UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

MAR 2 2 2018

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

TO ALL INTERESTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC GROUPS:

In accordance with the environmental review guidelines of the Council on Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Part 1500, and with the use of the implementing environmental review procedures of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found at 40 C.F.R. Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act" as guidance, the EPA has performed an environmental review of the following proposed action:

Village of Vinton Water Distribution Project
Proposed by the Village of Vinton
Located in Vinton, El Paso County, Texas

Estimated EPA Share: $ 2,936,109

The Village of Vinton is located in northwestern El Paso County, Texas. The purpose of the action is to provide safe and reliable drinking water services to approximately 451 persons. The action is needed because the existing private water system has exceeded recommended consumption levels for total dissolved solids, arsenic, and total coliforms. In addition, there is no fire flow capacity to protect residents in the event a fire occurs.

The Project consists of the installation of Phase II of a looped water system with wholesale supply of treated potable water provided through a purchase agreement with El Paso Water. Phase II includes the installation of approximately 15,200 linear feet (lf) of six and eight-inch water lines, 171 connections, 30 fire hydrants, 1 master meter, and 31 six and eight-inch gate valves. All service connections will be ¾-inch residential connections.

EPA Region 6 has performed an environmental review and assessment on the Environmental Information Document, and other supporting data, prepared for the proposed project. The environmental review and assessment process did not identify any potentially significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the proposed action. The project individually, cumulatively over time, or in conjunction with other actions will not have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the environment. Accordingly, EPA Region 6 has made a preliminary determination that the proposed project is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not warranted.

Re: Vinton Drinking Water FNSI

Comments regarding this preliminary decision not to prepare an EIS and issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) may be submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Special Projects Section (6EN-WS), 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733. All comments will be taken into consideration. No administrative action will be taken on this decision during the 30-day comment period. This preliminary decision, and the FNSI, will become final after the 30-day comment period expires if no new information is provided to alter this finding.

Responsible Official,

Cheryl T. Seager
Director
Compliance Assurance and
Enforcement Division

Enclosure

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for the
VILLAGE of VINTON WATER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
EL PASO COUNTY, TEXAS

1.0 GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

1.1 Purpose and Need for Proposed Action

The Fiscal Year 2017 Appropriations Act for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) included special Congressional funding for drinking water construction projects. The Village of Vinton was selected to receive appropriations funding support from the EPA for the construction of a water distribution system. The purpose of the action is to provide safe and reliable drinking water services to approximately 451 persons. The action is needed because the existing private water system has exceeded recommended consumption levels for total dissolved solids, arsenic, and total coliforms. In addition, there is no fire flow capacity to protect residents in the event a fire occurs. The Village of Vinton is located in northwestern El Paso County, Texas. The population was 1,971 according to the 2010 census.

1.2 Proposed Action

The Project consists of the installation of Phase II of a looped water system with wholesale supply of treated potable water provided through a purchase agreement with El Paso Water. Phase II includes the installation of approximately 15,200 linear feet (lf) of six and eight-inch water lines, 171 connections, 30 fire hydrants, 1 master meter, and 31 six and eight-inch gate valves. All service connections will be ¾-inch residential connections. The project area is 0.2 square miles in size, bounded by Brass Street to the west, Vinton Drive to the south, Iron Drive to the east, and existing railroad tracks to the north. The water lines will tie into the existing El Paso Water system at Vinton Road and AP Ramirez Street to serve customers north of Vinton Road in the north Vinton Hills and Vinton Village subdivisions.

The installation of buried water line would not change the surface use of any property. Total project cost is approximately $2,936,109. Construction activities would likely occur Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Alternatives Considered by the Applicant

2.1.1 Alternative 1 - Preferred Alternative - water supply through wholesale contract

This alternative consists of a new Village of Vinton owned water distribution system with water supplied to the village via wholesale contract with El Paso Water utilities (EPWU). Operation, maintenance, and administrative support services will also be provided through EPWU. Private wells would be discontinued and the four privately owned public water systems would be procured by the village and decommissioned. This alternative was determined to be the most practicable alternative that meets the purpose and need of the project, which is to provide acceptable potable water for the residents of Vinton.

