

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Avenue 50 Canal Crossing Project

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Yuma Area Office

Introduction and Proposed Action

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and based on the following, the Bureau of Reclamation has determined that implementation of the Proposed Action (the Avenue 50 Canal Crossing Project or “project”) to construct a road and utility crossing over the Coachella Branch of the All-American Canal (Canal) would not result in a significant impact on the quality of the human and natural environment. The project consists of a number of temporary and permanent features including:

- Construction of a temporary bypass channel, cofferdams, and other temporary structures to divert flows from the Canal for construction;
- Permanent box culvert in the Canal, utility extensions, and drainage improvements; and
- Roadway crossing the Canal

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) provides details on the proposed action and an analysis of the potential impacts and should be used as a companion document to this Finding of No Significant Impact.

The Canal crossing is a necessary step to facilitate future development of the Avenue 50 Extension Project, which proposes to link existing Avenue 50 west of the Canal to a future interchange east of the Canal at Interstate 10. The purpose of the proposed Avenue 50 Extension project is to improve circulation and highway access to the City of Coachella (City) and establishing new connectivity to areas within the project vicinity.

Resource Analysis

The analysis presented in the EA focused on those resource areas identified as potentially affected by the alternatives considered, including the No Action, Reclamation identified several best management practices (BMPs) to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects that may result from the Proposed Action. A brief summary of the environmental commitments and practices the City and/or its Contractor has committed to are listed below:

Air Quality

- Vehicle and equipment traffic would be limited to paved or graveled roads as much as possible.
- Vehicle speed shall not exceed 15 miles per hour within the construction limits.
- Where equipment traffic, excavation, or demolition is required outside of paved or graveled roads, water or soil binders would be applied to exposed surfaces.

- Equipment should be properly maintained to minimize exhaust emissions, and equipment idling would be limited.
- Ground disturbing activities would cease temporarily when wind speeds at the site exceed 20 miles per hour.

Biological Resources

- A qualified biologist shall be retained to conduct pre-construction surveys for burrowing owls within the construction area, and adjacent areas within 500 feet of the development footprint, or to the edge of the property if less than 500 feet, no less than 14 days prior to any ground-disturbing activities.
- The pre-construction surveys shall be approved by the City of Coachella Director of Development Services and conducted in accordance with current survey protocols provided in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (March 7, 2012).
- In the event a burrowing owl is found to be present onsite during the pre-construction survey, the following applicable avoidance measures, derived from the guidelines of the Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (March 7, 2012), shall be implemented:
 - Avoid disturbing occupied burrows during the breeding nesting period, from February 1 through August 31. If burrows are occupied by breeding pairs, an avoidance buffer shall be established by a qualified biologist. The size of such buffers is generally a minimum of 300 feet, but may increase or decrease depending on surrounding topography, nature of disturbance and location and type of construction. The size of the buffer area will be determined by a qualified biologist. Continued monitoring will be required to confirm that the specified buffer is adequate to permit continued breeding activity.
 - Avoid impacting burrows occupied during the nonbreeding season by migratory or non-migratory resident burrowing owls.
 - Avoid direct destruction of occupied burrows through chaining (dragging a heavy chain over an area to remove shrubs) or disking.
 - Develop and implement a worker awareness program to increase the onsite worker's recognition of and commitment to burrowing owl protection.
 - Place visible markers near burrows to ensure that equipment and other machinery does not collapse occupied burrows.
 - Do not fumigate, use treated bait, or other means of poisoning nuisance animals in areas where burrowing owls are known or suspected to occur.
 - If an occupied burrow is present within the development area, the Project Applicant shall ensure that a clearance mitigation plan is prepared in accordance with the Staff Report and is approved by the CDFW prior to implementation. This plan will specify the procedures for confirmation and exclusion of non-breeding owls from occupied burrows, followed by subsequent burrow destruction. There shall also be provisions for maintenance and monitoring to ensure that owls do not return prior to construction. Breeding owls shall be avoided until the breeding cycle is complete.

