CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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Chapter I

Introduction and Overview

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared this resource management plan and environmental assessment (RMP/EA) for certain Reclamation lands within the 5-mile zone. The 5-mile zone encompasses about 65,800 acres within Yuma County, in extreme southwest Arizona. (See **map I-1**, location map. Also see "Overview of Study Area and Background" for a complete description of the 5-mile zone.) Specifically, this planning effort only addresses approximately 30,200 acres of land within the 5-mile zone that are east of Avenue H and under the jurisdiction of Reclamation (study area). The study area is commonly called Reclamation's Protective and Regulatory Pumping Unit (PRPU). The study area boundary is shown in green on **map I-2**. The study area does not include those areas within the study area boundary that are outlined in red (about 5,150 acres). Other lands within the 5-mile zone are owned or managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), State of Arizona, city of San Luis, or private landowners.

BLM will address, in a separate resource management plan, the Reclamation lands that it manages along the Colorado River. In addition, because Reclamation does not have the authority to conduct planning on lands that are not under its jurisdiction, lands that are private; owned by cities, counties, or the State of Arizona; or are under the jurisdiction of another Federal agency are outside the scope of this study.

An RMP includes much of the same information and analyses that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires in an environmental compliance document; therefore, this RMP/EA is intended to meet the environmental compliance requirements of NEPA, as well the planning information requirements of an RMP. Because the alternatives developed for the RMP portion of the document are general in nature, the NEPA portion of the document (or EA portion) is programmatic in nature. Site-specific NEPA compliance will be required before any of the ground-disturbing management actions of the RMP can be implemented.

