

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

**Finding of No Significant Impact for the Construction  
of a Temporary Project to Reuse up to 7,000 Acre Feet  
Annually of Effluent at a Groundwater Savings  
Facility in Pima County**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Leslie A Meyers, Area Manager  
Phoenix Area Office  
Bureau of Reclamation**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

FONSI No. 13-06

## **INTRODUCTION**

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 (Reclamation) has issued a final Environmental Assessment (EA) to disclose the potential environmental impacts that would result from implementation of a proposal to construct a temporary project to reuse up to 7,000 Acre-Feet Annually (AFA) at a Groundwater Savings Facility (GSF). The final EA is incorporated by reference.

## **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to construct a temporary project to obtain 100% long term storage credit (LTSC) to meet Reclamation's firming obligations. The credits could also be sold to provide revenue for the Cooperative Fund set up by the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA) to provide for water deliveries. The credits could also be used for recovery purposes.

The project is needed because Reclamation is required to meet firming obligations under the Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act (SAWRSA) and the AWSA. Reclamation must continue to find new ways to efficiently meet its firming obligations; and obtaining 100% credit for its effluent is one way to accomplish this.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

Reclamation considered the "no action" and the proposed action in the EA.

No Action. Under the No Action Alternative, the temporary project would not be implemented. All of the effluent in the proposed action would continue to discharge to the Santa Cruz River. There would be no construction of a pipeline, Reclamation would continue to receive 50% LTSC for managed recharge, to be used for water deliveries or sold to obtain money for the Cooperative Fund. Reclamation would have substantially less money for the Fund. Further, Reclamation could fail to meet its legal requirements under SAWRSA and the ASWA. Reclamation would continue to try to meet its firming requirements through alternative methods.

Proposed Action. Under the proposed action, Reclamation would construct and implement a temporary project for the annual reuse of up to 7,000 acre feet of effluent, produced at the Pima County Tres Rios WRF. The effluent would be delivered through the project to a state permitted GSF. Reclamation would receive a long term storage credit from the Arizona Department of Water Resources for each acre-foot of water delivered to the GSF through the temporary project. The temporary project is located on Ina Road within the Tres Rios WRF. There would be construction of approximately 1,100 linear feet of piping that connects to an existing manhole for transmission to a GSF. The EA also evaluated the impacts of several inter-governmental agreements and partnerships needed to implement the project. The long-term storage credits can be used or sold to meet water delivery and firming obligations to the Tohono O'odham Nation

under SAWRSA. Any proposal for permanent reuse of effluent would be evaluated in a future National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis.

## **CONSULTATION, COORDINATION, AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The draft EA was issued in January 2016, and comments were solicited until January 22, 2016. At the request of the public, the comment period was extended until February 2, 2016. Several comments were received, which are addressed in the final EA.

## **FINDING**

Based on the analysis of the environmental impacts as described in the final EA and on thorough review and consideration of the public comments received, Reclamation has determined that implementing the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not warranted.

## **MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS**

The following issues have been taken into consideration in Reclamation's deliberation 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 or beneficial impacts on the quality of the human environment including water, air, land use, soil, and cultural and biological resources.
2. Land use will not be affected, there is no change expected in the use of the GSF or in the infrastructure site and conveyance system.
3. There would be archaeological monitoring of ground-disturbing activities within the project area where two historic properties are known. If cultural deposits were encountered, they would be treated according to the provisions contained within the monitoring and discovery plan, in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
4. The Proposed Action would not affect Indian Trust Assets.
5. There would be no impacts to unique ecological areas or rare characteristics of the landscape.
6. There are no expected long-term or permanent adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species as a result of the Proposed Action.
7. The Proposed Action is not related to other actions, and when viewed cumulatively with regard to past, present, or foreseeable future actions, impacts are not significant.

8. There are no low income or minority populations that would be affected by this action. There are no environmental health and safety risks and no children would be disproportionately affected a result of the Proposed Action. The socio-economic impacts were reviewed in accordance with Executive Orders 12898 and 13045, 40 CFR 1508.8, and 46 CFR part 46.230.
9. The Proposed Action is not highly controversial and does not involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. The action will not have highly uncertain environmental impacts and does not include unknown risks to human health and the natural environment.
10. The Proposed Action does not establish a precedent for future action and it does not represent a decision in principle about future actions.