

# **Finding of No Significant Impact**

## **Final Environmental Assessment**

### **Reclaimed Water Distribution Cheney Purple Pipe Project Spokane County, Washington**

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region**

**CPN FONSI # 22-08**

## **Introduction**

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the potential environmental impacts that could result from the Reclaimed Water Distribution Cheney Purple Pipe Project (Purple Pipe Project). This project proposes to upgrade the City of Cheney's (City or Cheney) Wastewater Treatment and Reclamation Facility (WTRF), including improvements to the existing reclaimed water distribution system, to produce and convey Class A reclaimed water. The reclaimed water will be used to irrigate turf grass and landscape at city parks, athletic fields, and school grounds.

As a reclaimed water project with a Reclamation-approved Title XVI feasibility study, the proposed project was eligible to compete for, and was ultimately awarded funds under, Reclamation's Title XVI WIIN Act Water Reclamation and Reuse Projects grant program. The money awarded through this program was appropriated through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. One of the stipulations of the Title XVI grant program is that environmental compliance must be completed prior to ground-disturbing activities and, as the lead agency, Reclamation is solely responsible for determining the appropriate level of NEPA compliance. As the grant applicant and to maintain eligibility to compete for Title XVI grant funds, Cheney, in partnership with Reclamation, prepared the EA to analyze potential environmental impacts that could result from the Purple Pipe Project.

## **Background**

Reclamation's WaterSMART Program supports cooperative work with states, Tribes, and local entities as they plan for and implement actions to increase water supply through investments to

modernize existing infrastructure and avoid potential water conflicts. Title XVI of Public Law 102-575 (Title XVI) provides authority for Reclamation's water recycling and reuse program where Reclamation identifies and investigates opportunities to reclaim and reuse wastewaters and impaired ground and surface water in the 17 Western States and Hawaii. Title XVI includes funding for the planning, design, and construction of water recycling and reuse projects in partnership with local government entities. Cheney is applying for federal funding assistance through a Fiscal Year 2022 WaterSMART Title XVI grant.

The EA examined the potential environmental impacts of the City's proposed Purple Pipe Project in Cheney, Washington. The City completed the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process in 2016 with a determination of no significant impact for the first two phases of the project proposed in the EA. The City is located approximately 17 miles southwest of downtown Spokane, Washington. The pipeline route crosses through properties of the City of Cheney, Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroads, and the Cheney School District. The City will obtain all required permits (see Table 4-1 in the EA).

Operation and maintenance of the collection and treatment process at the existing WTRF is performed by the Cheney Wastewater Division. The Cheney wastewater collection system consists of more than 40 miles of sewer main lines, as well as 850 manholes and 2 lift stations. Municipal wastewater is conveyed through the system to the WTRF. The WTRF is designed as an advanced secondary treatment plant, meaning that the system removes the biodegradable organic matter from the sewage while also reducing the level of impurities in the wastewater below levels that are attainable through just secondary or biological treatments. The WTRF utilizes biological removal of nutrients, solids, and organics, and secondary clarification prior to final Class B effluent (i.e., liquid waste or sewage) discharge to five wetland cells totaling more than 100 acres (see Figure 2-1 in the EA for the location of the wetlands). The wetlands serve as a tertiary (i.e., final polishing) enhancement for the Class B effluent that is discharged from the WTRF.

The current system provides for the immediate demands of the municipality, providing domestic water for all City needs, both household and irrigation. With improvements, the system has the potential to produce Class A (non-potable) reclaimed water for irrigation use, and, in turn, reduce the pumping of groundwater from the local Grande Ronde Aquifer, reducing the decline in the water table due to extraction of water from the aquifer that exceeds the speed at which the aquifer is naturally recharged (see Chapter 1 of the EA for greater detail).

## **Purpose and Need**

Reclamation's purpose for the Proposed Action, is to fulfill the requirements of the associated WaterSMART Title XVI grant. Cheney must have NEPA coverage before it conducts ground-breaking activities to maintain eligibility for Title XVI. The City's Class A reclaimed water system is a viable long-term solution that:

- 1) provides a sustainable irrigation source that does not involve depleting or pumping the Grande Ronde Aquifer;

- 2) recharges the Grande Ronde Aquifer by allowing irrigation water to infiltrate into the groundwater sub-surface; and
- 3) enhances water security by freeing up water that can be used elsewhere, such as for drinking water.

