

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

REGINA DROUGHT EMERGENCY WATER WELL FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Albuquerque Area Office
Albuquerque, New Mexico**

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Mission Statements

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes and our commitments to island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Albuquerque Area Office
Albuquerque, New Mexico

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Regina Drought Emergency Water Well
Sandoval County, New Mexico

For Anita Guin

Manager, Environment Division

12-10-09

Date

José [Signature]

Area Manager, Albuquerque, New Mexico

12/14/09

Date

FONSI Number: AAO-09-010

Summary of the Proposed Action

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) will provide funding to drill a water well, approximately 2,690 feet deep, through existing alluvium, sandstone, and shale, to the Tertiary sandstone of the Ojo Alamo Formation (proposed action). Shallower aquifers encountered during drilling will also be evaluated and may be utilized. The well would be drilled on a site prepared by the Regina Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association (Association), located approximately 10 miles north of Cuba, New Mexico (project area). A supplemental water supply source would help local residents maintain a reliable domestic water supply during drought or equipment-failure emergencies. The Association will obtain a permit for a supplemental well from the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE).

Water produced by the well would be pumped into the Association's existing water system pipeline and transported to the existing water storage facility. The Association's water storage and distribution lines are already established near the proposed project area to connect to the proposed well. The proposed well would supplement the current, small-capacity well as the primary water supply for the Association.

Background

Record drought in the southwestern United States continues to threaten domestic water supplies with severe shortages. The Association is entirely dependent on one small-capacity groundwater well for its water supply, which provides water to approximately 250 individuals and has a waiting list for new connections. The existing well is approximately 1,500 feet deep and pulls water from the San Jose Formation. The existing well produces less than 50 gallons per minute with several hundred feet of drawdown. The proposed action is needed to supplement the Association's existing water supply and to provide for growing water needs.

Precipitation in the area averages 13 inches per year, but may vary from less than 10 inches to more than 16 inches. The seasonality of the precipitation and the lack of quality surface water sources in the area make a reliable groundwater source extremely important. Prolonged periods of drought, such as the current event, can have a negative impact on groundwater levels, which often requires deeper and more expensive wells. The drought is forecast to continue and, based on the historic record, may be very long. Support for drought emergency well drilling was authorized by the U.S. Congress in Title 1 of the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991.

Environmental Impacts

The following resources and socioeconomic factors were evaluated in detail in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for anticipated impacts from implementation of the drought emergency water well: water resources, Federal and State-listed species, vegetation and wildlife, noxious weeds, soil erosion, air quality, cultural and archaeological resources, Indian trust assets, socioeconomic, environmental justice, and visual resources. These resources are discussed briefly below and in greater detail in the EA document.

Water Resources

There is no information available that indicates the proposed well would impact any wells in the surrounding area. Information provided by the Association indicates the existing well and the currently proposed well would tap into different water sources. New impacts would be less likely because no additional water beyond the Association's existing water rights would be removed. No significant impacts to surface water, water quality, or groundwater from this action are expected. The Association has filed an application with the NMOSE to appropriate 200 acre-feet per annum of additional water rights from aquifers located below the San Jose Formation.

Federal and State Listed Species

No impact would occur to endangered, threatened, or sensitive plant or animal species in the project area.

Vegetation and Wildlife

Soils and vegetation disturbance would be kept to a minimum, vegetation cover would be left undisturbed whenever possible, and disturbed areas would be reseeded with native species. Temporary displacement of wildlife species from increased human presence and noise from the drilling activities would occur in the project area. Wildlife would temporarily leave the project area but should return in a short period following construction. No significant impact to vegetation or wildlife is expected.

Noxious Weeds

Implementation of the proposed action has the potential to result in the introduction and establishment of State-listed and other noxious weed species. However, an aggressive revegetation plan, combined with thorough cleaning of all equipment before arriving at the project area, would minimize that potential.

Soil Erosion

Soils and vegetation disturbance would be kept to a minimum, vegetation cover would be left undisturbed whenever possible, and disturbed areas would be reseeded with native species.

Air Quality

During construction, there would be temporary increases in suspended dust (sediment transfer), resulting from activities such as vehicle traffic. No equipment or facilities requiring permitting through the New Mexico Environment Department Air Quality Bureau are anticipated for the proposed action.

Cultural and Archaeological Resources

There are no known structures or sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places that would be affected by the Proposed Action. In addition, no sacred sites or traditional cultural

properties are known to exist in the project area. If cultural or archaeological resources are encountered during site preparation or drilling activities, work will stop and the Reclamation Area Archaeologist will be notified immediately. Should consultation with Tribes result in the identification of any such sites or properties, Reclamation would then consult with the Tribes concerned to ensure no adverse effects result from the Proposed Action Alternative.

Indian Trust Assets

No Indian Trust Assets have been documented in the project area. Therefore, Reclamation anticipates no impact to Indian Trust Assets resulting from the proposed action.

Socioeconomics

The proposed action would result in the creation of a small number of jobs for site preparation and drilling contractors during the construction and drilling phases of the proposed action.

Environmental Justice

Implementation of the proposed action would not disproportionately (unequally) affect any low-income or minority communities within the project area.

Visual Resources

Visual quality impacts of the proposed action would result from temporary construction activities such as the generation of fugitive dust, increased traffic at the project area, and the visual effects of the drill rig and construction equipment. None of these temporary visual quality impacts are significant on a local or regional scale.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts as a result of the Proposed Action Alternative are expected to be minimal. The proposed action would not be expected to result in any long-term adverse cumulative effects to identified resources. The short-term cumulative effects of construction activities would be small in the overall regional context and would be temporary in nature.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, Reclamation's assessment of Indian Trust Assets and Environmental Justice, and agency and public comment on the Draft EA, Reclamation finds that there would be no significant impacts associated with the proposed action. Reclamation makes this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500). Reclamation has determined that the proposed action does not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the human environment. Therefore, no environmental impact statement would be prepared for the proposed action.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action..... 1

