
CHAPTER 2

2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Two alternatives are evaluated in this FEIS: (1) the No Action Alternative, under which facilities of the Wellton-Mohawk Division of the Gila Project and lands owned by Reclamation within or adjacent to the Gila Project would remain in federal ownership, and (2) the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative under which Reclamation would transfer title to the facilities of the Division and lands within or adjacent to the Gila Project to the District. Additional alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis are discussed in Section 2.3.

2.1 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the title transfer would not occur and the facilities of the Division and lands within or adjacent to the Gila Project would remain in federal ownership. Future conditions projected under this alternative are discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1 Facilities

Under the No Action Alternative, the irrigation and drainage facilities and systems of the Division owned by Reclamation would remain in federal ownership.

2.1.2 Reclamation Lands

Under the No Action Alternative, federal lands owned by Reclamation would not be transferred to or purchased by the District.

The facility ROWs would remain in federal ownership and continue to be managed in conjunction with the operation and maintenance of the irrigation and drainage systems, the Gila River Flood Channel and adjacent mitigation areas, and other features of the Division. Other federal lands considered under the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative would continue to be administered by Reclamation for an undefined period. During this period, Reclamation may make a minor amount of land available for public purposes such as parks, schools, and governmental administrative areas.

Under this alternative, land use applications may also be submitted to Reclamation for review and appropriate action. One potential application is for an approximately 1,450-acre federal parcel being considered as the location of the proposed Arizona Clean Fuels petroleum refinery (see Section 1.6.6).

2.1.3 Future Management and Operation

Under the No Action Alternative, the current uses and management of the facilities and lands within the Division would continue.

1 **2.2 PROPOSED ACTION/PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

2 The Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative would transfer facilities, ROWs, and certain
3 lands within or adjacent to the Gila Project. Other Reclamation lands within or adjacent to
4 the Gila Project would be purchased by the District under the Proposed Action/Preferred
5 Alternative. The Wellton-Mohawk Title Transfer Project is an administrative action that
6 does not involve construction, modification to facilities, or operational changes.
7 Implementation of the proposed title transfer would require Reclamation and the District to
8 jointly prepare and execute a contract to transfer the title to the facilities of the Division and
9 lands in or adjacent to the Gila Project. Preparation of the contract will include such
10 administrative actions as:

- 11 ▪ Preparation of an inventory of facilities and ROWs to be transferred.
- 12 ▪ Preparation of an inventory of other lands involved in the title transfer.
- 13 ▪ Completion of an environmental review of the proposed title transfer to assess the effects, if
14 any, on the natural, cultural, and/or socioeconomic environment. Included within compliance
15 with NEPA are the provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the National
16 Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
- 17 ▪ Preparation of environmental documentation as required by the Comprehensive
18 Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund) 42
19 USC § 9601 et seq.
- 20 ▪ Issuance of quitclaim deeds for lands transferred to or purchased by the District.
- 21 ▪ Registration of the quitclaim deeds with Yuma County.

22 **2.2.1 Facilities to be Transferred**

23 The facilities to be transferred consist of irrigation and drainage systems, protective dikes
24 and floodways, the Gila River Flood Channel and related mitigation areas, and various
25 buildings and structures used in the operation and maintenance of the Division. The facilities
26 are listed in Table 2-1, and the locations of the principal facilities are shown on Map 2-1.

27 **2.2.2 Lands to be Transferred or Purchased**

28 The lands included in the Proposed Action include ROWs and easements for the facilities
29 described in Table 2-1, and certain other Reclamation lands within and adjacent to the Gila
30 Project. The aggregate area involved in the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative is
31 approximately 47,626 acres. Lands would either be transferred to the District at no cost or
32 purchased by the District at fair market value. The lands have been divided into the
33 following categories based on the way they were acquired and their current use.

