

Mission Statements

The Department of the Interior (DOI) conserves and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people, provides scientific and other information about natural resources and natural hazards to address societal challenges and create opportunities for the American people, and honors the Nation's trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities to help them prosper.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
Finding of No Significant Impact**

No. 19-SCAO-008-FONSI

Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility Project
San Diego County, California

The Bureau of Reclamation is providing Title XVI funds to construct the Membrane Filtration and Reverse Osmosis Facility Project at 901 West Washington Avenue in the City of Escondido, San Diego County, California. The project will treat an existing recycled water supply to improve quality for agricultural users.

Based on our review of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the *Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility Project*, California State Clearinghouse No. 2020039020, we have determined that the financial assistance does not constitute a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.

Recommended: _____ Date: _____
Doug McPherson, Environmental Protection Specialist

Reviewed By: _____ Date: _____
Meghan Thiemann, Regional Title XVI Coordinator

Approved: _____ Date: _____
John E. Simes, Jr., (Acting) Area Manager
Southern California Area Office

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Assistance agreement no. R19AC00023 provides Title XVI funds for the City of Escondido to construct the Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility Project in San Diego County, California. The project will provide advanced treatment for Title 22 quality reuse water produced at an existing water reclamation facility. The treated water will be used for agricultural purposes and distributed to growers through existing non-potable reuse water/agriculture pipelines.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The City of Escondido currently imports 80% of its potable water and is increasing the use of recycled water for non-potable purposes. The Hale Avenue Resources Recovery Facility currently produces tertiary-treated recycled water used for landscape and industrial purposes. Excess recycled water is discharged to the Pacific Ocean.

Avocado growers located on the edges of the City's water service area are major water consumers, with many using private wells to pump groundwater for irrigation. Local growers have expressed interest in buying recycled water from the City.

Agriculture is an important part of Escondido's community and economy and avocados are one of the most important crops grown in San Diego County. Water quality is important for quantity and quality of avocado production. Growers maintain a high demand for low-salinity water. The water must be low in chlorides and other constituents to avoid leaf burn, root rot, and the need for excessive flushing.

Infrastructure to provide more recycled water with lower salinity is needed to offset agricultural potable demand, decrease demand for imported water, and to continue efficient agricultural production. The project will also reduce the amount of water discharged to the Pacific Ocean from the Hale Avenue Resources Recovery Facility. The existing Escondido Land Outfall and the San Elijo Ocean Outfall are each nearing flow capacity.

AUTHORITY

Federal assistance is authorized by the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act of 1992 (Title XVI of Pub. L. 102-575). Section 1612, San Diego Area Water Reclamation Program.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The federal funds will help the City of Escondido to construct a Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility, providing advanced treatment for Title 22 quality recycled water produced at the Hale Avenue Resources Recovery Facility. The new facility will use microfiltration or ultrafiltration membranes and reverse osmosis sized for a production capacity of 2.0 million gallons per day (mgd), about 2,200 acre-feet per year. The facility design allows future expansion of an additional 1.0 mgd of capacity.

The Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility will be constructed on a 10.3-acre city-owned parcel at 901 West Washington Avenue, assessor parcel number 232-090-72-00. The project consists of a 25,000 SF commercial/industrial building, two storage tanks (1,000,000 gallon and 240,000 gallon), associated pumps and other on-site infrastructure, and a back-up diesel generator.

The project will provide an additional water supply for agricultural users, producing high-quality recycled water low in total dissolved solids and chlorides. High quality treated water from the Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility will be blended with Title 22 recycled water within an on-site blend tank. The blended water will be used for agricultural purposes and will be distributed through existing non-potable pipelines. The project includes a new 24-inch product water pipeline about one-mile long in Washington Avenue to connect to the existing recycled water pipeline system.

ADOPTION OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

NEPA requires review of a proposed Federal action to determine its impact on the human environment. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations direct Federal agencies to cooperate with State and local agencies to the fullest extent possible to reduce duplication between NEPA and State and local requirements (40 CFR 1506.2). Department of Interior regulations for implementing NEPA encourage tiering of environmental documents and provide for adoption of existing environmental documents if, upon evaluation by a responsible official, it is found to comply with relevant provisions of the CEQ regulations.