- The project site should be cleared of vegetation outside the general bird nesting season (February 1 through August 31) to minimize potential conflicts with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). In the event that vegetation is not removed outside the bird nesting season, a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist three (3) days prior to vegetation removal. If nesting birds protected by the MBTA are found, the biologist shall prescribe avoidance measures to be approved by the City of Coachella Director of Development Services, such as a construction buffer, until the nesting activity is concluded. The specific details of these measures depend on such factors as the species, nesting stage, topography, and type of adjacent work. Any specified buffer less than 300 feet will require continued monitoring until nesting is complete to verify its adequacy for preventing nest failure due to construction disturbance.

Cultural Resources

- The City shall enter into an agreement with applicable Tribal Historic Preservation Officer to arrange for a Native American monitoring plan and a treatment and disposition plan.
- If during the course of any activities associated with the implementation of the Proposed Action any sites, buildings, structures, or objects not addressed in this assessment are discovered, activities would cease in the vicinity of the resource. Reclamation's Environmental Group Manager and project archaeologist would be notified immediately. Reclamation would ensure that the stipulations of 36 CFR Part 800.11 are satisfied before activities in the vicinity of the previously unidentified property resume.

Indian Trust Assets

No mitigation measures are proposed.

Environmental justice and socio-economic Conditions

No mitigation measures are proposed.

Hazardous Materials and Solid Waste

- Mitigation actions designed to limit the potential impact of hazardous materials or solid waste would be implemented according to State and Federal regulations.
- A site-specific contingency spill plan shall be developed and implemented. The plan shall consist of reporting guidelines in the event of a spill, BMPs applicable to the hazardous materials, and employee training in the use of required equipment and proper handling of potentially hazardous materials.
- Hazardous materials used for this project shall be contained within vessels engineered for safe storage.
- Staging areas for refueling of equipment shall be located away from the Canal to prevent any accidental fuel leakage from contaminating surface water, groundwater, or soils.

Noise

- Compliance with construction time periods specified in Chapter 7.04, Noise Control, and Section 7.04.075, Construction Activities, of the City's Municipal Code are considered adequate to reduce construction-related noise impacts and no additional mitigation is required.

Water Resources

No mitigation measures are required. However, appropriate BMPs shall be implemented during construction in conjunction with a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, to protect water resources in the project area. No refueling equipment should be permitted within the Canal area, and staging areas shall be located outside the Canal areas.

- Should an accident or spills occur, the City would implement a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures Plan (SPCCP) to contain and/or remove contamination to groundwater.

Geology and Soils

The following mitigation actions designed to limit the potential impact on geology and soils would be implemented according to State and Federal regulations:

- Preparation of an area-specific Geotechnical Study shall be submitted to the City for review and approval by the City Engineer.

Visual Resources

All development in the City is required to adhere to lighting requirements contained in the City's Municipal Code, including the following: Chapter 16.28.150(L) (Improvements and Grading); Chapter 17.56.010(J)(2)(e); (Signs); 17.54.010 (Off-Street Parking and Loading); Chapter 17.36.030(F) and (H), and 17.36.140(7) (Specific Plan District); and Chapter 17.62.010(17) (Site Plans). These measures are uniformly applied to development in the City.

Floodplain

No mitigation measures are proposed.

Traffic and Transportation

Construction-related impacts would be minimized with implementation of a Traffic Management Plan during the project's construction phase.

Cumulative Effects

No additional mitigation (beyond those included above) are proposed.

NEPA Finding

Based on the analysis of the Environmental Impacts, BMPs and environmental commitments, as presented in the EA , Reclamation has concluded that implementation of the Proposed Action (Canal Crossing) does not pose a significant adverse impact to the quality of the human and natural environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

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Yuma Area Office

12-19-2017
Date