

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Douglas Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade and Bay Acres Colonia Wastewater Collection System Expansion for the City of Douglas, Arizona, US

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 intends to authorize the award of Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) to the City of Douglas, Arizona. EPA Region 9's authorization of a grant award for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§4321-4370(f). In accordance with NEPA; Council of Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 CFR §§1500.1-1508.28; and EPA NEPA regulations, 40 CFR Part 6, EPA Region 9 has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) describing the environmental impacts associated with the proposed project, and which is available upon request. Based upon the analysis in the EA, EPA has prepared this finding of no significant impact (FONSI) which documents EPA Region 9's decision that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Project Location and Description

The City of Douglas is located in the southeastern corner of Arizona in Cochise County. Douglas is on the US-Mexico International Border adjacent to the City of Agua Prieta, Mexico and is approximately 119 miles southeast of Tucson, Arizona. The Bay Acres Colonia is located on the northeastern edge of Douglas, outside of the City limits and south of Highway 80.

The Bay Acres Colonia is currently serviced by inadequate, failing onsite wastewater treatment systems (septic tanks with leach fields). These onsite treatment systems are problematic in Bay Acres because the residential lots are small and the systems are either failing or near the end of their useful life. As a result, the small lots do not provide an adequate area for a new replacement leach field. The failing on-site wastewater systems are a public health concern due to various pathogenic microorganisms, ammonia and nitrate that may produce a health risk to humans and degrade the environment. The expansion of the wastewater collection system to the Bay Acres Colonia and adjacent areas, and expansion and upgrade of the Douglas Wastewater Treatment Plant are intended to provide improved health, sanitation, and security to the residents of the Bay Acres Colonia and the City of Douglas.

This project will increase the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant from 2.0 MGD under Aquifer Protection Permit (#APP-100831) to 3.1 MGD in order to accept and treat flows from the expanded wastewater collection system and modest growth in the City of Douglas. The project will provide capacity to meet needs of the Bay Acres Colonia and adjacent areas that may connect to the system, as well as allow for limited and controlled build out of the City and its associated colonias. Additionally, the project will help meet minimum Class B+ effluent standards to enable the reuse of the effluent on open access landscape areas in the project, and to meet the requirements for the Douglas Aquifer Protection Permit.

In preparing the EA, EPA examined several alternatives for both the upgrade to the Douglas WWTP and the expansion of the wastewater collection system to the Bay Acres Colonia and adjacent areas. A no-action alternative was considered in addition to several action alternatives. The proposed alternative will provide service to the Bay Acres Colonia and adjacent areas, as well the construction of two oxidation ditches, a secondary clarifier, lift station, aerobic digester, and an operations and maintenance building. The proposed alternative was selected based upon engineering feasibility, compliance with regulatory requirements, preliminary cost estimates, and environmental considerations.

Environmental Consequences and Conditions

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 the implementation of the proposed project.

In accordance with the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), EPA consulted with nine Native American governments with cultural affiliation in southern Arizona to determine whether there are Traditional Cultural Places in the vicinity of the proposed project or other issues of concern that need to be addressed. EPA received responses from three tribes. None of these indicated that a tribe was aware of any historic, religious or culturally significant resources that may be affected by the proposed project.

In addition, as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C.470, and the Arizona State Historic Preservation Act, A.R.S. §41-861 et seq., a Class III Cultural Resources Survey of the Bay Acres Colonia and Douglas Wastewater Treatment Plant was conducted. The survey concluded that work within the project area would not impact historic properties. On December 5, 2013, EPA received concurrence from the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office of the determination of no adverse effect on historic properties from the proposed project.

Finally, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, an appraisal of the project site was conducted to determine if any threatened or endangered species were located on the site. No threatened or endangered species or critical habitat was identified.

Public Review

Prior to taking action on the proposed project, EPA Region 9 is accepting comments from the public on the EA and unsigned FONSI. Notice of the public comment period will be published in the Douglas Dispatch and on EPA's website at:

<http://www.epa.gov/region9/nepa/epa-generated/douglas/index.html>

The public comment period will close at 5pm Pacific Time on February 27, 2014. EPA Region 9 will consider the comments received during the public 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. EPA Region 9 will not recirculate the signed FONSI for public review, but will make it available to any individual upon request.

The EA and unsigned FONSI are also available for public review at the offices of EPA Region 9 (75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94015-3901). To make an appointment to review the documents at this location, contact Elizabeth Borowiec at 415-972-3419.

Comments should be mailed to Elizabeth Borowiec at EPA Region 9 (mail code WTR-4) at the address included in the above paragraph.