

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Lower Colorado Region

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

## New Mexico Unit of the Central Arizona Project EIS

Issue No. 1, June 2018

### Bureau of Reclamation and New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Begin Planning Phase for the New Mexico Unit of the Central Arizona Project

#### Introduction

The United States Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Lower Colorado Region and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) are preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the New Mexico Unit (NM Unit) of the Central Arizona Project (CAP). The proposed NM Unit would be a water diversion, storage, conveyance and delivery system for agricultural use. The NM Unit would divert water from the Gila River or its tributaries in New Mexico including the San Francisco River and convey it for storage in off-stream storage sites in the Cliff-Gila Valley, along the San Francisco River and in the Virden Valley in New Mexico, and deliver it to the target New Mexico water users.

This newsletter announces the public scoping period, during which Reclamation and the NMISC are soliciting public comments and gathering input on the issues to be analyzed in the EIS. Eight scoping meetings are scheduled during the scoping period beginning on June 12, 2018. Comments will be accepted until July 20, 2018. Issues raised by the public will be used to focus the analysis of the EIS and formulate additional alternatives, if needed. These alternatives will be analyzed within the EIS in addition to the proposed action and the No Action alternative.

It is important that interested parties provide their comments at such times and in such a manner as to be useful to the agencies' preparation of the EIS. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's input on the range of issues, impacts, and alternatives that should be evaluated in the environmental analysis process. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action.

#### Project Background

The Colorado River Basin Project Act of 1968 and the Arizona Water Settlements Act of 2004 (AWSA) authorized the CAP to deliver Arizona's allocation of Colorado River water to central and southern Arizona. It also authorized the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to enter into contracts with water users in New Mexico for consumptive use of water from the Gila River in

exchange for delivery of CAP water to downstream users in Arizona. The Secretary may contract with users in New Mexico for up to an annual average of 14,000 acre-feet of water over any consecutive 10-year period, over and above consumptive uses provided by Article IV of the Decree of the Supreme Court of the United States in *Arizona v. California*, 376 U.S. 340 (1964).

Additionally, the AWSA ratified the Consumptive Use and Forbearance Agreement (CUFA), signed by Gila River users downstream in Arizona. The CUFA details the conditions that must be met for New Mexico to be able to divert water from the Gila River and its tributaries in New Mexico, including the San Francisco River. Furthermore, the 1968 Act as amended by the AWSA requires that CAP water be delivered to the downstream users in Arizona in exchange for consumptive use in New Mexico.

Pursuant to the AWSA, the NMISC notified the Secretary on November 24, 2014 that New Mexico intended to pursue the construction and operation of a NM Unit. This infrastructure would allow the diversion and storage of the AWSA water from the Gila River or its tributaries in New Mexico, including the San Francisco River, in accordance with the CUFA.

The New Mexico CAP Entity (Entity) is the project proponent. It is composed of representatives of counties, municipalities, irrigation districts, and soil and water conservation districts in the four-county region of Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna in southwest New Mexico. The NMISC is a non-voting member and a fiscal agent of the Entity. The AWSA required the Secretary and the Entity to sign the New Mexico Unit Agreement (Agreement) within one year of the State's notification. The Secretary and the Entity executed the Agreement accordingly on November 23, 2015.

The Agreement and the AWSA specifically call for full environmental review of a potential NM Unit, including review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and other related statutes. As allowed by the AWSA, New Mexico, acting through the NMISC, has requested to be a joint lead for NEPA purposes. Reclamation and the NMISC entered



into a Memorandum of Understanding describing their respective roles for the preparation of the EIS and other related environmental compliance requirements. Agreements have been; and continue to be developed between Reclamation and the NMISC as joint leads, the Entity as project proponent, and other agencies that may play a role in the environmental compliance process. Those agreements outline roles and responsibilities, funding arrangements and other requirements.

Pursuant to the AWSA, the Secretary is authorized to design, construct, operate, and maintain the NM Unit. However, the AWSA specified that any or all of these responsibilities will be transferred to the Entity if requested. The Entity formally requested transfer of the design authority by letter to the Secretary dated April 4, 2016. Pursuant to the Agreement, design must be in accordance with applicable Reclamation design standards even though design authority has been transferred to the Entity.

### Purpose and Need

The **purpose** of the proposed action is to develop a NM Unit of the CAP to allow for consumptive use of water from the Gila River, its tributaries or underground water sources in southwestern New Mexico, diverted in accordance with the CUFA and pursuant to the terms of the AWSA.

