

**Final Environmental Impact Statement/  
Final Environmental Impact Report  
Coachella Canal Lining Project**

**Public Hearing Transcripts**



**AD HOC  
REPORTING**

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**COACHELLA CANAL LINING PROJECT**

**RIVERSIDE AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES  
CALIFORNIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING**

**COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT  
COACHELLA, CALIFORNIA**

**WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER 25, 2000**

## **Public Hearing Transcripts**

A public hearing on the Coachella Canal Lining Project Revised and Updated Draft EIS/EIR was held on October 25, 2000, at the Coachella Valley Water District, Avenue 52 and Highway 111, Coachella, California. The Draft EIS/EIR hearing time and date were announced in local newspapers at the start of the public review period, one week prior to the hearing, the day before the hearing, and the day of the hearing. A total of two members of the public/agency representatives attended.

The hearing started with a presentation by staff from the Coachella Valley Water District and members of the EIS/EIR project team, including an overview of the proposed action and its alternatives, a summary of the probable environmental effects should one of the alternatives be implemented, and a discussion of proposed mitigation for those impacts. This was followed by an informal question and answer period with the two meeting attendees. Questions raised at the hearing were either addressed verbally at the meeting or have been addressed in this Final EIS/EIR in response to the attendee's subsequent comments letters on the Revised and Updated Draft EIS/EIR. Based on these factors, no written responses to comments from the public hearing are included with this transcript.

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COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT  
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WEDNESDAY  
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PARTICIPANTS

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Chairperson

Robert Robinson, Coachella Valley Water District

Presenter

Michael Schwerin, KEA Environmental

Don Young, Assistant Area Manager, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Yuma, Arizona

Paul Rose, Resource Branch Chief, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Yuma, Arizona

Tom Ryan, Metropolitan Water District

Donald Mitchell, Coachella Valley Water District

Steve Horvitz, California State Parks

Kevin Hansen, Bureau of Land Management, Palm Springs, and Manager, Dos Palmas Preserve

Chuck Keene, California Department of Water Resources

Dan Parks, Coachella Valley Water District

1 COACHELLA, CA WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2000 7:04 P.M.

2 --oOo--

3 MR. ROBINSON: I guess the time is 7:04, and the  
4 date is October 25th. I would like to welcome you to this  
5 public hearing on the Coachella Canal Lining Project.

6 This project, if you will forgive the pun, has been  
7 dribbling along for the last 14 years, starting since 1987.  
8 There have been many challenges, such as how to design a  
9 concrete-lined canal that can be climbed out when anyone or  
10 anything finds that it's in over its head. But those  
11 challenges, like challenges of the 1992 lack of funding,  
12 which threw a wet blanket on the entire project, or the later  
13 1997, when the Bureau threatened to deep-six the project,  
14 these challenges have been overcome, and most of this is  
15 water under the bridge.

16 I'd like to introduce you to each member of the  
17 team. But my memory is very leaky. So I would like to have  
18 them introduce themselves.

19 UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: How long is this going  
20 to go on?

21 MR. ROBINSON: My name, to start off, is Robert  
22 Robinson. I'm with the Coachella Valley Water District.

23 MR. SCHWERIN: I'm Michael Schwerin with KEA  
24 Environmental. We are a consultant of the Coachella Valley  
25 Water District and the Bureau of Reclamation, working with

1 them on the environmental impact statement/environmental  
2 impact report.

3 MR. ROBINSON: And do we want introductions from  
4 the rest, or should we proceed immediately to the  
5 presentation?

6 UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: For the record, you  
7 should probably --

8 MR. ROBINSON: Okay. Yeah.

9 MR. YOUNG: Okay. I'm Don Young, assistant area  
10 manager with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Yuma, Arizona.

