



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

REGION 6  
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200  
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

May 8, 2017

**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 (CFR) Part 1500, and with the use of the implementing environmental review procedures of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found at 40 CFR 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:

Drinking Water Infrastructure Construction Project  
Proposed by the City of Presidio  
For BECC Activities  
Located in the City and Las Palmas Colonia, Presidio County, Texas

Estimated EPA Share: \$ 875,000

The Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations Act for the EPA included special Congressional funding for water and wastewater construction projects. The City of Presidio (City) was selected to receive funding support through these special appropriations for the construction of improvements to its drinking water distribution system to correct water loss from unbilled metered and unmetered consumption (including unauthorized consumption), reduce extremely high water system pressure, and extension of the drinking water system into a portion of a local colonia known as Las Palmas.

An engineering study conducted by the City determined that there is adequate water storage capacity, but water loss amounts to almost 100 million gallons per year at a huge operating expense. The project will help eliminate this loss by correcting line breaks and leaks. The system is experiencing tremendous line pressure caused by the difference in the elevations of the two storage tanks in the system. The lower tank at the southern end is almost 171 feet lower than the upper tank at the northern end of the system. The pumps on the lower tank are working against the back pressure to deliver water uphill to the northern tank. This situation is causing and/or contributing to line breaks through water hammer and increased pressure to locations between the tanks. A dedicated transmission line will be constructed between the tanks, and will have pressure reducing valves installed. Also, as part of the project first ever water supply will be provided to residents of a local colonia known as Las Palmas. Colonias are unregulated semi-rural settlements containing substandard housing structures, lack infrastructure, potable water, sanitary sewage collection and treatment, adequate roads, and other basic services.

Residents in the Las Palmas colonia haul water to their homes in large tanks for drinking, bathing, and other household needs. This method commonly involves commuting into the City, and filling jugs carried back in an automobile or large containers/tanks in the bed of a pickup truck. Once water leaves the City taps, the safety of the water and the health of the users cannot be guaranteed. This practice is dangerous, inconvenient and a nuisance to the residents. This hauling is unregulated, introduction of bacteria and other contaminants is highly probable. Water connections in homes provide a safe and reliable alternative to this practice.

All project activities will occur on the easement/utility right of way, on private property of the new connections, or on land to be purchased by the City and used exclusively for this project. The City of Presidio has submitted an application under the EPA prioritization process to the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) for certification of the project. After the project application was reviewed and ranked by the BECC with EPA assistance, the applicant was selected to receive funding from the EPA Project Development Assistance Program administered by BECC. Upon certification, the project will receive Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) assistance administered by the North American Development Bank (NADB). Both the BECC and the NADB are bi-national sister organizations created by the governments of the United States and Mexico to improve the environmental conditions in and along the United States/Mexico border region. The applicant will utilize the BEIF funding support to finance the proposed construction project. The improvements should continue to protect the health and welfare of the citizens living in the immediate vicinity.

The environmental review process, which is documented by the enclosed Environmental Assessment, indicates that no potential significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated from the proposed action. The project individually, cumulatively over time, or in conjunction with other actions is not expected to have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the environment. On that basis, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary. My preliminary decision is based upon the enclosed Environmental Assessment, a careful review of the Environmental Information Document prepared for the project, the results of the public participation process, and other supporting data which are on file in the office listed below and available for public review upon request. Therefore, I am issuing this preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact pertaining to the project.

Comments regarding my preliminary decision may be submitted for consideration to the attention of the Water Enforcement Branch, Special Projects Section (6EN-WS), Environmental Protection Agency, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733. After evaluating any comments received, the EPA will make a final decision. No administrative action will be taken on this preliminary decision for at least 30 calendar days after release of this Finding of No Significant Impact. The preliminary decision and finding will then become final after the 30-day comment period expires if no new significant information is provided to alter this finding. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or Don Walker, NEPA Specialist, of my staff at (214) 665-6769 or [walker.donald@epa.gov](mailto:walker.donald@epa.gov) for any assistance you may need.