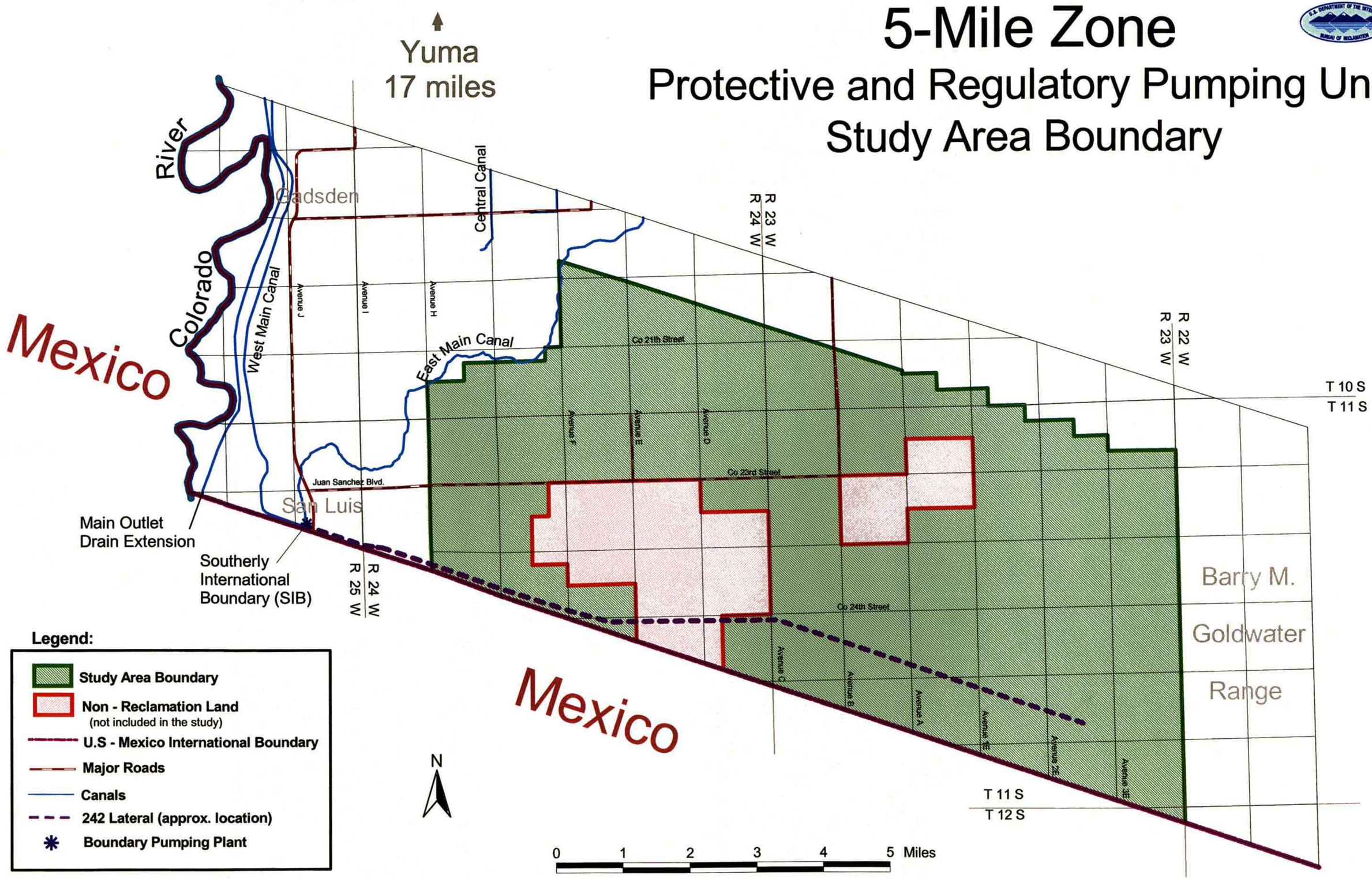
AUTHORITY

Title 28 of Public Law (P.L.) 102-575, Section 2805 (106 Statute [Stat.] 4690, Reclamation Recreation Management Act of October 30, 1992), provides Reclamation with authority to prepare resource management plans.

Map I-1.—Study Location Map.

5-Mile Zone

Protective and Regulatory Pumping Unit Study Area Boundary



Map I-2

PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTION

Preparation and implementation of an RMP is a **Federal action** that is intended to direct the management of resources within the study area to maximize overall public and resource benefits for the next 10 years. NEPA requires Federal agencies to consider the potential effect(s) of a Federal action on the environment before implementing the proposed action. Therefore, Reclamation used a planning process and an appropriate level of environmental analysis to develop this RMP/EA. Once Reclamation adopts the RMP/EA, it will be used as the framework to manage lands within the study area.

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR FEDERAL ACTION

The purpose of this RMP is to establish a 10-year conceptual plan detailing the management framework to conserve, protect, enhance, develop, and use the natural and cultural resources within the study area.

The RMP is needed to do the following:

- Provide decisionmakers with consistent direction and guidance to successfully manage the natural and cultural resources within the study area.
- Ensure management of the natural and cultural resources will be compatible with the authorized purposes of Title I of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974, P.L. 93-320, as amended by P.L. 96-336.
- Resolve land and water use issues and concerns within the study area related to the tremendous growth of the city of San Luis, Arizona, and surrounding area.
- Address the increasing demand for public use of the resources within the study area while protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural resources.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The RMP/EA has the following overall objectives:

- Explore ways to protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources.
- Identify and determine uses of Reclamation lands that are compatible and consistent with Reclamation's primary purpose.
- Identify long-term programs that address public health and safety, wildlife, recreation, and other resources.
- Identify financially feasible opportunities or partnerships to assist in managing the resources.

- Document management actions that will allow Reclamation to operate and maintain the study area for the primary purpose of Title I of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974, as amended.
- Protect and conserve groundwater resources for use in partial satisfaction of the 1944 Water Treaty.

Additionally, in recent years, Reclamation's focus on developing large, federally financed agricultural and power projects has changed—as reflected in its mission statement—to that of managing, developing, and protecting water and related resources "in an environmentally sound manner. . .." The overall objectives for completing an RMP for the study area are consistent with the three objectives identified in Reclamation's *2000-2005 Strategic Plan*:

- Manage, develop, and protect water and related resources to meet the needs of current and future generations.
- Operate, maintain, and rehabilitate facilities safely, reliably, and efficiently to provide project benefits.
- Advance Reclamation's organizational effectiveness.

Chapter VI of this document contains specific Reclamation goals and accompanying objectives for the study area. These goals and objectives were formulated as a result of (1) public involvement, (2) agency consultation and coordination, and (3) Reclamation review of programs and policies. The goals and objectives are consistent with the provisions of existing laws and regulations.

SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF DOCUMENT

This RMP/EA provides a conceptual management framework to conserve, protect, enhance, develop, and use the natural and cultural resources within the study area. Because the RMP establishes only a conceptual framework for managing resources, the EA portions of this document focus on broad impacts associated with the alternatives. As stated previously, NEPA compliance will be completed, and site-specific environmental and cultural clearances will be obtained before any ground-disturbing activities begin.