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TABLE 2-1 FACILITIES TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE DISTRICT

Facility	Description
Wellton-Mohawk Canal	The main supply canal from the GGMC into the District. The Wellton-Mohawk Canal has a capacity of 1,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) and extends approximately 18.5 miles.
Wellton-Mohawk Pumping Plants 1, 2, and 3	Pumping plants on the Wellton-Mohawk Canal with a combined pump lift of 170 feet and a maximum pump lift of 250 feet.
Wellton-Mohawk Laterals and Relift Pumps	A system of distribution laterals beginning at the Wellton-Mohawk Canal and serving the southwestern area of the District including two relift pumps.
Dome Canal, Laterals, and Relift Pumps	A branch canal beginning at the Wellton-Mohawk Canal with distribution laterals serving the western part of the District including ten relift pumps.
Mohawk Canal	A supply canal that extends east along the south side of the District, crosses the Gila River near the east end of the District, and continues west along the north side of the District for a total length of approximately 46.8 miles.
Mohawk Laterals and Relift Pumps	A system of distribution laterals beginning at the Mohawk Canal and serving the eastern and northern areas of the District including the Texas Hill Canal and 24 relift pumps.
Wellton Canal	A supply canal that extends through the District on the south side of the Gila River for approximately 19.9 miles.
Wellton Laterals	A system of distribution laterals beginning at the Wellton Canal and serving the southern area of the District
Protective Dikes and Floodways	Various earthen dikes on the upslope side of various canals providing protection against overland runoff from rainstorms, and floodways to convey stormwater flows to the Gila River. The aggregate length of dikes is approximately 85 miles.
Wellton-Mohawk Main Conveyance Channel	A concrete-lined drain extending through the District conveying drainage water to MOD Station 0+00 at the west end of the District.
Drainage Wells and Observation Wells	Wells with pumps and power transformers to control groundwater depth and observation wells to monitor groundwater depth.
Drains and Sump Pumps	Lined ditches and pipelines that convey drainage water from groundwater wells to the Main Conveyance Channel including seven pumps at tile drain sumps.
Gila River Flood Channel and Adjacent Mitigation Facilities	A system of levees and grade control structures along the Gila River with mitigation facilities consisting of oxbow ponds and associated water diversion facilities. The length of the flood channel is approximately 56.3 miles and the aggregate length of the levees is approximately 105 miles.
Wellton Government Camp	The headquarters complex at Wellton, Arizona containing the District office, repair shops, garages, and employee housing.
Employee Housing	Twelve houses at various locations throughout the District

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2.2.2.1 *Rights-of-Way and Easements for Facilities*

For this discussion, ROWs and easements are divided into two groups:

- Irrigation and drainage system ROWs, including irrigation and drainage systems and other facilities associated with irrigation and return flow operations, and
- Flood channel ROWs, including the Gila River Flood Channel and mitigation areas.

Irrigation and drainage systems ROWs include land used to construct the facilities and provide access for the operation and maintenance of the irrigation system. This also includes flowage easements on private land along protective dikes and stormwater floodways. These ROWs and easements typically occupy narrow parcels along canals, dikes, floodways, and other facilities. The ROWs and easements were acquired in the 1940s and 1950s by Reclamation via withdrawals and acquisition of the Gila Valley Power District (GVPD), Mohawk Municipal Water Conservation District (MMWCD) and private lands and flowage easements.

The flood channel ROWs contain low-lying federal lands used for the Gila River Flood Channel and the adjacent mitigation areas developed under the Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit issued to the District by the USACE. These Reclamation lands consist of (1) withdrawn lands; (2) acquired GVPD lands and federal lands; and (3) private lands acquired under P.L. 93-320.

The federal ROWs and easements comprise approximately 28,197 acres. Except for ROWs on withdrawn lands, the costs associated with ROW acquisition were included in the District's repayment obligation. The ROWs on withdrawn lands were assigned to their respective facilities. Consequently, the federal ROWs and easements would be transferred to the District without additional cost.

2.2.2.2 *Lands and Rights-of-Way Acquired from GVPD and MMWCD*

This category consists of lands that Reclamation acquired from the GVPD and the MMWCD for Division purposes, but that have not been used for ROWs or farm unit development because the lands were in excess of those required for Division purposes. Acreage limitations on irrigable lands precluded the use of all available lands. These lands comprise approximately 4,544 acres in and adjacent to the District. Their acquisition costs were included in the District's repayment obligation, and would therefore be transferred to the District without additional cost.