 1.1 Introduction..... 1

 1.2 Background..... 1

 1.3 Proposed Action..... 1

 1.4 Purpose of and Need for Proposed Action..... 1

Chapter 2. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives..... 3

 2.1 Introduction..... 3

 2.2 No Action Alternative..... 3

 2.3 Proposed Action Alternative..... 3

 2.4 Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Analysis 4

Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences..... 5

 3.1 Introduction..... 5

 3.2 Water Resources 6

 No Action Alternative 6

 Proposed Action Alternative 6

 3.3 Federal and State-Listed Species 7

 No Action Alternative 7

 Proposed Action Alternative 7

 3.4 Vegetation and Wildlife..... 7

 No Action Alternative 8

 Proposed Action Alternative 8

 3.5 Noxious Weeds 8

 No Action Alternative 8

 Proposed Action Alternative 8

 3.6 Soil Erosion..... 8

 No Action Alternative 9

 Proposed Action Alternative 9

 3.7 Air Quality 9

 No Action Alternative 9

 Proposed Action Alternative 9

 3.8 Cultural and Archaeological Resources..... 9

 No Action Alternative 10

 Proposed Action Alternative 10

 3.9 Indian Trust Assets (ITAs)..... 10

 No Action Alternative 10

 Proposed Action Alternative 10

 3.10 Socioeconomics 10

 No Action Alternative 10

 Proposed Action Alternative 10

 3.11 Environmental Justice..... 11

 No Action Alternative 11

 Proposed Action Alternative 11



3.12 Visual Resources..... 11
 No Action Alternative 11
 Proposed Action Alternative 11
 3.13 Cumulative Impacts 12
 3.14 Environmental Commitments 12

Chapter 4. Consultation and Coordination..... 13
 4.1 Persons and Agencies Consulted 13

Chapter 5. List of Preparers 14
 5.1 BIO-WEST Staff Contributors. 14
 5.2 Bureau of Reclamation Staff Contributors 14

Chapter 6. References 15

APPENDIX A: THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES LISTS

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC AND AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Summary of Environmental Impacts by Resource for Each Alternative..... 5

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Regina Drought Emergency Water Well Project Area Location Map. 2



Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action

1.1 Introduction

Record drought in the southwestern United States continues to threaten domestic water supplies with severe shortages. The Regina Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association (Association) of New Mexico, is dependent on groundwater for its water supply, which is pumped from an existing small-capacity groundwater well located approximately 10 miles north of Cuba, New Mexico (Figure 1). The existing well depth is approximately 1,500 feet and pulls water from the San Jose Formation, which is composed of sandstones and shales. Prolonged periods of drought can have a negative impact on groundwater levels, often requiring the need for deeper and more expensive wells.

1.2 Background

The Association's existing groundwater well produces less than 50 gallons per minute with several hundred feet of drawdown in the well. A new well is needed to supplement the Association's existing water supply in case of emergency. Precipitation in the area averages about 13 inches per year, but may vary from less than 10 inches for several consecutive years to more than 16 inches. The seasonality of the precipitation and the lack of high-quality surface water sources in the area make a reliable groundwater source extremely important to the Association's members. Support for drought emergency well drilling was authorized by the U.S. Congress in Title 1 of the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991.

1.3 Proposed Action

The Federal action addressed in this Environmental Assessment (EA) would be the funding and development of one domestic groundwater well for the Association and its membership. The proposed drought emergency water well would be drilled by a private contractor, licensed to drill water wells in the State of New Mexico, for the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). The Association will obtain the necessary permit to drill a supplemental water well from the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE). The proposed project area is located on private land near the town of Regina in Sandoval County, New Mexico. The legal description of the well site is: NE ¼ of NW ¼ of Section 28, Township 23 North, Range 01 West, N.M.P.M. The project elevation is approximately 7,550 feet above sea level. The proposed well would tie into the Association's existing domestic water supply system with a short pipeline connection (Figure 1).

1.4 Purpose of and Need for Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide a safe and reliable domestic water source, and for the Association to fully utilize their existing water rights with additional capacity and operational flexibility during drought emergencies. The proposed action is needed because a severe drought is now gripping the southwest United States and will potentially continue into the indeterminate future. The proposed action is also needed to supplement the Association's existing water supply, which is considered inadequate to meet the existing demand.