The following paragraphs briefly describe, by chapter, the structure of this RMP/EA.

Chapter I: *Introduction and Overview*

Chapter I provides an introduction to and overview and history of the study area and sets forth the purpose and need for an RMP/EA, authorities, overall objectives, public involvement, consultation and coordination, and related activities occurring within and adjacent to the study area.

Chapter II: *Management Framework*

Chapter II establishes the management framework by describing the existing policies and programs affecting or influencing the use of Reclamation land and water and describes the responsibilities other entities may have in managing lands within the study area. Chapter II also describes the responsibilities other entities have in managing lands adjacent to the study area.

Chapter III: *Planning Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints*

Chapter III summarizes the key factors that influenced development of the RMP/EA by identifying the planning issues, opportunities, and constraints within the study area.

Chapter IV: *Alternatives*

Chapter IV describes the four alternatives, including the preferred alternative and the No Action Alternative, formulated in response to the issues identified by the public and Reclamation.

Chapter V: *Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences*

Chapter V describes the affected environment of the study area and discusses the potential effects of the alternatives on resources and environmental factors (environmental consequences).

Chapter VI: *Final Resource Management Plan*

Chapter VI describes in detail the RMP, the preferred alternative selected by Reclamation. The chapter details the management goals and objectives and the management strategies and directives for the study area for the next 10 years.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY AREA AND BACKGROUND

The 5-mile zone is a 5-mile-wide, 13-mile-long strip of land about 10 miles south of Yuma, Arizona, in the extreme southwestern part of the State. (See **map I-3**, 5-mile zone boundary map.) The Southerly International Boundary (SIB) between the United States and Mexico forms the 5-mile zone's southern boundary. The 5-mile zone's northern boundary parallels its southern boundary. From its western boundary, formed by the limitrophe section of the international boundary,[1] the 5-mile zone extends 13 miles southeast to the boundary of the Barry M. Goldwater Range. The city of San Luis is located in the southwest portion of the 5-mile zone.

[1] "Limitrophe" refers to the international boundary between the United States and Mexico formed by the Colorado River.

As discussed previously, the study area only includes those lands within the 5-mile zone that are east of Avenue H and under the jurisdiction of Reclamation. Other lands within the 5-mile zone are owned or managed by BLM, State of Arizona, city of San Luis, or private landowners. Reclamation does not have authority to conduct planning activities or prescribe management actions for lands that are not under its jurisdiction and are outside the study area.

The city of San Luis is the largest community nearest the study area, with a population of 15,322. The city of Yuma, about 10 miles north of the 5-mile zone, has a population of 83,330 (Eatherly, 2004). The other communities of significance near the 5-mile zone are Somerton, located about halfway between Yuma and the 5-mile zone, and Gadsden, located just north of San Luis. San Luis Rio Colorado, Mexico, is immediately across the international boundary from San Luis, Arizona, and has an estimated population of 250,000.

Irrigated agriculture is important in Yuma County and within the 5-mile zone. It is particularly important near the city of San Luis, where agricultural lands make up approximately 29 percent of the total land base. Crops include upland cotton, wheat, alfalfa hay, vegetables, and citrus fruit.

History of 5-Mile Zone

In 1944, the United States and Mexico signed a treaty (1944 Water Treaty) requiring the United States to deliver 1.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water to Mexico each year. The treaty did not address the salinity of the delivered water. By 1961, the salinity of the delivered water had increased from about 700-920 parts per million (ppm) of total dissolved solids (TDS) to 2,500 ppm in some months. The increased salinity was caused by (1) discharge to the Colorado River of saline irrigation drainage pumped from new wells in the Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District; (2) reduced excess Colorado River flows, resulting from the construction of Glen Canyon Dam; and (3) reduced Gila River flows, resulting from the construction of Painted Rock Dam.

