DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for the

COUNTY OF BERNALILLO,
NEW MEXICO

SECTION 593 WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT
Coors 8, 9 & 10 Sanitary Sewer Vacuum Pump Station

August 18, 2004

US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Albuquerque District

Finding of No Significant Impact
Section 593 Water Resources Development Act
Coors 8, 9 & 10 Sanitary Sewer Vacuum Pump Station
Bernalillo County, New Mexico

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Albuquerque District, in cooperation with and at the request of Bernalillo County, New Mexico, is planning a project that would provide municipal vacuum and gravity sewer service. The construction work would be conducted under Section 593 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-53; 33 U.S.C. 2201 *et seq.*), as amended. The Act authorizes the Corps to provide assistance for design and construction for water-related environmental infrastructure and resource protection and development projects in central New Mexico. Bernalillo County is the local sponsor. The proposed construction period is ten to twelve months and is expected to start in the spring of 2005, provided that funds are available at that time.

The proposed project would provide vacuum and gravity sewer service to approximately 600 properties currently using on-site septic systems in the Southwest Valley. The proposed project area is located in Bernalillo County, just south of the Albuquerque City limits. The work would consist of design and construction of vacuum and sewage pump stations. The stations would be placed on a one-acre property that would be deeded by Bernalillo County to the City of Albuquerque Public Works Department.

The Corps conducted a literature and data search and a cultural resources inventory survey for the project area. No artifacts or cultural resource manifestations were observed during the survey. The data search found that several archaeological sites and historic structures are known to occur within or near the Southwest Valley. None of these sites or structures will be affected by the construction project. Based on existing documentation and the results of the cultural resources survey, as presented in the project's cultural resources survey report, the Corps is of the opinion that there would be "No Historic Properties Effected" by the construction project.

The potential effects of the proposed action are similar to the No-Action alternative, with the caveat that the No-Action alternative would result in further degradation of the groundwater and associated health concerns.

The proposed work would not affect waters of the United States regulated by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA); therefore a Section 404 Department of the Army (DA) permit would not be needed for the project. The addition of vacuum and gravity sewer service equipment would occur within the 100-year floodplain. All Bernalillo County ordinances would be followed. After the permit is issued from the County to build, the Corps would presume that no significant impacts would occur to the floodplain. Also, no further floodplain development is expected to result. Therefore, the planned action is consistent with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management). The proposed work complies with Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), as no wetlands are within the project area.

Only short-term negligible adverse impacts to land use, aesthetics, soils, air, noise, vegetation, and wildlife, would occur during construction. No impacts would occur to land use

(long-term), climate, soils (long-term), air (long-term), wetlands or other waters of the U.S., floodplains, special status species, socioeconomics, or cultural resources. Environmental justice would be impacted beneficially, although not to a level of significance, and would be long-lasting. The proposed project would not result in any moderate or significant, short-term, long-term, or cumulative adverse effects, and, therefore, is recommended.

The planned action has been fully coordinated with federal, state, tribal, and local agencies with jurisdiction over the ecological, cultural, and hydrological resources of the project area. Based upon these factors and others discussed in detail in the Environmental Assessment, the planned action would not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environment Impact Statement will not be prepared for the proposed construction of the vacuum and gravity sewer service system.

_____
Date

_____
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Location

The United States Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District, in cooperation with and at the request of Bernalillo County, New Mexico, is planning a project that would provide vacuum and gravity sewer service to approximately 600 properties in the Southwest Valley of Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

The rehabilitation work would be conducted under Section 593 of the Water Resources Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-53; 33 U.S.C. 2201 *et seq.*) as amended. The Act authorizes the United States Army Corps of Engineers to provide assistance in the form of design and construction for water-related environmental infrastructure, resource protection, and development projects in central New Mexico, which is defined within the Act as the counties of Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia. Types of projects included under the Act are: wastewater treatment and related facilities, stormwater retention and remediation, environmental restoration, surface water resource protection and development, and sewer and water line replacement.

Provisions under the Act require that the project be publicly owned to receive Federal assistance. As such, the non-Federal project sponsor is Bernalillo County, New Mexico. The Act further requires that a cooperative agreement be established between the Federal and non-Federal interests. In general, the Federal share of project costs under each cooperative agreement is 75 percent of the total project costs.

