



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6

1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200

DALLAS TEXAS 75202-2733

May 27, 2000

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

To Interested Agencies, Officials, Public Groups and Individuals:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 6, has performed an environmental assessment (EA) pursuant to the project certification process established by the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) for the financing of projects through the Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) under the authority of the November 1993 Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America (U.S.) and the Government of the United Mexican States (Mexico) Concerning the Establishment of a BECC and a North American Development Bank (NADBank). The EPA intends to authorize the release of BEIF funds thirty (30) days after this publication for the following action:

Proposed Action: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would approve grant funding for the town of Puerto Palomas, Ascension, Chihuahua, Mexico, for the proposed improvements to the potable water and sewage systems, and the proposed construction of a wastewater treatment system.

Applicant: Water and Drainage Rural Committee, State of Chihuahua, Mexico, guaranteed by the Water and Drainage Central Committee of the State of Chihuahua.

Table with 2 columns: Description and Cost. Rows include: Estimated Cost of Wastewater Treatment System: \$10,101,083.86; Estimated Cost of Sewage System: \$17,927,464.20; Estimated Cost of Potable Water System: Option #1 (use newly drilled well) \$20,143,690.57; Option #2 (defer use of newly drilled well) \$20,574,365.96; Total Estimated Capital Cost (Option #1): \$48,172,238.63; Total Estimated Capital Cost (Option #2): \$48,602,914.02

Proposed Project. The Water and Drainage Rural Committee (JRAS) of the state of Chihuahua has applied for financial assistance from the Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) for the proposed improvements to the potable water and sewage systems, and proposed construction of a wastewater treatment system for Puerto Palomas in the municipality of Ascension, which is in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. The proposed project is intended to address three main concerns: (1) public health; (2) preservation of groundwater quality; and (3) to meet the demands of the current and projected population of Puerto Palomas. Puerto Palomas currently has a population of 7,156, which is expected to increase at a medium-growth rate to 14,779 by the year 2020.

The proposed project would divide the town into three sectors, each with its own separate elevated water supply tank which would operate independently. The existing 200 and 250 cubic meter (m<sup>3</sup>) capacity metal tanks would be rehabilitated, and a third elevated metal tank with a capacity of 250 m<sup>3</sup> would be installed. Interconnection would also allow the tanks to operate as a single system. The proposed action would also address the restructuring and consolidation of the entity responsible for the operation and maintenance of the proposed systems.

Currently, the sewage system serves only about 40% of the population. The remaining population uses septic systems (14%) or latrines (46%). The septic systems and latrines are more likely to contaminate soils, ground water and drinking water and result in serious health problems. Puerto Palomas has no wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater is currently pumped to a large open lot, located approximately 1,000 meters (m) from the pumping pit, producing foul odors with the potential for health and soil contamination problems. The potable water supply is currently being drawn from the Guadalupe Victoria soft-water aquifer by two deep wells with a total capacity of 85 liters per second.

**Finding.** The EPA has performed an environmental assessment (EA) based primarily on the environmental information provided by the BECC to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with proposed project. On the basis of the EA, the EPA has determined that the authorization for release of the BEIF funds will not constitute an action significantly impacting the quality of the human or natural environment, and that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not warranted.

Comments regarding this determination not to prepare an EIS will be accepted during the thirty (30) day comment period following the public notice of this FNSI. All comments will be considered by the EPA prior to taking any administrative action on the release of the grant funds. The EA is on file at the EPA, Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202, and is available for public examination between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Address all comments and requests for review of the administrative record supporting this determination to:

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