2.1.2 Alternative 2 – Water supply through Vinton owned wells

This alternative would construct a water system owned and operated by the village. Similar to alternative 1, private wells would be discontinued as a potable water source and the privately owned water systems would be procured by the village and decommissioned. This alternative would not tie into the EPWU system, and would have its own wells, water treatment, pumping, and storage facilities. The new system would include two 900 gallons per minute (gpm) wells, on-site chlorination, well collection, piping, a 400-gallon arsenic removal/blend facility, booster pumps, and a 700,000 gallon elevated storage tank.

2.1.3 Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the system would continue operating in the current mode. This would violate water standards for many pollutants, which could result in negative health outcomes for residents and potential financial liabilities for Vinton from the State of Texas for non-compliance.

2.2 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

No other alternatives, besides the preferred alternative, are considered to provide feasible or practical solutions to providing safe and reliable water. Alternative 2 would require the acquisition and development of property to be converted to industrial use as well sites. The no action alternative would continue to provide unsafe drinking water conditions, and inadequate fire protection. Therefore, these alternatives are not considered in detail.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Village of Vinton is located in northwestern El Paso County, 18 miles north of El Paso, TX and 29 miles south of Las Cruces, NM. There are approximately 1,971 inhabitants according to the 2010 census and has an area of 2.4 square miles. Vinton is situated in the Chihuahuan desert at an elevation of approximately 3,800 feet. The topography is considered to be high desert. Vinton lies at the extreme west of the toe slopes and drainages of the Franklin Mountains, which lie approximately 4.5 miles to the east. The Rio Grande River flows southward along the western edge of the village limits. Vinton is interspersed with west-trending natural and man-made drainages and arroyos that empty into the Rio Grande.

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Air Quality

Air quality in a given location is determined by the concentration of various pollutants in the atmosphere. The EPA establishes national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for criteria pollutants. NAAQS represent maximum levels of background pollution limits necessary to protect human health. The EPA has designated all areas of the United States as attainment (meeting the standard), non-attainment (not meeting the standard), or unclassified with respect to NAAQS. Portions of El Paso County are "moderate" non-attainment areas for particulate matter with diameters of less than 10 microns (PM_{10}) and "maintenance" for carbon monoxide and ozone.

Under the no action alternative, construction activities that result in particulate matter and hydrocarbon emissions would not occur. Air resources in the area of concern would not be impacted by implementation of the No-Action Alternative.

An increase of 100 tons per year (tpy) for the criteria pollutants of concern would trigger the need for a general conformity analysis. Construction activity is not expected to result in significant increases in the emissions of carbon monoxide, ozone, or PM_{10} because of the small number of construction vehicles that would be involved and the limited and temporary nature of the construction activities. Construction activities under the Preferred Alternative may temporarily increase soil erosion and dust emissions; however, dust suppression techniques such as watering, and application of soil stabilizers would be used to minimize the fugitive dust. The emissions from the project are expected to be well below the 100 tpy threshold. Construction and operational activities associated with the Preferred Alternative would have no significant impact to air quality within the area of concern. The Texas Commission of Environmental Quality concurred with this opinion, by letter, on July 21, 2017.

4.2 Noise

Noise is defined as unwanted sound or, more specifically, as any sound that is undesirable because it interferes with communication, is intense enough to damage hearing or is otherwise annoying. Human responses to noise vary depending on the type and characteristics of the noise, the distance between the noise source and the receptor, receptor sensitivity, and time of day.

The day-night average sound level (L_{dn}) is the energy-averaged sound level measured over a 24-hour period, with a 10 dB penalty added to noise occurring between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. The 10 dB penalty is intended to compensate for the generally lower background noise and increased annoyance associated with noise during the quieter nighttime hours. L_{dn} is the preferred noise metric of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, USEPA, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and U.S. Department of Defense. The noise environment at the proposed project site in Vinton is characteristic of residential areas.

Under the No Action Alternative, no new infrastructure would be implemented. No construction activity would occur under this alternative, and no changes in the existing noise environment would occur. Therefore, no direct or indirect short-term or long-term noise-generating activity or associated impacts would occur.

