

# CARLSBAD PROJECT WATER OPERATIONS & WATER SUPPLY CONSERVATION EIS

## NEPA PROCESS FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS NEPA?

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 establishes a policy and framework for encouraging environmental protection in the United States.
- There are two primary objectives of NEPA:
  1. Ensure that federal agencies consider every significant aspect of a proposed project's environmental impact.
  2. Inform and involve the public of potential impacts and alternatives.
- The NEPA process is a set of activities to gather information on, analyze, and document the potential environmental effects of the proposed project.

### WHEN IS NEPA REQUIRED?

- NEPA is required when a Federal action is proposed that may have impacts on the human or natural environment. Federal actions include those that occur on Federal lands, or require the use of Federal funding, permits, facilities, equipment or employees.

### WHY IS THE FEDERAL ACTION NEEDED AND WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?

- The purpose of the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) proposed Federal action is to conserve the Pecos bluntnose shiner (shiner), a federally threatened fish species, and to conserve the Carlsbad Project water supply. The underlying need for Reclamation action is compliance with the Endangered Species Act and Reclamation's responsibility to conserve the Carlsbad Project water supply.
- To meet this need, Reclamation is proposing to change Carlsbad Project operations and to acquire water.

### WHAT ACTIONS TRIGGERED THE NEPA PROCESS?

- The NEPA process was triggered by Reclamation's ongoing changes in Carlsbad Project operations in order to comply with the Endangered Species Act. Efforts to conserve the shiner can affect the amount of Carlsbad Project water available for delivery to Carlsbad Irrigation District. Without an accompanying program to acquire and provide water, the Carlsbad Project water supply would be reduced.

### WHAT LEVEL OF NEPA DOCUMENTATION HAS BEEN PREPARED?

- The Bureau of Reclamation and New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission have prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addressing the potential impacts resulting from the proposed action. An EIS is required for Federal actions which may have a significant impact on the human or natural environment. Several supporting technical studies and models have been prepared to support the analysis. After a sixty-day comment period a final EIS will be prepared. After a 30-day review period Reclamation can then issue a record of decision.

## **WHO ARE THE LEAD AGENCIES?**

- Reclamation and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission have the primary responsibility for this EIS and are the joint lead agencies. Several other Federal, state, and local agencies are cooperating or participating in the EIS process.

## **HOW IS THE PUBLIC INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS?**

- There are ongoing opportunities for the public and stakeholders to be involved in the Carlsbad Project Water Operations & Water Supply Conservation EIS. The lead agencies maintain a mailing list, distribute a newsletter and post public documents on the project website at: <http://www.usbr.gov/uc/albuq/library/eis/carlsbad/carlsbad.html>
- At the beginning of the NEPA process, a 60-day (October 6 to December 6, 2002) public scoping period was held to identify issues, sources of relevant data, and impact analysis methods. Four public meetings were held in Santa Rosa, Ft. Sumner, Carlsbad, and Roswell during the scoping period. A scoping report is available on the project website which summarizes comments that were considered in developing the Draft EIS.
- Technical specialists, stakeholders and agency representatives participated in workgroups tasked with developing and screening alternatives and water acquisition options, providing technical resource and modeling support, and producing guidelines for the adaptive management of river operations. Communication and participation in the NEPA process has been facilitated by regular meetings of the Interdisciplinary Team, the Review Committee of cooperating and participating agencies and through consultation with other agencies and Native American groups.
- The Draft EIS has been released for a 60-day public review and comment period. Public meetings are being held in conjunction with the comment period which will continue to October 31, 2005. Additional workshops to solicit public input may be scheduled at other points during the preparation of the Final EIS.

## **WHERE DO WE SEND COMMENTS?**

- Written comments regarding the adequacy of the analysis and content of the EIS can be submitted tonight or can be addressed to:

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