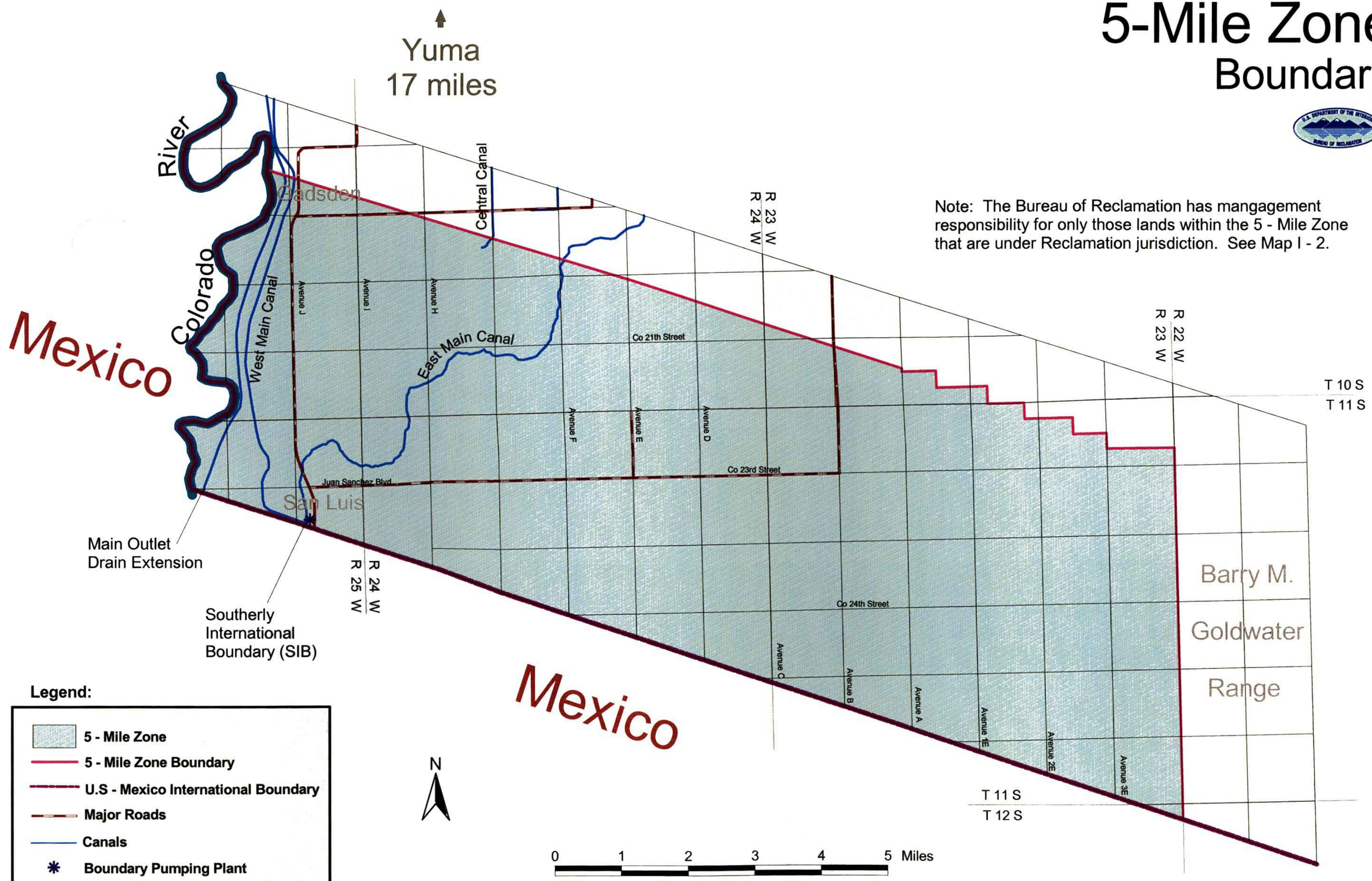
The United States and Mexico attempted to resolve the salinity problem for more than a decade. Finally, in August 1973, the two countries reached a permanent solution to the problem in the form of Minute No. 242 of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC 242 Minute). (See attachment A.) IBWC 242 Minute contains several provisions, including the following:

- Each country shall limit pumping of groundwaters in its territory within 5 miles of the Arizona-Sonora boundary near San Luis, Arizona, to 160,000 acre-feet annually.
- The United States shall deliver approximately 140,000 acre-feet annually at the Southerly International Boundary to partially satisfy treaty requirements.

The Congress passed P.L. 93-320 (known as the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974 [Act]) in June 1974; attachment B), to enable the United States to comply with its obligations under IBWC 242 Minute. Section 103 (a) of the Act authorized the

5-Mile Zone
Boundary

Note: The Bureau of Reclamation has mangagement responsibility for only those lands within the 5 - Mile Zone that are under Reclamation jurisdiction. See Map I - 2.