The proposed project area is located within Bernalillo County, just south of Albuquerque's City limits (see Figures 1 and 2). The construction of the vacuum and sewage pump stations would take place on a one-acre property that will be deeded by Bernalillo County to the City of Albuquerque Public Works Department (see Figures 3 and 4).

The project service boundaries are Brooksmoor Road on the north, Los Padillas Road on the south, the Isleta Drain on the east, and Douglas Road on the west (see Figure 2). The proposed construction period is ten to twelve months and is expected to start in the spring of 2005, provided that funds are available at that time.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide vacuum and gravity sewer service to approximately 600 properties currently using on-site septic systems in the Southwest Valley of Bernalillo County. As Bernalillo County and its former villages on the Rio Grande Valley floor have urbanized, the detrimental effects associated with the increased population densities in the southwest valley have increased. Increasing numbers of on-site wells and septic tanks have resulted in concern for groundwater quality and potential contamination sources. The primary source of potential contamination of the ground water supply is directly associated with the large number of on-site domestic septic systems. Many of these septic systems have failed. The combination of septic system failures, high population density, private water sources, and extremely high water table (as high as four feet from the ground surface in some areas) have increased concern for the safety and protection of public health and the environment (Wilson &

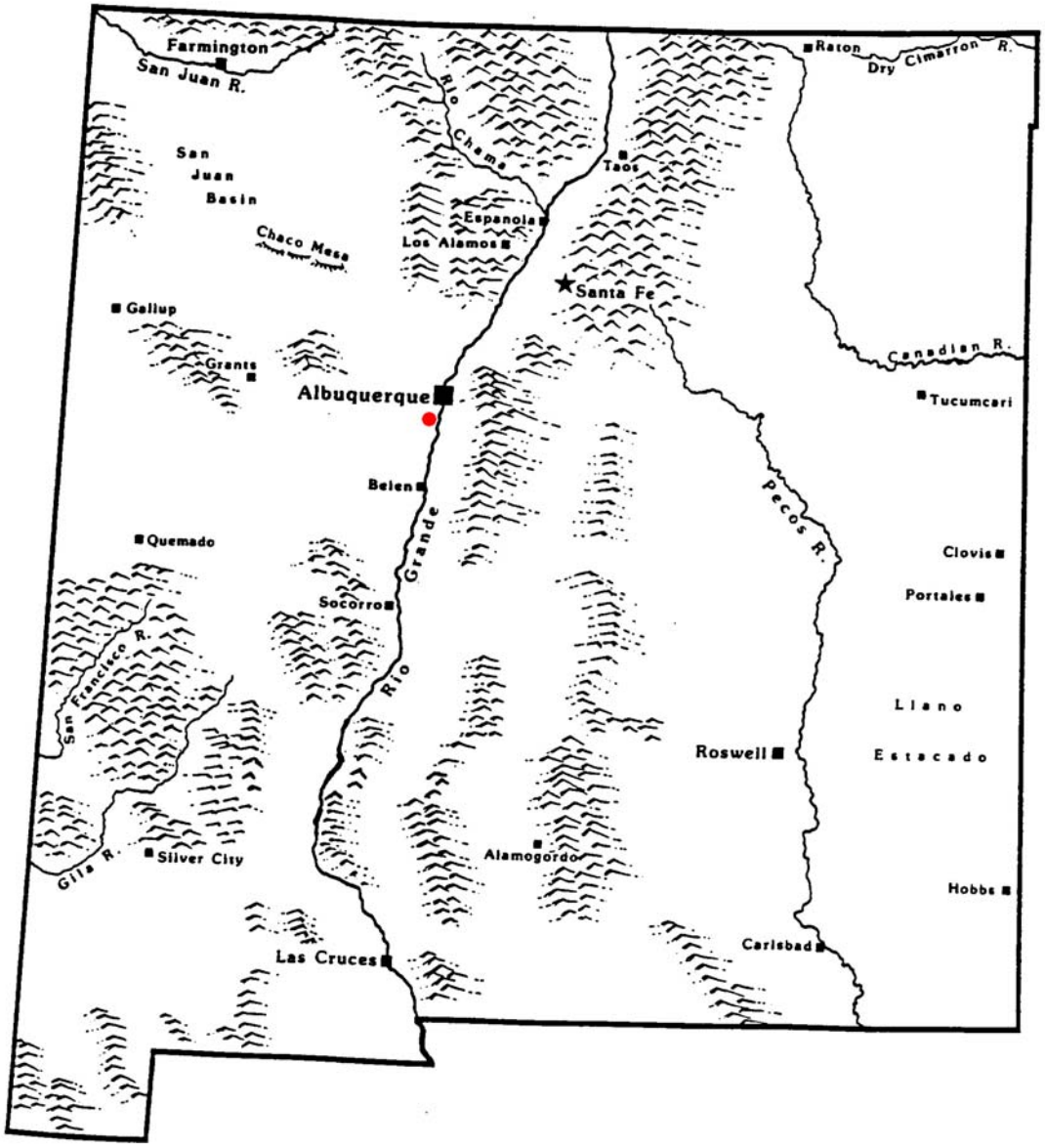

Figure 1. Location of Proposed Project Area for the Sewage Vacuum Pump Station, Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

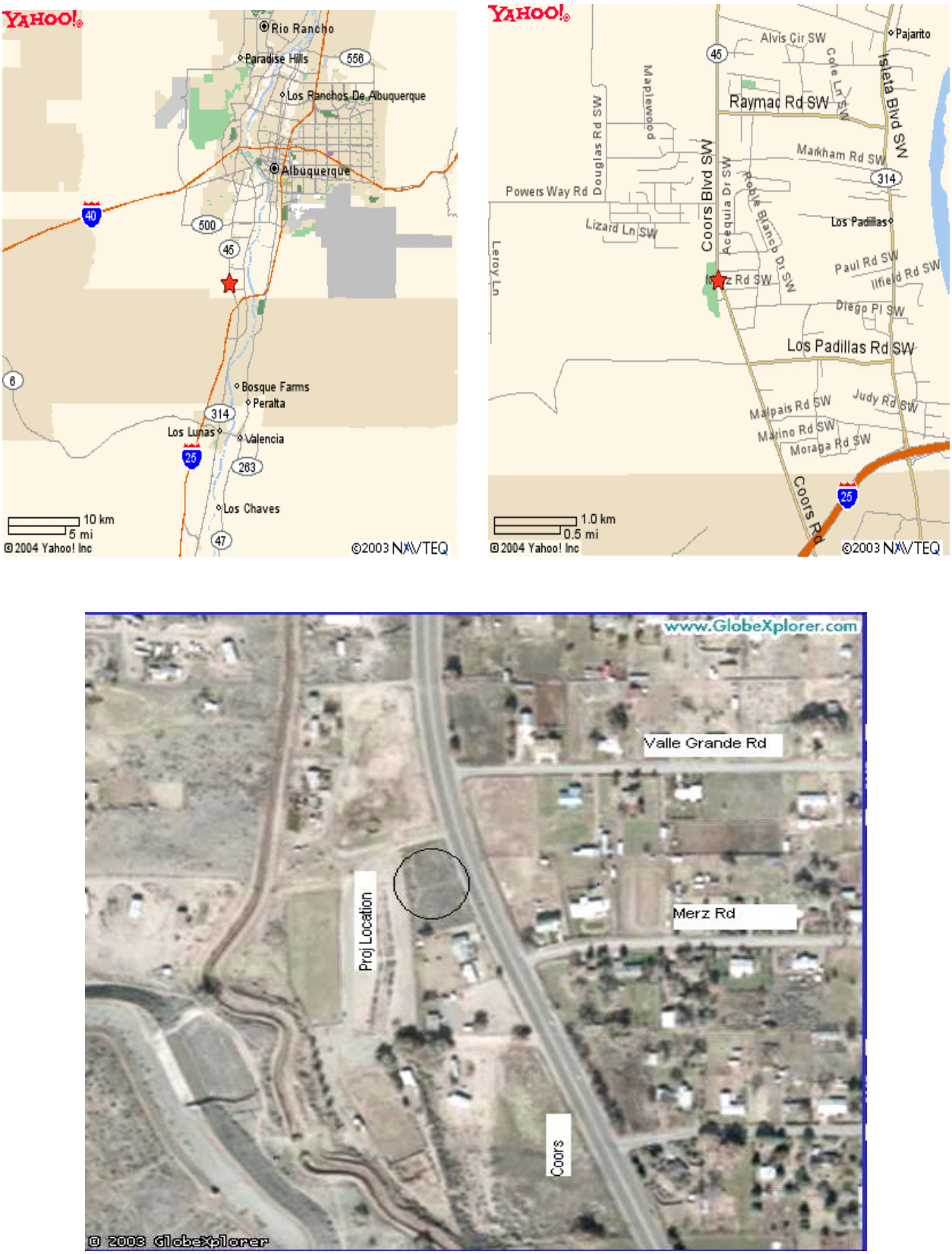

Figure 2. Site of Proposed Project for the Sewage Vacuum Pump Station, Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

Figure 3. Project site looking south (one acre lot)

Figure 4. Project site looking north (one acre lot)

Company, 1997). The proposed project is necessary to assist in the effort to minimize the number of individual on-site septic systems and alleviate their concerns.