2.2.2.3 *Additional Land to be Purchased*

This category includes 9,104 acres of land acquired by Reclamation from private landowners under the Salinity Control Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-320) and the Salt River Pima-

1 Maricopa Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-512).
2 Additionally, 5,781 acres of land was withdrawn from the public domain in the 1940s for
3 Division purposes, but was not used for ROWs or development of farm units. Some of these
4 withdrawn lands had their irrigable classification rescinded under P.L. 93-320. The total
5 amount of land in this category is approximately 14,885 acres. This land is currently under
6 Reclamation's administration within and adjacent to the Gila Project. The acquisition cost of
7 the land in this category was not included in the District's repayment obligation. Therefore,
8 under the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative, the land would be purchased by the
9 District at fair market value.

10 Table 2-2 lists the lands and acreages included in the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative
11 by category. The land acquisition process for the Division and the determination of the
12 method of transfer for each type of land is discussed in more detail in Appendix D. Map 2-2
13 shows the locations of the land categories to be transferred. Detailed maps showing the
14 locations of the lands by category are presented in Appendix C.

15 **2.2.3 Contractual Provisions for Title Transfer**

16 Under the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative, the District and Reclamation would
17 execute a contract specifying the facilities and lands to be transferred. The contractual
18 provisions associated with the title transfer would address the public interest criteria cited in
19 Section 1.4. Existing easements (e.g., roadways and gas, water, and power lines) on lands to
20 be transferred would not be affected by the transfer or purchase of federal lands.

21 **2.2.4 Post-Title Transfer Operation and Maintenance**

22 After the title transfer is complete, the District would continue to operate the facilities under
23 the established irrigation, drainage, and flood control program. The allocation of Colorado
24 River water and hydropower to the District would remain unchanged by the Proposed
25 Action/Preferred Alternative. The District would continue to submit an annual "water order"
26 to Reclamation for the diversion of Colorado River water. Reclamation would continue to
27 apportion water to the District in accordance with existing contractual arrangements and the
28 *Law of the River*.

29 The District agrees to accept Reclamation's goal of limiting the ARFs discharged into the
30 MOD to the design capacity of the YDP, and that the District water management activities
31 will reflect this goal to the extent that the goal remains relevant. Reclamation will dispose of
32 ARFs pursuant to the U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty of 1944, Minute 242, P.L. 93-320, and
33 through Reclamation's water management program in the Yuma-Transboundary Area. As in
34 the past, potential variations in ARFs beyond the control of the District (e.g., flooding)
35 would be coordinated with Reclamation to minimize undesirable effects.

1 **TABLE 2-2 LANDS INCLUDED IN WELLTON-MOHAWK TITLE TRANSFER**

Land Category and Type	Type of Transfer	Approximate Acreage
<i>Rights-of-Way and Easements for Facilities</i>		
Land for irrigation and drainage systems, including protective dikes, floodways, the administrative complex, and employee housing.	Transfer at no additional cost	16,859
Gila River Flood Channel lands and adjacent mitigation areas.	Transfer at no additional cost	11,338
<i>Subtotal for Category</i>		28,197
<i>Lands and Rights-of-Way Acquired from GVPD and MMWCD</i>		
GVPD and MMWCD lands and ROWs acquired by Reclamation but not used for Division purposes.	Transfer at no additional cost	4,544
<i>Subtotal for Category</i>		4,544
<i>Additional Lands to be Purchased</i>		
Lands acquired under P.L. 93-320 and P.L. 100-512 that were not used for Gila River Flood Channel ROWs	Purchase	9,104
Withdrawn lands that were not used as ROWs or for development of farm units.	Purchase	5,781
<i>Subtotal for Category</i>		14,885
<i>Total</i>		47,626