Re: FNSI for Presidio, Texas, BECC Project

Responsible Official,



Cheryl T. Seager  
Director  
Compliance Assurance and  
Enforcement Division

Enclosure

cc: John Ferguson, Mayor  
City of Presidio

Renata Manning-GboGbo, Director of Projects  
Border Environment Cooperation Commission

Jeff Walker, Executive Administrator  
Texas Water Development Board

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
BECC DRINKING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT  
CITY of PRESIDIO, PRESIDIO COUNTY, TEXAS**

**BACKGROUND**

The City of Presidio (City) was selected to receive funding support through the Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations Act for the EPA for the construction of improvements to its drinking water distribution system to correct water loss, reduction of extremely high water system pressure, and extension of the drinking water system into a portion of a local colonia known as Las Palmas. The project will help eliminate water loss by correcting line breaks and leaks. There are approximately 14 properties along the 2.2 miles of the new water line in Las Palmas. The current population of the City is approximately 5,000 citizens, and is expected to increase in the future. The proposed project will not displace any existing citizen, home or business.

The City has submitted an application under the EPA prioritization process to the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) for certification of the project. After the project application was reviewed and ranked by the BECC with EPA assistance, the applicant was selected to receive funding from the EPA Project Development Assistance Program administered by BECC. Upon certification, the project will receive Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) assistance administered by the North American Development Bank (NADB). Both the BECC and the NADB are bi-national sister organizations created by the governments of the United States and Mexico to improve the environmental conditions in and along the United States/Mexico border region. The applicant will utilize the BEIF funding support to finance the proposed construction project. The improvements should continue to protect the health and welfare of the citizens living in the immediate vicinity. The City will utilize the Congressional funding support to finance the construction of the proposed project. The project planning area is shown on the map enclosed as Figure 1.

The proposed project is considered to be a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In accordance with the environmental review requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and with the use of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) implementing regulations found at 40 CFR Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act" as guidance, the EPA is preparing this Environmental Assessment to assist in determining the environmental impacts of the proposed action, and in evaluating whether an Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact will be prepared for the proposed project.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The City has proposed the construction and installation of rehabilitation and expansion components for their drinking water system. The City will construct or install 8 and 12-inch diameter water supply and transmission lines, a booster station, an elevated 75,000 gallon water

storage tank, three pressure reducing valves, and necessary equipment and connections to insure proper system functionality.

## **ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

The funding recipient evaluated and considered a range of various alternatives to address the infrastructure needs of the area. Important factors influencing the evaluation of the processes and their recommended solutions include environmental acceptability, overall costs, availability of land for the intended uses, maximum reuse of existing facilities when applicable, operation and maintenance costs, system reliability, accommodation of future expansion needs, and public acceptance. A complete description of the alternatives is provided in the Environmental Information Document (EID) provided by the funding recipient for the project.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

The City of Presidio is located in Presidio County along the Rio Grande which is the United States/Mexico border, and encompasses a total area of 2.6 square miles with no surface water bodies, has a semi-arid climate, and has an average elevation of approximately 2,582 feet above sea level. The project site is located within the semi-arid Trans Pecos area which is the only part of Texas with desert and mountains found together. The general landscape of the site has minimal native vegetation due to low annual precipitation. Livestock grazing and frequent droughts have severely impacted the vegetation and soils in the area.

Land use in the area consists of residential and commercial properties, farmlands, agricultural irrigation canals, and drainage ditches that eventually tie into the Rio Grande. The majority of the soils in the area are described as a gravelly fine sandy loam near the surface with gravelly loamy coarse sand as the underlying material. There are no wilderness areas, national landmarks or monuments, or wild and scenic rivers within or immediately adjacent to the project area. A more detailed description of the local environment is provided in the EID developed for the project.

## **IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

The proposed project was analyzed to identify potential short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts on the environment. There are no anticipated significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the proposed action that cannot be reduced to acceptable levels as identified and discussed below.

1. **Biological Resources Including Threatened and Endangered Species:** Based upon initial coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife (TDPW), construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to biological resources. No protected species were found during a walking tour of the site, and no critical habitat has been designated within the project area. The USFWS and the TPWD must be notified immediately if any protected species or their designated habitat are encountered, and any recommendations they make must be implemented. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the USFWS and the TDPW

to insure protection of any protected animal and plant species or their designated habitat. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

2. Cultural/Historic Resources: Based upon coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Texas Historical Commission (THC), construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to archaeological, historical, architectural, or cultural resources since these protected resources are not known to occur in the project area. A cultural survey of the proposed site conducted in July 2016 determined no sites eligible for designation as State Antiquities Landmarks or for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. After review of the survey results, the THC stated that the project may proceed without further consultation with their office.

