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RECORD OF DECISION
Narrows Project
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Small Reclamation Project Act Loan Application

March 1995

I. Introduction

This document constitutes the Record of Decision of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Upper Colorado Region, regarding the preferred alternative for the Narrows Project Small Reclamation Project Act loan application and is the subject of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Narrows Project, Utah (INT FES 95-02 dated January 27, 1995) developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

II. Recommended Decision

The recommendation is to proceed with the Recommended Plan identified in the FEIS by providing Federal funding to the Sanpete Water Conservancy District (Sponsor) under the provisions of the Small Reclamation Act (P.L. 84-984). The Recommended Plan would provide to north Sanpete County an average annual supply of 4,920 acre-feet of supplemental irrigation water for 15,420 acres of presently irrigated farmland and 480 acre-feet of water for municipal use. The project would include construction of the 17,000 acre-foot Narrows Dam and Reservoir on Gooseberry Creek, pipelines to deliver the water to existing water distribution systems, rehabilitation of the existing Narrows Tunnel, and relocation of 2.9 miles of State Road (SR) 264. The project would also provide recreation opportunities and improvements for fish, wildlife, and water quality.

III. Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the Recommended Plan, eight alternatives were evaluated in the FEIS. Two of these alternatives were evaluated in detail while six were studied in less detail because they were found to be non-viable.

A. The other alternatives evaluated in detail include the following:

1. The No Action Plan represents the conditions of the affected area without development of additional water supplies. It established the baseline for evaluating environmental impacts of providing a supplemental water supply to north Sanpete County. It also established anticipated conditions in affected areas without development and assumes that irrigation operations would continue according to historic use.

2. The Smaller Reservoir Plan would be similar to the Recommended Plan except that the reservoir capacity would be limited to 7,900 acre-feet. The Dam would be in the same location as that for that Recommended Plan. Because of the smaller reservoir capacity, the average annual water supply would be reduced from 5,400 acre-feet to 4,900 acre-feet and the project would be unable to provide the same level of instream flow as the Recommended Plan. Other features of the project would be essentially the same as those for the Recommended Plan and would

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include construction of pipelines, rehabilitation of the existing Narrows Tunnel, relocation of SR-264, and improvements for fish, wildlife, and water quality.

B. The six alternatives that were considered but found to be non-viable include the following:

1. The Alternative Damsite Plan would serve the same purpose as the Recommended Plan. The dam would be located in the valley upstream from the Narrows Damsite. However, conditions set forth in the 1984 Compromise Agreement dictate site location and storage capacity of the project reservoir. If those conditions are not met, a breach of contract would result and the water rights agreement for the project would become null and void. Because of these institutional constraints, there are no water rights for the Alternative Damsite Plan.

2. The Year-round Release Alternative was formulated to minimize impacts of the transmountain diversion on Cottonwood Creek by releasing the flows on a year-round basis. The alternative was found to be impractical because it would require construction of all of the facilities in the Recommended Plan plus an additional storage reservoir in the Sanpete Valley. Construction and operation of the additional reservoir would cause more impacts than those that would have been avoided on Cottonwood Creek.

3. The Groundwater Development Without Exchange alternative was formulated as a means of providing supplemental water supply to north Sanpete County without constructing Narrows Dam and Reservoir. This alternative was found to be nonviable because the State Engineer has determined that the groundwater aquifer in north Sanpete County is fully appropriated. Additional groundwater development would negatively impact existing water rights and would therefore not be allowed under Utah water law.

4. Central Utah Project (CUP) Water was also considered as an alternative to constructing the Narrows Project. However, recent developments with respect to the organization of the Central Utah Water Conservancy District (CUWCD) and CUP planning indicate that CUP water will not be available to Sanpete County. With Millard County withdrawing from the CUWCD, the CUWCD has dropped from further consideration all plans to deliver CUP water to the Sevier River Basin and hence, to Sanpete County.

