

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Provo Area Office  
Provo, Utah

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

### **Environmental Assessment Interstate Canal Piping Salinity Control Project**

**Sweetwater, Wyoming**

EA-20-016

Recommended by:

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## **I. Introduction**

The Interstate Canal is an unlined canal on the north slope of the Uinta Mountains. In its current condition, the canal loses about 25 percent of its flow to seepage. Water seeped from the canal passes through salt bearing ground formations as it flows into local streams including Burnt Fork, Birch Creek, and the Henrys Fork River and eventually into the Colorado River, degrading the rivers water quality.

The proposed improvements to the Interstate Canal include installing approximately 11.0 miles of underground pressurized pipeline to replace 13 miles of open unlined canal, replacing the canal's diversion structure, headworks, and other associated appurtenances. These improvements would offer decreased salt loading of the Colorado River, increased efficiency of the canal, and reduce maintenance. Extensive feasibility studies and evaluations of potential alternatives have been completed to consider numerous potential alternatives to determine the Proposed Action.

## **II. Alternatives**

The environmental assessment (EA) analyzed two alternatives: the No Action and the Proposed Action.

### No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) would not authorize funding to the applicant. There would be no changes to the canal alignment or structures and an estimated 2,295 tons of salt would continue to reach the Colorado River annually. The Canal would continue to lose water due to seepage and evaporation, maintenance costs would continue to rise, and sedimentation and vegetation would continue to displace the canals capacity.

### Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation will authorize funding to the applicant to install approximately 11 miles of underground pressurized pipe to replace 13 miles of open unlined canal. The Proposed Action consists of four main components:

- 1) a new diversion structure consisting of stream channel modification, a new pipeline headworks, a screening structure, and a covered measurement flume.
- 2) a canal pipeline with a 35cfs capacity located primarily in the canal alignment.
- 3) twelve turnout structures to deliver water to individual farms.
- 4) pipeline appurtenances such as valves, air and vacuum relief valves, vents, drains, and other various components.

These components are described in detail in Section 2.3 of this EA.

## **III. Environmental Commitments**

The commitments found in Chapter 4 of the final EA are incorporated into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by reference and considered part of the Proposed Action. The environmental commitments must be implemented as outlined in the final EA.

#### **IV. Summary of Impacts**

Environmental resources were initially considered in the final EA, but twelve resources were analyzed in detail under a No Action Alternative and a Proposed Action Alternative. Effects to the remaining resources are summarized below.

- **Geology and Soils Resource**-The Proposed Action will have no impact on geological resources since all disturbance will occur in surface soils. Soil compaction, erosion, and loss of productivity will likely occur but will be minimal in the scope of the surrounding habitat.
- **Visual Resources**-The pipeline will be buried, and the site restored to its original condition resulting in improved visual resources. The diversion structure will have long-term visual impacts, but they are minimal as there are no major roads in the vicinity and the site is rarely visited by humans.
- **Cultural Resources**-The Proposed Action will have no adverse effect on cultural resources and historic properties.
- **Hydrology**-The Proposed Action will improve hydrology by increasing efficiency of water delivery and practically eliminating seepage and evaporation losses.
- **Water Quality**-The Proposed Action may temporarily increase sedimentation but will have positive long-term effects of reduced salinity from seepage going into Henrys Fork and the Upper Colorado River Basin.
- **System Operations**-The Proposed Action will have beneficial effects on systems operations by reducing water losses from an open canal and reducing maintenance.
- **Floodplains**-Impacts to flood plains during construction will be minimal and the ground surface will be restored to pre-construction conditions.
- **Wetlands, Vegetation, and Wildlife**-The Proposed Action will not have any negative long-term effects to wetlands. Vegetation and wildlife habitat that rely on canal flow will be lost because of piping the canal. However, mitigation measures will offset these adverse impacts.
- **Special Status Species**-The Proposed Action will cause the loss of some areas of tree and shrub cover habitat which is potential habitat for several special status State listed species. However, the canal will be backfilled to existing, adjacent ground elevation and herbaceous vegetation will establish resulting in a net increase in habitat.
- **Fisheries Resources**-The Proposed Action will have temporary negative impacts to fisheries resources. Fish will be disturbed within the boundaries of construction activities but will likely move to areas unaffected by the Project. Sedimentation could possibly affect fish habitat downstream but will occur during non-spawning seasons.
- **Socioeconomics**-The Proposed Action will have beneficial socioeconomic impacts to the Project area by increasing the water supply to existing shareholders.
- **Access and Transportation**-All negative impacts will be local, for a short time, and cease when construction activities are completed.

#### **V. Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based on a review of the final EA and its supporting documents, implementing the Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the human or natural environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Consequently, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for this Proposed Action.

## **VI. Decision**

The Proposed Action to replace 13 miles of the open, unlined Interstate Canal with 11 miles of underground pressurized pipeline will not significantly affect the human or natural environment as summarized above. Furthermore, the Proposed Action meets the purpose and need identified for the Project and discussed in this EA. The No Action alternative does not meet the purpose or need for the Project. Based on the lack of significant effects to the human environment and because the No Action alternative does not meet the purpose and need of the Project, it is Reclamation's decision, therefore, to implement the Proposed Action as described in the attached EA.