



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements
for the City of Willcox, Arizona, United States**

June 2012

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Region 9 is considering authorizing the award of a Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) grant to the City of Willcox, Arizona, for improvements to the City's wastewater treatment system.

USEPA Region 9's award of a grant for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§4321-4370f. In accordance with NEPA, Council of Environmental Quality Regulations at 40 CFR §§1500.1-1508.28, and EPA NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Part 6, USEPA Region 9 has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) describing the potential environmental impacts associated with, and the alternatives to, the proposed project. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents USEPA Region 9's decision that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Project Location and Description

The City of Willcox is located in Cochise County, in the southeastern corner of Arizona. The City's existing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is located about one mile south of the main City business district (west of State Route 186), and occupies approximately 19 acres of City-owned property.

The City's WWTP treats wastewater collected through the City sewer system and septage deposited by local haulers. Historically, the City WWTP has discharged its treated effluent to the Twin Lakes Country Club Golf Course (golf course) for irrigation approximately 10 months a year. When the golf course is unable to accept all of the treated wastewater, a portion of the effluent is discharged to Cochise Lake.

The City is proposing to replace the existing treatment lagoons with two concrete oxidation ditches and a secondary clarifier. All construction would occur within the footprint of the existing WWTP. The oxidation ditches would have a total treatment capacity of 0.6 million gallons per day, which is the same as the existing lagoons.

Purpose and Need for Proposed Project

Currently, the WWTP is not in compliance with the City's existing and anticipated Aquifer Protection Permit (APP) and Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (AZPDES) permit requirements. In January 2011, a Consent Order was issued between the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and the City, which required the City to come into compliance with permit requirements. The purpose of the proposed project is to construct a treatment system that will comply with APP and AZPDES permit requirements.

The USEPA has selected the Oxidation Ditch Alternative as the preferred alternative since it will consistently produce effluent with 5-day biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) concentrations below 5 milligrams per liter (mg/L), total suspended solids (TSS) concentrations below 10 mg/L and total nitrogen concentrations under 10 mg/L in accordance with the ADEQ requirements.

Environmental Consequences

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), USEPA has prepared an EA that analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed action. After considering a wide range of regulatory, environmental (both natural and human) and socio-economic factors, the EA did not identify any significant impacts to the environment that would result from the implementation of the proposed project.

During the preparation of the EA, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were contacted regarding potential impacts from the proposed project on cultural resources and threatened and endangered species, respectively. The SHPO certified on December 23, 2011 that no cultural resources would be affected. On January 24, 2012, the USFWS confirmed that no impacts to threatened or endangered species were anticipated from the proposed project.

After carefully considering the regulatory, environmental (both natural and human) and socio-economic factors as described in the EA, EPA Region 9 has not identified any significant impacts to the environment that would result from implementation of the proposed project.

Public Review

USEPA made the EA and the unsigned FONSI available for public review at <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/infrastructure> and at the office of US EPA Region 9 (75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, California, 94105-3901). Notice of the proposed project and the public comment period was published in the Arizona Range News. USEPA did not receive any public comments on the EA or the unsigned FONSI prior to the close of the public comment period on June 14, 2012.

Finding

Based upon the information contained in the EA, and after an opportunity for public comment, USEPA has determined the proposed project will not result in significant impacts to the environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This FONSI is final upon signature. USEPA will not recirculate this FONSI for public review, but will make it available to any individual upon request.



Nancy Woo
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7/3/12
Date