11 MR. ROSE: And I'm Paul Rose, Resource Branch  
12 chief, Bureau of Reclamation, Yuma.

13 MR. RYAN: And I'm Tom Ryan from the Metropolitan  
14 Water District.

15 MR. MITCHELL: I'm Donald Mitchell from the  
16 Coachella Valley Water District.

17 REPORTER: My microphone can't pick that up.

18 MR. ROBINSON: He said Don Mitchell from the  
19 Coachella Valley Water District.

20 REPORTER: Thank you.

21 MR. HORVITZ: You want me, too? Steve Horvitz,  
22 California State Parks.

23 MR. HANSEN: Kevin Hansen, Bureau of Land  
24 Management, Palm Springs Field Office. I'm also the manager  
25 of the Dos Palmas Preserve.

1 MR. KEENE: Chuck Keene, California Department of  
2 Water Resources.

3 MR. PARKS: And Dan Parks, Coachella Valley Water  
4 District.

5 MR. HANSEN: Do we have anyone here from the  
6 general public?

7 MR. ROBINSON: No.

8 I guess we'll get started. Mike.

9 MR. SCHWERIN: Thank you.

10 This is a public hearing on the revised and updated  
11 draft environmental impact statement/environmental impact  
12 report for the Coachella Canal Lining Project. The lead  
13 agencies for this, the Bureau of Reclamation is the federal  
14 lead agency under NEPA, and the Coachella Valley Water  
15 District is the state lead agency under the California  
16 Environmental Quality Act, or SEQA. And again, I'm with KEA  
17 Environmental, who is a consultant working with these  
18 agencies on the document.

19 I'm going to skip over the housekeeping comments  
20 based on the audience at hand.

21 I'm going to do a quick overview of the environ-  
22 mental compliance process, followed by a description of the  
23 projects, the proposed project's purpose, and a description  
24 of the components of it and its alternatives, address the  
25 water conservation that would result from the project,

1 discuss some of its impacts and the mitigation to avoid those  
2 impacts, and the schedule for the proposed project.

3           As a little background -- Robert Robinson had  
4 provided some of that -- there was a previous draft EIS/EIR  
5 that was prepared. It was completed in 1993/1994. It was  
6 circulated for public review. That document was never  
7 finalized. The scoping meetings held for that document were  
8 held in 1988, '89 and '92 in local communities. The project  
9 was postponed until this year, and tonight we are reviewing  
10 the revised and updated draft EIS/EIR.

11           Again, the Bureau of Reclamation is the lead agency  
12 under NEPA, Coachella Valley Water District lead agency under  
13 CEQA, and all of the -- there's four alternatives that are  
14 being evaluated in this document, and I'll describe those in  
15 detail -- a little more detail later.

16           Some of the major milestones for the environmental  
17 compliance process, in the summer of this year, we have  
18 revised and updated the document. We're in the middle of a  
19 60-day public review period. That closes on November 21st.  
20 There are going to be no extensions to that review period,  
21 and that's for when written comments need to be received  
22 either by the Coachella Valley Water District or the Bureau  
23 of Reclamation. There are addresses for both of those  
24 agencies on the written comment forms outside, if you'd like  
25 to pick those up. We anticipate a final EIS/EIR this

1 December, with a record of decision in January 2001.

2           The proposed project would conserve approximately  
3 30,850 acre feet of water that is currently lost as canal  
4 seepage. That water will help California stay within its  
5 annual 4.4 million acre foot allotment or allocation of  
6 Colorado River water. It will also help the federal govern-  
7 ment facilitate implementation of the San Luis Rey Indian  
8 Water Rights Settlement Act. If you have any specific  
9 questions on that act, we'd be glad to answer those or go  
10 into more detail after this presentation.

11           The project location is between Siphon 7 and 32 in  
12 the Coachella Valley. That's roughly from around here  
13 (indicating with light pen) up to right here, as indicated on  
14 the screen. I had to use that feature. The project includes  
15 all of -- lining the canal between the siphons. The siphons  
16 themselves would not be replaced. They would remain.

17           The alternatives that are evaluated in detail in  
18 the draft EIS/EIR include conventional lining, underwater  
19 lining, a parallel canal alternative, and no action. I'm  
20 going to give a brief overview of what each of these  
21 alternatives entails. They all have several common features.  
22 They would line or replace a total of 33.2 miles of earthen  
23 canal reaches. That's the length of canal between the  
24 siphons. It does not include the siphons themselves in the  
25 overall length. They would each use concrete ridges or some

1 other escape mechanism to improve public safety and large  
2 mammal escape from the canal, and they would conserve between  
3 29,850 and 30,850 acre feet of water per year.

