

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

PROPOSED PHASE 1 REHABILITATION SAN CARLOS IRRIGATION PROJECT FACILITIES

Pinal County, Arizona

Scoping Information
and
Opportunity to Comment

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



February 2010

Introduction

This Scoping Notice/Opportunity to Comment is being offered to the public to allow early and meaningful participation in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of an irrigation system rehabilitation project proposed by the San Carlos Irrigation and Drainage District (SCIDD) with funding provided by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). After the public scoping period has ended, Reclamation, as the lead Federal agency, will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of the proposed project. The Gila River Indian Community (Community)/Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project (P-MIP), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)/San Carlos Irrigation Project (SCIP), and SCIDD will serve as cooperating agencies in the preparation of the EA.

The proposed project includes Phase 1 rehabilitation and construction of BIA SCIP water diversion and conveyance infrastructure, approximately 6.5 miles northeast of the Town of Florence, Pinal County, Arizona. The upcoming EA will evaluate the environmental consequences resulting from rehabilitation of the headworks of the Ashurst-Hayden Diversion Dam, construction of a Settling Basin and ancillary sediment management and storage facilities, and rehabilitation of the section of the Florence-Casa Grande Canal linking the canal's headworks with the Settling Basin (Figures 1 and 2).

Background

In 1976, the Community filed claims with the court to have its water rights quantified. These efforts culminated in the promulgation of the Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Agreement (Amended and Restated, Final Version October 21, 2005), and Title II of the Arizona Water Settlements Act (ASWA) (Public Law 108-451, December 10, 2004). Section 203 of the ASWA authorizes the execution of the Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Agreement, which provides for the rehabilitation and replacement of certain SCIP water diversion and delivery works, known as the Joint Works, with funds provided by Reclamation under Section 403(f)(2) of the Colorado River Basin Project Act (Public Law 90-537 September 30, 1968). Phase 1 of the project involves rehabilitation of Ashurst-Hayden Diversion Dam and associated headworks on the Florence-Casa Grande Canal and construction of a sediment processing and storage facility. The ASWA designates Reclamation as the lead Federal agency with respect to environmental compliance.

The SCIP joint works facilities convey water from the Gila River and Central Arizona Project to 50,546 acres of Indian farmland located on the Community and served by P-MIP, and 50,000 acres of non-Indian farmland located outside of the Community and served by SCIDD. Major components of the SCIP joint works include Ashurst-Hayden Diversion Dam, Florence-Casa Grande Canal, Pima Lateral Interconnection, Pima Lateral, and Picacho Reservoir.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed Phase 1 Rehabilitation of SCIP Facilities is to improve operation and increase the useful life of Ashurst-Hayden Diversion Dam and to improve water delivery efficiencies of the irrigation system by removing sediment from the Florence-Casa Grande Canal immediately downstream of the headworks.

The Ashurst-Hayden Diversion Dam, which was constructed in 1922, is in need of repair due to age-related deterioration and functional deficiencies. Some of the gates that control water diversions are inoperable, and the concrete is spalling (chipping or fragmenting); and, in some places, steel reinforcement is exposed. Proper functioning of the diversion dam and associated headworks is necessary to regulate flows entering the Florence-Casa Grande Canal from the Gila River.

Gila River water is heavily laden with sediment which enters the SCIP system in flows diverted at Ashurst-Hayden Diversion Dam. Sediment deposition and accumulation in the system has caused operational inefficiencies and maintenance problems which ultimately impedes water deliveries.

Proposed Action

Phase 1 involves the rehabilitation of Ashurst-Hayden Diversion Dam and associated headworks, including installation of new slide gates, repair of sluice gates, installation of a trash exclusion system, and mechanical and electrical upgrades. The project also would repair areas where steel reinforcement has been exposed by spalling of the concrete.

The Phase 1 project also includes the construction of a sediment management and storage facility to remove and store coarse sediment extracted from the Florence-Casa Grande Canal. Sediment processing infrastructure would consist of a new Settling Basin and mechanical equipment for sediment removal, which would be constructed on existing BIA land along the Florence-Casa Grande Canal immediately downstream of the diversion dam (Figures 1 and 2). In addition, the project would require acquisition of approximately 180 acres of land for long-term sediment storage. This land would be acquired from the 725-acre area shown in Figure 1. Land selection would be based on environmental considerations, engineering and operational feasibility, and land availability.