An initial study and mitigated negative declaration (SCH No. 2020039020) prepared under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was approved on April 30, 2020. The City Zoning Administrator passed, adopted and approved Resolution No. 20-2020, adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration,¹ CEQA Findings, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. Notice of Determination was filed on May 4, 2020 with the California State Clearinghouse and the San Diego County Clerk.

Bureau of Reclamation staff reviewed the initial study and concluded that it adequately identifies and discloses the reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of the action. We adopt the document in accordance with regulations for implementing NEPA promulgated by the CEQ at 40 CFR 1506.3 and by the Department of the Interior at 43 CFR 46.320(a).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The initial study/mitigated negative declaration identified effects related to biological, cultural and tribal cultural resources, wildland fire hazards, hydrology and noise. Revisions in project plans and/or mitigation and avoidance/minimization measures reduced all impacts to less-than-significant. The City Zoning Administrator found no substantial evidence that the project or any of its aspects could result in significant adverse impacts. The City Zoning Administrator also found that the mitigation measures will not cause any significant effects of their own.

OTHER FEDERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Clean Air Act

The San Diego air basin is designated nonattainment/moderate for 2008 8-hour ozone. The basin is in attainment for all other criteria pollutants under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards: maintenance for 1997 8-hour ozone, maintenance for ozone 1-hour, maintenance for carbon monoxide, and attainment for lead, NO₂, PM-2.5 and PM-10.

The *de minimis* thresholds at 40 CFR 93.153(b) will not be exceeded during construction or operation. Estimated construction-phase emissions of ozone pre-cursors reactive organic gas (ROG) is 0.7 tons per year and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) is 2.7 tons per year, below *de minimis* threshold of 100 tons per year. No general conformity determination is required. A stationary source permit from the San Diego Air Pollution Control District is required for the back-up diesel generator.

Endangered Species Act

No federal-listed endangered or threatened species occur within the action area. No critical habitat is designated within the action area. The project site is currently developed with City field offices, a metal storage building, and an asphalt paved parking lot. The entire site is developed and highly disturbed.

Construction activities could cause indirect impacts to adjacent resources, including the Reidy Creek and Escondido Creek flood control channels. With implementation of Best Management Practices and the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, no indirect impacts to off-site sensitive resources will occur.

¹ A negative declaration is a determination that no environmental impact report is required under CEQA because no substantial evidence was found to suggest that the project would result in significant environmental impacts. It is the California equivalent of a NEPA Finding of No Significant Impact.

National Historic Preservation Act

No historic-period or prehistoric resources were identified within the project area. No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated. As a precaution, an archaeological and Native American monitoring program will be implemented for grading or other ground disturbing activities.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Management Act

The project does not include any impacts to marine resources, other than indirectly by reducing discharges to the Pacific Ocean via the San Elijo Ocean Outfall.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Trees, shrubs, and other vegetation present within and in the immediate vicinity of the project area may provide suitable nesting habitat for common birds and raptors protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Construction activities may require removal or trimming of trees and other vegetation during the general bird nesting season (January 15 through September 15). Impacts to nesting birds will be avoided by biological monitoring to identify active nests and construction timing requirements.

Water Resources

Escondido's total water demand is about 22,000 acre-feet per year. Implementation of the project will have a positive impact on water availability. The recycled water will offset existing potable water uses.

Farmland Protection Policy Act

The project site is classified as Urban and Built-Up Land and does not contain any Prime Farmland or Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The agricultural lands served by project water include both Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland. No agricultural land will be taken out of production.

Clean Water Act

Discharge from the Hale Avenue Resource Recovery Facility and from the Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility via the San Elijo Ocean Outfall is authorized by Clean Water Act National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit no. CA0107981, adopted on April 11, 2018.