4           This slide depicts the escape ridges that were  
5 constructed in a 1991 prototype lining project. You can kind  
6 of discern them on there. Essentially that allows along the  
7 entire length of the canal -- it makes it easier for either  
8 large mammals, or if a person were to fall in, for them to  
9 climb out, whereas with a traditional lined canal that does  
10 not have those ridges, it can be very slippery.

11           Mr. Hansen, is there a --

12           MR. HANSEN: Yeah. Is that the section on the  
13 slide between Siphon 14 and 15?

14           MR. SCHWERIN: Yes, it is. And under any of the  
15 alternatives, there would be either these concrete ridges or  
16 some other escape mechanism.

17           The conventional lining alternative is the  
18 preferred alternative or the proposed action. The  
19 construction of the lined canal would occur between siphons.  
20 Those siphons and the canal would be tied into the -- the  
21 water would be diverted around the siphons during  
22 construction of that one lining. Once it's lined, then those  
23 bypass pumps would no longer be used for that section. The  
24 water would flow through that. The bypass pumps would  
25 essentially be moved to the next segment of canal. The water

1 would be diverted around that, and the lining would occur on  
2 that region. So it would proceed reach-by-reach along the  
3 canal. And this would then add 33.2 miles of lining to the  
4 canal.

5           The second alternative is the underwater lining  
6 alternative. This was used during the prototype project in  
7 1991. This is a sample of one of the two pieces of equipment  
8 that was used to complete that project. Essentially, the  
9 canal can stay in operation while the lining is put in. You  
10 put in a liner -- an impervious liner to reduce the seepage,  
11 and that's then covered with concrete, which acts as a  
12 protection for the liner.

13           This alternative would actually have a little  
14 higher leakage by about a thousand acre feet per year in  
15 comparison to the preferred alternative. Accordingly, it  
16 would conserve a thousand acre feet less, 29,850 acre feet.

17           The third action alternative is the construction of  
18 a parallel lined canal. Under this alternative, water would  
19 be diverted from the existing canal into a parallel canal.  
20 As each reach is completed, the new canal that would be --  
21 new parallel canal would be lined. Once it's complete,  
22 reach-by-reach water would be diverted in. Even this  
23 parallel canal, however, would use the same siphons to avoid  
24 the need to construct the siphons at each of the washes that  
25 crosses over the canal. This is similar to the method that

1 was used to line the upstream or southernmost 49-mile section  
2 of the Coachella Canal in 1980.

3 Under the no action alternative, the existing canal  
4 would be left in its current unlined condition. This  
5 alternative would not conserve the water that's currently  
6 lost to seepage. It would not help the state stay within its  
7 annual allocation of Colorado River water. And it would not  
8 help facilitate implementation of the San Luis Rey Indian  
9 Water Rights Settlement Act.

10 There are several mitigation measures that have  
11 been incorporated into the proposed project that would help  
12 avoid significant impacts. Some of these are required by  
13 public law. Vegetation and wildlife habitat that are  
14 dependent on seepage-induced groundwater would be protected,  
15 reestablished or mitigated. A lot of the mitigation is  
16 proposed in the Dos Palmas Preserve or Dos Palmas area of  
17 critical environmental concern.

18 Flows in Salt Creek would be maintained to support  
19 pupfish habitat, vegetation and other wildlife features.  
20 These are the flows that are measured at a USGS stream gauge  
21 located near the mouth of Salt Creek at the Salton Sea. And  
22 as part of this mitigation, invasive non-native salt cedar,  
23 or tamarisk, would be replaced with native plants such as  
24 willow and mesquite. These are plants that have a higher  
25 habitat value for native wildlife.

