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# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
Lower Colorado Regional Office  
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Boulder City, NV 89006-1470

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Mr. James Garrison  
State Historic Preservation Office  
Arizona State Parks  
1300 West Washington  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Subject: Laguna Restoration Project (Project): 1,800 Acres of Native Plant Habitat Between Laguna Dam and Imperial Dam for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Implementation Project, Yuma County, Arizona (LC-CA-10-03)

Dear Mr. Garrison:

The Bureau of Reclamation proposes to establish native plant habitat between Laguna Dam and Imperial Dam. The purpose of this submittal is to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for 1,800 acres within the lower Colorado River floodplain, Imperial County, California and Yuma County, Arizona (Exhibit 1). During field investigations, four historic properties were identified and any impacts to these will be avoided by project design.

### Project Description

The proposed Project is in the lower Colorado River floodplain, 13 miles north of Yuma, Arizona, and includes acreage in Yuma County, Arizona, and Imperial County, California (Exhibit 2). In Arizona, the proposed Project site includes portions of Sections 31 and 36 of Township 6 South, Range 21 West, and Sections 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14 of Township 7 South, Range 21 West, Gila and Salt River Meridian. In California, the Project site includes portions of Sections 17, 20, 21, 28, 29, 31, and 32 of Township 15 South, Range 24 East, San Bernardino Meridian.

This Project would remove invasive plant species and replace them with native Colorado River plant species. Currently, this area is covered in an extensive and dense monoculture of saltcedar (*Tamarix spp.*). This Project is part of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP). The LCR MSCP is a multi-stakeholder Federal and non-Federal partnership balancing legal use of the lower Colorado River water resources with the conservation of threatened and endangered species, and their habitats, to comply with the Endangered Species Act.

Appendix A presents a detailed representation of the work to be done at the site. Clearing of the land would be done by burning and heavy machinery. Existing non-native plants (e.g., saltcedar) would be removed by a 1,200 acre prescribed burn. The prescribed burn would be followed by clearing the remaining debris with machinery. An underground pipeline would be built from the Gila Forebay (Forebay) of Imperial Dam, and then a levied wetland area would be created (Exhibit 3); all of this would be accomplished by mechanical excavation equipment.

The wetland system is designed with multiple channel networks to spread available water efficiently and maximize habitat restoration. The Project site would be split into three reaches based on existing topography (see Appendix A). The levied wetlands water delivery system design would include several water control structures that would temporarily pool and spread available water to provide water management flexibility (see Appendix A). An outlet water control structure would pass water to the Mitty Lake inlet canal that would function as an alternative outlet for the flows.

### **Area of Potential Effect**

The area of potential effect for the proposed Project is 1,800 acres within the floodplain of the lower Colorado River below Imperial Dam, and the Forebay.

### **Identification of Historic Properties**

Four historic resources (AZ X:3:520 (ASM), AZ X:3:549 (ASM), AZ X:3:550 (ASM), and the Gila Forebay) were identified during cultural resource investigations. No cultural resource sites were found that predate the World War II use of the area. This is likely due to the location of the Project in the historic floodplain of the Colorado River; sites predating Imperial Dam would have been removed by the torrent Colorado River waters.

The northern portion of the Project area was surveyed for cultural resources by the Bureau of Land Management. Their work identified a significant cultural resource site, AZ X:3:520 (ASM) (see Appendices B and C). This site is associated with the United States Army (Army). In preparing for the Invasion of Normandy during World War II, the Army established a bridge testing facility, the Yuma Test Branch, at the base of Imperial Dam (Exhibits 4 and 5). Army engineers tested bridges against a variety of stream velocities. In 1948 the testing facilities were moved from this location and all of the structures dismantled and removed. The concrete pads and a paint storage structure are all that remain of this occupation; these lie adjacent to the Project area.

The Forebay is part of the Imperial Diversion Dam and De-silting Works (see Exhibit 3). Imperial Dam is a feature of the Boulder Canyon Project, All American Canal System, constructed between 1936 and 1938. The Forebay has been repaired and maintained over time to keep it functioning properly. Recent inspection of the Forebay area as well as the proposed pipeline route by Reclamation archaeologists indicated that the surface has been routinely cleared and leveled by heavy machinery (Exhibits 6 and 7).

Under contract with Reclamation, SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) undertook a Class I records check; 37 cultural resource sites were identified within one mile of the Project area but no previously recorded sites were found in the Project area. The pedestrian survey was also conducted by SWCA (see Tucker and Hesse 2010; Enclosure 5) and Reclamation archaeologists. The SWCA survey area is larger than the Project footprint (Exhibit 8). Also, due to extremely dense saltcedar stands, some areas could not be investigated. The contractor did identify two sites and three isolated objects (IO). The two sites, AZ X:3:549 (ASM) and AZ X:3:550 (ASM), are concrete foundations (Exhibits 9, 10, 11) that date to Army use of the area and are likely loci associated with AZ X:3:520 (ASM). Two of the IOs are automobile bodies that were dumped there and the remaining IO is a utility pole of unknown age.

### **Eligibility Determination**

Reclamation finds that AZ X:3:520 (ASM), AZ X:3:549 (ASM), AZ X:3:550 (ASM) are all eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criteria (a) which a property is "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." These sites are all associated with World War II and the unique controlled testing of riverine bridges in preparation for the invasion of Europe.

### Assessment of Effects

Project design would avoid impacting all of the cultural resource sites. Reclamation would require an archaeological monitor during the construction phase. This would be done to ensure that all of the sites and features are avoided and to examine the surface of areas that could not be surveyed; the contractor was only able to inspect 25 percent of the acreage due to the dense stands of saltcedar. While it is unlikely that additional cultural resources would be identified in primary depositional context within the historic floodplain of the Colorado River, if encountered, the monitor would halt work in the area and examine the find to see if further study is needed. If necessary, appropriate consultation would be conducted, and treatment approved and implemented before work proceeds at that locale. Since the pipeline into the Forebay would be underground and hidden from view, this dam feature would not be adversely affected by its installation.

Reclamation requests your concurrence with its finding of *no adverse effect*. Should you have questions regarding this submission, contact Mr. Mark C. Slaughter, Archaeologist, at 702-293-8143 or [mslaught@usbr.gov](mailto:mslaught@usbr.gov).

Sincerely,

*Annelie Pate*

For

William J. Liebhauser, Chief  
Resources Management Office

Enclosures – 5

1. Exhibits 1-11
2. Appendix A
3. Appendix B
4. Appendix C
5. SWCA Cultural Resource Survey Report (Tucker and Hesse 2010)

*Concern:*

*AZ X:3:320(ASM), AZ X:3:549(ASM), and AZ X:3:550(ASM)  
are all National Register-eligible under Criterion (a).  
Concur that avoidance of these sites during  
project results in finding of No Adverse Effect.  
Archaeological monitor should be present  
as discussed above in letter.*

*James Caswell 1/13/11  
State Historic Preservation Office*