

3.15 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

“Environmental justice” refers to the fair treatment of people of all races, income and cultures with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment implies that no person or group of people should shoulder a disproportionate share of negative impacts resulting from the execution of environmental programs. Executive Order 12898, dated February 11, 1994, establishes the achievement of environmental justice as a Federal agency priority:

To the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, and consistent with the principles set forth in the report on the National Performance Review, each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States... .

The memorandum accompanying the order directs heads of departments and agencies to analyze environmental effects of Federal actions, including human health, economic and social effects when required by NEPA and to address significant and adverse effects on minority and low-income communities. Departmental and Reclamation policy and strategy for addressing environmental justice also stresses the importance of providing opportunities for community involvement in the NEPA process considering the effects of Reclamation's decisions on minority and low income populations and communities and identifying mitigation measures in consultation with the affected communities.

Populations that depend on the Colorado River for their water supply include minority and low-income communities in rural and urban areas in each of the seven Basin States. On- and off-reservation populations of Native American Indians are included.

Reclamation is not aware of exposure of any minority or low-income populations to a human health or environmental hazard that would result from implementation of interim surplus criteria. No significant difference in the distribution of benefits and burdens would occur to a minority or low-income communities from any of the alternatives.

Reclamation has involved potentially affected tribes and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to identify and address tribal concerns (see Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination). This includes tribes with reservations along the Colorado River, as well as tribes with Colorado River water rights in the Basin States. Tribal concerns

are discussed in Section 3.14, Indian Trust Assets, and are based on further evaluation of impacts as they affect tribal interests.

Scoping for this EIS did not identify any concerns for adverse impacts on other minority populations in the United States, such as Hispanic communities, or low-income communities. No minority or low-income communities are expected to be affected in any disproportionate way as a result of any of the action alternatives considered in this EIS. Therefore, no potentially significant Environmental Justice issues are analyzed further in this section. Reclamation will continue to seek input on the DEIS from representatives of such communities.