1           As I mentioned, part of this mitigation effort  
2 would be focused on the Dos Palmas area of critical environ-  
3 mental concern. Other environmentally suitable areas may  
4 also be considered, but Dos Palmas is the number one priority  
5 in terms of considering mitigation. That can entail, in  
6 addition to the vegetation enhancement we mentioned earlier,  
7 the actual purchase and preservation, adding land to that  
8 preserve. And as part of this process, we are currently  
9 coordinating with -- the project team is currently  
10 coordinating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the  
11 California Department of Fish and Game, and the Bureau of  
12 Land Management, and other agencies.

13           As indicated by the escape ridges, the slide you  
14 saw earlier, wildlife escape mechanisms will be provided as  
15 part of the canal lining process. Mitigation, monitoring and  
16 maintenance are also included as part of this, in that once  
17 the, for example, vegetation enhancement is in place, it will  
18 be continued on to ensure that the native habitat is  
19 maintained and is not displaced again by salt cedar or other  
20 non-native species.

21           The mitigation for impacts of vegetation and  
22 habitat are required by public law. That's the law  
23 authorizing this project, in addition to any requirements  
24 there are under the National Environmental Policy Act or the  
25 California Environmental Quality Act.

1           This is a depiction of some of the seepage-  
2 dependent vegetation. This is primarily salt cedar with some  
3 fan palms that are visible on the right-hand side in the  
4 background of this slide that are located near Siphon 10  
5 along the Coachella Canal.

6           MR. HANSEN: Can I ask a question again?

7           MR. SCHWERIN: Sure.

8           MR. HANSEN: Just backing up to the ridge question,  
9 in the test section between Siphon 14 and 15, or in any  
10 previous linings where ridges were installed, were there any  
11 parallel studies conducted in cooperation with Fish and Game  
12 or U.S. Fish and Wildlife to determine the impact on large  
13 mammals, in other words, did they count how many carcasses  
14 were floating in the canals, any kind of impacts like that?

15           MR. SCHWERIN: They did not do a study to determine  
16 any large mammals that may have been in the canal after that  
17 prototype was done. But there was a specific test for that  
18 prototype section where a mule deer was basically led to the  
19 canal and was able to approach the canal and exit the canal  
20 safely. That was considered to be evidence that in fact it  
21 was effective. There have not been other specific studies  
22 that were incorporated into this. One of the aspects of the  
23 ridge design is that there will be monitoring as part of this  
24 project to make sure they are an effective means, and if not,  
25 then additional means such as escape ramps may be added as

1 part of the project. But that would be -- the initial  
2 proposal is for the escape ridges or another mechanism,  
3 monitoring of that to ensure its success, and then, if  
4 necessary, taking additional action.

5 MR. HANSEN: So empirical data will be gathered  
6 over time to determine impact?

7 MR. SCHWERIN: Yes.

8 MR. HANSEN: Thank you.

9 MR. SCHWERIN: And most mitigation for vegetation  
10 and habitat impacts is proposed to be accomplished in the Dos  
11 Palmas area of critical environmental concern or the land  
12 immediately adjacent to that area.

13 In addition to the impacts to the biological  
14 resources in the area, there's social and economic impacts  
15 that would be associated with the project. However, these  
16 impacts are considered minimal because 97 percent of the  
17 unlined canal is adjacent to undeveloped land. This includes  
18 a large section which runs parallel to the Chocolate  
19 Mountains Aerial Gunnery Range. There would be less than  
20 significant construction traffic and noise impacts. Air  
21 quality impacts would be -- primarily dust generation --  
22 would be mitigated through watering unpaved roads.

23 On the beneficial side, there would be the short-  
24 term creation of construction jobs with an associated  
25 increase in incomes within the region and an increase in the

1 use of local supplies.

2 MR. HANSEN: Can I ask another question?

3 MR. SCHWERIN: Yes, Mr. Hansen.

4 MR. HANSEN: During the construction phase, I would  
5 assume the main access road would be the parallel canal road  
6 that currently exists?

7 REPORTER: Can you summarize the questions? I'm  
8 not sure I'm picking this up from the audience.

9 MR. HANSEN: I can make it shorter.

10 MR. SCHWERIN: I believe his concern is the  
11 microphone won't pick up your speech until you're actually up  
12 at the podium.