5. The Direct Diversion Without a Reservoir alternative was formulated in an effort to identify a project alternative that would be more cost effective and have fewer environmental impacts. The alternative would divert water directly from Gooseberry Creek to Cottonwood Creek without construction of a reservoir. The alternative was found to be non-viable because it did not comply with the terms of water rights agreements and the deliverable amounts of water would be substantially reduced and would not be delivered when needed.

6. Conservation Without Development of Additional Water Supplies was considered as an alternative to the project but found to be non-viable because: (a) most of the project area is already under sprinkler irrigation and is served by pipeline systems; (b) the areas not presently irrigated by sprinkler are in the process of converting to sprinkler; (c) even with full conversion of the

project area to sprinkler irrigation, there would be still be a shortage of 7,000 acre-feet of water per year, and (d) conservation was determined to be part of the No Action Plan as well as action alternatives. The Sponsor has determined that all recipients of project water will be required to implement conservation practices.

IV. Basis of Decision and Issues Evaluated

The Recommended Plan has been formulated to meet several of the Department of the Interior's resource management objectives in addition to those of the Sponsor. The specific resource management objectives met by the project include the following:

1. Partnerships - Implementation of the recommended plan would involve a partnership of Federal, State, and local agencies. These agencies would participate not only with project funding, but also with operation, management, and administration of the project.

2. Water Conservation - A goal of the Administration's Stewardship Program is to meet new water supply demands by making more efficient use of existing supplies. Water conservation is an integral part of the Recommended Plan.

3. Maintaining and Enhancing the Environment - Environmental enhancement is a key element of the Administration's Stewardship Program. To accommodate environmental and conservation concerns, several environmental measures have been included in the Recommended Plan.

4. Rural Development - The Administration's policy is to improve the economic and social well-being of rural America. Sanpete County communities view the family farm as being basic to the economy. Completion of the project will help preserve the economic soundness and strong work ethic of rural America. Following construction of the project, the economy of the agricultural sector within the project area will benefit. The project will serve to maintain or improve the economic position of agriculture relative to other economic sectors of the area.

The Recommended Plan would provide for an increased and more dependable irrigation water supply that would improve and stabilize the agricultural sector of the local economy of Sanpete County. By providing additional water for outdoor municipal use, the high quality culinary water can be conserved for indoor use, thus forestalling the need to develop additional culinary water supplies. Implementation of the Recommended Plan would also satisfy longstanding water rights agreements and complete the final elements of Reclamation's original "Gooseberry Plan." The project would also provide rehabilitation of the existing Narrows Tunnel which would secure the delivery of not only project water, but also the existing water supply from Fairview Lakes. The Recommended Plan would also provide much needed recreation facilities and opportunities as well as a new fisheries.

In developing the Recommended Plan all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm were adopted and included in the plan. Providing minimum streamflows and other channel maintenance flows, performing stream channel

restoration work, acquiring, enhancing, and fencing wetland and upland wildlife habitat will protect the natural resource values within the project area of influence and minimize environmental degradation.

The Recommend Plan has incorporated reasonable and prudent alternatives with regard to the endangered fishes of the Colorado River system. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that project depletion impacts can be offset by implementation of these reasonable and prudent alternatives.

Concern has been expressed by water users in the Price River drainage regarding social and economic impacts that the project would cause them. Although the Narrows Project would cause a reduction in water supplies available for users in the Price River drainage, this reduction was anticipated many years ago and Scofield Reservoir was enlarged to offset those impacts. In exchange for the enlargement of Scofield Reservoir, the water users in the Price River drainage have agreed to operate the reservoir under the provisions of the "Gooseberry Plan." This plan provides for the construction of a dam on Gooseberry Creek (Narrows Dam) and a transmountain diversion of water to the Sanpete Valley. Careful review of: the water depletions that would be caused by the Recommended Plan; operation of Scofield Reservoir under the Recommended Plan; and signed agreements with respect to the reconstruction of Scofield Dam and Reservoir, indicates that although the Narrows Project would slightly reduce the present water supply in the Price River drainage, the total useable water supply would still be greater than it would have been without the enlargement of Scofield Reservoir, which was provided as part of the overall "Gooseberry Plan." Therefore it has been determined that any adverse social and economic impacts to water users in the Price River drainage have already been offset by the enlargement of Scofield Reservoir.