The need for the Proposed Action arises from declining aquifer levels and summer irrigation demands that exceed potable water supply. Over the years, multiple planning studies have been completed to assess and support a recommendation to expand the City's reclaimed water distribution system, as detailed in Table 1-1 in the EA.

## **Alternatives**

The range of alternatives developed for the EA is based on the purpose and need for the project. The alternatives analyzed include a No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action. The City of Cheney is funding Phases 1 and 2 of the Proposed Action (see Section 1.2 of the EA for details on previously completed environmental reviews). Reclamation proposes to provide funding via a WaterSMART Title XVI grant to the City for Phases 3 and 4.

## **Proposed Action/Selected Alternative**

The City of Cheney is funding Phases 1 and 2 of the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative (see Section 2.2 of the EA for details on project phases). Reclamation proposes to provide funding via a WaterSMART Title XVI grant to the City for Phases 3 and 4. The Purple Pipe Project proposes to upgrade Cheney's WTRF to produce and convey Class A reclaimed water (non-potable) to irrigate turf grass and landscape at city parks, athletic fields, and school grounds. This would reduce the peak demand on the City's potable water system during the summer (see Figure 2-1 of the EA for the pipe route and delivery sites). During the irrigating months, reclaimed water would be diverted from the storage reservoir to the reclaimed water pump station and then pumped to the irrigation sites. During the non-irrigating months, the reclaimed water would be routed from the storage reservoir to the existing wetland cells.

## **No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not provide WaterSMART Title XVI funding. Cheney would continue to operate the WTRF and reclaimed water distribution system under the current configuration and uses.

## **Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact**

Reclamation, based upon review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA and supporting documentation, has determined that the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative – to provide funding via a WaterSMART Title XVI grant to the City of Cheney – does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

## Potentially Affected Environment

In considering the potentially affected environment (Per 40 CFR § 1501.3(b)(1)), Reclamation considered the affected area and its resources as appropriate to the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1. Resources determined to be unaffected by the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action

Resources Eliminated	Rationale for Why Resources are Unaffected by the Proposed Action
Geology and Soils; Mineral Resources	There are no important geological features or mineral resources in the Project Study Area. Soils would be managed following the environmental commitments identified in the EA. Therefore, there would be no impact to these resources from the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action.
Wilderness Area; Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no designated wilderness areas or wild and scenic rivers within the Project Study Area. The closest designated wild and scenic river is the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River, located over 200 miles away. Therefore, there would be no impact to these resources from the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action.
Prime and Unique Farmland	There is no designated prime or unique farmland within the Project Study Area. Therefore, there would be no impact to this resource from the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action.
Floodplains	There are no Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated floodplains within the Project Study Area. Therefore, there would be no impact to this resource from the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action.
Visual Resources	Many of the project components (e.g., new pump station) are adjacent to the existing WTRF, are consistent with the existing infrastructure, and would not change the viewshed or aesthetics. The remaining components (e.g., buried underground distribution pipe system) would not be visible to the public following construction. Therefore, there would be no impact to this resource from the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action.
Recreation	The parks and playfields are currently irrigated with potable water. Irrigation with Class A reclaimed water (non-potable water) allows for the same activities as irrigation with potable water, i.e., no change to recreational activities would occur. Therefore, there would be no impact to this resource from the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action.

