

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## **Southern Nevada Water Authority WaterSMART Grant- Landscape Rebate Program**

**Finding of No Significant Impact and Final Environmental Assessment  
LC-19-03**

**Lower Colorado Region, Boulder City, Nevada**



**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Lower Colorado Region  
Boulder City, Nevada**

**November 2018**

## **Mission Statements**

The Department of the Interior conserves and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people, provides scientific and other information about natural resources and natural hazards to address societal challenges and create opportunities for the American people, and honors the Nation's trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities to help them prosper.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

*Cover photo: Xeriscape yard within SNWA Service Area (Bureau of Reclamation photo)*

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>Acronym or abbreviation</b>	<b>Term</b>
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended
Project	SNWA’s 2019/2020 Water Smart Landscapes Rebate Program
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
SNWA	Southern Nevada Water Authority
U.S.	United States
WEEG	Water and Energy Efficiency Grant
WSL Program	Water Smart Landscapes Rebate Program

# Finding of No Significant Impact

(FONSI)

LC-19-03

For

Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for Southern Nevada Water Authority  
(SNWA) WaterSMART Landscape Rebate Program

Boulder City, Nevada

Based on a thorough analysis of the potential environmental impacts presented in the EA, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) finds that implementation of the Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment within or adjacent to the project area, therefore an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Accordingly, this FONSI is submitted to document environmental review and evaluation of the Proposed Action in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended.

Prepared: Faye Steiner Date: November 26, 2018  
Natural Resource Specialist

Recommended: [Signature] Date: 11/26/18  
Manager, Environmental Compliance Group

Approved: [Signature] Date: 12/7/18  
Chief, Resources Management Office

## **Background**

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to award a WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant (WEEG) to the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) to expand their existing landscape rebate program. This FONSI tiers to and incorporates by reference the November, 2018 “SNWA WaterSMART Landscape Rebate Program Final EA (EA)”, prepared for the WEEG and included with this FONSI.

## **Alternatives Considered**

A No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action were considered in the EA. Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not award the WEEG. Under the Proposed Action Reclamation would award the WEEG (Agreement No. R18AP00167) to SNWA for landscape conversion rebates under SNWA’s Watersmart Landscapes Rebate Program during fiscal year 2019/2020. Reclamation will provide \$300,000; SNWA will provide a contribution of \$3 million for a total project cost of \$3.3 million.

## **Environmental Commitments**

The following measures will be implemented as part of the Proposed Action to reduce or eliminate impacts to resources:

### **General**

The SNWA will be responsible for obtaining all required Federal, State, County, and City permits for the Project.

### **Cultural Resources/Traditional Cultural Properties/Sacred Sites**

If during the course of any activities associated with the execution of the Project, the SNWA becomes aware of or discovers an architectural and/or archaeological resource, the activity in the vicinity of the resource will cease. The SNWA will secure and protect the resource, and notify Reclamation. Reclamation will ensure that the stipulations of 36 CFR Part 800.11 are satisfied before activities in the vicinity of the resource can resume.

## **Environmental Impacts and Findings**

Implementation of the Proposed Action will not result in significant impacts to any of the resources evaluated in the EA. There will be no direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Indian Trust Assets, visual resources, floodplains, wetlands, soils, water quality, environmental justice, cultural resources including traditional cultural properties, Indian sacred sites, or biological resources including threatened and endangered species. Minor, insignificant, temporary negative impacts were identified related to noise and air quality. Beneficial impacts to water resources are anticipated.

# **Final Environmental Assessment for Southern Nevada Water Authority WaterSMART Landscape Rebate Program**

**Environmental Assessment  
LC-19-03**

**November, 2018**

**Prepared by:  
United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Lower Colorado Region  
Boulder City, Nevada**

# **1.0 Introduction**

## **1.1 Proposed Federal Action**

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to award a WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant (WEEG) to the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) to expand their existing landscape rebate program, which provides a financial incentive for property owners to replace lawn with water-efficient landscaping. The WEEG would support a portion of the SNWA's 2019/2020 Water Smart Landscapes Rebate Program (WSL Program/Project). Reclamation previously completed a supplemental EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (LC-10-31) for the WSL Program, but the time period established in that EA has expired.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA. The purpose of this EA is to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed action on the physical and human environment and determine if the impacts will be significant requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

## **1.2 Background for the Purpose and Need**

The SNWA was formed in 1991 by the following water and wastewater agencies: Big Bend Water District, City of Boulder City, City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, Clark County Water Reclamation District, and Las Vegas Valley Water District. The member agencies of SNWA provide water and wastewater service to more than 2.1 million residents in Southern Nevada. As the wholesale water provider, SNWA is responsible for water treatment and delivery, as well as acquiring and managing long term water resources for Southern Nevada.

The SNWA and its member agencies depend on the Colorado River for approximately 90 percent of the service area's drinking water needs. The SNWA's primary resource is its share of Nevada's consumptive use apportionment of 300,000 acre-feet per year of Colorado River Water. The SNWA receives delivery of Colorado River water from Reclamation under several contracts held by SNWA or its member agencies.

