

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Joshua Basin Water District Water Recharge Project Joshua Basin, California

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 intends to authorize the award of a FY 2009 special appropriation grant to the Joshua Basin Water District for recharge and nitrate monitoring wells and studies, and the environmental planning costs for the Water Recharge System. The completed project will consist of the construction of one recharge basin facility, and an extension of the Morongo Basin Pipeline from its existing terminus to the new recharge basin. EPA Region 9's authorization of funds is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§43321-4370(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. Based upon the analysis in the EA, EPA has prepared this unsigned 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 proposed action (project) consists of the construction of one recharge basin facility, and an extension of the Morongo Basin Pipeline from its existing terminus to the new recharge basin. The recharge basin would be approximately 32.5 acres in size, consisting of multiple (up to six) six-to-seven foot deep 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. The pipeline would be installed within the road rights-of-way, following Yucca Mesa Road south to SR 62 then eastward along SR 62 to the recharge basin location. The pipeline would be buried approximately three to four feet below grade along the northern side of the highway.

The Joshua Basin Water District relies entirely on ground water from the local aquifer, which has been overdrafted by 47,000 acre-feet since 1950. There is no natural recharge, meaning that none of the pumped water is replenished, except for discharge from septic systems. 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. Studies show that, 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

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.

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 EA, contact Charlotte Ely at the address given below. Interested parties may submit comments on the EA and this unsigned FONSI to EPA Region 9 by 5:00 p.m. on March 20, 2011. Comments via letter, fax, or email should be sent to Charlotte Ely at the following address:

EPA Region 9, WTR-4
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA
94015-3901
Telephone: 415-972-3731
Fax: 415-947-3537
Email: ely.charlotte@epa.gov

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.