

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) For Adopted Environmental Assessment (EA):**  
*CASA BLANCA CANAL*

Based upon a review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) Lining and Rehabilitation of the Casa Blanca – III Lateral and Sub-Lateral Canals, dated May, 2019, the Bureau of Reclamation's FONSI dated May, 2019, and supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Environmental Assessment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. The original publicly reviewed EA completed by the Bureau of Reclamation was circulated for public comment.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service announced their intent to adopt the EA under the provisions of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR para 1506.3). NRCS accepted comments on our intent to adopt the Lining and Rehabilitation of Casa Blanca-III Lateral and Sub-Lateral Canals EA for a 30-day period from October 4 to November 4. No comments or objections were received.

NRCS reviewed the EA and determined that it adequately addresses the environmental impacts related to the proposed action for funding of the proposed project.

Based upon the final EA, NRCS has determined that lining and rehabilitation of the Casa Blanca Canals will not have a significant effect on the human environment, and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. This decision is based upon the following considerations.

1. The proposed project will not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. Lining and rehabilitation of the existing canal system will improve efficiency of operation, conserve water, and reduce the cost of operation. Project implementation will not have a significant effect on water resources, floodplains and flooding, land use, soil, noise, air quality, and biological resources.
2. The proposed project will not have significant impacts on public health or safety. During construction, OSHA standards and traffic control devices and/or flaggers would be employed, as necessary, to ensure public and worker safety. Following construction, proposed improvements to the Casa Blanca Canals would enhance operational controls and water storage and reduce the potential for downstream flooding.
3. The proposed project will not have significant impacts on unique geographical or ecological characteristics such as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation and

refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; natural national landmarks; sole source aquifers; wetlands; floodplains; prime farmlands; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. Practically all of the construction impact area is situated on lands previously affected by agricultural development or altered by other use.

4. The proposed project will not have highly uncertain, unique, or unknown environmental risks. The existing Casa Blanca Canal has been in operation since 1928. The fundamental operation of the canal system will not change as a result of the proposed improvements.
5. The proposed project will not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant effects. Rehabilitation of the Casa Blanca Canal is a sub-element of a broader effort to develop and modernize the canal system on the Community under Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project (P-MIP). Effects of this comprehensive modernization and expansion of the canal system were previously considered in the P-MIP Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS).
6. The proposed project will not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects. Cumulative effects of the project were considered in the EA and determined not to be significant.
7. The proposed project will not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places. Reclamation consulted with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office regarding potential impact to eligible or potentially eligible cultural resources. To mitigate potential effects, a treatment plan was developed for each of the cultural resources within the area of potential effects for the project. No ground disturbance would begin until the requirements of the plan have been fulfilled.
8. The proposed project will not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.
9. The proposed project will have no effect on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. There is no designated critical habitat in the project area.
10. The proposed project will not violate Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. As a sovereign nation, the Community is not subject to State or local (non-tribal) environmental requirements for actions that are implemented on tribal lands.
11. The proposed project will not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or

spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or result in actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. To prevent the introduction and establishment of invasive weed species, all construction equipment would be power-washed at the contractor's storage facility prior to entering the construction site.

12. The proposed project will not adversely affect Indian Trust Assets. As the primary Indian Trust Asset of concern, water that is conserved from lining and from improved operating efficiencies would be put to beneficial use to irrigate cropland, much of which is allotted to individual Community members.

13. The proposed project will not have significant and disproportionately high and adverse effects on low income or minority populations. Improvements to the Casa Blanca Canals will have short-term effects (primarily dust, noise, and disruption of traffic associated with construction) on minority and low-income populations that live along the canal alignment in the Sacaton community. These effects will be mitigated as indicated in the final EA. Effects of construction will be distributed along the entire canal alignment, more than 90 percent of which is situated in rural and sparsely populated portions of the Community. Consequently, effects to residents of Sacaton will not be disproportionate.

14. The mitigation measures identified in the final EA will be implemented by P-MIP.



Date



**State Conservationist, Arizona**

#### DOCUMENTS REFERENCED

PEIS, 1997 - Final programmatic environmental impact statement. Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project.

Casa Blanca-III Lateral and Sub-Lateral Canals, 2019. Final environmental assessment. Casa Blanca Lining and Rehabilitation. Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project. Gila River Indian Community. Pinal County, AZ. Issued May 2013.