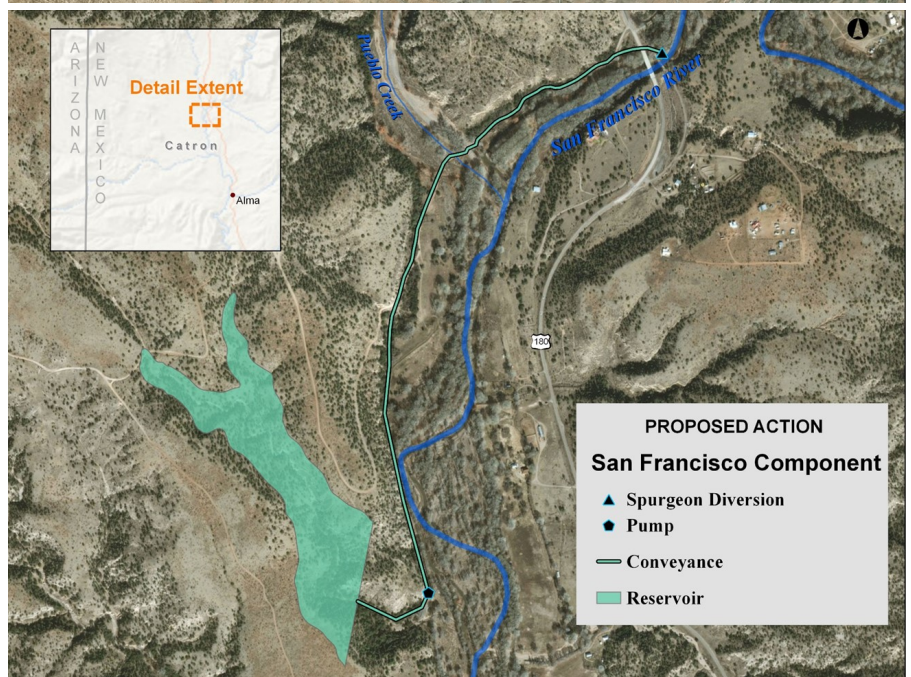
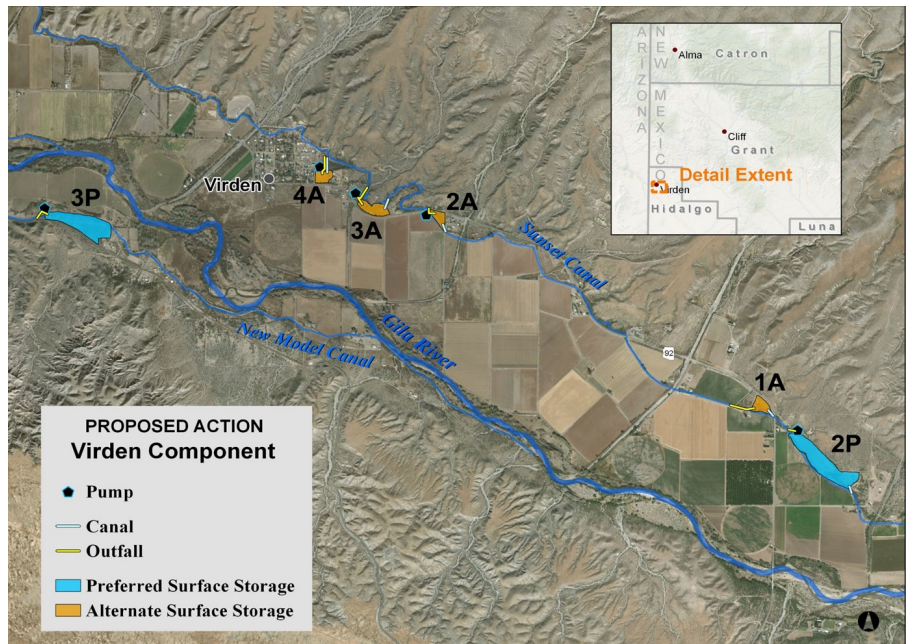
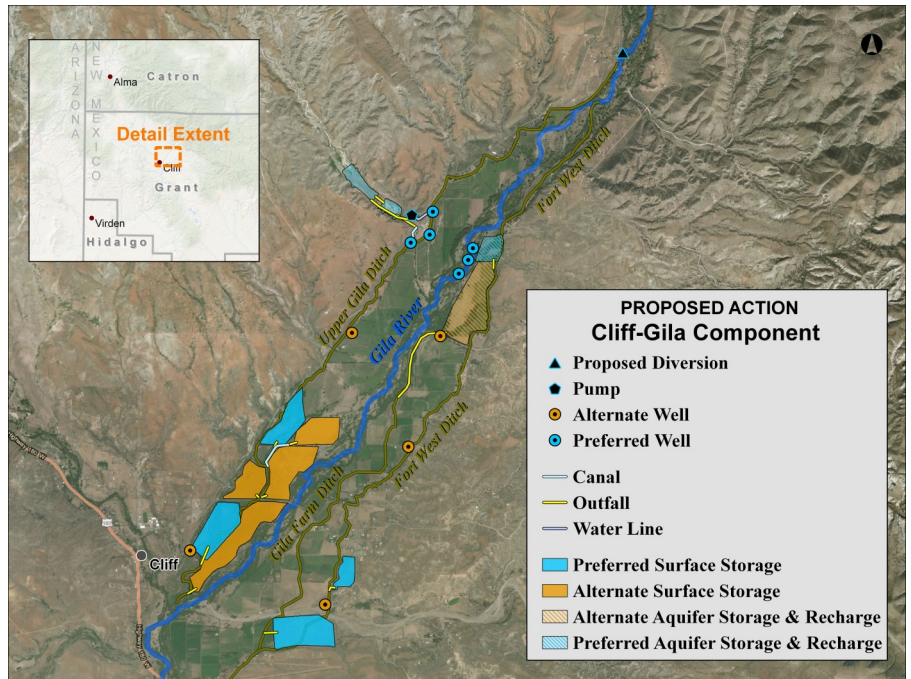
The **needs** for the proposed action are to (a) develop water for delivery at the times, locations, and in quantities that will improve agricultural use, and (b) provide capability for future expansion for authorized beneficial purposes.