Table 2. Summary of No Action and Proposed Action resource impacts

Resource	Summary of Impacts
Wetlands and Riparian Areas	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on wetlands or riparian areas. The Proposed Action would have no significant direct or indirect impacts on wetlands or riparian areas.
Noxious Weeds and Vegetation	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on noxious weeds or vegetation. The Proposed Action would have no significant direct impacts on noxious weeds or vegetation. The implementation of construction best management practices (BMPs) during re-seeding efforts would ensure no significant indirect impacts to vegetative communities.
Hydrology	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on surface waters. The No Action Alternative could have potential impacts to groundwater availability in the Grande Ronde Aquifer. During the construction phase of the Proposed Action, it is expected that there would be no direct impact to hydrology. However, the Proposed Action is anticipated to have a beneficial indirect impact on groundwater hydrology.
Water Rights	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on water rights. The Proposed Action would have no direct impacts to water rights during construction. However, the anticipated reduction in groundwater withdrawal (i.e., approximately 1 million gallons per day) during the irrigation season may allow the City to maintain their existing water rights for a longer period. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have potential beneficial indirect impacts on the City's water rights.
Water Quality	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on water quality. The Proposed Action would have no adverse direct impact on water quality. Reclaimed water will increase the quantity of potable groundwater; therefore, it is anticipated that the Proposed Action would have potential beneficial indirect impacts on water quality.
Cultural Resources and Sacred Sites	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on cultural resources or sacred sites. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impacts on cultural resources or sacred sites.
Indian Trust Assets	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on Indian Trust Assets. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impacts on Indian Trust Assets.
Paleontological Resources	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on paleontological resources. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impacts on paleontological resources.
Health and Safety	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on health and safety. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impacts on health and safety.
Air Quality	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on air quality. The Proposed Action would have no significant direct or indirect impacts on air quality.

Resource	Summary of Impacts
Noise	The No Action Alternative would have no impact on noise. The Proposed Action would have no significant direct impact on noise. After construction was completed, noise levels would return to normal and there would be no indirect impact to noise.
Climate	Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would have no effect on climate change. It is anticipated that the Proposed Action will have no significant direct impact to the climate. The Proposed Action plans to decrease groundwater pumping by using Class A reclaimed water for irrigation on selected parks and playfields, rather than the current use of potable groundwater. Therefore, the Proposed Action is anticipated to have an insignificant beneficial indirect impact on effects related to climate change. It is anticipated that climate change would have no direct or indirect impacts on the Proposed Action.
Fish and Wildlife Resources; Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species	Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented and therefore would have no effect on fish and wildlife resources, or on threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impact on fish and wildlife resources, or on threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.
Environmental Justice	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on environmental justice. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impact on environmental justice.
Socioeconomics	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on socioeconomics. The Proposed Action should have no direct or indirect impact on socioeconomics.
Environmental Health and Safety	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on environmental health and safety. The Proposed Action should have no direct or indirect impact on environmental health and safety risks.
Public Safety	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on public safety. The Proposed Action would have no direct or indirect impacts on the public safety of the Cheney community.
Access and Transportation	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on access or transportation. The Proposed Action would have no significant direct impact and no indirect impacts on access and transportation in the Cheney community.
System Operations	The No Action Alternative would have no effect on system operations. There may be short-term effects as a result of the Proposed Action, but they are anticipated to have no significant direct impact on system operations. The Proposed Action would have no significant indirect impact on system operations.

Cheney is located in Spokane County, approximately 17 miles southwest of downtown Spokane, Washington and has an estimated year-round population of 12,522. The project study area (19.8 acres in total) includes the WTRF, the proposed Class A Reclaimed Water Pipeline (2.5 miles in length, plus a 25 -foot buffer), and associated construction staging areas (see Figure 2-1 in the EA). The Project Study Area includes residential and commercial land use, as well as public safety facilities such as police, fire department services, and health care facilities. The Spokane Transit Authority provides access to and within the City, including two daily bus loops that run through and across portions of the project footprint. To evaluate the potential presence of cultural resources or sacred sites within the Project Study Area, an area of potential effects (APE) was defined in consultation with Washington State's Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and with the Spokane Tribe of Indian's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). Beyond the facility grounds of existing WTRF, the project APE consists of a 12-foot-wide corridor centered on the proposed 2.5-mile-long distribution pipe, which generally runs along existing subsurface water mains that are adjacent to paved roads and sidewalks through downtown and residential areas of Cheney. At locations adjacent to railroad crossings, the project APE expands to 30-foot widths to accommodate exploration associated with the existing railroad infrastructure. The proposed vertical APE is approximately 6six feet below the ground surface, except at railroad crossings where borings may impact up to 15 feet in buried depth (AHS 2020). The project APE has been significantly impacted by previous development.

