

DRAFT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Tularosa Basin Desalination Research and Development Facility

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Commissioner's Office
Research and Natural Resources

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) on its proposal to construct and operate the Tularosa Basin Desalination Research and Development Facility (Research Facility) in Otero County, New Mexico. A copy of the final EA is attached to this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The issues evaluated in the draft EA were identified through an early public and agency scoping process conducted by Reclamation and other members of the Executive Committee. The scoping process received project input through meetings and discussions with key stakeholders and local, State, and Federal agency personnel. Site visits, surveys, and consultations and discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office were also used to identify issues.

The draft EA specifically evaluated the impacts of the construction and operation of the 30-acre Research Facility at three alternative sites on ground and surface water hydrology and quality, cultural resources, Indian Trust Assets, vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and air quality. Construction and operation activities will have only potentially minor and, in some cases, temporary impacts on ground water quality, vegetation, wildlife, and air quality. There will be no impact on ground water hydrology, cultural resources, Indian Trust Assets and threatened and endangered species.

The draft EA identified and incorporated into the proposed project several measures to reduce or eliminate impacts or potential impacts on the environment. These measures are included in Appendix A of the attached Tularosa Basin Desalination Research and Development Facility Draft EA.

Based on an analysis of the environmental impacts and implementation of the measures, as shown in the attached Tularosa Basin Desalination Research and Development Facility Draft EA, Reclamation has concluded that implementation of Alternative B (Preferred Alternative) will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment or the natural and cultural resources of the area. This FONSI documents environmental review and evaluation in compliance with the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

Director, Research and Natural Resources

Date