## **1.3 Purpose and Need**

In 2009, the United States (U.S.) Congress passed the SECURE Water Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11, Title IX, Subtitle F), directing the U.S. Department of Interior to develop a sustainable water management policy. In 2010, the Secretary of the Interior established the WaterSMART program, combining existing programs with new initiatives to create a broad framework for managing the Nation's water supplies. Through WaterSMART grants, Reclamation provides



financial assistance to water managers for projects that seek to conserve and use water more efficiently, increase the use of renewable energy and improve energy efficiency, benefit threatened and endangered species, investigate and develop water marketing strategies, prevent any water-related crisis, or otherwise contribute to water supply sustainability in the Western U.S.

WEEG grants are one of the grant categories that Reclamation funds under the WaterSMART program. These grants are awarded on a competitive basis to irrigation and water districts, tribes, states, and other entities with water or power delivery authority. Projects conserve and use water more efficiently, increase the production of hydropower, mitigate conflict risk in areas at a high risk of future water conflict, and accomplish other benefits that contribute to water supply reliability in the western U.S.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to further the intent of the SECURE Water Act of 2009 and the goals of the WaterSMART program. The Project is needed because it is expected to result in the replacement of approximately 1,833,333 square feet of turf, with an expected annual water savings of 225 acre-feet. The Project, along with other conservation initiatives implemented by SNWA and its member agencies will help to extend the availability of Nevada's consumptive use apportionment in the light of continuing drought on the Colorado River. The WSL Program has proven to be the region's most effective way to achieve significant and lasting conservation gains, providing water savings that directly extend the region's existing supplies (SNWA 2018)

## **2.0 Description of Alternatives**

### **2.1 No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not award the WEEG. SNWA would need to find other funds to fully fund the Project or make fewer rebates available.

### **2.2 Proposed Action Alternative**

Under the Proposed Action Reclamation would award the WEEG (Agreement No. R18AP00167) to SNWA for landscape conversion rebates under SNWA's existing WSL Program during fiscal year 2019/2020. Reclamation would provide \$300,000; SNWA would provide a contribution of \$3 million for a total project cost of \$3.3 million. Reclamation's discretionary action is limited to providing ten percent of the funding for the WSL Program; which is administered and overseen by SNWA.

The WSL Program provides rebates to residential, commercial, and institutional water users within the SNWA's service area who convert private turf lawns to water efficient landscaping. It currently rebates \$3.00 per square-foot for the first 10,000 square-feet converted per property. Beyond the first 10,000 square-feet, a rebate \$1.50 per square-foot is provided. Additional details on the WSL Program can be found on SNWA's website at: <https://www.snwa.com/rebates/wsl/index.html> (SNWA 2018 b).

## **2.2.1 Mitigation Measures/Design Features**

The following measures would be implemented as part of the proposed action to reduce or eliminate impacts to resources:

### **General**

The SNWA would be responsible for obtaining all required Federal, State, County, and City permits for the Project.

### **Cultural Resources/Traditional Cultural Properties/Sacred Sites**

If during the course of any activities associated with the execution of the Project, the SNWA becomes aware of or discovers an architectural and/or archaeological resource, the activity in the vicinity of the resource will cease. The SNWA will secure and protect the resource, and notify Reclamation. Reclamation will ensure that the stipulations of 36 CFR Part 800.11 are satisfied before activities in the vicinity of the resource can resume.

## **2.2.2 Alternatives Considered but Not Evaluated in Detail**

The WSL Program is identified in SNWA's Water Conservation Plan and meets the criteria for funding under a WaterSMART WEEG grant. Because this activity is appropriate for funding, no other alternatives were considered.

