

---

## **CHAPTER 4**

---

1 **4 OTHER NEPA CONSIDERATIONS**

2 **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

3 NEPA requires that impacts to resources from proposed federal actions include the  
4 perspectives of cumulative impacts, the relationship between short-term uses of the  
5 environment and long-term productivity, and irreversible and irretrievable commitments of  
6 resources. While an attempt was made to incorporate those considerations in the discussion  
7 for each resource, they are summarized here in recognition of the emphasis they are given in  
8 NEPA and the CEQ regulations.

9 **4.2 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

10 A cumulative impact is an impact that results from the incremental impact of an action when  
11 added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what  
12 agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts  
13 can result from individually minor, but collectively significant actions taking place over a  
14 period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

15 As discussed in Chapter 1, Reclamation has adopted the policy of transferring the title of  
16 projects to individual districts if the transfer could assure operational stability, protection of  
17 federal investments, and compliance with applicable laws, contracts and agreements. To  
18 date, a number of title transfers have been completed by Reclamation, and others are  
19 currently authorized or under consideration. This cumulative impact analysis does not  
20 attempt to examine the general cumulative effects that may be associated with the  
21 disposition of Reclamation lands not included in the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative  
22 considered in this DEIS. Although such disposition may result in a cumulative decrease in  
23 lands under federal ownership, the implementation of the title transfer program under the  
24 National Performance Review is not the subject of the current Proposed Action/Preferred  
25 Alternative, and therefore, cumulative impacts that may be associated with the program are  
26 beyond the scope of this document.

27 Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Proposed Action would not result in changes in  
28 operation of the Division facilities or changes in water consumption or quality of return  
29 flows from the District. As such, no cumulative impacts to Colorado River water resources,  
30 including water quality in the Yuma-Transboundary area, would occur.

31 Also, the future uses of the land proposed for transfer may result in cumulative land use  
32 impacts when considered in combination with the effects of development by others (existing  
33 and planned) within the project area. Up to 9,800 acres of currently unused, vacant transfer  
34 lands have been identified as candidate lands for residential, commercial, or enhanced  
35 agricultural development. Currently, proposed development of these parcels include a golf

1 course near the Town of Wellton, and the construction of the proposed Wellton-Mohawk  
2 Generating Facility, combined-cycle power plant near Ligurta in the western portion of the  
3 District. As discussed in Chapter 1, a separate NEPA review of the proposed power plant is  
4 currently underway. The issue rests on whether development of some transferred lands  
5 would be additive to development on the private and state lands available for development.  
6 The finding of the land use analysis in Section 3.2 is that the Proposed Action/Preferred  
7 Alternative would not be expected to increase the amount or rate of development that is  
8 anticipated within the project area. Consequently, the Proposed Action would not be  
9 expected to contribute cumulatively to changes in land use within the project area.

10 Development within the county can also result in impacts to other resources in varying  
11 degrees. Yuma County is the primary land management agency that would have jurisdiction  
12 over lands that may be acquired by the District and subsequently developed by a private  
13 entity. In the 2010 Plan, the county has identified issues and included specific measures to  
14 address any potential concerns. The 2010 Plan discusses issues associated with water  
15 resources, air quality, noise pollution, solid waste disposal, hazardous wastes, renewable  
16 energy, agricultural resources, silvaculture areas, cultural resources, environmental land use  
17 designations, geological resources and hazards, biological resources, and soils. The  
18 Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative would not affect the level of development anticipated  
19 in the 2010 Plan, and therefore no additional impacts would occur with implementation of  
20 the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative beyond those that would occur from development  
21 in the absence of the Proposed Action. The recent establishment of the District as a Yuma  
22 County Rural Planning Area is expected to strengthen the area's compliance with the Yuma  
23 County's 2010 Plan. No additional cumulative impacts have been identified.

#### 24 **4.3 SHORT-TERM USES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LONG-TERM** 25 **PRODUCTIVITY**

26 NEPA requires consideration of the relationship between short-term uses of the environment  
27 and long-term productivity associated with a proposed action. The Proposed  
28 Action/Preferred Alternative is an administrative action that would not result in a direct  
29 physical change to the environment. The current uses of the irrigation, drainage, and flood  
30 control facilities of the Division would continue under the Proposed Action. Currently, lands  
31 owned by Reclamation within the District are either rights-of-way for irrigation facilities  
32 and the Gila River Flood Channel, or they are vacant lands within the District. Under the  
33 Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative, the rights-of-way and Gila River Flood Channel  
34 lands would continue to be used as they are at present during both the short- and long-term.

35 The Proposed Action would likely result in as much as 1,400 acres of vacant land in  
36 scattered tracts in agricultural areas being made available to farmers with adjacent land as  
37 discussed in Section 3.2. This change in use would increase the efficiency of farming  
38 operations in the District and would have little impact on the general landscape inasmuch as

1 the lands are in or adjacent to established agricultural areas. In addition, as noted above, up  
2 to 8,400 acres of transfer lands have been identified as candidate lands for residential or  
3 commercial development, and may be made available to other parties for that purpose. Such  
4 use of these lands would increase the long-term productivity of the lands, but would reduce  
5 the development of lands in private and state ownership.

#### 6 **4.4 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES**

7 *Irreversible commitments* are decisions affecting renewable resources such as soils, wetlands  
8 and waterfowl habitat. Such decisions are considered irreversible because their  
9 implementation would affect a resource that has deteriorated to the point that renewal can  
10 occur only over a long period of time or at great expense, or because they would cause the  
11 resource to be destroyed or removed.

12 *Irretrievable commitment* of natural resources means loss of production or use of resources  
13 as a result of a decision. It represents opportunities forgone for the period of time that a  
14 resource cannot be used. Irretrievable refers to the permanent loss of a resource including  
15 production, harvest, or use of natural resources. For example, production or loss of  
16 agricultural lands can be irretrievable, while the action itself may not be irreversible.

17 The transfer of Division works, facilities, and lands from the federal government to the  
18 District would not cause any direct physical impacts to existing biological, cultural, or  
19 physical resources. Because the title transfer, in and of itself, would not result in any  
20 operational changes or other physical impacts that would irreversibly or irretrievably  
21 commit renewable resources, such as soils, wetlands, or habitat, there would be no direct  
22 irreversible or irretrievable commitment of such resources from this federal action. Other  
23 land use decisions occurring after the title transfer may follow. However, because these  
24 decisions are vague, speculative, and will depend on a number of future political, planning,  
25 zoning, and economic factors, they can not be solely attributed to this federal title transfer  
26 action, but instead will result from the outcomes of these future, uncertain decisions and  
27 processes.

28

1

*--This page left intentionally blank--*