Construction activities would likely occur from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Nearby residential receptors would be exposed to short-term construction noise, but no extended disruption of normal activities is expected. Further, provisions would be included in construction plans that require the contractor to make every reasonable effort to minimize construction noise through abatement measures; including proper maintenance of muffler systems. Minimal adverse short-term impacts on the noise environment at and adjacent to the project site would be expected to occur with implementation of the Proposed Action. However, any impacts would be temporary and would not be considered significant.

4.3 Floodplains

Review of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Rate Map Panel number 4802120025B for El Paso County indicates two drainage arroyos designated as 100-year floodplain would be crossed by water lines. Under the Proposed Action, the water lines would be buried underground where they intersect with drainage arroyos. There would be no above ground facilities constructed within areas designated as floodplain, and no direct impacts to floodplains would occur under implementation of the Preferred Alternative.

If the No Action Alternative were selected, no construction would occur in the proposed project area. No activities would result in direct or indirect impacts on floodplains.

4.4 Wetlands

Executive Order 11990 states that it is the policy of the federal government to avoid, to the extent possible, adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands. The project area does not have hydric soils that would support wetland vegetation. Therefore, neither the preferred alternative or the no-action alternative would have effects on wetlands.

4.5 Ground Water Resources

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would continue to result in unsafe water supply from private wells. This could potentially lead to negative health outcomes resulting from the continued ingestion of unhealthy water.

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would discontinue private wells and the four privately owned public water systems would be procured by the Village and decommissioned. EPWU would supply water through a wholesale contract; which would be transported through Village owned infrastructure.

In administering the sole source aquifer program (SSA) under Section 1424 of the Safe Drinking Water Act, EPA performs evaluations of projects utilizing federal dollars for potential impacts to designated SSA's. The project does not lie within the boundaries of a designated SSA, and therefore, does not require review under the SSA program.

4.6 Surface Water Resources

Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 tasks the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) with overseeing any action that may affect navigable waters of the United States. Under the Preferred Alternative, water pipelines would cross two drainage areas that could be considered navigable waters. In 2012, USACE reviewed the project for potential impacts to navigable waters of the U.S., and concluded the project would not impact these resources. The Rio Grande River is impaired by bacteria resulting in the designated use for recreation not being achieved.

With the no action alternative, no construction would take place and surface water quality would remain the same.

Construction and operation activities associated with the preferred alternative would not have direct impacts to surface water resources. Hay bales or silt fences would be placed along the edge of the construction right-of-way to ensure that siltation would not result from construction activities.

4.7 Biological Resources

The project site is located in previously developed areas and surrounded by residential uses. The surrounding area has been converted from desert shrub land to the current developed condition. The project site does not contain suitable habitat for federally listed threatened and endangered (T&E) species.

With implementation of the preferred alternative, some mobile animals would escape to areas of similar habitat, and sedentary animals that utilize burrows (e.g., amphibians, lizards, and small mammals) could be potentially affected during the construction. The applicant made a "no effect" determination with respect to federally recognized threatened and endangered species. According to Section (7)(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act, and its implementing regulations, consultation with the USFWS is satisfied. The applicant is responsible for following all recommendations made by federal and state natural resource agencies regarding T&E species for the duration of the project.

Prime and unique farmland soils and those of statewide or local importance are subject to protection under the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA). The purpose of the FPPA is to minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of prime farmland. According to the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey, there are no prime farmlands in the project area. The NRCS was consulted for this project to determine potential impacts to prime farmland soils. In correspondence dated July 28, 2017, the NRCS concluded the proposed project would not impact any prime farmland soils and further consultation was not necessary.

4.8 Cultural, Historical, and Archeological Resources

Both federal and state laws require consideration of cultural resources during project planning. At the federal level, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, Archeological and Historic Preservation Act (AHPA), among others, apply to projects. In addition, state laws such as the Antiquities Code of Texas apply to these projects. Compliance with these laws often requires consultation with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and Texas State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to determine the project's effects on cultural resources.

Construction activities associated with the proposed action would not occur with implementation of the no action alternative. As a result, historical, cultural, and archeological resources in the area of concern would not be impacted.