### Data Collection Activities

Reclamation and the contracting team will be conducting various environmental surveys to collect biological and cultural data as needed. There will be no permanent impact on the area from these surveys. Reclamation and surveyors will coordinate with private landowners to gain permission before accessing any private property.

### Area of Interest

The area of interest includes the Gila River and its tributaries in New Mexico, including the San Francisco River and three counties in southwestern New Mexico: Catron, Grant, and Hidalgo Counties. No facilities are proposed for Luna County as part of this action.





## Proposed Action

As the project proponent, the Entity has provided Reclamation with a proposed action. This proposed action is still being refined. The proposed action consists of components in Grant, Catron, and Hidalgo counties, New Mexico. The proposed action would develop only a portion of the 14,000 acre-feet allowed under the AVSA, while not precluding the future development of the full amount. The precise amounts of water that would be diverted will be confirmed as the proposed action and alternatives are further refined, prior to the publication of the Draft EIS.

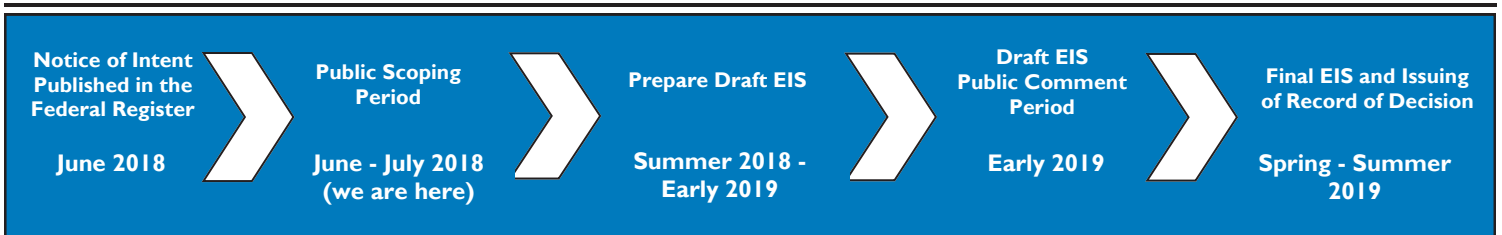
The proposed action includes:

- A surface water diversion structure on the Gila River, in the Cliff-Gila Valley;
- Storage ponds in the Gila River floodplain and a side drainage of the Cliff-Gila Valley, providing approximately 4,000 acre-feet of storage;
- Aquifer storage with recovery wells in the Cliff-Gila Valley;
- Gravity flow and pumped delivery of diverted water to storage facilities in the Cliff-Gila Valley;
- Pumping facilities associated with delivery of stored water in the Cliff-Gila Valley;
- Ditch improvements, including increased capacity and lining of about one-third of existing ditches in the Cliff-Gila Valley;
- Surface storage ponds in the Gila River floodplain or side channels, providing approximately 500 acre-feet of storage in the Virden Valley;
- Improvements to existing ditches for water conveyance in the Virden Valley;
- Pumping facilities associated with delivery of stored water in the Virden Valley;
- A surface water diversion structure on the San Francisco River, near Alma;
- Conveyance (i.e., open ditch, box culvert, or pipeline) construction and improvements to existing ditches for water conveyance from the proposed diversion on the San Francisco River;
- Pumping facility for delivery of diverted water to a proposed reservoir near Alma;
- Construction of an approximately 1,900 acre-foot off-stream reservoir near Alma, to store diverted water from the San Francisco River; and,
- Construction of water conveyance facilities from the reservoir to points of use along the San Francisco River.