# **3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**

## **3.1 Affected Environment**

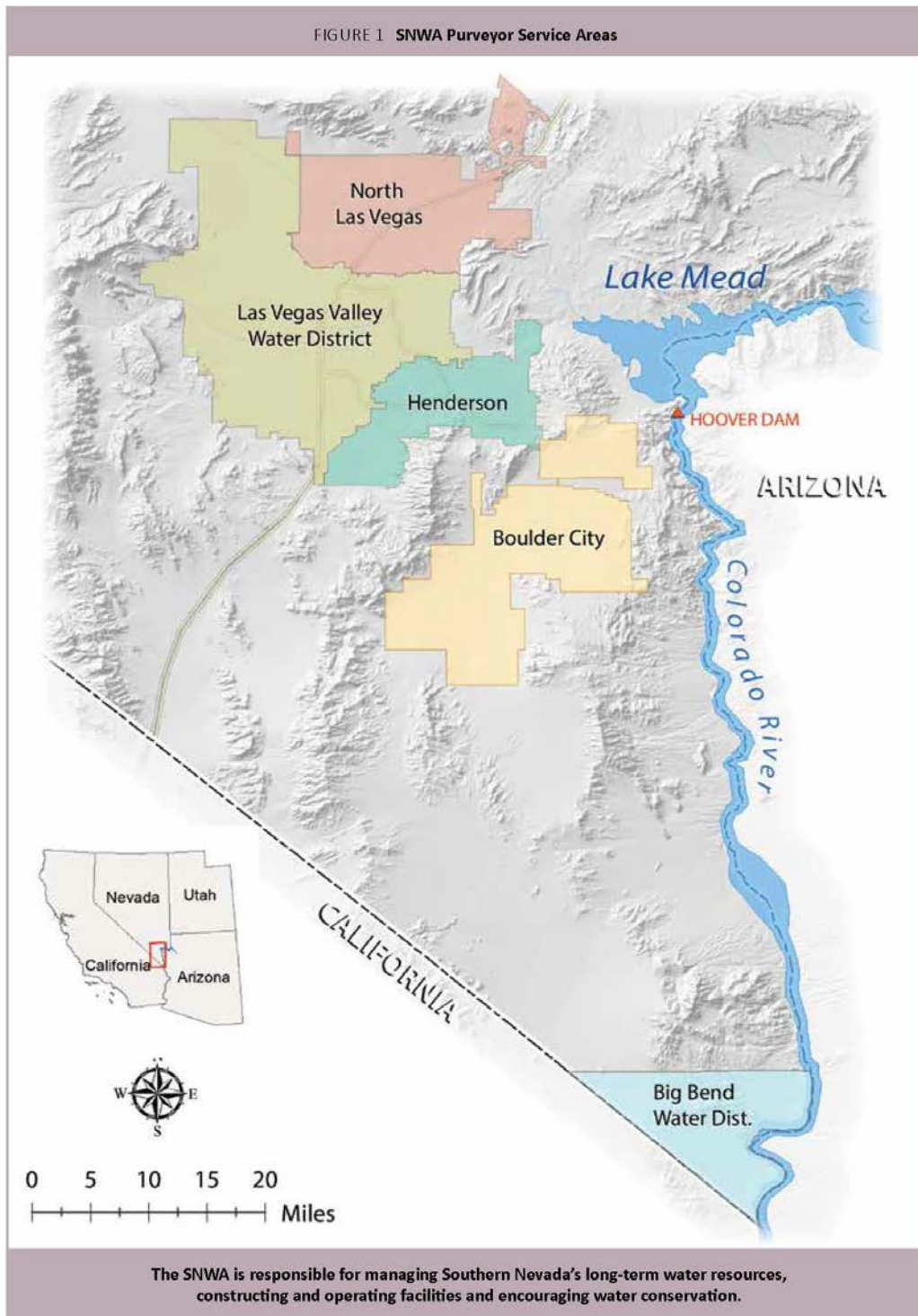
Figure 1 shows the SNWA service area. The seven member agencies of the SNWA are located within this service area.

All activities associated with the WSL Program would take place on private residential, commercial, or institutional lawns within previously disturbed urban southern Nevada communities.

## **3.2 Environmental Consequences**

### **3.2.1 No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, Reclamation would not award the WEEG. The WSL Program would continue, but the number of rebates provided may be reduced due to less funding. The total water savings projected as a result of the Project may not occur.



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**Figure 1- SNWA Service Areas**  
*Source: SNWA 2017*

### **3.2. 2 Proposed Action**

All WSL Program activities take place on previously disturbed private lawns in urban settings. A small amount of ground disturbance would be needed to remove turf and install plants. No new vehicle access routes are anticipated.

Due to the limited amount of ground disturbance which would occur in previously disturbed areas and the limited scope of the action there would be no direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to Indian Trust Assets, visual resources, floodplains, wetlands, soils, water quality, environmental justice, cultural resources including traditional cultural properties, Indian sacred sites, or biological resources including threatened and endangered species.

There may be minor, inconsequential negative air quality and noise impacts from vehicles delivering plants or other materials to residential, commercial, or institutional property. These impacts would be temporary, occurring only while the landscape conversion is taking place.

The water savings projected as a result of the Program would create a beneficial impact to water resources.

## **4.0 Coordination and Consultation**

### **4.2 Scoping/Public Involvement**

Reclamation conducted internal scoping for the EA.

The FONSI and Final EA as well as a press release will be posted on Reclamation's web site. The press release will also be issued to local media to inform the public of the availability of the FONSI and Final EA.

## **5.0 List of Preparers**

Faye Streier  
Natural Resource Specialist-National Environmental Policy Act Coordinator  
Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Regional Office

Andrew Trouette  
Natural Resource Specialist- Biological Services Coordinator  
Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Regional Office

James Kangas  
Archaeologist  
Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Regional Office

## **6.0 References**

Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA). 2018. Water Smart Landscapes Rebate Program application. Las Vegas, NV.

SNWA. 2018b. Water Smart Landscapes Rebate. Accessed at: <https://www.snwa.com/rebates/wsl/index.html> on October 29, 2018.

SNWA. 2017. Water Resource Plan. Accessed at: <https://www.snwa.com/where-southern-nevada-gets-its-water/water-resource-plan/index.html> October 31, 2018.