

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



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

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Joshua Basin Water District Water Recharge Project
Joshua Basin Water District
Joshua Tree, California

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 intends to award a grant in the amount of \$291,000 to the Joshua Basin Water District, in accordance with the FY 2009 Appropriations Act for recharge and nitrate monitoring wells and studies, and the environmental planning costs for the water recharge system.

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 AND DESCRIPTION

The proposed project consists of the construction of one recharge basin facility, and an extension of the Morongo Basin Pipeline. The recharge basin would be approximately 32.5 acres in size, consisting of multiple sub-basins separated by overflow earthen weirs that would allow water to flow from sub-basin to sub-basin as needed. The basins would fill by gravity and no pumping equipment would be needed. The proposed pipeline would include up to 24,000 linear feet of up to 16 to 24-inch diameter pipe connecting to the existing Morongo Pipeline at Yucca Mesa Road.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

This project will protect the water quality of Joshua Basin and help assure an adequate supply for future and existing customers. Water from the State Water Project (SWP) will be delivered to the new ponds to recharge groundwater, the district's only source of water. The local aquifer has been overdrafted by 47,000 acre-feet since 1950 and there is no natural recharge. If the proposed project is completed, as much as 1,959 acre feet of water will be delivered through the State Water Project to help recharge the over-drafted aquifer and protect water quality. Without recharge, nitrate and other minerals will increase beyond maximum allowable state and federal levels, requiring more intensive water treatment. Additionally, water levels will decrease, requiring wells to be drilled deeper at higher energy costs. Failing to recharge the aquifer will

result in impaired water quality and additional negative consequences, such as increased emissions associated with pumping and treating less-accessible, contaminated water.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND CONDITIONS

In compliance with NEPA, EPA has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that examines the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. The impacts for the proposed project are less than significant with the proposed mitigation measures. All the mitigation measures set forth on pages 4-1 through 4-64 of the EA for the proposed project are hereby incorporated by reference and are enforceable under this FONSI.

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 this project. EPA has, therefore, prepared this finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

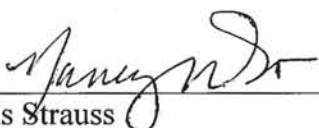
PUBLIC REVIEW

EPA made the EA and the unsigned FONSI available for public review at the EPA Region 9 office (75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco 94105) and on the EPA website (<http://www.epa.gov/region9/nepa/epa-generated/index.html>) from February 26, 2011 until March 30, 2011. Notice of the proposed project and the public comment period was published in the Hi Desert Star on February 26, 2011.

EPA received five comment letters from residents of Joshua Tree. EPA carefully reviewed and has responded to the comments, which largely concerned growth and water quality. A summary of the comments and EPA's responses to the comments are attached.

FINDING

Based on the information contained in the EA, and after consideration of comments received from the public, EPA has determined the proposed project will not result in significant impacts to the environment and an environmental impact statement is not required.



Alexis Strauss
Director, Water Division

8/9/11

Date