Secretary of the Interior to construct, operate, and maintain well fields capable of providing approximately 160,000 acre-feet of water per year for use in the United States and for delivery to Mexico to partially satisfy treaty requirements. Public Law 96-336 (passed in September 1980) amends the Act and states that no contract shall be entered into that will impair the ability of the United States to continue to deliver approximately 140,000 acre-feet annually to Mexico at the SIB (attachment B).

The well fields authorized by Section 103(a) of the Act intercept part of the groundwater underflow that moves south from the Yuma Mesa in the United States into Mexico. Currently, there are 21 wells on Reclamation property in the southern portion of the Yuma Mesa. The wells are located generally less than ½ mile north of the international boundary and are spaced approximately ½ mile apart. They are connected by a 15.3-mile conveyance system (242 Lateral) that carries the water west to the afterbay of the Boundary Pumping Plant, where it flows by gravity across the SIB. Approximately 105 acres of land are used as rights-of-way for access roads, powerline routes, well sites, and pipelines for the entire well field. Private interests are not authorized to pump groundwater within the study area without approval from Reclamation because Reclamation has jurisdiction over the land surface and operates the well fields. Reclamation does not regulate or control groundwater pumping from lands that are outside the PRPU and that are under another entity's jurisdiction or in private ownership.

Current Status of 5-Mile Zone

Current policy for the use of water and Reclamation facilities or lands within the study area is based in part on the treaty, IBWC 242 Minute, and the Act, as amended. Any request to use water, facilities, or lands is subject to the limitations of IBWC 242 Minute, as well as existing contracts in the area. The United States must continue to be able to meet the requirements of the treaty, IBWC 242 Minute, and the Act, as amended. This need, coupled with the needs of the rapidly growing areas of the cities of Yuma and San Luis, Arizona, for water and use of Reclamation facilities and lands, has prompted Reclamation to defer any further decisions on actions that affect the study area until it completes a comprehensive resource management plan.

The 5-mile zone consists primarily of broad, flat plains vegetated with creosote bush and white bursage, with some agricultural lands as well as some mixed and riparian vegetation between the East Main Canal and the Colorado River.

The 5-mile zone includes about 16,000 acres of flat-tailed horned lizard habitat ("Yuma Desert Management Area"), which Reclamation manages under the 2003 Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard Management Strategy (Rangewide Management Strategy). These approximately 16,000 acres encompass the best remaining, relatively undisturbed creosote-white bursage community in the 5-mile zone, the habitat favored by the flat-tailed horned lizard. The Rangewide Management Strategy, prepared by representatives of Federal, State, and local governments, provides guidance for the conservation and management of sufficient habitat to maintain viable populations of flat-tailed horned lizards. It is designed to be the basis of a conservation agreement

among the agencies. However, most of the flat-tailed horned lizard habitat in Arizona is within the Barry M. Goldwater Range, which is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the 5-mile zone and is managed by the Marine Corps Air Station at Yuma.

The 5-mile zone also includes the Protective and Regulatory Pumping Unit, the Yuma Desalting Plant sludge disposal site, Rolle Airfield, and a State prison. In addition, the U.S. Border Patrol maintains a 90-foot-wide protective zone along the United States-Mexico border, as well as drag roads and surveillance towers to monitor and prevent illegal entry of undocumented aliens into the United States.

The Bureau of Land Management manages some lands in the 5-mile zone for Reclamation, and the State of Arizona administers several sections of land, primarily for open space, recreation, and agriculture. Other land uses within the 5-mile zone include agriculture on 2,300 acres of land served by the Hillander "C" Irrigation District and various commercial and residential uses, primarily in and near the city of San Luis.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Throughout the development of this RMP/EA, Reclamation made a concerted effort to involve interested parties, including agencies, special interest groups, and individuals, in the planning for the environmental, land, recreation, and wildlife resources within the study area.

In July 2001, Reclamation met with the following Federal, State, and local entities to provide information and gather input about the proposed RMP/EA.

Federal entities:

- International Boundary and Water Commission
- Department of Homeland Security, Border Patrol
- Bureau of Land Management, Yuma Field Office
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Marine Corps

State entities:

- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Arizona Department of Transportation, Yuma District Office

Local entities:

- Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization and Greater Yuma Port Authority
- City of San Luis, Arizona

- Yuma County Development Service, Planning and Zoning

Additionally, Reclamation met with the local Cocopah Indian Tribe on July 11, 2001, and with the local Quechan Tribe on November 6, 2001.