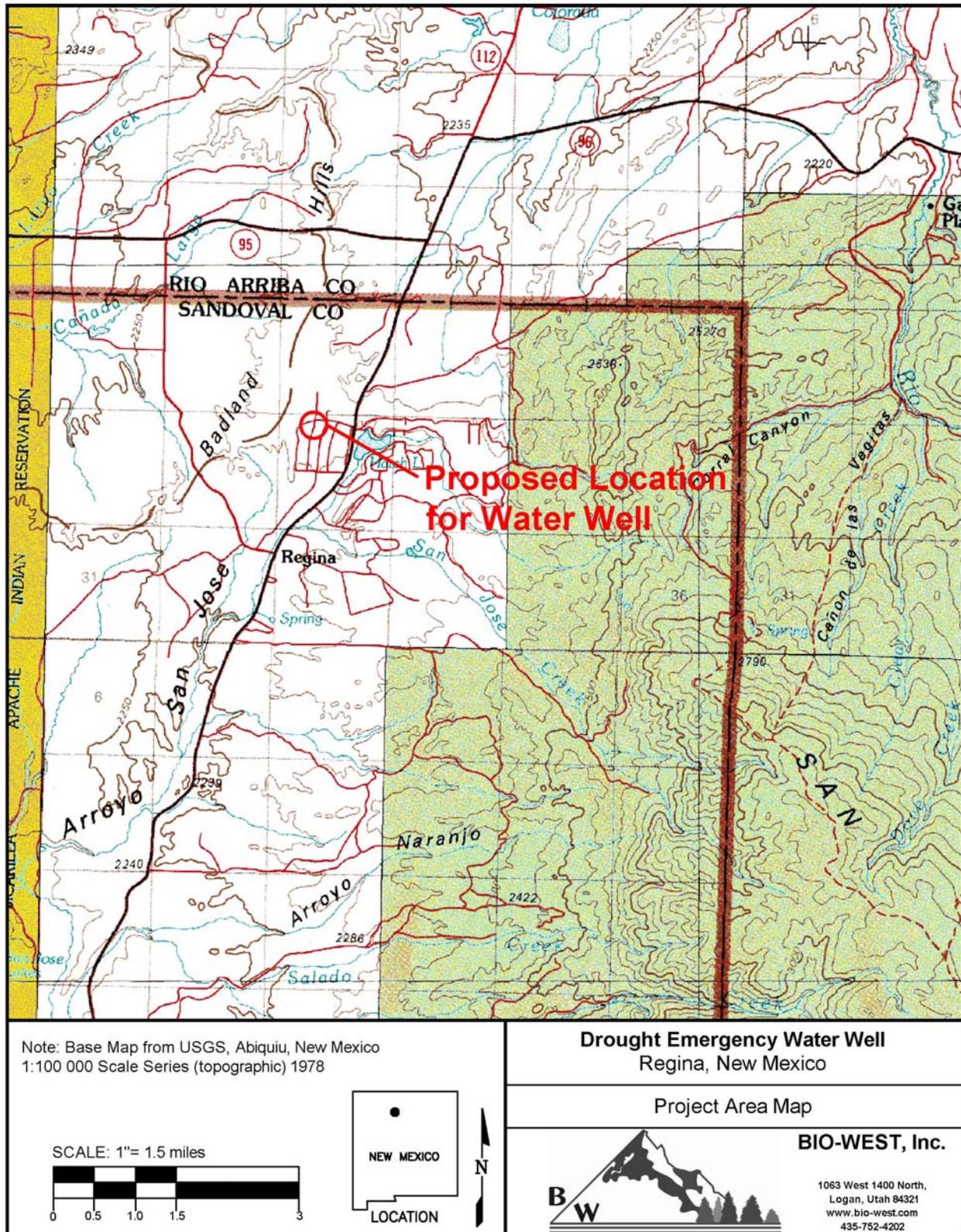


Figure 1. Regina Drought Emergency Water Well Project Area Location Map.

Chapter 2. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the two alternatives analyzed in this EA. Alternative A is the No Action Alternative. Alternative B is the Proposed Action Alternative. Following the alternative descriptions section, the decision making process for advancing or eliminating alternatives is described.

2.2 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative includes not drilling a supplemental groundwater well and continued reliance by the Association on the existing small-capacity groundwater source for domestic water supply. The productivity of the current groundwater well would continue to decline through the drought period, ultimately reducing well yields. The No Action Alternative would prevent additional water connections for the Association’s members and result in additional households on the current waiting list. The current domestic water supply may fall below projected water demand, resulting in water shortages. Water shortages may affect public health and safety, including shortages of water for sanitation and fire fighting. The lack of adequate water could affect the Association’s ability to supply its membership with a reliable water source, which could result in economic decline for the area.

2.3 Proposed Action Alternative

Reclamation contractors would drill one groundwater well, approximately 2,690 feet deep, through the existing alluvium, sandstone, and shale into the Tertiary age sandstone of the Ojo Alamo Formation to tap into the existing subsurface aquifer. Shallower aquifers encountered during well drilling will also be evaluated and may be utilized. A supplemental water supply source would provide additional capacity and operational flexibility for the Association and would help maintain a domestic water supply during drought and declining groundwater levels or equipment failure emergencies. The Association will obtain a permit for a supplemental well from the NMOSE.

Water produced by the proposed well would be pumped into the Association’s existing domestic water system pipeline, and would be transported to the existing water system storage facility. The primary collection and distribution pipelines are already established, although a short segment of pipeline to connect the existing water system to the proposed well would be required (Figure 1). The well site is located on Association-owned land outside of municipal boundaries in Sandoval County. The well site has been previously disturbed by development of the existing road, well, and residences, and by domestic grazing activities. The well site is within an unincorporated area of Sandoval County, which falls within the Rural Residential/Agricultural (RRA) zone district. Current zoning allows for the proposed use and would not require any permits or zone changes for the proposed well (Sandoval County 2009).

The well would be placed on an existing well pad prepared by the Association. The well pad would be approximately 1 acre in size and would be accessed by State Highway 96 and Rincon Road, an existing unpaved road. All drilling fluids and pumped test waters would be contained at the project area. No water or drilling fluids would be allowed to flow into nearby natural drainages. A stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) would be prepared and implemented by the drilling contractor. Any temporary retention structures would be built on previously disturbed land. The proposed well would be 10.75 inches in diameter.

2.4 Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Congressional authorization and funding for the Proposed Action Alternative is specifically for drought emergency domestic water wells. Therefore, no other alternatives were considered.

Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

3.1 Introduction

A review of the two alternatives presented in Chapter 2, in addition to a site visit by resource specialists, resulted in the identification of 11 environmental resources that either must be reviewed by law or that could be affected by either the Proposed Action Alternative or No Action Alternative. This chapter describes the existing conditions of the 11 environmental resources, as well as the potential effects of each alternative on those resources. Cumulative impacts and environmental commitments are also presented in this chapter. A summary of impacts by resource issue for each alternative is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Environmental Impacts by Resource for Each Alternative.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPONENT	ALTERNATIVE		DISCUSSION
	NO ACTION	PROPOSED ACTION	
Air Quality	No	No	Project area is not in a non-attainment zone.
Cultural and Archaeological Resources	No	No	Previously disturbed project location; no cultural resources are known to be present.
Environmental Justice	Yes	No	The "No Action Alternative" would disproportionately affect poorer components of the community, who have fewer alternatives if water is scarce.
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	No	No	None present.
Federal and State listed threatened and endangered species or critical habitat	No	No	No suitable habitat. Species not present.
Floodplains	No	No	None present.
Hazardous Materials	No	No	None present.
Indian Trust Assets	No	No	None present.
Noxious Weeds	No	No	None present.
Soil Erosion	Yes	No	Previously disturbed project location.
Vegetation and Wildlife	No	No	No effect to important vegetation or wildlife species.
Visual Resources	No	Yes	Temporary construction impacts.
Water Resources	No	Yes	Minimal effect to existing groundwater resources. No effect to surface water resources.
Wetlands-Riparian Zones	No	No	Temporary construction impacts.

3.2 Water Resources

There are no perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral drainages that would be affected within the project area. There are no jurisdictional wetlands located within the project area.