No resources have been identified within the area of potential effects (APE) that are listed as a National Historic Landmark, on the National Register of Historic Places, on the list of Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks, designated as an Official Texas Historic Marker, or

designated as a State Archeological Landmark. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to historic resources are anticipated; thus, no mitigation measures are planned for impacts to historic resources.

Given the extent of disturbances within APE, and lack of archeological sites recorded in the vicinity of the project site, it is unlikely that proposed action will encounter or impact intact archeological deposits. It is recommended that project plans proceed without additional archeological and historic research. A cultural resources survey of the APE is not recommended, as the APE possesses a low-probability for intact cultural deposits. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to significant archeological resources are anticipated because of the proposed project. Construction activities that require subsurface excavation would include the stipulation that if any subsurface cultural materials are identified, work should cease and the appropriate personnel from the Village of Vinton, THC, and the SHPO to determine the appropriate course of action. The Texas SHPO concurred with these findings in a July 2017 review.

4.9 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations*, was enacted on February 11, 1994, and mandates that federal agencies identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of programs on minority and low income populations.

According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) "Minority populations should be identified where either (a) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50 percent or (b) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate geographical analysis". Minority populations in the project area are approximately 98%.

Under the No Action Alternative, the project would not be constructed. Implementation of this alternative could be considered adverse with respect to public health since it would not address issues associated with impaired water use.

The Proposed Action would result in positive impacts for children, minority populations, and low-income populations within the proposed project area. Implementation of the project would reduce the contaminants in the potable water system. No adverse impacts on children and minority and low-income populations would occur under implementation of the preferred alternative.

4.10 Cumulative Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would continue to provide water that results in taste and odor complaints, as well as, testing positive for drinking water contaminants above safe levels. This would negatively impact health and quality of life for on the residents of Vinton. Residents could potentially seek to live elsewhere resulting in loss of population and resources for the Village. The cumulative effects of the preferred alternative would be to improve the health and quality of life for Vinton residents. This will lead to the continued growth for the area.

4.11 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Implementation of the action alternative would result only in temporary, adverse impacts such as fugitive dust emissions, vehicle emissions, noise, minor traffic disruption, and soil disturbance. Unavoidable adverse impacts associated with the no-action alternative include the adverse long-term health consequences for Vinton residents, and repercussions from drinking water non-compliance.

4.12 Relationship Between Short-term Uses and Long-term Productivity

In the short term, implementation of the action alternatives would result in temporary, adverse impacts such as fugitive dust emissions, noise, traffic disruption, and soil erosion. Long-term effects of the action alternative include improved long-term health and quality of life for Vinton residents. The no action alternative would result in adverse impacts on both short- and long-term productivity from continued poor drinking water quality and public health.

4.13 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

If the preferred alternative is implemented, irreversible and irretrievable resources committed to the project include energy used to construct the water pipeline, depreciation in value of the equipment used in construction, and monies expended toward workforce expenses during construction.

5.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The project's technical and financial information was available to the public for review by holding public meetings in Vinton on May 31, 2017 and July 19, 2017. This meeting was announced in a newspaper that has a circulation within El Paso County.

During the process of conducting the environmental review and preparing this Environmental Assessment for the project, coordination has been conducted with all required resource protection agencies and offices to solicit and incorporate their initial review and comments. Copies of this Environmental Assessment (EA) will be provided to those agencies and offices for their final review and comments. Other interested parties may request a copy of the EA and/or Environmental Information Document by contacting Keith Hayden, via telephone at (214) 665-2133, electronically at hayden.keith@epa.gov, or in writing from the EPA, Special Projects Section (6EN-WS), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

Based upon completion of this Environmental Assessment, and a detailed review of the Environmental Information Document for the project, it has been determined that construction activities are considered to be environmentally sound. Therefore, it is recommended a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued.

7.0 LIST OF AGENCIES CONTACTED BY BECC

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. National Park Service

Re: Vinton Drinking Water
Environmental Assessment

Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Reclamation
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Texas Historical Commission
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
Ft. Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
Mescalero Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma
Comanche Nation
White Mountain Apache Tribe
Wichita and Affiliated Tribes
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Village of Vinton Floodplain Administrator
International Boundary and Water Commission