The SCIDD anticipates that some of the coarse sediment generated through processing activities would be sold to outside parties, thereby reducing the long-term storage requirement.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

Section 102(2)(E) of NEPA requires that a No Action alternative be considered in an environmental review whenever there are unresolved conflicts associated with the proposed project with respect to alternative uses of available resources. The No Action alternative is also customarily used in EAs to provide a baseline for comparison of the environmental effects associated with the action alternatives.

In addition to the No Action and the Proposed Action, other alternatives to meet the purpose and need will be considered during scoping.

Decision Framework

The Responsible Federal Official for the EA is the Area Manager of Reclamation's Phoenix Area Office. This official must decide whether to implement the proposed project, an alternative action that would meet the purpose and need, or the no action.

Preliminary Issues

In accordance with Department of the Interior NEPA regulations at 43 CFR 46.300, Reclamation has determined that an EA is the appropriate level of NEPA compliance to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of the proposed project. NEPA applies to Federal actions; therefore, the first step in determining the scope of the EA is to identify key issues related to the effect of the proposed Federal action on the existing environment. Public input during this initial scoping process will help to focus the EA on relevant environmental issues.

It is anticipated that the following issues will be addressed in the EA:

- effects to biological resources (including special status species)
- effects to cultural resources
- effects to air quality
- effects to water quality
- effects to land use and ownership

How to Comment and Timeframe

You are encouraged to offer comments on the scope of the upcoming EA, including potential environmental issues and alternatives to the proposed project that would meet the stated purpose and need. Your comments should be submitted by March 18, 2010, in order to be considered in the draft EA. Please include your full name, address, and project title (Phase 1 Rehabilitation of San Carlos Irrigation 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. Email comments may be submitted to jmcglothlen@usbr.gov.

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 email at jmcglothlen@usbr.gov.