Construction activities will comply with the Statewide General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity, NPDES permit no. CAS000002 and with the San Diego County Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems NPDES no. CAS0109266. The project includes an on-site biofiltration basin to capture, treat, and release storm water at a controlled rate. The basin will direct storm flows into an existing 54-inch storm drain and then to the Reidy Creek Flood Control Channel.

Marine Mammal Protection Act

The project does not include any impacts to any marine resources in the Pacific Ocean, other than indirectly by reducing discharges via the San Elijo Ocean Outfall.

Wetlands and Floodplains

No wetlands area involved. The project is not within the 100-year flood hazard area.

Socioeconomic Resources

The does not include housing or commercial development that would directly affect the number of residents or employees in the area and would not contribute to the creation of additional housing or jobs in the City of Escondido. The project will not divide an existing community, will not remove housing, and will not displace people or housing.

The project site is within an urban area developed with primarily commercial and industrial uses. The project site is currently occupied with two trailers, a metal storage building, and an asphalt paved parking lot. No changes to land uses will occur.

Environmental Justice

No impacts relevant to environmental justice are anticipated. The central portion of Escondido east of the project is designated a Disadvantage Community by the California Department of Water Resources. The project will not result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects.

Indian Trust Assets

No Indian trust assets have been identified in the project area. The general vicinity of the project site is known to have been occupied by the Luiseño and Kumeyaay people for thousands of years. A Sacred Lands File search by the California Native American Heritage Commission yielded positive results, with the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians indicating that sensitive discoveries have occurred immediately north of the Escondido Creek channel. As a precaution, the City will implement an archaeological and Native American monitoring program for grading and ground-disturbing activities.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility site is at the confluence of Escondido Creek and Reidy Creek. No Wild & Scenic Rivers or waterways listed on the National Rivers Inventory are involved.

Coastal Zone Management Act

The project is 13 miles from the Pacific Ocean, well outside the California Coastal Zone Boundary.

Coastal Barrier Resources Act

The project will not encourage development or modification of coastal barriers. The project is not within any units of the Coastal Barrier Resources System. The Coastal Barrier Resources Act applies on the Atlantic, Gulf, and Great Lakes coasts/ No system units are located along the Pacific coast.

Sole Source Aquifers

The Escondido Creek groundwater basin is not an EPA-designated sole source aquifer.

Airports

The proposed project is not located within an airport land use plan or within two miles of a public airport or public use airport.

AGENCY CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)

The SWRCB may provide funding under the Clean Water Act State Revolving Fund. SWRCB staff completed a "CEQA-Plus" review of federal cross-cutting authorities, delegated by the U.S. EPA.

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)

The RWQCB adopted Order R9-2018-0002 on April 11, 2018, approving Waste Discharge Requirements under the California Water Code and the federal NPDES permit for the project.

California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

The SHPO concurred with the SWRCB finding of "*No Historic Properties Affected*" on August 18, 2020 (ref: EPA_2020_0805_001).

Fish and Wildlife Service

Consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is not required. The project is in a developed urban area. The project as mitigated will not affect federal listed species or critical habitats.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-Fisheries)

No consultation is required under the Endangered Species Act or the Magnuson-Stephens Act.

California Coastal Commission

No Coastal Zone Management Act consistency certification is required.

Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Consultation with the NRCS District Conservationist is not required.

Tribal Consultation

The Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians requested consultation and completion of an archaeological record search and assessment. Formal consultation with the Rincon Band was conducted under California law (AB 52) on October 22, 2019.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

A CEQA mitigation monitoring and reporting program was adopted by the City of Escondido. The mitigations are considered ameliorative design elements per 43 CFR 46.130(b). The Bureau of Reclamation did not identify a need for additional environmental commitments under NEPA.

REFERENCES

Membrane Filtration Reverse Osmosis Facility Project Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, March 2020 (ESC-31), prepared for the City of Escondido by HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc., La Mesa, California.

<https://www.escondido.org/Data/Sites/1/media/PDFs/Planning/mfro/FinalISMND042020.pdf>

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