

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Phase I Wastewater Conveyance and
Treatment Systems
Gila County, Arizona

Rural Utilities Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Tri-City Regional Sanitary District
Claypool, Arizona

Prepared by:
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Rural Development

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Tri-City Regional Sanitary District plans to submit a financing request to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utility Service (RUS) to construct the proposed Phase I Wastewater Conveyance and Treatment Systems in Gila County, Arizona. RUS is considering this financing request. Prior to taking a federal action (i.e., providing financial assistance), RUS is required to complete an environmental impact analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (U.S.C. 4231 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and RD's NEPA implementing regulations, Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970). After completing an independent analysis of an environmental report prepared by Tri-City Regional Sanitary District and its consultant, RUS concurred with its scope and content. In accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102 and § 1970.15, RUS adopted the report and issued it as the Agency's Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Project. RUS finds that the EA is consistent with federal regulations and meets the standards for an adequate assessment. The Tri-City Regional Sanitary District published a newspaper notice, announcing the availability of the EA for public review, in accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102. In addition, RUS considers the proposed Project an undertaking subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 16 USC 470(f), and its implementing regulation, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800).

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE/NEED

The overall purpose of the Project is for construction of a wastewater conveyance and treatment system within the Phase I area. Improvements will provide adequate capacity to provide service to new service connections and an allowance for modest growth. RUS has reviewed the purpose and need for the Project and determined that the proposal will meet the present and future needs of the Phase I areas within the Tri-City Regional Sanitary District.

C. ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

1. No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, RUS would not provide financial assistance to the Tri-City Regional Sanitary District, and/or the proposed Project would not be constructed. This alternative would not assist Tri-City Regional Sanitary District in providing a wastewater collection and treatment system to the Phase I area.

2 Action Alternative (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Action Alternative, RUS would consider financing the proposed Project, and the Tri-City Regional Sanitary District would construct wastewater conveyance and treatment systems within Phase I area. This proposed project consist of 58,000+/- linear feet (LF) of gravity sewer lines, 7,500+/- LF of force main, approximately 145 new manholes, 856 new services connections, lift stations and a new 0.25 million gallons per day (MGD) Water Reclamation Facility (WRF). The treatment facility will be capable of meeting effluent limits imposed by a subsequent permit(s) issued by ADEQ.

3 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

In addition to the No Action Alternative and Action Alternative, the Tri-City Regional Sanitary District considered other technology and siting alternatives, which are documented in the Alternatives section of the EA.

D. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The analyses in the EA documented that the proposed Project would have no adverse effects to Land Use, Floodplains, Wetlands, Water Resources, Coastal Resources, Cultural Resources, Biological Resources, Aesthetics and Air Quality. The proposed project will convert floodplains at the location of the proposed lift station (approximately 400 square feet, which is less than 0.01 acres), and will not adversely impact the floodplain. The proposed WRF is outside the 100-year floodplain, near the boundaries of the 500-year floodplain and will not impact the floodplain. The following mitigation measures were deemed necessary to avoid or minimize impacts. Tri-City Regional Sanitary District is responsible for implementing these measures.

- Floodplains: During the final design of the sewer collection system, lift station and WRF, additional analysis would be performed to ensure that the WRF footprint would lie outside of the 100-year floodplain. Berms, additional grading, and/or other features would be incorporated into the final design, as necessary, to provide proper protection to the WRF and lift station from a 500-year flood event.
- Cultural Resources: Sites AZ V:9:646 (ASM) and AZ V:9:653 (ASM) shall be avoided by construction activities associated with the Proposed Action. Temporary fencing consisting of lathe and orange plastic fencing shall be installed by a qualified archaeologist along the length of the pipeline alignment 50 feet from the surface site boundary to ensure avoidance. An archaeological monitor would perform limited monitoring during ground-disturbing activities in the area between the two sites; this could consist of a monitoring observing activities for a brief time to ensure that cultural subsurface deposits are not present between the sites. This limited monitoring may occur the same day that avoidance fencing is installed.
- Biological Resources: If clearing activities are scheduled during migratory bird breeding season (March 1 to August 31), the Contractor shall have a qualified biologist conduct a field survey to flag active bird nests to be avoided. TRSD's contractor would avoid and maintain a 20-foot buffer around any active bird nests. If the active nests cannot be avoided, the contractor should notify an approved and qualified biologist to evaluate the situation.

E. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

A local newspaper advertisement, announcing the availability of the EA and participation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, was/were published in the local newspaper, the Arizona Silver Belt on March 28th and April 4th, 2018. A copy of the EA was available for public review at the offices of Rural Development, 230 North 1st Avenue, Suite 206, Phoenix AZ, 85003 and posted on website: www.trsd.org. The 14-day comment period ended on April 10th, 2018. No comments were received.

F. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on its EA, RUS has concluded that the proposed Project would have no significant effects to Land Use, Floodplains, Wetlands, Water Resources, Coastal Resources, Cultural Resources, Biological Resources, Aesthetics and Air Quality. The proposed Project will have no effects on historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and no effects to federally listed species or designated critical habitat. The proposed Project would not disproportionately affect minority or low income populations.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR 1500–1508), and RD’s Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970), RUS has determined that the environmental impacts of the proposed Project have been adequately addressed and that no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment would result from construction and operation of the proposed Project. Any final action by RUS related to the proposed Project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant federal and state environmental laws and regulations. Because RUS’s action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, RUS will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its potential federal action associated with the proposed Project.

G. RUS LOAN REVIEW AND RIGHT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This FONSI is not a decision on a loan application and therefore not an approval of the expenditure of federal funds. Issuance of the FONSI and its notices concludes RUS’s environmental review process. The ultimate decision on loan approval depends upon conclusion of this environmental review process in addition to financial and engineering reviews. Issuance of the FONSI and publication of notices will allow for these reviews to proceed. The decision to provide financial assistance also is subject to the availability of loan funds for the designated purpose in RUS’s budget. There are no provisions to appeal this decision (i.e., issuance of a FONSI). Legal challenges to the FONSI may be filed in Federal District Court under the Administrative Procedures Act.

H. APPROVAL

This Finding of No Significant Impact is effective upon signature.

JEFFREY A. HAYS
Community Programs Director

_____4/25/18_____
Dated

Water and Environmental Program
USDA, Rural Development

Contact Person

For additional information on this FONSI and EA, please contact Michael A Luecker at 602-280-8762.