V. Implementing the Decision and Environmental Commitments

The Sponsor has committed to the following environmental programs to ensure the protection of natural resources and to establish the appropriate level of mitigation. These commitments would be included in construction contracts and other agreements to ensure their implementation. Mitigation measures would be concurrent with project construction. If environmental commitments are not kept, project funding would be withheld by Reclamation. Additionally, the 404 Permit issued by the Corps of Engineers could restrict filling of the reservoir if environmental commitments are not met.

1. Prior to initiation of final design and construction, detailed cultural resource surveys would be performed along the proposed alignments of the Upper Cottonwood Creek, Oak Creek, and East Bench Pipelines. If cultural resource sites are found, the pipelines would be re-routed where possible to avoid the impact. If the pipeline cannot be re-routed, appropriate mitigation would be developed through coordination with the State Historical Preservation Office.

2. Contractors would be required to cease work immediately if they should discover prehistoric, historical, or archeological evidence during construction. Work would not be resumed until such evidence is properly evaluated by qualified cultural resource specialists.

3. All construction activities would comply with applicable Federal and State laws, orders, and regulations relating to air and water quality. This would include obtaining proper permits, such as a 402 Storm Water Permit from the State of Utah, and complying with any limitations imposed by those permits. Best Management Practice's specified in the Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Control Plan for Hydrological Modification in Utah would be implemented as a requirement of all construction contracts.

4. All construction contractors would be required to comply with Federal and State laws concerning the use of pesticides and hazardous wastes.

5. The asphalt road surface and road base would be removed from the reservoir basin.

6. All disturbed landscape would be rehabilitated immediately after project construction.

7. The Sponsor would have primary responsibility for implementation of all wildlife measures described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. The Sponsor would be responsible for funding and acquiring all lands and easements. The Sponsor would provide seed to supplement the FS seed mixture for the watershed and range improvements such as fencing. This work would be performed concurrently with construction of other project facilities such as the dam, tunnel rehabilitation, and pipelines. All lands and rights-of-way would be acquired and initial construction of wildlife measures would be completed prior to initial filling of the reservoir. The Sponsor would also be responsible for funding the mitigation monitoring. The Sponsor would be responsible to enter into Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) with the Utah Division of Water Resources (UDWR), Forest Service (FS), and other appropriate agencies for all wildlife measures. The MOAs would clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Sponsor, the UDWR, the FS, and other parties for implementation and maintenance of the wildlife measures.

8. The Sponsor would have primary responsibility for implementation of the wetlands measures described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. The Sponsor would be responsible for funding and acquiring all lands and rights-of-way. The Sponsor would provide and transplant any plantings needed. The Sponsor would be responsible to ensure that all fences are in good repair and are maintained properly. The Sponsor would also be responsible to install and maintain any diversion and/or irrigation facilities. This work would be performed concurrently with construction of other project facilities such as the dam, tunnel rehabilitation, and pipelines. All lands and rights-of-way would be acquired and initial construction of wetlands measures would be completed prior to initial filling of the reservoir. The Sponsor would be responsible to fund the monitoring of the wetland mitigation. The Sponsor would be responsible to enter into MOAs with the UDWR, Corps of Engineer (COE), and other appropriate agencies for all wetlands measures. The MOAs would clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Sponsor, the UDWR, the COE, and other parties for implementation and maintenance of the wildlife measures.