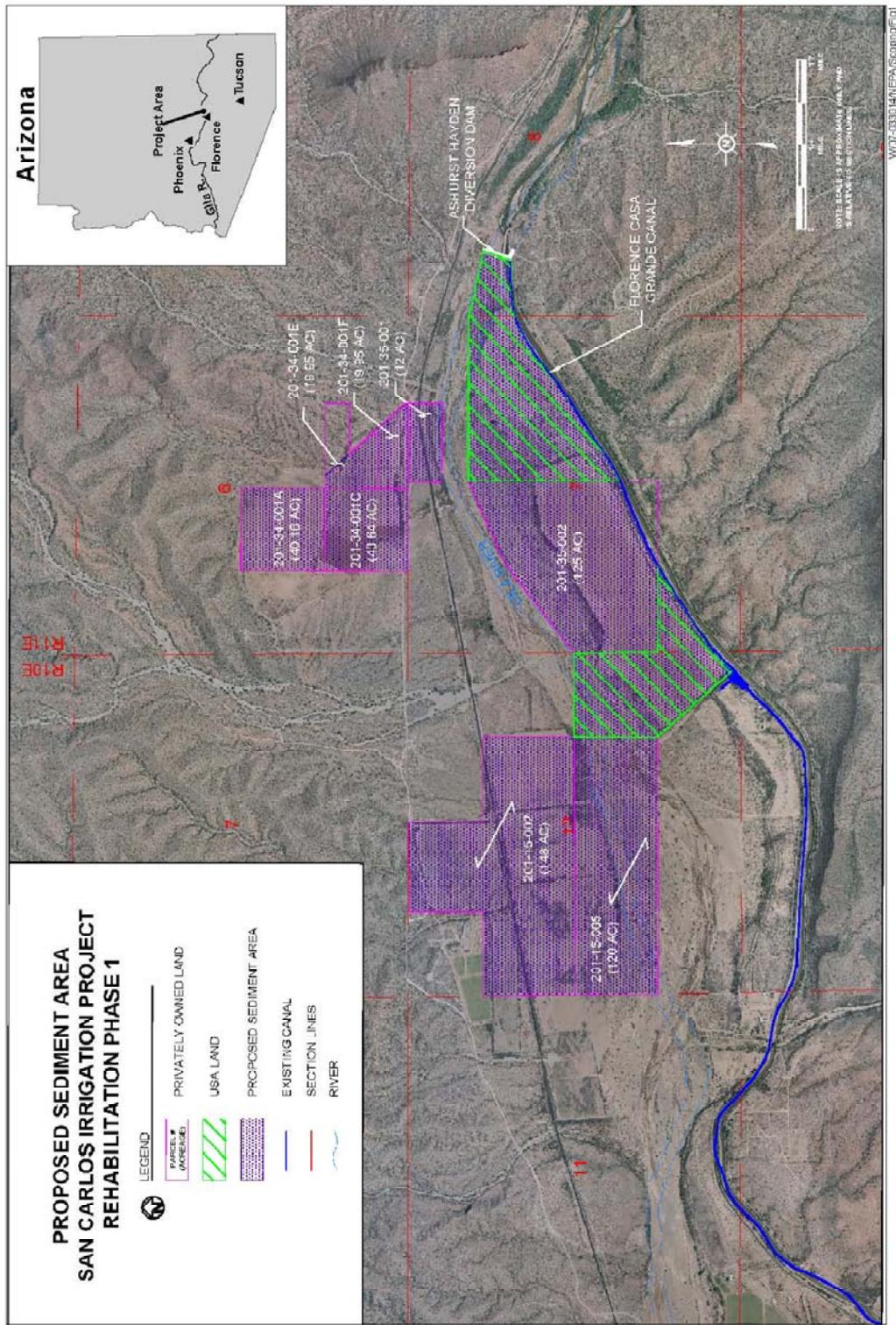


Figure 1. Sediment Area

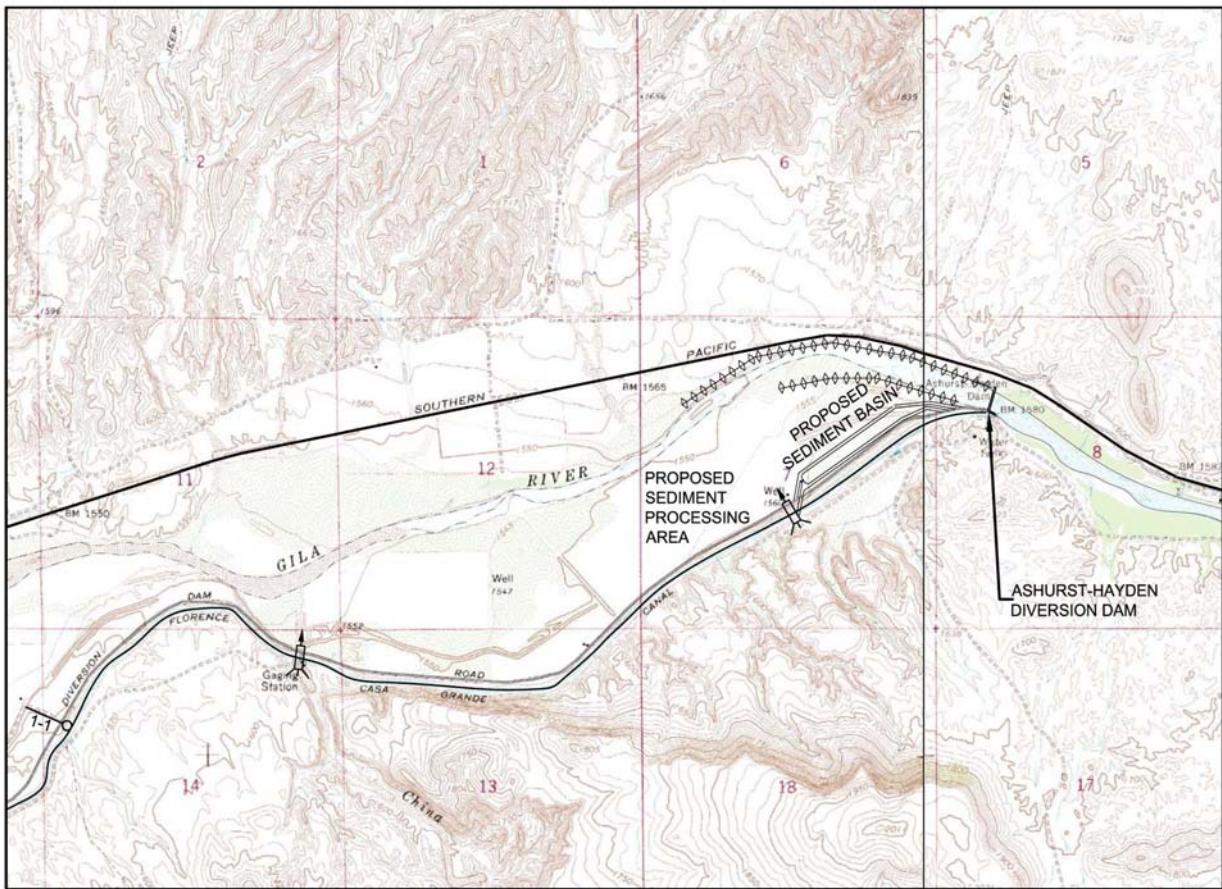


Figure 2. Proposed sediment processing area.