A search of the NMOSE water rights database reported four groundwater wells located within 1-mile of the proposed well site. The wells are used for domestic and stock watering purposes. The first well is located within 50-feet of the proposed well location. This well is owned by the Association. This well is 1,500 feet deep and removes water from the San Jose Formation. The second well is located approximately 0.37-mile east of the proposed well site. Upon investigation of this well BIO-WEST discovered a permit was issued to drill the well, however the well was never drilled. The Third well is located approximately 0.96-mile northeast of the proposed well site. Upon investigation of this well BIO-WEST discovered a permit was issued to drill the well, however the well was never drilled. The fourth well is located approximately 0.96-mile southwest of the proposed well site. This well is 160 feet deep and removes water from the shallow unconfined aquifer. No additional groundwater wells are located within the surrounding area.

The estimated static groundwater level in the proposed well is approximately 200 feet below surface grade. The primary target aquifer for the proposed well is the Ojo Alamo Formation. The Ojo Alamo Formation underlies the San Jose Formation and the Nacimiento Formation which is approximately 1,000 feet thick. The Ojo Alamo aquifer is a recharging aquifer. Groundwater from the Ojo Alamo aquifer contains fresh to moderately saline water (Robson and Banta 1995). Dissolved solids concentrations generally increase with distance from the aquifer recharge area (Robson and Banta 1995). Secondary target aquifers include aquifers within the lower part of the San Jose Formation and aquifers within the Nacimiento Formation. Depending on the quantity and quality of the groundwater encountered, water could be withdrawn from any of these aquifers. Secondary target aquifers would be deeper than the existing Association well and would be separated by a confining layer within the San Jose Formation.

No Action Alternative

There would be no effects on surface water resources under the No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the existing Association well would continue to pump groundwater from the San Jose Aquifer to supply water to the Association under their existing water rights. The Association would have no backup supply for drinking water.

Proposed Action Alternative

There would be no effects on surface water resources under the Proposed Action Alternative. The currently proposed well would be drilled to approximately 2,690 feet below the existing land surface into the Ojo Alamo Aquifer. The proposed well would create a new impact on the Ojo Alamo aquifer and potentially additional impacts on the San Jose or Nacimiento Formation aquifers. This impact would have a minimal effect on groundwater resources in the area since it will be deeper than the existing Association well and separated by a confining layer within the San Jose Formation. There are currently no other wells in the area withdrawing water from the aquifers. The proposed well would be used to supplement the Association's municipal water supply infrastructure. No additional water would be removed from the aquifers beyond what is currently allowed under the Association's existing water rights. However, the Association has

filed an application with the NMOSE to appropriate 200 acre-feet per annum of additional water rights from aquifers located below the San Jose Formation.

3.3 Federal and State-Listed Species

Of the seven wildlife species listed as either threatened or endangered in Sandoval County, three are Federally protected and four are protected by the State of New Mexico (Appendix A) (BISON-M 2009). Although critical habitat for the Rio Grande silvery minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*) and Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) have been designated for Sandoval County (USFWS 2001, 2003), no suitable habitat can be found within the project area for either species. No suitable or potentially suitable habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) is present in or adjacent to the proposed project area. Based on species specific habitat requirements, the disturbed nature of the project area, and the lack of suitable habitat, no State or Federally protected species are thought to occur within the approximately 1-acre project area.

According to the Natural Heritage Program of New Mexico, there are no Federally protected vegetation species listed for Sandoval County. However, two plant species are protected at the State level. These include Parish's alkali grass (*Puccinellia parishii*) and the wood lily (*Lilium philadelphicum* var. *andinum*). Both species are listed by the state as endangered (NMNHP 2009). Based on species specific requirements, neither plant species is expected to occur within the project area.

No Action Alternative

There would be no change to the existing conditions and no effects to State or Federally listed species under the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action Alternative

No suitable or potentially suitable habitat exists for any State or Federally listed species within the project area. A "no effect" determination for listed species has been made by a qualified wildlife biologist for the Proposed Action Alternative.

3.4 Vegetation and Wildlife

As reported by Bailey (1995), the project area lies within the Arizona-New Mexico Mountains Semi-Desert – Open Woodlands – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province, which is generally characterized by mixed grasses, chaparral brush, oak-juniper woodland, and piñon-juniper woodland. The project area is best described as disturbed piñon-juniper woodland with intermixed ponderosa pine and pasture grasses. The disturbed areas result from agricultural activities including livestock grazing and pasture cultivation. Mammal species common to this province include black bear (*Ursus americanus*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), mountain lion (*Felis concolor*), coyote (*Canis letrans*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), long-tail weasel (*Mustela frenata*), cottontails (*Sylvilagus auduboni*), and other small mammals.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, existing vegetation, including native and non-native species, would remain in place. The proposed project area would continue to be used for grazing and pasture cultivation. Disturbance-related vegetation species would likely persist and areas void of vegetation would likely be susceptible to erosion from wind and water.

Proposed Action Alternative

Activities associated with implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would not disturb portions of the landscape that are not currently disturbed. Native grasses and wildflowers would be seeded in areas disturbed by construction that are not needed for well operation to re-establish an appropriate vegetative cover. Although construction activities may displace existing wildlife temporarily, most animal species in the project area would be able to return after project completion. Some mortality of less-mobile species would be expected as a result of construction, but not in quantities that would damage local populations.

3.5 Noxious Weeds

No populations of State-listed noxious weeds were observed in the project area during a recent site visit.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no additional ground-disturbing activities would be undertaken. Therefore, there would be no effect on any existing noxious weed infestations.

Proposed Action Alternative

Whenever land is disturbed, the potential exists for the intrusion and establishment of noxious weeds. The Proposed Action Alternative could disturb up to 1 acre of land, depending upon how much space is ultimately needed for well construction and staging activities. To minimize the potential for the continued establishment and spread of State-listed and other noxious weeds, a revegetation plan would be implemented. In addition to re-seeding areas disturbed during construction, the introduction of noxious weed seeds would be minimized by a requirement that all equipment used for the project be pressure washed before arriving at and departing from the project area. As such, the potential for noxious weeds becoming established in the project area over time would be minimal.

3.6 Soil Erosion

Any activities that reduce or eliminate vegetation have the potential to result in soil erosion until vegetation is re-established. The project area has been disturbed as a result of past grazing and residential development activities, and is currently used as pasture for livestock. Grazing and residential development (e.g., home sites and access roads) activities often eliminate or reduce vegetation cover, even if only temporarily, and thus become a potential cause of soil erosion during periods of precipitation runoff. Some limited soil erosion at the project area was observed during recent site visits.