However, if cultural materials are encountered during construction, work will stop immediately in the general area of the discovery, and the funding recipient will immediately notify the SHPO of the discovery. Any such resources discovered will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements of 36 CFR Part 800, and appropriate mitigation measures developed and implemented, as needed, in consultation with the SHPO before construction in the area is allowed to continue. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

3. Floodplain: Based upon coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the local Floodplain Administrator (FA), the City is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program and has implemented the appropriate Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. Compliance with any requirements imposed by the FA should insure that there will be no significant impacts to the floodplain from the proposed project. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the FA during actual construction activities. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

4. Wetlands: Based upon coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE), construction of the proposed project will not require the issuance of a project-specific construction permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act designed to protect any wetlands and jurisdictional waters of the United States that may be present. The site consists entirely of uplands areas, and therefore there are no waters of the United States on the project site. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the COE to remain in compliance with any changes to COE regulations and policies as they relate to the project, and must complete any subsequent requirements prior to the initiation of actual construction activities. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

5. Surface Water Resources: Based upon initial coordination with the EPA Region 6 Water Quality Protection Division, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the International Boundary and Water Commission, and the National Park Service, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to protected surface water resources. There will be no discharge into any waters which have been designated as a wild and scenic river. Since the proposed project will disturb in excess of one acre of land, the funding recipient must comply with the Texas Storm Water Construction General Permit which also requires the preparation and implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. The

funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the TCEQ, and must complete any subsequent permitting process prior to the initiation of actual construction activities. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

6. Ground Water Resources: Based upon initial coordination with the EPA Region 6 Sole Source Aquifer Program within the Ground Water/UIC Section, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to protected ground water resources since the project area is not located over a designated sole source aquifer. The City relies exclusively on ground water for drinking water and fire protection, and pumps water from a type of aquifer known as a bolson where the water is more confined due to impermeable layers of clay. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination, and must complete any subsequent permitting process, if any, prior to the initiation of actual construction activities. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

7. Prime and Unique Farmlands: Based upon coordination with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to prime or unique farmlands. The NRCS stated that the proposed installation of the water lines and pressure reducing valves are not considered a permanent conversion of farmlands under the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA), and therefore exempt from the requirements of the FPPA. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the NRCS, and must comply with NRCS recommendations during construction activities. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

8. Air Quality: Based upon coordination with the TCEQ, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to air quality since the project is located in an area which is in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for all criteria air pollutants. To further insure compliance with NAAQS standards, all vehicles and motorized equipment used in construction must comply with regulations regarding the control of air pollution from mobile sources. Construction activities will cause temporary and minor increases in dust levels, but these will cease upon completion of construction activities. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the TCEQ, and must complete any subsequent permitting process prior to the initiation of actual construction activities. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

9. Economically Disadvantaged Communities: The project was reviewed to ensure that construction will be conducted in an appropriate manner so that all persons and populations are served equally by the infrastructure improvements. Based upon the results of an evaluation to rank the potential environmental impacts to local communities using a computer-assisted mathematical formula, including Geographical Information System maps and census demographic data, no persons or populations will be discriminated against or denied the benefits of the proposed project. Since all persons and populations will be served equally by the project, there will be no adverse impacts that are considered disproportionate to any particular portion of the population.

10. Coastal and Barrier Resources: Based upon coordination with the Texas General Land Office (GLO), construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts

to the coastal zone or barrier resources. The project is located inland, and is not adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico, and therefore is not within the jurisdictional boundary of the Texas Coastal Management Program under the GLO. The Texas GLO is responsible for insuring consistency with the goals and policies of the state coastal management program. The City is responsible for continued coordination with the GLO. The funding is contingent upon compliance with these requirements.

11. Cumulative Impacts: Potential cumulative impacts would be those impacts to the local environment that would result from the proposed project in combination with other ongoing actions, and those reasonably foreseeable future actions. No other major construction activity is being conducted presently or planned for the immediate future. The proposed project will not individually nor cumulatively over time have a negative impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. To the contrary, improved infrastructure will have a positive environmental effect by enhancing public health and protecting the natural environment from continued contamination and degradation.

### **DOCUMENTATION, COORDINATION, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

A public hearing for the proposed project was held on October 8, 2015, in the Presidio Activity Center at 1200 E. O’Rielly Street. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the public of the proposed project, to identify any concerns, and to request public participation in the development of the project. The meeting was conducted in both English and Spanish. There were no adverse public comments received during the hearing specific to construction of the proposed project.