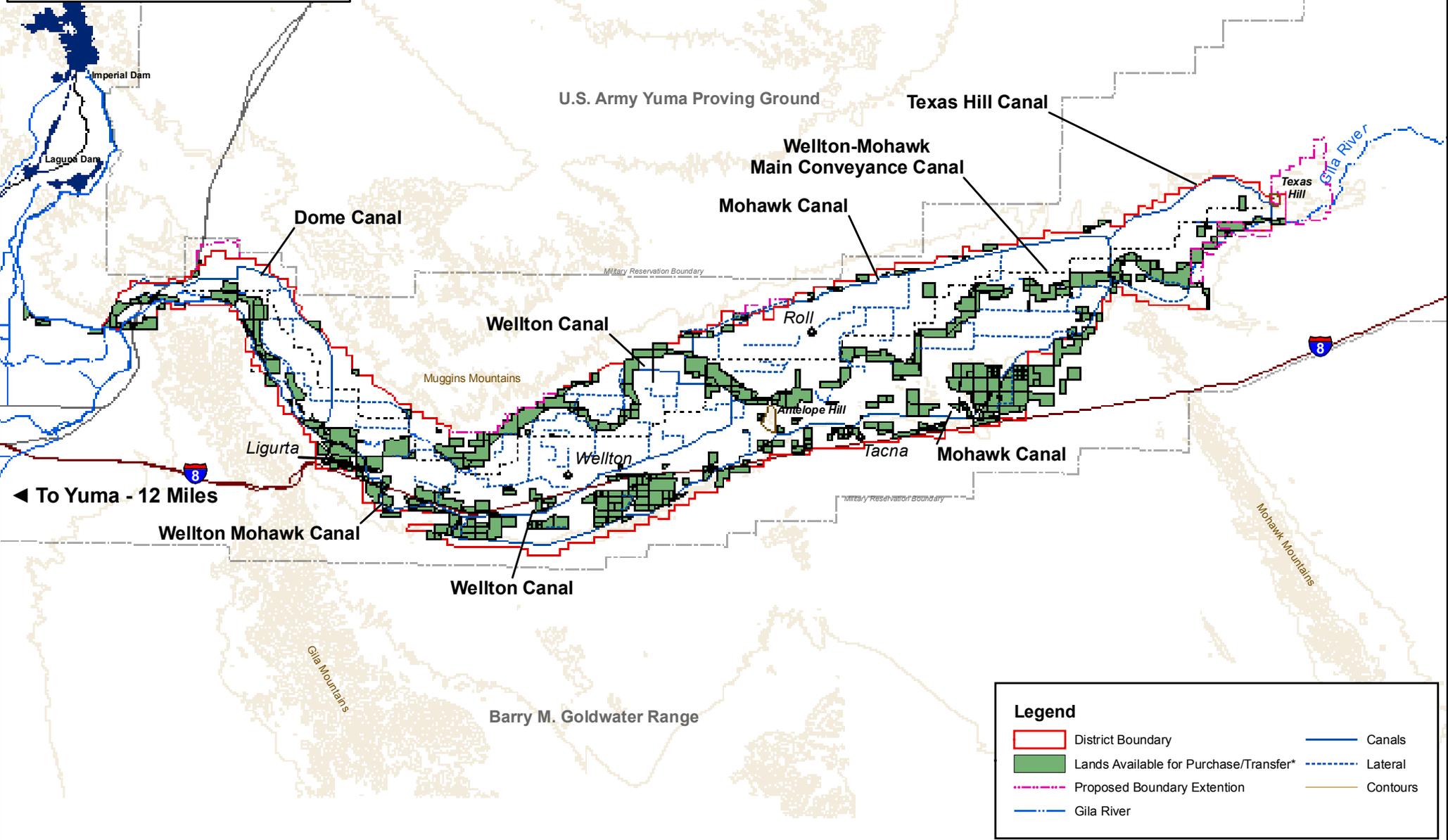
2 The flood control facilities would continue to be operated in accordance with existing state
3 and federal agreements. The provisions of the permit issued to the District under Section 404
4 of the Clean Water Act govern the operation and maintenance of the Gila River Flood
5 Channel and the adjacent wetland mitigation facilities through the life of the project. The
6 operation and maintenance of the flood channel and the adjacent wetlands will not change
7 under the conditions of the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.

8 Public access to the facilities and ROWs would not change under the Proposed
9 Action/Preferred Alternative. Access to levees and dikes for recreation and other public uses
10 would continue, subject to existing operational constraints. Public access restrictions on
11 maintenance roads along major canals and drains would continue as needed for public
12 safety.

13 **2.2.5 Facilities and Lands Not Proposed for Transfer**

14 In addition to the federal facilities and lands described above, the District contains some
15 federal facilities and lands that are not proposed for transfer under the Proposed
16 Action/Preferred Alternative. Such facilities include the following:

Note: Federal rights-of-way lie along most of the Gila River Flood Channel and along other facilities of the Wellton-Mohawk Division. These rights-of-way would be included with the proposed transfer of facilities to the District. Rights-of-way for canals and laterals are not shown on this map.