No Action Alternative

Erosion of existing soils within the project area would continue under the No Action Alternative until such time as the vegetation becomes re-established naturally.

Proposed Action Alternative

During construction, the removal of vegetation and disturbance of soil could result in localized soil erosion at the project area. However, standard construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented to minimize runoff during construction. Consequently, most runoff would be contained within the active construction site. Native grasses and wildflowers would be seeded in areas disturbed by construction that are not needed for well operation to re-establish an appropriate vegetative cover. The re-establishment of native vegetation in the project area following construction would ultimately reduce soil erosion. Because the proposed project could result in the disturbance of more than 1 acre of land, a notice of intent (NOI) would be submitted by the contractor under the New Mexico Construction General Permit and a SWPPP would be prepared and implemented.

3.7 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act of 1970, as amended, established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (40 CFR 1 Section 81.332) to protect the public from exposure to dangerous levels of several air pollutants. Sandoval County is in Air Quality Control Regions (AQCRs) 014 and 152, also known as the Four Corners Interstate and Albuquerque-Mid Rio Grande Interstate AQCRs (NMED 2008). The AQCRs 014 and 152 has been classified as an attainment area for all air pollutants identified in the NAAQS (eCFR 2008). Because of this classification, the proposed project is not subject to Environmental Protection Agency requirements for ambient monitoring.

No Action Alternative

There would be no effects to air quality under the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action Alternative

Fugitive dust generation from drilling and grading activities in the project area, along with exhaust emissions from heavy equipment and vehicles working on the project, are the only anticipated effects to air quality during construction. These temporary effects would not be expected to be significantly adverse. Fugitive dust would be suppressed by spreading water over disturbed areas where heavy equipment is working during dry conditions. Exhaust emissions from heavy equipment and vehicles working on the project would dissipate rapidly before leaving the project area. There would be no effects to air quality following completion of construction activities and re-establishment of vegetation in disturbed areas.

3.8 Cultural and Archaeological Resources

Reclamation conducted a check in the Archaeological Records Management Section and found no recorded sites within the proposed project area.

No Action Alternative

There would be no effects to cultural or archaeological resources, or sacred sites, under the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action Alternative

There are no structures or sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places that would be affected by the Proposed Action Alternative. It has been determined that the Proposed Action Alternative would have no effect to cultural or archaeological resources. If cultural or archaeological resources are encountered during site construction or drilling activities, work would stop and the Reclamation Area Archaeologist would be notified immediately. In addition, no sacred sites or traditional cultural properties are known to exist in the project area. However, should consultation with Tribes result in the identification of any such sites or properties, then Reclamation would consult with the Tribes concerned to ensure no adverse effects result from the Proposed Action Alternative.

3.9 Indian Trust Assets (ITAs)

Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) or resources are defined as legal interests in assets held in trust by the U.S. Government for Native American Indian tribes or individual tribal members. Examples of ITAs are lands, minerals, water rights, other natural resources, money, or claims. An ITA cannot be sold, leased, or otherwise alienated without approval of the Federal government. Reclamation consultation with potentially affected Tribes and the Bureau of Indian Affairs has yielded no known ITAs within the project area.

No Action Alternative

There would be no effects to ITAs under the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action Alternative

Because there are no known ITAs within the project area, there would be no effects to ITAs under the Proposed Action Alternative.

3.10 Socioeconomics

According to the most recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Accounts (2008), the annual per capita income for the State of New Mexico in 2006 was \$29,725. The 2005 annual per capita income for Sandoval County was \$27,146. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), 29.4 percent of the residents of Sandoval County were Hispanic or Latino, 1.7 percent were Black or African American, and 16.3 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native in the year 2000.

No Action Alternative

There would be no effects to socioeconomics under the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action Alternative

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would result in the creation of a small number of jobs for contractors during site construction and drilling activities. Construction and

drilling activities are anticipated to take approximately 30 days to complete and would employ two to three individuals during that time period. Assuming materials would be purchased and workers would be employed from the Sandoval County area, the Proposed Action Alternative would result in some minor beneficial effects on the local economy.

3.11 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires that the effects on minority and low-income populations within a project area be given special consideration to determine if the proposed action would result in disproportionate adverse effects to their communities.

No Action Alternative

A water shortage can be expected to have an impact on the poorest members of a community first; those least able to afford alternative water sources or unable to relocate to areas without water shortages. The No Action Alternative could lead to insufficient water for some members of the community during an emergency situation, and would likely impact those with the lowest incomes. Insufficient water may affect health, safety and welfare of the community's poor through lack of water for bathing, clothes washing, cleaning and fire fighting.

Proposed Action Alternative

No adverse effects to low-income or minority populations are anticipated under the Proposed Action Alternative. Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would provide a reliable water supply for the Association and its members in times of drought.

3.12 Visual Resources

Visual quality in this portion of Sandoval County varies somewhat, depending on the specific site in question and the viewer. In general, the regional landscape near the project area is vegetated with native upland plant species. Human-made features within this portion of the landscape are highly visible, such as roads, utility corridors, water tanks, industrial and commercial developments, and houses. At a more site-specific level, an access road, powerlines, and nearby residences are visually prominent at the project area.

No Action Alternative

There would be no effects to visual resources under the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action Alternative

Impacts of the proposed project include temporary construction effects: dust, noise, increased vehicle traffic to and from the site, and visual impacts of the drill rig and equipment. Once completed, the well and associated equipment would be housed in a small shed that would blend with the surrounding area. None of these temporary impacts are significant on a local or regional scale.

3.13 Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts from the proposed project are anticipated. This project, in combination with other planned projects in the area, would not be expected to result in any long-term adverse cumulative effects to identified resources. The short-term cumulative effects of construction activities would be small in the overall regional context and would be temporary in nature.

Permanent impacts include the effects on the Ojo Alamo Formation tapped by the well; the water produced from the proposed well would not be available to others. These effects are considered by the NMOSE in issuing a well permit. The water produced would enter the Association's domestic water system, and ultimately be released as effluent. There would be few, if any, operational impacts of the well on the natural environment. Because the well would supplement the Association's existing water supply and is limited in volume by the NMOSE permit, it is unlikely to contribute to additional population growth in the area beyond what would be expected under the Association's existing water rights.