## We Want to Hear From You!

If you want to get involved in the planning phase of the project or are just looking for more information, please attend one of the public scoping meetings to learn more about the project, visit with Reclamation and NMISC staff, view maps and handouts, and submit comments. Meetings will run from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm for weekday meetings and from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm for Saturday meetings. Informational materials will be on display throughout the meetings and will also be available on the project website ([www.NMUnitEIS.com](http://www.NMUnitEIS.com)). There will be no court reporters and oral commenting periods at the meetings. Staff will be available to assist with providing written comments at the meetings. Comments can be submitted in person at the public scoping meetings, by email, by US mail to the Bureau of Reclamation, or through the public website.

City	Date	Location
Albuquerque, NM	Mon 7/2/18	State Bar of New Mexico, Rodey Classroom, 5121 Masthead St NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109
Chandler, AZ	Fri 7/6/18	Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino, Acacia Room, 5040 Wild Horse Pass Blvd., Chandler, AZ 85226
San Carlos, AZ	Sat 7/7/18	Apache Gold Casino Resort, Convention Center, 777 Geronimo Springs Blvd Cutter Industrial Park, San Carlos, AZ 85550
Silver City, NM	Mon 7/9/18	Grant County Veterans Memorial Business and Conference Center, Multipurpose Room, 3031 Highway 180 East, Silver City, NM 88062
Cliff-Gila, NM	Tue 7/10/18	Cliff High School, Old Gymnasium, 622 St Hwy 211, Cliff, NM 88028
Glenwood, NM	Wed 7/11/18	Glenwood Community Center and Library, 14 Menges Ln, Glenwood, NM 88039
Virden, NM	Thu 7/12/18	Virden Community Center, 110 Richmond Ave., Virden, NM 88045
Safford, AZ	Fri 7/13/18	Graham County General Services Building, 921 Thatcher Blvd, Safford, AZ 85546



This is the first in a series of newsletters from the United States Bureau of Reclamation and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission regarding the proposed design and construction of the New Mexico Unit of the Central Arizona Project. This edition of the newsletter provides an overview of the project, the NEPA process, and guidance on how to get involved, including a schedule of public scoping meetings and how to submit comments. Contact us at [NMUnitEIS@empci.com](mailto:NMUnitEIS@empci.com) if you would like to be removed from the mailing list or to receive future mailings via email.

## Want More Information?

**Get on the mailing list:** Send a request to [NMUnitEIS@empci.com](mailto:NMUnitEIS@empci.com)

**Visit the project website:** [www.NMUnitEIS.com](http://www.NMUnitEIS.com)

**Attend public meetings:** Scoping meetings will be held in eight locations in New Mexico and Arizona and are open to the public.

**Submit comments:** Comments may be submitted at a public meeting or by using one of the methods listed below. Comments should be provided by July 20, 2018. You can submit comments even if you have not attended a public meeting.

*Online:* [www.NMUnitEIS.com](http://www.NMUnitEIS.com)

*E-mail:* [NMUnitEIS@empci.com](mailto:NMUnitEIS@empci.com) (if emailing comments, please use "NM Unit EIS" as the subject of your email)

*Postal Mail:* Phoenix Area Office, Bureau of Reclamation  
ATTN: NM Unit EIS  
6150 West Thunderbird Road  
Glendale, AZ 85306

## Public Meeting Schedule

Albuquerque, NM	Monday, 7/2/18
Chandler, AZ	Friday, 7/6/18
San Carlos, AZ	Saturday, 7/7/18
Silver City, NM	Monday, 7/9/18
Cliff-Gila, NM	Tuesday, 7/10/18
Glenwood, NM	Wednesday, 7/11/18
Viriden, NM	Thursday, 7/12/18
Safford, AZ	Friday, 7/13/18

See Page 2 of the newsletter for meeting times, locations, and format



*\*Acting as contracted agent for the  
Bureau of Reclamation*

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