BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-322), Title III Natural Resources Section 4009(a): Feasibility Study Review Findings

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation's Desalination Construction Program

Prepared for

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate
Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives

U.S. Department of the Interior **November 2026**

Mission Statements

The U.S. Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and affiliated 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.

Contents

Page
Introduction....1
Feasibility Reviews and Determinations....1
Project Summaries....2
City of Corpus Christi....2
Mesa Water District....3

Introduction

This report is provided in accordance with Public Law (P.L.) 114-322, the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act of 2016, Section 4009(a).

Section 4009(a) of the WIIN Act allows desalination projects to compete for funding after a project sponsor completes a feasibility study and Reclamation determines that it meets the requirements outlined in the Reclamation Manual (RM) Directives and Standards (D&S) WTR 11-01. Reclamation uses WTR 11-01 as structured guidance to determine if a study meets the requirements of a feasibility study as defined originally for Title XVI projects under Section 1604 of P.L. 102-575. Specifically, Reclamation's review confirms that:

- The feasibility study report meets the requirements of a feasibility study as defined under Section 1604 of P.L. 102-575, as amended.
- The feasibility study, and the process under which the study was developed, comply with Federal laws and regulations applicable to feasibility studies of Title XVI projects.
- The desalination project is technically and financially feasible and provides a Federal benefit in accordance with the reclamation laws.

For Desalination Construction projects with total estimated project costs of $500 million or more, feasibility studies must also meet additional requirements established in RM D&S WTR TRMR-128 Large-Scale Water Recycling Program Feasibility Study Review Process (TRMR-128), which builds on WTR 11-01 by requiring a more in-depth alternative analysis, a detailed benefit-cost economic analysis, and documentation of peer review. These additional requirements reflect the higher level of Federal funding such projects may receive.

Feasibility Reviews and Determinations

Section 4009(a) of the WIIN Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to submit a report to Congress that describes the results of feasibility reviews. Figure 1 below is a summary of the two feasibility study reviews that have occurred since the last Feasibility Study Review Findings report was transmitted to Congress in 2025. Both feasibility studies were determined to meet the requirements of WTR 11-01. The feasibility study for the desalination project with total estimated project costs above $500 million was also determined to meet the requirements of TRMR-128.

As a result of meeting requirements outlined in WTR 11-01, and TRMR-128 for applicable projects, these projects, as defined by the feasibility study, are now eligible for planning, design, and construction funding through the competitive WIIN Act Desalination Construction grant program. Reclamation uses annual competitive funding opportunities to allocate funds available for the WIIN Act Desalination Construction Program. The total Federal funding received may not exceed 25 percent of the total project cost.

Prior to receiving funding, projects must also comply with all applicable environmental laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), and before any construction begins, all project sponsors must demonstrate that it is financially capable of funding the non-Federal portion of project construction costs and all operation, maintenance, and replacement costs, pursuant to WTR-11-02.

Project Summaries

Provided below is a summary of the two projects that include the projects sponsors, location, project description, and total estimated project costs.

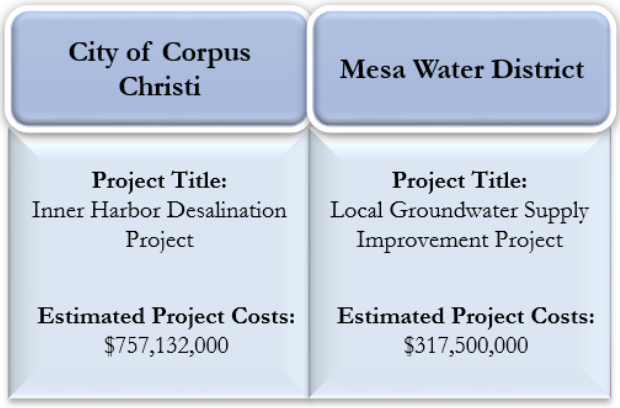


Figure 1.—Summary of the two feasibility studies reviewed by Reclamation.

City of Corpus Christi

Project: Inner Harbor Desalination Project
Location: Corpus Christi, TX
Review Completed: May 11, 2026

The City of Corpus Christi is planning to construct a new 30 million gallons per day seawater desalination treatment plant and the associated infrastructure to integrate the new supply into the existing water system. Major components include an intake structure in the Inner Harbor to draw in the seawater, pretreatment to remove suspended solids from the raw seawater, main treatment using cartridge filters and reverse osmosis membranes to remove salt, product storage and delivery facilities, and a discharge pipeline with diffusers for brine management. The project is expected to provide approximately 33,600 acre-feet per year of desalinated water, enhancing drought resilience and diversifying the City's water supply portfolio.

Total Estimated Project Costs: $757,132,000

Mesa Water District

Project: Local Groundwater Supply Improvement Project
Location: Costa Mesa, CA
Review Completed: May 18, 2026

The Mesa Water District evaluated constructing a 5.35 million gallons per day brackish groundwater desalination facility, supplied by five groundwater wells that would pump seawater-influenced brackish groundwater. The treated water will then be distributed as a new, drought resilient local potable supply. By intercepting the brackish groundwater before it migrates further into the aquifer, the project will reduce reliance on imported water, enhance regional drought resilience, and support long-term groundwater basin protection.

Total Estimated Project Costs: $317,500,000