3.14 Environmental Commitments

- Should evidence of possible scientific, prehistoric, historic, or archeological data be discovered during the course of this action, work will cease at that location and the Reclamation Area Archaeologist will be notified by phone (505-462-3644) immediately, with the location and nature of the findings. Care will be exercised to not disturb or damage artifacts uncovered during operations, and the proponents will provide such cooperation and assistance as may be necessary to preserve the findings for removal or other disposition by the Government. Any person who knows or has reason to know that he or she has inadvertently discovered human remains on Federal or tribal lands, must provide immediate telephone notification of the inadvertent discovery, with written confirmation, to the responsible Federal agency official with respect to Federal lands, and, with respect to tribal lands, to the responsible Indian tribe official. The requirement is prescribed under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (P.L. 101-601; 104 Stat. 3042) of November 1990 and National Historic Preservation Act, Section 110(a)(2)(E)(iii) (P.L. 102-575, 106 Stat. 4753) of October 1992.
- Native grasses and wildflowers will be seeded in areas disturbed by construction to re-establish vegetation. Only the amount of the proposed staging and drilling areas needed would be used or disturbed. Upon completion of stabilization activities, all work areas would be cleaned up and all materials and equipment removed.
- To minimize the potential for the establishment of State-listed and other noxious weeds, an aggressive revegetation plan will be implemented. In addition to seeding, the introduction of noxious weed seeds would be minimized by requiring that all project equipment be pressure washed before arriving and leaving the project area.
- To minimize soil erosion during rain storms, standard construction BMPs will be utilized to minimize runoff during construction activities.
- Fugitive dust will be suppressed by spreading water over disturbed areas where heavy equipment is working during dry conditions.

Chapter 4. Consultation and Coordination

This chapter presents the persons and agencies consulted as part of developing this EA. Copies of public and agency correspondence are contained in Appendix B.

4.1 Tribal Government Officials and Other Persons Consulted

- Don Buttry, Manager, Regina Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association
- Paul Chinana, Governor, Pueblo of Jemez
- Earl Salazar, Governor, Ohkay Owingeh
- Ronnie Tenorio, Governor, Pueblo of San Felipe
- Ernest Suina, Governor, Pueblo of Cochiti
- Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, Director, Hopi Tribe Cultural Preservation Office
- John Sorrell, Hydrology, Pueblo of Isleta
- Levi Pesata, President, Jicarilla Apache Nation
- Billy Evans Horse, Chairman, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Joe Shirley, President, Navajo Nation
- Wallace Coffey, Chairman, Comanche Indian Tribe
- Robert J. Benavides, Governor, Pueblo of Isleta
- George Daingkau, Kiowa NAGPRA Coordinator
- Earl Yeahquo, Chairman, Kiowa Business Committee
- Lawrence Morgan, Speaker, Navajo Nation Council
- John E. Antonio, Sr., Governor, Pueblo of Laguna
- George Rivera, Governor, Pueblo of Pojoaque
- Martin W. Aguilar, Governor, Pueblo of San Ildefonso
- Ulysses Leon, Governor, Pueblo of Santa Ana
- Sisto Quintana, Governor, Pueblo of Santo Domingo
- Ivan Pino, Governor, Pueblo of Zia
- J. Michael Chavarria, Governor, Pueblo of Santa Clara
- Paul T. Martinez, Governor, Pueblo of Taos
- Norman Coeoyate, Governor, Pueblo of Zuni

Chapter 5. List of Preparers

This chapter presents the individuals who contributed to the technical content of this EA. The document was produced by BIO-WEST, Inc., located in Logan, Utah, with project management and oversight provided by Reclamation staff from the Albuquerque Area Office located in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

5.1 BIO-WEST Staff Contributors.

NAME	RESPONSIBILITY	QUALIFICATIONS	PARTICIPATION
Aaron Crookston	Planner and CAD Specialist	B.L.A. Landscape Architecture; 3 years professional experience.	Mapping and construction drawings, air quality analysis.
Chris Sands	Project Manager	B.L.A. Landscape Architecture, M.L.A. Landscape Architecture; 20 years professional experience.	Project management, document development, and visual analysis.
Mike Sipos	Wildlife Biologist	B.S. Wildlife Science, M.S. Wildlife Science; 10 years professional experience.	Threatened and Endangered species, wildlife, and vegetation analysis.
Wes Thompson	Hydro-geologist	A.S. Geology, B.S. Composite Sciences; 20 years professional experience.	Water resources analysis.
Chadd VanZanten	Editor	B.S. English; 15 years professional experience.	Editorial oversight, proofreading, document design, and document formatting.

5.2 Bureau of Reclamation Staff Contributors

- Marsha Carra, Environmental Protection Specialist and NEPA Project Manager
- Chris Gorbach, Supervisory Civil Engineer
- Mark Hungerford, Archaeologist

Chapter 6. References

- Bailey R.G. 1995. Description of the ecoregions of the United States. 2nd ed. Rev. and expanded (1st ed. 1980). Misc. Publ. No. 1391 (rev.), Washington (DC): U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. 108 p. plus map.
- [BISON-M] Biota Information System of New Mexico. 2009. New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Conservation Services Division, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Sandoval County species database query. Location: <http://www.bison-m.org>. 7/28/2009.
- [eCFR] Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. 3/4/2008. Air Quality Control Region Designations. Location: <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov>.
- [NMED] New Mexico Environmental Department. 3/4/2008. New Mexico Environmental Department Air Quality Bureau Air Quality control regions. Location: http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/modeling/aqcr_map.html.
- [NMNHP] New Mexico Natural Heritage Program. 7/28/2009. New Mexico vegetation database. Location: <http://nhnm.unm.edu/>.
- Robson S.G., Banta E.R. 1995. Ground water atlas of the United States, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah. Reston (VA): United States Geological Survey. Hydrologic Investigations Series HA 730-C. 32 p.
- Sandoval County. 10/27/2009. Sandoval County Development Department Zoning Information. Location: <http://www.sandovalcounty.com>
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Accounts. 3/10/2008. Regional economic accounts, personal income and per capita personal income by county for New Mexico. Location: <http://www.bea.gov/regional/reis/>.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 3/4/2008. New Mexico demographic information by county. Location: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.
- [USFWS] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2001. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; final designation of critical habitat for the Mexican Spotted Owl. 66 FR: 8530-8553.
- [USFWS] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2003. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; designation of critical habitat for the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow; final rule. 68 FR: 8087-8135.