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 will be provided to those agencies and offices for their final review and comments. Other interested parties may request a copy of the Environmental Assessment in writing from the EPA, Water Enforcement Branch, Special Projects Section (6EN-WS), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733.

### **REFERENCES**

Environmental Information Document, Presidio Water System Improvements for the City of Presidio, Texas, September 2016.

### **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 that a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued.



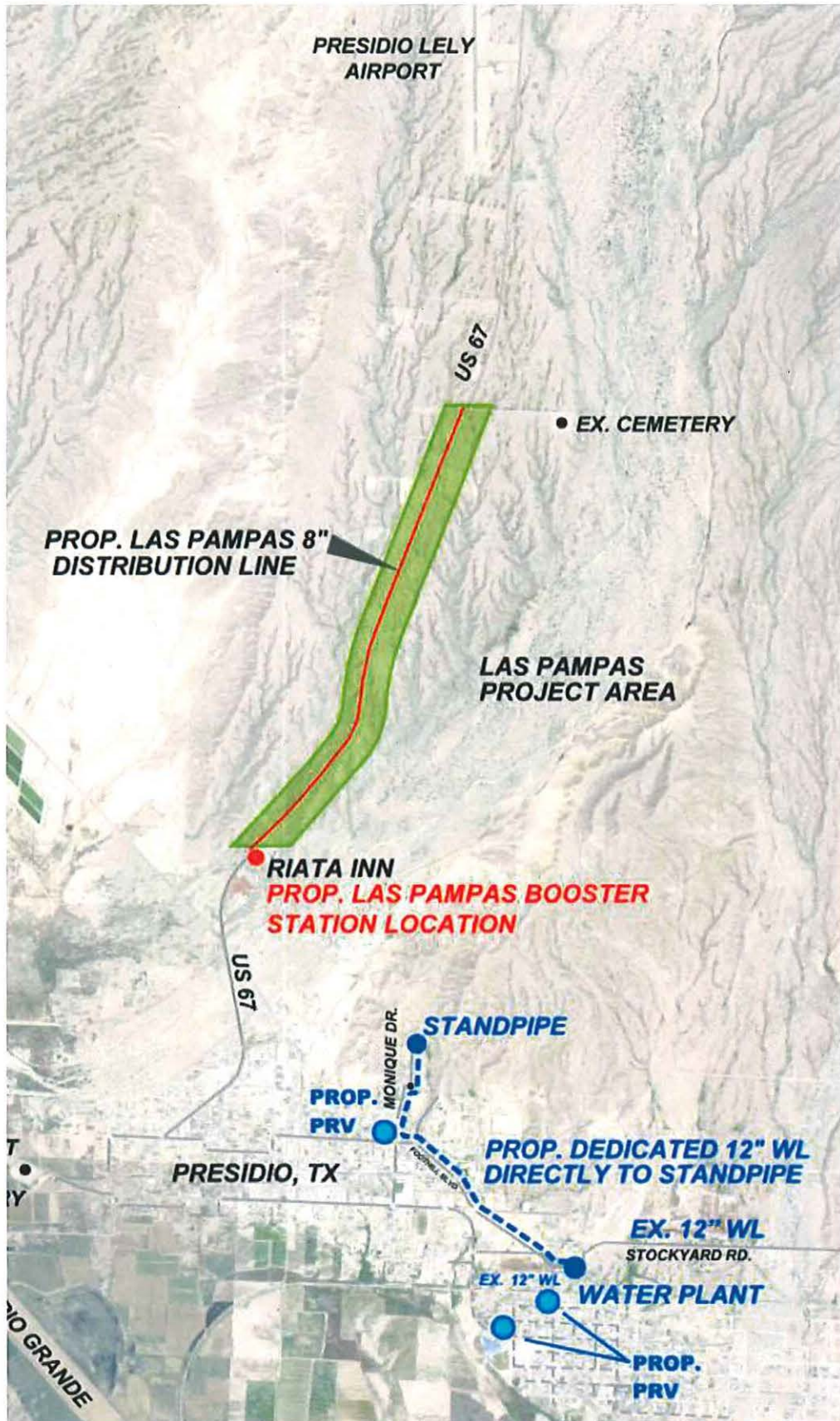


Figure 1