To initiate the public scoping process for this RMP/EA, Reclamation staff conducted two open houses in Yuma, Arizona, on November 7, 2001, and one open house in San Luis, Arizona, on November 8, 2001. Reclamation mailed bilingual (English/Spanish) notices to individuals; organizations; local county, State, and Federal agencies; and tribes in the local area describing the study, announcing the open houses, and requesting written comments. Reclamation also sent a press release announcing the open house to local media. At each open house, Reclamation provided pertinent information to the public and solicited public issues and concerns about the existing and future management of the study area. Several maps were displayed, and numerous handouts were available. A question and answer session followed a formal presentation by Reclamation staff. Approximately 27 individuals attended the open houses. Following the open houses, Reclamation received six written comments; it also received two comment board[2] comments and one information request during the open houses.

Using public input, Reclamation formulated four preliminary alternatives for managing resources in the study area. In May 2002, Reclamation mailed descriptions of these alternatives and how they were developed to those on the mailing list and invited written comments. The public was also invited to attend open houses on June 4, 2002, to receive additional information about the alternatives. In addition, a press release announcing the open houses was sent to local media. About 15 people attended the afternoon open house in Yuma, and about 10 attended the evening open house in San Luis. At each open house, information about the alternatives was displayed. Reclamation staff also discussed the alternatives and responded to individual questions before and after a formal presentation and question and answer session. A bilingual contact person was available by phone before the open houses. Bilingual speakers also were available at the open houses; however, their services were not requested. Following the open houses, Reclamation received nine written comments, which were considered in preparing the draft RMP/EA.

On August 25, 2003, the draft RMP/EA was sent to those on the distribution list for review and comment. The accompanying transmittal letter provided information about the RMP/EA, how to submit comments, and invited attendance at public open houses. The draft RMP/EA was posted on the Yuma Area Office internet site. A news release announcing availability of the draft RMP/EA and the September 23, 2003, open house was provided to area media. A bilingual contact person was available by phone before the open houses. About 15 people attended the afternoon open house in Yuma, and 5 people attended the evening open house in San Luis. Bilingual speakers were available at both open houses. Bilingual assistance was requested and used at the San Luis meeting to translate the formal presentation, discuss the RMP/EA displays and handouts, and answer questions about the draft RMP/EA. In response to public request

[2] At the open houses, Reclamation provided comment boards identifying resources and environmental factors for attendees to write comments on.

at the San Luis open house, all handouts were translated into Spanish and mailed to those requesting them, including, as also requested, extra copies to share with others interested in the RMP/EA. The accompanying Spanish transmittal letter invited comments in Spanish and provided the name and phone number of a bilingual contact person. However, no comments were received from this Spanish-speaking group.

Copies of the 14 comment letters Reclamation received from the public on the draft RMP/EA are included in the comments appendix. The comments contained in these letters were considered in preparing this final RMP/EA.

The final RMP/EA will be available on the internet and mailed to those on the distribution list. A news release announcing its availability will be sent to local media.

Future public involvement opportunities associated with implementing some of the management actions in the RMP will be provided primarily through the PRPU study area working group, as described in chapter VI, and public involvement activities associated with future RMP-related NEPA compliance requirements.

AGENCY CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Reclamation conducted the following agency consultation and coordination in the course of preparing this document.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as Amended

Reclamation initiated consultations required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 800) to identify cultural resources within the study area. On December 13, 2001, Reclamation sent a letter to the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) initiating consultation under Sections 6 and 7 of 36 CFR 800 (attachment C). In February 2002, Reclamation sent letters to the appropriate Indian tribes to notify them of its proposed action and to seek assistance in identifying archeological sites or traditional cultural properties, including Indian sacred sites, within the study area and to learn if the tribes have any related cultural resource management concerns (attachment C). Reclamation received responses from five tribes: Fort Mojave Indian Tribe (AhaMaKav Culture Society), the Cocopah Indian Tribe, the Hopi Tribe, the Tohono O'odham Nation, and the Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe. Reclamation replied to these five tribes in February 2003 to thank them for their input and to notify them about the upcoming release of the draft RMP/EA. On August 25, 2003, Reclamation sent copies of the draft RMP/EA to the SHPO and all the Indian tribes on the distribution list for review and comment. No comments were received. Reclamation will continue consultation with the tribes and the SHPO during the planning period before implementing RMP management actions that could potentially affect unidentified archeological resources or traditional cultural properties, including Indian sacred sites.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958, as Amended, and Endangered Species Act of 1973, as Amended

