, the Tohono O'odham Nation, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. All cultural resources affected by the project will be treated in accordance with the monitoring plan. No Traditional Cultural Properties have been identified in the project area.
6. Construction vehicle operation and related soil-disturbing activities will have a minor effect on air quality. Dust abatement practices will be implemented during construction. Long-term emissions from agricultural sources will be less under the proposed action than existing conditions due to the expanded application of irrigation and dust control best management practices.
7. No substantial noise impacts will result from implementation of the project.
8. The project is part of an overall plan to revitalize agriculture within the District and apply the water right under SAWRSA to benefit community members. Project implementation would enhance the value of Indian Trust Assets associated with water resources and allotted land within the farm lease area. Rights-of-way and/or flow easements will be acquired by the United States for project effects on allotted land outside the farm lease area.
9. The project will not adversely affect low income, minority, or Indian populations as defined by Executive Order 12898, Environment Justice. Direct economic benefit to the community will accrue from increased employment associated with expanded agriculture.
10. The mitigation identified in the EA will be implemented during construction and operation.

Documents related to this action are listed below.

Bureau of Reclamation. 2005. San Xavier farm rehabilitation final environmental assessment. Phoenix, Arizona.

Archaeological Consulting Services, Ltd. 2005. Monitoring plan for the construction phase of the San Xavier farm rehabilitation project, San Xavier District, Tohono O'odham Nation, Pima County, Arizona. Contract No. 01-CS-32-0110.