13 MR. HANSEN: I can project.

14 (Laughter.)

15 REPORTER: I'm not sure. I'd have to --

16 MR. SCHWERIN: Okay. Well, let me summ- -- the  
17 question was, will the access roads that currently parallel  
18 the canal be the primary access road for construction? And  
19 the answer to that is, yes, for construction along the linear  
20 length of the canal, it's expected that the existing parallel  
21 roads will be the primary route. Under the conventional or  
22 preferred alternative, there will be bypass pumps and  
23 pipelines located on one side of the canal.

24 However, those will alternate, so there will always  
25 be access along one of the two parallel roads that parallels

1 the canal on each side. There will need to be access to the  
2 canal from the state highway, but there are several sort of  
3 intersecting roads that would be used, for example, Beal (ph)  
4 Road, depending on where the construction is, that we'll have  
5 to traverse, you know, perpendicular to the canal to reach  
6 it.

7 There's also batch plants that will be located  
8 right up near the canal. So again, the primary truck routes  
9 will be along those parallel existing access roads.

10 MR. HANSEN: Thank you.

11 MR. SCHWERIN: The escape mechanisms that will help  
12 large mammal escape will also improve public safety by making  
13 it easier to exit the canal through inadvertent entry. It's  
14 unauthorized -- it's illegal to actually go swimming in the  
15 canal, or fishing.

16 The proposed project also would assist the federal  
17 government in satisfying Indian Trust asset requirements.  
18 Specifically, it would help them implement the San Luis Rey  
19 Indian Water Rights Settlement Act.

20 This slide shows the proposed project schedule. We  
21 anticipate completing the EIS/EIR at the end of this year,  
22 with a record of decision in January of 2001. The environ-  
23 mental mitigation requirements will begin as soon as the  
24 record of decision has been signed, and continue -- this --  
25 the arrow shows them continuing on past this because there

1 are long-term maintenance and monitoring requirements to  
2 ensure the successful establishment, for example, of native  
3 vegetation. Project construction would run from the end of  
4 2002 through the end of 2004, maybe into the beginning of  
5 2005, at which point the conserved water would be available,  
6 and that's essentially available through infinity, that once  
7 this project is constructed, there will be the long-term  
8 permanent ability to conserve water as the result of the  
9 project.

10           So in conclusion, November 21st is the close of the  
11 60-day public comment period for the revised and updated  
12 draft EIS/EIR. No extensions on the public comment period  
13 will be granted.

14           At this point, what we would like to do is turn it  
15 over to any questions or comments you may have. This public  
16 hearing is being recorded by a court reporter. The  
17 transcript will be included in the document, and we will  
18 address any comments on the adequacy of the EIS/EIR that you  
19 may like to provide us at this meeting.

20           In addition, you may also provide written comments.  
21 We have forms for that out in the lobby with the address.  
22 Although you can also certainly send in a letter. You do not  
23 need to use those forms.

24           So at this point, I'll bring the lights up. And do  
25 either of you have comments that you would like to provide at

1 this point? -- either of our two guests, I should say.

2 MR. HANSEN: Are we the guests?

3 MR. SCHWERIN: You're the guests.

4 MR. HANSEN: What's the --

5 MR. SCHWERIN: Could I actually -- at this point,  
6 could you use the podium, or just -- for the purposes of  
7 getting the things transcribed.

8 MR. HANSEN: Oh, that podium.

9 MR. SCHWERIN: You can sit up here if you'd like,  
10 but --

11 MR. HANSEN: I'm an old park interpreter, so I'm  
12 used to talking loud when I have to.

13 I was just curious. What's the -- I spent a lot of  
14 time up on the canal. It, obviously, passes just north of  
15 the preserve. I'm interested in the width of construction  
16 impact, how wide that's going to be, how much of a swath of  
17 resource disturbance is going to take place along that.

18 MR. SCHWERIN: The width of -- the specific width  
19 of construction disturbance depends on the method of canal,  
20 which of the alternatives is selected. And what I'm going to  
21 have to do is get back to you with the specifics on that.

