

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Effluent Recharge Project for the Town of Huachuca City, Arizona

June 2011

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 is considering authorizing the award of a Special Appropriation grant to the Town of Huachuca City, Arizona (Town) for an effluent recharge project. The Town is proposing to construct and operate a new municipal wastewater treatment storage pond and approximately 600 feet of gravity flow pipeline. The Town's pipeline will connect to Fort Huachuca's (Fort) existing force main and lift stations. The Town's effluent will be conveyed to the Fort's wastewater treatment plant for treatment with discharge at the Fort's East Range Recharge Facility.

EPA 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, EPA Region 9 has prepared an 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 EPA Region 9's decision that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Project Location

The Town of Huachuca City is a rural town situated along SR90 in the southeast corner of Arizona. The Town is located approximately 64 miles south of the City of Tucson, 20 miles north of the United States/Mexico border, and is just north and east of Fort Huachuca and the City of Sierra Vista.

Purpose and Need for Proposed Project

The Town of Huachuca City is required to upgrade its sewage treatment facility in order to comply with the requirements of its Aquifer Protection Permit (APP), required by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). The Town's current facility consists of three unlined wastewater evaporation ponds and one abandoned lined pond that are located within the 100-year floodplain of the Babocomari River. Only two of the ponds are currently in use. The APP limited the Town's wastewater treatment capacity to 220,000 gallons, although it is estimated that the Town's treatment capacity is 370,000 gallons per day. The APP limited the treatment capacity of the Town because of the possible discharge of raw sewage into the environment during a 100-year flood which would negatively impact both ground and surface water quality.

With the region's naturally arid climate, groundwater recharge is an important element in water management for the Upper San Pedro groundwater basin. The proposed project will help to virtually restore the Town's wastewater treatment capacity, as well as meeting the goal of increasing region's groundwater recharge. Finally, the proposed project will address the existing

concern of contamination to ground and surface water through the construction of a lined storage pond.

Environmental Consequences

In March 2010, EPA issued an EA for the Town's effluent recharge project. In the March 2010 EA, EPA incorporated the Fort's July 2000 EA and REC, since the Town's proposed project is a separate project from the recharge project conducted by the Fort.

EPA's March 2010 EA examined the impacts of funding the construction of the Town's new wastewater storage pond and 600 feet of gravity flow pipeline. During the comment period for the EA, EPA received a comment which brought to the Agency's attention that an alternative that had been eliminated from further review due to financial infeasibility needed to be fully analyzed and included as a full alternative in the EA. In addition, there was a public comment regarding the impact to groundwater from closing the Town's existing unlined wastewater evaporation ponds and the Babocamori River which EPA determined needed to be addressed. Due to these public comments, EPA completed two new technical documents to: 1) examine the financial feasibility of the eliminated alternative (construction of a new wastewater treatment plant at the Town) and 2) review the hydrological connection between the Town's existing evaporation ponds and the river.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), EPA has prepared a revised 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 revised EA did not identify any significant impacts to the environment that would result from the implementation of the proposed project. However, mitigation measures were established in the revised EA for the proposed project and are enforceable under this FONSI. A copy of the mitigation measures is included in the revised EA.

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

Public Review

The EA is on file and available for public review at the EPA Region 9 office. To make an appointment to review the revised EA, contact Elizabeth Borowiec at the address given below. The EA can also be viewed at:

<http://www.epa.gov/region9/nepa/epa-generated/huachuca/>

Interested parties may submit comments on the revised EA and this unsigned FONSI to EPA Region 9 by June 6, 2011. Comments via letter, fax, or email should be sent to Elizabeth Borowiec at the following address:

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EPA Region 9 will not take administrative action on the proposed project prior to the close of the comment period. If, after considering public comments, EPA Region 9 concludes the proposed project will not have significant environmental impacts, EPA Region 9 will revise this FONSI by adding a summary of the comments received and EPA Region 9's responses. The revised FONSI will be forwarded to the Water Division Director for review and signature. The FONSI will be final upon signature. EPA Region 9 will not recirculate the signed FONSI for public review, but will make it available to any individual upon request.