Legend

District Boundary	Canals
Lands Available for Purchase/Transfer*	Lateral
Proposed Boundary Extension	Contours
Gila River	

Wellton-Mohawk Title Transfer

Map 2-2 Lands Proposed for Transfer or Purchase



Not to Scale. For illustrative purposes only.

- 1 ▪ Electrical switchyards and other power facilities owned by the federal government
2 that are part of Western’s regional power transmission and distribution network.
- 3 ▪ Early in the environmental review process, Reclamation excluded from title
4 transfer consideration the federally owned portion of Antelope Hill, which contains
5 archeological remains of cultural significance to Native American tribes and
6 communities. Antelope Hill is the only National Register of Historic Places
7 (NRHP) eligible traditional cultural property (TCP) currently identified in the
8 project area (additional discussion of Antelope Hill is provided in Section 3.7).
- 9 ▪ Reclamation has also excluded approximately 2,186 acres of land from the title
10 transfer due to the presence of sensitive cultural resource sites of importance to the
11 Native American tribes and communities.

12 **2.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM ANALYSIS**

13 Several modifications to the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative suggested during the
14 scoping process were considered, but were eliminated from detailed analysis. The
15 suggestions submitted, and the reasons for their elimination are summarized in the following
16 sections.

17 **2.3.1 Guarantee the Water Supply to the Cienega de Santa Clara**

18 Commenting parties suggested guaranteeing deliveries of the current water supply for the
19 marsh habitat in the Cienega de Santa Clara in Mexico through the following additions to
20 the Proposed Action and Title Transfer Act.

- 21 ▪ The District’s agreement to continue its current level of ARFs.
22 ▪ The District’s agreement to secure replacement water if its ARFs decline.
23 ▪ Reclamation’s commitment to bypass the ARFs around the YDP.

24 The disposition of the District’s ARFs is outside the scope of the Proposed Action/Preferred
25 Alternative.

26 **2.3.2 Retain Federal Ownership of Wetlands Habitat**

27 Commenting parties suggested that the wetlands habitat along the Gila River would be better
28 preserved in the future if Reclamation retained ownership of the Gila River Flood Channel.

29 The District currently owns approximately 5,000 acres of the floodplain and riverbed. The
30 District also operates and maintains facilities to wetland mitigation sites along the river,
31 including some with drainage flows derived from irrigation in the District. This modification
32 would perpetuate the overlapping jurisdictions that impede prompt responses needed to react

1 to flood flows in the Gila River, and the inefficiencies in administrative efforts, which would
2 be counter to the project purpose and need. Regardless of the title transfer status, federal
3 oversight of wetlands habitat located within the jurisdiction of Waters of the United States
4 would continue under the District's Clean Water Act Section 404 permit.

5 **2.3.3 Include a Water Supply Management Component**

6 The following addition to the Proposed Action was suggested to enhance water management
7 flexibility in the Yuma-Transboundary area in order to accommodate potential future shifts
8 in water policy and assure a sustainable balance between available water supplies,
9 ecosystem health, and water supply commitments:

- 10 ▪ Develop a water management plan for the District based on available water
11 management techniques including water transfers and exchanges, conservation,
12 pricing, conjunctive use, recycling, voluntary, temporary, or permanent land
13 fallowing, irrigation efficiency improvement, and other market-based incentives.

14 The addition of this element would expand the scope of the Proposed Action beyond its
15 intended purpose. The District currently is engaged in ongoing water supply management
16 and planning, and is positioned to address additional water management practices as the
17 need arises. Other planning efforts are being conducted by multiple agencies that will
18 influence water management in the area, including the evaluation of future Yuma area
19 groundwater management and the development of the MSCP. Enhancement of water
20 management in the Yuma-Transboundary area is more effectively addressed through such
21 broad-based planning efforts.

22 **2.4 SUMMARY TABLE OF IMPACTS**

23 Table 2-3 summarizes the results of the analysis presented in this FEIS. The analysis for
24 each resource or issue listed in the table is presented in Chapter 3.