22 MR. HANSEN: But it varies with the alternatives?

23 MR. SCHWERIN: It varies with the alternatives that  
24 are listed in the document.

25 Robert.

1 MR. ROBINSON: We have right-of-way that is  
2 basically a 200-foot width, that's 100-foot in either  
3 direction of the canal. All the alternatives fit within the  
4 current right-of-way, except for, I think, there's just one  
5 small corner somewhere on the parallel canal lining  
6 alternative. So it would all be fitting within a 200-foot  
7 swath.

8 MR. HANSEN: So about 200 feet wide --

9 MR. ROBINSON: Yes.

10 MR. HANSEN: -- on the average?

11 MR. ROBINSON: Actually, no, at a maximum.

12 MR. SCHWERIN: Maximum.

13 MR. HANSEN: Maximum.

14 MR. SCHWERIN: Average would be less.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Of course, if it's lined in place  
16 with pump-arounds, the impact would be just the pumping or  
17 temporary pipes.

18 MR. HANSEN: Okay. I had a question regarding  
19 the -- the Dos Palmas Preserve is obviously one of the  
20 targets for protection. But one of my concerns is the Salt  
21 Creek Watershed, which covers a fairly larger extension.  
22 When this area was identified as an ACEC -- and I appreciate  
23 Dos Palmas being identified as a priority -- that's great --  
24 but I'm also concerned. Dos Palmas is only the northernmost  
25 drainage of the watershed. There's still a tremendous amount

1 of water flowing into Salt Creek, both from the north end of  
2 the Chocolates and some of it -- there's also drainage from  
3 the Chuckwallas. If you look at any of the aerial photos,  
4 particularly the Coachella Valley Water aerials, you'll see  
5 that Dos Palmas and the left-most one there, obviously,  
6 supplies a lot of the water. We're about to do our own  
7 tamarisk control project late this year. But I'm concerned  
8 about the fact that there's not much discussion of the  
9 drainage to the east, as well. Is that going to be  
10 addressed?

11 MR. SCHWERIN: The document addresses flows in Salt  
12 Creek. From all the sources there is a commitment to  
13 maintain at least the current level of flows in Salt Creek at  
14 the mouth of Salt Creek.

15 MR. HANSEN: Uh-huh.

16 MR. SCHWERIN: As to the specific drainage -- you  
17 talked about a lot of the drainage, for example, from the  
18 Chocolate Mountains. This project would reduce the  
19 artificial flows that are seeping out of the canal, but they  
20 would not eliminate any sources of flows, such as groundwater  
21 flows that are originating in the Chocolate Mountains that  
22 are not canal-dependent. The document -- the evaluation of  
23 impacts to vegetation is vegetation all along the entire  
24 canal, including those that are not in the Dos Palmas area of  
25 critical environmental concern. So impacts to vegetation

1 within the overall watershed will be mitigated. A lot of the  
2 vegetation in those areas is salt cedar. The mitigation for  
3 impacts to salt cedar is at less than a one-to-one ratio,  
4 depending on if it's a pure stand of salt cedar, or if it's  
5 salt cedar mixed with the native community.

6 So the focus, then, on the mitigation has been to  
7 concentrate it into one area, which right now we're looking  
8 at the Dos Palmas ACEC. But the impacts for the entire  
9 project are being mitigated, even those that would occur, for  
10 example, in other parts of the watershed.

11 Does that --

12 MR. HANSEN: I've read the -- just so you -- I have  
13 read almost all the reports. So frequently I ask questions  
14 I know the answer to.

15 In Dos Palmas, again, specifically, since that's my  
16 interest, BOR estimates are up to 50 per- -- I'll lose up to  
17 50 percent of my water flow, both in the spring and the well.  
18 I have two major springs and a well that feed my ponds and  
19 most of my water. How's that going to be compensated for?