9. The Sponsor would have primary responsibility for implementation of all fishery measures described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. The Sponsor would be

responsible for funding and acquiring all lands and rights-of-way. The Sponsor would fund and construct all improvements such as fencing and stream channel improvements. The Sponsor would provide water from its water rights or enter into operating agreements for all instream flows described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. This work would be performed concurrently with construction of other project facilities such as the dam, tunnel rehabilitation, and pipelines. All lands and rights-of-way would be acquired and initial construction of fishery measures would be completed prior to initial filling of the reservoir. The Sponsor would be responsible to fund all operation and maintenance costs of mitigation facilities. The Sponsor would be responsible to enter into a MOA with the UDWR and other appropriate agencies for all fishery measures. The MOA would clearly define roles and responsibilities of the Sponsor, the UDWR, and other parties for implementation, monitoring, and maintenance of the fishery measures.

10. The Sponsor would comply with all existing policies and regulations requiring the preparation, submittal, and implementation of a water conservation plan.

11. The Sponsor has adopted a policy that would require all recipients to implement conservation practices in order to be eligible for project water.

VI. Comments Received on FEIS

Following the filing of the FEIS in January 1995, eight letters were received which provided comments on the FEIS. Those submitting comments include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Moab District; BLM, Richland District; U.S. Forest Service; Utah Department of Transportation; Utah Division of Air Quality; Carbon Water Committee; and Trout Unlimited.

Most of the comments contained in these letters were similar or identical to comments that were submitted on the Draft EIS (DEIS). These comments were addressed in the FEIS and include the follow issues: alternatives addressed in the EIS, conservation, hydrologic studies and water depletion, water quality impacts and mitigation, wetlands impacts and mitigation, fisheries mitigation, mitigation management, impacts on Scofield and lower Gooseberry Reservoirs fisheries and recreation, indirect impacts caused by recreationists, social and economic impacts, benefit-cost analysis, impacts on Carbon County, conflicts with current Reclamation policy, the need for the project, earthquake hazards and the need for contractor to comply with air quality rules.

EPA comments dealt with wetlands impact analysis methods, wetlands mitigation, Endangered Species Act compliance, alternatives addressed in the EIS, the use of a site on Mud Creek for water quality mitigation, and public health concerns related to water quality. Subsequent to receipt of the EPA letter, a meeting was held with EPA to discuss their comments in detail. At the meeting it was agreed that some of the EPA's concerns regarding wetlands and alternatives analysis dealt with 404 permitting process and those concerns should be addressed in the 404 permit. The other concerns were resolved to EPA's satisfaction. Following the meeting, EPA sent a letter indicating that no additional follow-up was needed for purposes of NEPA compliance.

In addition to the comments described above, four of the comments received dealt with issues which had not been raised during the scoping process nor during the public review and comment period for the DEIS. These issues are described as follows:

1. BLM, Moab District, expressed concern that its water rights in the Price River were not considered in the FEIS. However, the Sponsor maintains that its water rights will not interfere with direct flow rights on the Price River and that the 1984 Compromise Agreement which was facilitated by the Utah State Engineer provides protection for direct flow water rights. The State Engineer will monitor project operation to ensure that senior water rights are not adversely impacted by the project.

2. BLM, Richfield District, concern regarding two existing water lines which cross Cottonwood Creek and the potential to damage those lines due to increased scour of the streambed. The Sponsor has agreed to carefully evaluate those pipelines and provide armoring as necessary to prevent scour damage.

2. The Forest Service indicated that a special use permit will be inquired to construct the Upper Cottonwood Creek Pipeline. The Sponsor will obtain this permit prior to construction of the pipeline.

3. The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) expressed concern regarding who will pay the cost of the highway relocation, The Sponsor has responded to UDOT and has indicated that the highway relocation has been included as a project cost that will be included in project funding.

4. Trout Unlimited expressed concerns regarding project impacts on the roundtail chub, flannelmouth sucker, and bluehead sucker in the lower Price River system. During the initial phase of project impact analysis, the interagency team concluded that the Narrows Project would have no measurable impact on the fisheries below Scofield Reservoir. Therefore the lower Price River and the species which reside there were not included in the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report, the Biological Opinion which was prepared in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, nor in the EIS. The Sponsor maintains that the project will have no measurable impact on those species.

There are no unresolved issues.

Approved

MAY 8 1995

Date

Charles A. Calhoun
Regional Director