APPENDIX A: THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES LISTS



Biota Information System
Of *New Mexico*



Providing New Mexico and its wildlife
Year-round Excellent Service

[Close Window](#)

[Disclaimer Policy](#)

[Print Page](#)

Database Query

Your **search terms** were as follows:

7 species returned.

Taxonomic Group	# Species	Taxonomic Group	# Species
Fish	1	Mammals	1
Amphibians	1	Molluscs	1
Birds	3		

[Export to Excel](#)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat Map	Species Photo (click photo to enlarge)	County	Status
Minnow, Silvery, Rio Grande	<i>Hybognathus amarus</i>	no map	no photo	Sandoval	Federal: Critical Hab. Designated (NM) Federal: Endangered State NM: Endangered
Salamander, Jemez Mtns.	<i>Plethodon neomexicanus</i>	no map		Sandoval	State NM: Endangered
Flycatcher, Willow, SW.	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	no map		Sandoval	Federal: Critical Hab. Designated (NM) Federal: Endangered State NM: Endangered
Owl, Spotted, Mexican	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i> (NM,AZ)	no map		Sandoval	Federal: Critical Hab. Designated (NM) Federal: Threatened
Pelican, Brown	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis carolinensis</i> (NM)	no map		Sandoval	State NM: Endangered
Mouse, Jumping, Meadow	<i>Zapus hudsonius luteus</i> (NM,AZ)	no map		Sandoval	State NM: Endangered
Marshsnail, Wrinkled	<i>Stagnicola caperata</i>	no map	no photo	Sandoval	State NM: Endangered

[Close Window](#)

Sandoval County Protected Vegetation Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed Status	State Status
Wood Lily	<i>Lilium philadelphicum var. andinum</i>	---	E
Parish's Alkali Grass	<i>Puccinellia parishii</i>	---	E

Source: Natural Heritage New Mexico (Available at: <http://nhnm.unm.edu/>)

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC AND AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Albuquerque Area Office
555 Broadway Blvd. NE, Suite 100
Albuquerque, NM 87102-2352



IN REPLY REFER TO:

ALB-186
ENV-1.10

AUG 06 2008

Interested Parties

Subject: Scoping Invitation Regarding the Bureau of Reclamation's Drought Emergency Water Wells for Brazos, Cañon and Regina, New Mexico

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Bureau of Reclamation is preparing three Environmental Assessments (EA) for the funding of drought wells for community water systems in Brazos, Cañon, and Regina. The purpose of the drought wells is to provide a supplemental source of domestic water for the systems to fully utilize their existing water rights by providing additional capacity and operational flexibility during a drought emergency. These projects are needed due to the severe drought now gripping the southwest U. S. and the potential for the drought to continue for the indeterminate future.

The EAs will evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts from these actions, from taking no action, and from any alternative actions that may be identified.

Scoping, as defined in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, is "an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action." This scoping period is meant to provide interested members of the public, Native American tribes, local governments, and organizations an opportunity to comment on the proposed projects and to obtain information that will focus the EA on important issues.

The scoping process helps us to identify the following:

- The important issues, resource concerns, and possible impacts to be addressed in the EA;
- Those issues that are not important, or that have been addressed by prior environmental review or eliminated from further study;
- Existing information sources;
- Other environmental review, permits, and consultation requirements

Reclamation will gladly provide any additional information needed by you about the proposed projects or to describe the EAs in further detail. For more information or to arrange a meeting, please contact Ms. Marsha Carra, Environmental Protection Specialist at 505-462-3602.

Sincerely,

John R. Poland
Area Manager

Enclosure

AUG 15 2008

ALB-186
ENV-1.10

Honorable Ernest Suina
Governor, Pueblo of Cochiti
P.O. Box 70
Cochiti, NM 87072

Subject: Consultation Invitation Regarding the Bureau of Reclamation's Drought Emergency Water Wells for Brazos, Cañon, and Regina, New Mexico

Dear Governor Suina:

Reclamation is preparing three Environmental Assessments (EAs) for the funding of drought wells for community water systems in Brazos, Cañon, and Regina, New Mexico. The purpose of the drought wells is to provide a supplemental source of domestic water for the systems to fully utilize their existing water rights by providing additional capacity and operational flexibility during a drought emergency. These projects are needed due to the severe drought now gripping the southwestern U.S. and the potential for the drought to continue for the indeterminate future.

The EAs will evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts from these actions, from taking no action, and from any alternative actions that may be identified.

The purpose of this letter is to invite your tribe's involvement on a government-to-government basis to identify any concerns your tribe may have regarding the potential effects of our future activities on trust assets, cultural and biological resources, or tribal health and safety. Reclamation wants to ensure that you have an opportunity to help us identify and address any issues important to your tribe.

Reclamation will gladly provide any additional information needed by you or your staff to describe the EAs in further detail. To discuss the EAs or arrange a meeting, please contact Ms. Marsha Carra, Environmental Protection Specialist, at 505-462-3602.

Sincerely,



John R. Poland
Area Manager

Identical letter sent to persons on next page.

(A)

Identical Letter Sent To:

Continued from previous page.

