

CARLSBAD PROJECT WATER OPERATIONS & WATER SUPPLY CONSERVATION EIS PROJECT BACKGROUND FACT SHEET

Federal involvement in the Pecos River Basin began in 1905 with authorization of the Carlsbad Project. US Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) stores and delivers Carlsbad Project water for the benefit of the Carlsbad Irrigation District (CID). Reclamation's Carlsbad Project facilities on the Pecos River now include Sumner Dam, Brantley Dam, and Avalon Dam. Reclamation and CID are also permitted to store Carlsbad Project water in Santa Rosa Lake provided total storage in all four reservoirs does not exceed 176,500 acre-feet. The Fort Sumner Diversion Dam is owned by Reclamation, but it is not associated with the Carlsbad Project. The Fort Sumner Irrigation District operates the facility and holds title to all water rights diverted at the dam.

In 1987, the Pecos bluntnose shiner was listed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a threatened species and approximately 101 miles of the Pecos River were designated as the shiner's critical habitat. Releases from Sumner Dam in 1989 adversely affected the Pecos bluntnose shiner. Reclamation consulted with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and received a biological opinion from them in 1991 indicating that operation of Reclamation's Pecos River facilities was jeopardizing the continued existence of the Pecos bluntnose shiner. In 1992, Reclamation began a cooperative research program aimed at determining how to meet the needs of the Pecos bluntnose shiner and downstream water users. Through a multi-agency collaborative effort, a hydrologic model has been developed and various biological reports have been prepared.



The Pecos bluntnose shiner is a federally protected species under the Endangered Species Act

For several years, Reclamation and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) have worked together to address Pecos River water issues. Recently, the two agencies developed an approach for environmental review of proposed Pecos River Basin activities. One EIS would be prepared for Reclamation's Carlsbad Project water operations and water acquisition (Carlsbad Project Water Operations and Water Supply Conservation EIS, which is the subject of this Fact Sheet). Another EIS would be prepared for a miscellaneous purposes contract that would allow the NMISC to use Carlsbad Project water allocated to approximately 6,000 acres of CID land for purposes other than agriculture (Miscellaneous Purposes Contract EIS). Reclamation and the NMISC plan to conduct both EIS processes concurrently to the extent possible and fully coordinate environmental analyses.

The range of alternatives to be analyzed in this EIS would likely include various operational scenarios for Sumner Dam and various sources and quantities of water for the water acquisition program. Adjustments to the timing, magnitude, frequency, duration, and rate of change of Sumner Dam releases will likely be addressed. The quantity of water stored in or bypassed through Sumner Reservoir during low-flow periods will be addressed. To the extent that revised operations diminish the Carlsbad Project water supply, the alternatives will include various water acquisition options. Water offsets could be through acquisition of water rights voluntarily offered for sale or lease and other cooperative mitigation efforts. The concept of adaptive management would be incorporated to allow refinement of operations, or changes to targets and ranges, as new information becomes available and in response to environmental conditions.



Operations of Sumner Dam will be assessed in the EIS

The EIS will assess potential effects that the proposed action may have on Indian Trust Assets. It will also assess potential disproportionate effects on minority or low-income communities. Currently, there are no known issues such as these that are related to the proposed action. Operational scenarios, water right acquisitions, and other cooperative mitigation efforts have the potential to adversely affect New Mexico's ability to maintain compliance with the Pecos River Compact and Amended Decree, which requires that a certain amount of Pecos River water be available to Texas at the state line. Effects of each alternative on New Mexico's state line deliveries and its Pecos River Compact obligations will be evaluated. With successful mitigation measures, the most significant issues associated with the proposed action are anticipated to be economic and social change associated with permanent retirement of irrigated farmland.

We want your input!

Written comments regarding the scope and content of the EIS should be addressed to:

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In order to be most useful, comments should be received by December 6, 2002.