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TABLE 2-3 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Resource/Issue	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative
Land Resources	Reclamation lands involved in the project would not be transferred or purchased by the District. The rate and distribution of future land development would be subject to Reclamation decisions regarding disposal of these lands, guided by local planning and zoning. Local demand would motivate any net change in land development rates or uses.	Reclamation would transfer to the District ownership of approximately 28,197 acres of ROWs and easements for facilities and the Gila River Flood Channel, and ownership of approximately 19,429 acres of additional land. Land management would be integrated into the prevailing agricultural, open space, and other use trends in the area. Future land uses would be subject to local planning and zoning decisions and subject to the planning envisioned in the Yuma County 2010 Comprehensive Plan (2010 Plan).
Geologic Resources	Development of sand and gravel operations would continue in the project area, as required for local and regional development. Any development on federal lands would require NEPA compliance, and, if located within jurisdictional waters of the United States, a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit.	Potential for sand and gravel development and operations would continue in the project area in the same way as with the No Action Alternative. Future sand and gravel development on transfer lands outside the jurisdictional waters of the United States may no longer require NEPA compliance. Future sand and gravel development on transfer lands inside jurisdictional waters of the United States would still require a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, which may include NEPA compliance.
Soil Resources	Reclamation and District programs would not affect soil resources or their use in the District for the foreseeable future. No loss of prime and unique farmland would be expected.	District programs would not affect soil resources or their use in the District for the foreseeable future. No loss of prime and unique farmland would be expected.
Water Resources	Current District water entitlement or water supply operations would be unchanged.	Current District water entitlement or water supply operations would be unchanged.

Resource/Issue	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative
Biological Resources	Any federal action in the project area that may affect a plant or animal species listed as threatened or endangered must continue to comply with Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA and NEPA.	ESA consultation with the FWS was completed with the finding that the title transfer may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect any federally threatened or endangered species. Transferring lands out of federal ownership would remove future federal compliance requirements of Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, except for the Gila River Flood Channel lands, which are subject to Section 7 ESA requirements for the flood channel project. Non-federal lands are subject to ESA under Section 10. Actions requiring Section 404 permits in jurisdictional waters of the United States would require ESA Section 7 compliance.
Cultural Resources	Cultural resources on federal lands would remain under federal control and be subject to federal management pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and other federal laws.	A comprehensive program to identify cultural resource sites has been completed. Cultural resources, including currently undiscovered sites, located on the transferred lands would pass from federal management and protection. Arizona Antiquity laws may provide some protection for cultural resources discovered after transfer. National Register eligible cultural resources would either be protected through the use of conservation easements or mitigated in a manner set forth in a Historic Properties Treatment Plan. Certain lands with cultural resources not transferred may be considered for cooperative management arrangements between tribes and Reclamation.
Socioeconomic	No changes in the amount of federal land included in Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payment calculations would occur. The No Action Alternative would not cause a change in employment. Development trends would remain unchanged.	Given the level of federal land holdings in Yuma County, the reduction in federal land due to the Proposed Action would not have a significant effect on PILT payments to Yuma County. Commercial and community development on transferred land would not significantly increase the cost of county services over No Action conditions and may increase tax revenues to the county. Employment may increase.
Public Health and Safety	Public health and safety in the District would continue under current conditions.	There are no foreseeable changes in District operation following title transfer that would affect public health and safety.

Resource/Issue	No Action Alternative	Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative
Air Quality	Air quality in the District would continue unchanged from current conditions and trends, regulated by the State of Arizona.	There are no foreseeable changes in operation resulting directly from the transfer of title that would significantly change the air quality from current agricultural practices, foreseeable economic development, or other sources. Potential indirect impacts may result from a change in ownership of certain lands within the District. However, actions occurring on lands following a transfer would be subject to separate air quality regulation and permitting by the State of Arizona.
Transportation	Transportation routes and facilities in the Division would remain unchanged from current conditions.	Transportation routes and facilities in the District would likely remain unchanged from current conditions.
Recreation	Recreation opportunities in the District would remain unchanged from current conditions.	Indirect impacts may result associated with the change of ownership of certain lands. The District does not currently plan to restrict public access except where access is incompatible with other uses, development, or resource protection needs.
Indian Trust Assets (ITAs)	No ITAs are known in the project area.	No ITAs are known in the project area.
Environmental Justice	No environmental justice issues have been identified for the No Action Alternative.	The effects of the proposed title transfer would not be disproportionately focused on minority or low-income populations.

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