## **Degree of Effect of the Action**

In considering the degree of the effects (per 40 CFR § 1501.3(b)(2)), Reclamation considered the effects identified below, as appropriate to the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative.

### **Short- and Long-Term Effects**

Table 2 presents a summary of impacts to resources. The implementation of the Proposed Action / Selected Alternative will have no short or long-term significant impacts to analyzed resources.

### **Beneficial and Adverse Effects**

Table 2 presents a summary of impacts to resources. The implementation of the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would yield the following beneficial or adverse effects:

#### ***Hydrology***

During the construction phase, it is expected that there would be no direct adverse impact to hydrology. However, beneficial indirect impacts on groundwater hydrology are anticipated through implementation of the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative.

#### ***Water Rights***

The Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would have no direct adverse impacts to water rights during construction. However, the anticipated reduction in groundwater withdrawal (i.e., approximately 1 million gallons per day) during the irrigation season may allow the City to maintain



their existing water rights for a longer period. Therefore, the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative has potential beneficial indirect impacts on the City's water rights.

### ***Water Quality***

The Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would have no adverse direct impact on water quality. Reclaimed water would increase the quantity of potable groundwater; therefore, it is anticipated that the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would have potential beneficial indirect impacts on water quality.

### ***Climate***

It is anticipated that the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would have no adverse direct impact to the climate. The Proposed Action plans to decrease groundwater pumping by using Class A reclaimed water for irrigation on selected parks and playfields, rather than using potable groundwater for irrigation. Therefore, the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative is anticipated to have an insignificant beneficial indirect impact on climate change related effects. It is anticipated that climate change would have no direct or indirect impacts on the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative.

## **Effects on Public Health and Safety**

Implementation of the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would not modify or impact public safety, access, or transportation, nor affect minority or low-income populations, because of funding or associated construction.

## **Effects that would Violate Federal, State, Tribal or Local Law Protecting the Environment**

Implementation of the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would not violate any federal, state, local, or Tribal law, regulation, or policy imposed for the protection of the environment. The Washington State Department of Ecology (WSDOE) emailed scoping letters to the Spokane Tribe of Indians (STI) and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe (CDA) on September 24, 2020, as part of the cultural resources survey. As required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. § 306108), Reclamation consulted with the STI and CDA Tribes, as they both attach religious and cultural importance to historic properties in the project vicinity. Reclamation's agency official (Talmadge Oxford, Columbia-Cascades Area Office Manager) sent letters to the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers of both Tribes on September 25, 2022. No response was received from either Tribe following the required 30-day review period, which means that Reclamation can consider the Tribes to have no comments about this project as per 36 CFR § 800.3(c)(4). The Washington State Historic Preservation Office did respond and concurred with the Finding of No Adverse Effects, thus completing the Section 106 consultation obligations.



## Cumulative Effects

40 CFR 1508.7 defines cumulative impact as an “impact on the environment which results the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.” The Proposed Action/Selected Alternative would be constructed to support the implementation of upgrades to the WTRF in the reasonably foreseeable future. These upgrades are outlined in Section 2.2 of the EA. Reclamation has confirmed with the City of Cheney that the City has no identified projects that have been through the NEPA (environmental compliance) process that are anticipated to occur over the next 5 years (2022-2027).

Therefore, when the Proposed Action/Selected Alternative is considered in combination with no anticipated new NEPA projects over the next 5 years, nothing incrementally will be added. No cumulative impacts are anticipated, as the project is consistent with the City of Cheney Comprehensive Plan (2017-2037) and the Cheney Municipal Code (July 15, 2021).

WSDOE also maintains a SEPA Register for SEPA and NEPA documents posted by WSDOE since 2000. A cursory review of the WSDOE SEPA Register export found determinations for several projects that are within or near the Project Study Area, as outlined in Section 3.11 of the EA. No cumulative impacts are anticipated when considering the Proposed Action project in combination with other recent proposals in the vicinity.

## Approved:

**SCOTT  
HOEFER**

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