20 MR. SCHWERIN: The compensation focuses not  
21 necessarily on the specific amount of water that will be  
22 lost, but on the habitat value of the vegetation that will be  
23 affected, and also the habitat value for the pupfish in Salt  
24 Creek. The compensation will be through the -- the document  
25 does outline -- and I'm sure you're aware -- several

1 different ways where water can be provided for mitigation  
2 purposes. The removal of salt cedar, which is an integral  
3 component of the proposed mitigation, will free up a lot of  
4 water -- native vegetation -- since -- uses much less than  
5 the salt cedar.

6 As necessary, water from the canal can be used as  
7 irrigation. That would then -- it would entail actually  
8 pumping water out of the canal or putting a pipe in the canal  
9 and bringing it in to support vegetation. In addition, it is  
10 possible to develop groundwater supplies on public land.  
11 That's authorized by the same public law that authorized this  
12 project -- calls for the -- looking at the use of -- with the  
13 prior of non-potable sources, but looking at groundwater as  
14 the source for the mitigation. Those are the primary  
15 components.

16 Is there something you want to add, Don Mitchell,  
17 to that, or --

18 REPORTER: Mike, I'm not going to be able to pick  
19 him up there.

20 MR. SCHWERIN: Okay.

21 (Pause.)

22 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. So in terms of compensating  
23 50 percent loss of water flow, the concept is, is that the  
24 berms would all be maintained at level, and that the flows in  
25 Salt Creek would be such that a combination of source supply

1 combined with tamarisk removal, there would be a maintained  
2 rate of flow of, I think, about 600 --

3 MR. SCHWERIN: 623 acre feet per year.

4 MR. MITCHELL: -- at the mouth of Salt Creek. So  
5 the overall concept is, is there would be no net loss of  
6 habitat values for claporwils (ph) and all the other water-  
7 dependent avian species at Dos Palmas. Maintenance of water  
8 levels and trying to target in terms of removing tamarisk and  
9 source supply from any actual (indiscernible) a tie-in  
10 pipeline to the Dos Palmas Oasis Spring proper. So there'd  
11 be the headwater supply, maintenance of the water level so  
12 you don't lose water levels at the ponds, maintenance of  
13 creek flow by combined maintaining the water levels in the  
14 ponds and removing tamarisk so you'd get your found water  
15 also, and then trying to maintain that target at the mouth.  
16 So that's how it'd be accomplished.

17 MR. HANSEN: Follow-up question?

18 MR. SCHWERIN: Yes, sir.

19 MR. HANSEN: What I'm driving at, and what the  
20 Everglades taught me, is the amount of water is not always  
21 the question, it's how it's delivered. It's the pattern, the  
22 timing. Now, the hydrogeology of the Dos Palmas Basin is  
23 incredibly complex. And I'm not really satisfied that you  
24 guys got it nailed as to how it works. So before I accept on  
25 faith that -- before you turn the tap off, and tell me on

1 faith that it's okay, we'll duplicate it in another way, I'm  
2 a little nervous, because the water -- I have a two -- I have  
3 two water sources. I have water sources coming in through  
4 the aquifer, and I have leakage from the canal. And I've  
5 spent a lot of time running around, and I've been out there  
6 with two hydrogeologists of my own choosing, saying that it's  
7 pretty complex out there as to how the water is being  
8 delivered. And I'm not completely confident that, you know,  
9 the water -- you know, it's great to talk about mitigation,  
10 and we will continue to do so. And I think it's great, and  
11 I applaud all the efforts here.

12 I don't mean to be critical, but I am a little  
13 nervous when someone says, Trust me, we're going to turn the  
14 water off, and we can duplicate it in another manner. We did  
15 that in the Everglades, and we paid for it when we found out  
16 that four floodgates do not equal sheet flow -- 70 miles  
17 worth of sheet flow. So if I'm a little nervous about that,  
18 that's why. And I'll leave the question hanging. You don't  
19 have to answer it. But I'll let you know that that's the  
20 angle I'll be coming at this from when you say it's okay,  
21 we'll fix it. All right?