Reclamation consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) as required by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958, as amended, (FWCA) and Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). On July 24, 2001, Reclamation sent a memorandum to the Service requesting a threatened and endangered species list for the study area (attachment C). On August 17, 2001, the Service sent a list of threatened, endangered and candidate species potentially occurring in the project area (attachment C and table V-1, shown later in this report). On August 25, 2003, Reclamation sent a copy of the draft RMP/EA to the Service for review and comment. Comments received from the Service in a letter dated September 19, 2003, were used in drafting the final RMP/EA.

Indian Trust Assets

In a letter dated February 5, 2002, Reclamation contacted the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and area tribes about Indian trust assets within the study area. In response, BIA advised Reclamation that it had not identified any trust assets in the study area. The Fort Mojave Indian Tribe did not identify any trust assets within the study area. The Hopi Tribe advised Reclamation they have interests in the Little Colorado and Colorado Rivers.

On August 25, 2003, the draft RMP/EA was provided to BIA and area tribes for review and comment. No comments were received from the BIA or area tribes. During implementation of the RMP, Reclamation will be in contact with the BIA and area tribes; should trust assets be identified, potential impacts will be identified, analyzed, and action taken to avoid adverse impacts. If adverse impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation will be implemented.

Adjacent Landowners

Reclamation must coordinate its planning efforts with Federal, State, and local entities to ensure that Reclamation's land uses are compatible with adjacent land uses (public and private). Therefore, Reclamation contacted several adjacent landowners during the preparation of the RMP/EA and gathered information about existing and future uses of those lands. Reclamation contacted the following entities: BLM, Marine Corps (Barry M. Goldwater Range), city of San Luis, city of Yuma, and individuals who have water rights for certain fee-acquired and State of Arizona leased lands within the exterior boundary of the study area.

OTHER RELATED ACTIVITIES

- The Yuma County Airport Authority contracted with Coffman Associates, Inc. (airport consultants) to prepare an airport master plan for Rolle Airfield, located 4 nautical miles northeast of the city of San Luis, Arizona. The master plan and associated environmental evaluation were completed in March 2001. The master plan is a comprehensive analysis of airport needs and alternatives intended to direct the future development of the airfield's potential. Currently, the airfield is located on Reclamation lands leased to the county and primarily supports local crop dusting activities.

- Through a contract with Reclamation, an environmental assessment for the establishment of a new commercial port-of-entry was completed in September 2001. The proposed port-of-entry will be located approximately 5 miles east of the current port-of-entry at San Luis, Arizona, and will be built on a 339-acre site owned by the Greater Yuma Port Authority. A new commercial port-of-entry is needed because the existing facility is unable to process the current level of activity resulting from increased population in the area and increased trade between the United States and Mexico.

- In May 2001, the city of San Luis, Arizona, through a contractor, distributed the San Luis General Plan 60-day Review Draft for public review. The general plan is intended to guide development of the city for the next 20 to 25 years. Even though the lands within the study area remain in Federal ownership, the city of San Luis has annexed certain lands within the study area and included them in its long-range planning strategies, as addressed in its general plan. Reclamation has provided comments on the general plan to the city of San Luis.

- The Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) is preparing an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the Barry M. Goldwater Range east of the study area. One of the MCAS's main concerns, which the MCAS plan will address, is the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard Conservation Agreement. The MCAS encourages joint consideration and Reclamation support regarding the conservation plan. (Also see chapter II, "Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard Interagency Coordinating Committee.")

- The Federal Highway Administration is preparing an environmental assessment for the construction of the proposed State Route 195 (SR195) along County Road 23 (23rd Street) through the study area. The proposed SR195 is commonly referred to as the Area Service Highway (ASH). The proposed SR195 will be a four-lane divided highway that will require a 200-foot easement. The highway will have limited access; however, reasonable and safe access will be provided to those areas that already have access. Once construction of the proposed SR195 is authorized, it will be completed over an 8-year period.

- The U.S. Border Patrol has implemented a national initiative to increase its protective/security zone north along the United States-Mexico border from 90 feet to 150 feet. This initiative would involve lands within the study area. An appropriate level of NEPA compliance activities will accompany this initiative.