Honorable Wallace Coffey
Chairman, Comanche Indian Tribe
P.O. Box 908
Lawton, OK 73502

Honorable Robert J. Benavides
Governor, Pueblo of Isleta
P.O. Box 1270
117A Tribal Road 40
Isleta, NM 87022

Honorable Paul Chinana
Governor, Pueblo of Jemez
P.O. Box 100
Jemez Pueblo, NM 87024

Mr. George Daingkau
Kiowa NAGPRA Coordinator
Route 2, Box 74
Fort Cobb, OK 73038

Mr. Earl Yeahquo
Chairman, Kiowa Business Committee
P.O. Box 369
Carnegie, OK 73015

Honorable Joe Shirley
President, Navajo Nation
P.O. Box 9000/Navajo Tribal Hill
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Honorable Earl Salazar
Governor, Ohkay Owingeh
P.O. Box 1099
San Juan Pueblo, NM 87566

Honorable Ronnie Tenorio
Governor, Pueblo of San Felipe
P.O. Box 4339
San Felipe Pueblo, NM 87001

Ms. Leigh Kuwanwisiwma
Director, Hopi Tribe Cultural Preservation Office
P.O. Box 123
Kykotsmovi, AZ 86039

Mr. John Sorrell
Hydrology, Pueblo of Isleta
P.O. Box 1270
117A Tribal Road 40
Isleta, NM 87022

Honorable Levi Pesata
President, Jicarilla Apache Nation
P.O. Box 507
Dulce, NM 87528

Honorable Billy Evans Horse
Chairman, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 369
Carnegie, OK 73015

Honorable John E. Antonio, Sr.
Governor, Pueblo of Laguna
P.O. Box 194
Laguna, NM 87026

Mr. Lawrence Morgan
Speaker, Navajo Nation Council
P.O. Box 3390
Window Rock, AZ 86515

Honorable George Rivera
Governor, Pueblo of Pojoaque
78 Cities of Gold Road
Santa Fe, NM 87506

Honorable Martin W. Aguilar
Governor, Pueblo of San Ildefonso
Route 5, Box 315-A
Santa Fe, NM 87506

Continued on next page.

Continued from previous page.

Honorable Ulysses Leon
Governor, Pueblo of Santa Ana
2 Dove Road
Santa Ana Pueblo, NM 87004

Honorable Sisto Quintana
Governor, Pueblo of Santo Domingo
P.O. Box 99
Santo Domingo Pueblo, NM 87052

Honorable Ivan Pino
Governor, Pueblo of Zia
135 Capitol Square Drive
Zia Pueblo, NM 87053

Honorable J. Michael Chavarria
Pueblo of Santa Clara
P.O. Box 580
Española, NM 87532

Honorable Paul T. Martinez
Governor, Pueblo of Taos
P.O. Box 1846
Taos, NM 87571

Honorable Norman Coeeyate
Governor, Pueblo of Zuni
P.O. Box 339
Zuni, NM 87327

WBR:MCarra:ronchaga:08/12/08:505-462-3602
G:\SecFiles\Envi\Carra, Marsha\NA Tribal Letters - 081208.doc

ORIGINAL

THE



HOPi TRIBE

Benjamin H. Nuvamsa
CHAIRMAN

Todd Honyaoma, Sr.
VICE-CHAIRMAN

August 25, 2008

John R. Poland, Area Manager
Attention: Dr. Jeffery Hanson, Archaeologist
Bureau of Reclamation, Albuquerque Area Office
555 Broadway Blvd., NE, Suite 100
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102-2352

RECEIVED BOR ALBUQUERQUE AREA OFFICE OFFICIAL FILE COPY		
SEP 03 '08		
I-08-444		
Class	WTR-4.13	Action
Prj	G7F	
Cntr #		
Fldr #		
Date	Initial	To
9/3	JPP	100
9/8	JCC	102
9/10	M	150
		192
9/10	M	186

Dear Mr. Poland,

Thank you for your correspondence dated August 16, 2008, regarding drought emergency water wells for Brazos, Canon, and Regina, New Mexico. The Hopi Tribe claims ancestral and cultural affiliation to prehistoric cultural groups in New Mexico, and therefore we appreciate the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)'s solicitation of our input and your efforts to address our concerns.

The Hopi Cultural Preservation Office supports identification and avoidance of prehistoric archaeological sites and Traditional Cultural Properties and we consider the archaeological sites of our ancestors to be Traditional Cultural Properties. Therefore, to assist us in determining if these proposals may effect cultural resources significant to the Hopi Tribe please provide us with copies of the cultural resources surveys of the areas of potential effect for review and comment. If prehistoric cultural sites are identified in the project area that will be adversely affected by this proposal activities, we also request to be provided with a copy of any proposed draft treatment plans for review and comment.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Terry Morgart at the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office. Thank you again for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma, Director
Hopi Cultural Preservation Office

xc: Lisa Meyer, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office

ORIGINAL



THE NAVAJO NATION

RECEIVED BOR
ALBUQUERQUE AREA OFFICE
OFFICIAL FILE COPY
I-08-484
SEP 22 '08
WTR-4.13

JOE SHIRLEY, JR.
PRESIDENT

September 18, 2008

Class		5
Prj	GF	BEN SHELLY VICE-PRESIDENT
Cntr #		
Fldr #		
Date	Initial	To
9/23	gcp	100
9/23	ecw	102
9/30	jm	150
9/30	gk	174
9/30	cmh	192

186
10-1-08

Mr. John R. Poland, Area Manager
Bureau of Land Management
555 Broadway Blvd. NE, Suite 100
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102-2352

Subject: Tribal Consultation Request. Proposing to install drought wells for community water systems in Brazos, Canon, and Regina, New Mexico.

Dear Sir:

Our apology for an oversight and missing the deadline date of our response to your request, please note that in reference to your letter of August 15, 2008, the Historic Preservation Department – Traditional Culture Program (HPD-TCP) received a request for consultation regarding the above undertaking and/or project. After reviewing your consultation documents, HPD-TCP has concluded the proposed undertaking/project area **will not impact** any Navajo traditional cultural properties or historical properties.

However, if there are any inadvertent discoveries made during the course of the undertaking, your agency shall cease all operations within the project area. HPD-TCP shall be notified by telephone within 24 hours and a formal letter be sent within 72 hours. All work shall be suspended until mitigation measures/procedures have been developed in consultation with the Navajo Nation.

The HPD-TCP appreciates your agency’s consultation efforts, pursuant to 36 CFR Pt. 800.1 (c)(2)(iii). Should you have additional concerns and/or questions, do not hesitate to contact me. My contact information is listed below.

Sincerely,
Tony Joe

Mr. Tony Joe, Program Manager
Historic Preservation Department – Traditional Culture Program

Tel: 928.871.7688 Fax: 928.871.7886 E-mail: tonyjoe@navajo.org

TCP 08-881
File: Office file/chrono