22 MR. SCHWERIN: That's fine. I am still going to  
23 tack something onto that, in that --

24 MR. HANSEN: Feel free.

25 MR. SCHWERIN: -- we will continue to coordinate --

1 you know, as the land manager out there, we do hope to tap  
2 into your expertise as more specific mitigation is developed,  
3 and that it is understood that there's a complex hydrogeology  
4 out there that needs to be addressed in the mitigation plan.  
5 And that is part of the effort, and that's one of the reasons  
6 why we are going to be coordinating with you on the  
7 mitigation.

8 MR. HANSEN: And I want to applaud the efforts of  
9 BOR and everyone involved.

10 One last question. With regard to the efforts  
11 involved on the mitigation end of things, I realize we have  
12 sort of a man-made situation out there. We have to provide  
13 for endangered species, as well, but what I'm concerned about  
14 is that we're now reaching a point where the data contained  
15 in the current EIS is 10 to 15 years old. I want to know  
16 what your confidence level is that that's still applicable in  
17 some of the data that's been collected, particularly  
18 groundwater, vegetation, stuff that's been done from the 1993  
19 EIS.

20 MR. SCHWERIN: We have a high confidence level  
21 because we have made a specific effort to update the  
22 document. One of the decision points on this was whether or  
23 not it would be prudent to simply proceed to a final EIS/EIR  
24 stage. It was determined that, actually, so that we could  
25 have that confidence level in the data that we're presented,

1 to revise and update the draft. That's included looking at  
2 new satellite images, for example, for the vegetation, field  
3 visits to update the vegetation and looking at that.

4 We used a fairly conservative approach. For  
5 example, that vegetation which was not present when the  
6 previous draft EIS/EIR studies were completed, but that were  
7 present now, were most likely canal-dependent, because no  
8 other sources of water have likely been developed in the area  
9 that would support them. So we have a fairly conservative  
10 impact assessment methodology. And the fact that we did  
11 update that data, there is a high degree of confidence in it.

12 MR. HANSEN: Great.

13 I lied. I have one more question. Did you  
14 consider the possibility of leaving portions of the canal  
15 unlined?

16 MR. SCHWERIN: That was evaluated initially. The  
17 problem with that approach is that the area where you would  
18 really get the benefit from leaving a portion of the canal  
19 unlined would be in what is in the document referred to as  
20 sub-unit, or Unit D, which encompasses much of the Dos Palmas  
21 area. And about one-third of the savings, the water conser-  
22 vation savings from the project would be lost if you did not  
23 line that one section. So the area where you would gain the  
24 most benefit in terms of providing water for vegetation is  
25 also an area where, in order to really have an effective

1 water conservation canal lining project, you really do need  
2 the lining. So it was evaluated, but the seepage that goes  
3 through that area was considered too high, and it's --

4 MR. HANSEN: What's that approximate reach on the  
5 siphons? I don't have the map in front of me. I could --

6 MR. ROBINSON: I want to say it's roughly -- we can  
7 address that at a later time.

8 MR. SCHWERIN: Yeah. Let's address that at a later  
9 time rather than having me --

10 MR. HANSEN: Okay.

11 MR. SCHWERIN: -- speculate.

12 MR. HANSEN: Thank you.

13 MR. SCHWERIN: Are there any other questions from  
14 the audience?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. SCHWERIN: There are no other questions. It is  
17 about 7:37, and at this point, we will call this meeting to  
18 a close. I would like to thank everyone for attending.  
19 Again, please, if you have any written comments, please  
20 submit those by the 21st. Feel free to use either the  
21 written comment forms out in the lobby -- they have the  
22 addresses -- or if you'd like to submit a separate letter.

23 Thank you very much.

24 //

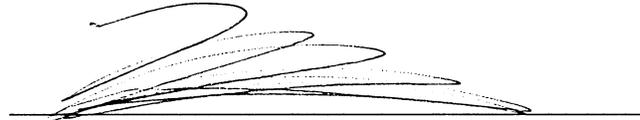
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(Proceedings adjourned at 7:38 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is a verbatim transcription prepared from the electronic sound recording produced at the proceedings in the above-entitled matter, and is a true and accurate transcript of said proceedings to the best of my ability and belief.



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