1.3 Regulatory Compliance

This Draft Environmental Assessment was prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District, in compliance with all applicable Federal Statutes, Regulations, and Executive Orders, including the following:

- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (16 U.S.C. 470)

- Clean Water Act of 1972 and Amendments of 1977 (CWA)
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, (ESA) as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq*).
- Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations, 1994.
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958, as amended (16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq*.)
- Floodplain Management (Executive Order 11988)
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C 4321 *et seq*).
- Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1500 *et seq*.)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq*.)
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 U.C.S. 3001 *et seq*.)
- Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment (Executive Order 11593)
- Protection of Wetlands (Executive Order 11990)
- Procedures for Implementing NEPA (33 CFR 230; ER 200-2-2)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Procedures for Implementing NEPA (33 CFR 230)

This Draft Environmental Assessment also reflects compliance with all applicable State of New Mexico and local regulations, statutes, policies, and standards for conserving the environment such as water and air quality, endangered plants and animals, and cultural resources.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

All Federal agencies that assist or take part in projects that utilize funding are mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate alternative courses of action. Typically, alternatives are a set of different locations that satisfy certain defined project criterion. However, alternatives can also include design considerations and/or attributes that may mitigate or reduce impacts generated by a given action. In general, alternatives, including a No-Action alternative, can provide decision makers with an evaluation on the present and future conditions with regard to the implementation of an action at a given site, time, or including particular design characteristics. Information and knowledge yielded from alternative evaluations can then guide decision-making processes such that they are made in the best interest of the public and environment.

2.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action would entail design and construction of vacuum and sewage pump stations. These would consist of vacuum pumps and storage tanks housed in a masonry building that is 25 feet wide by 40 feet long. Sewage pumps would be placed in a wet well. The vacuum and pump stations would have four 430-CFM vacuum pumps; two centrifugal sewage pumps; two 1500-gallon steel collection tanks; and other valves, piping, electrical instrumentation, odor control facilities, etc., for the operation of the unit. The vacuum and pump stations would sit on a one-acre property that would be deeded by Bernalillo County to the City of Albuquerque Public Works Department. These stations would be located at the hydraulic center of the described area, on 7005 Coors Blvd. SW. The pump station is designed to pump sewage via a

force main along the Isleta Drain to the Lakeview Interceptor gravity sewer line.

2.2 The No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action alternative, there would not be any construction or modification to the sewer service equipment. No federal funding would be expended and there would be no new effects to the project site or surrounding environment. However, the No-Action alternative is considered environmentally unsound and not in keeping with efforts to improve sewer service to residents in the project area.

3.0 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL AND FORESEEABLE EFFECTS

3.1 Physical Resources

3.1.1 Physiography, Geology, and Soils

The proposed project is in the Middle Rio Grande Valley, a wide floodplain of fertile bottomland (USDA 1977). These fertile soils and shallow water tables support diverse vegetation as well as a variety of resident and migratory wildlife. The Rio Grande Valley is a productive agricultural area that contributes to the quality of life and economies of the urban areas of Albuquerque, Bosque Farms, Los Lunas, and Belen, New Mexico, as well as several other smaller communities.

The Rio Grande follows a well-defined geologic feature called the Rio Grande graben. The Rio Grande graben contains several thousand feet of poorly consolidated sediment of the Santa Fe Group of the middle Miocene to Pleistocene age.

The terrain in the area is characterized by gently sloping plains from the east to the Rio Grande ranging from about 4,860 feet to 4,875 feet in elevation. Water tables are typically four to five feet in depth and permeability is moderate (USDA 1977). The general soil conditions are deep, nearly level, well-drained soils that are formed in recent alluvium, on floodplains of the Rio Grande.

The major soil series, which occur within the proposed planning area, are described in the following paragraphs. The information in this section was obtained from the soil survey for Bernalillo County (USDA 1977).

<u>Agua Series</u>

The Agua series consists of deep, well-drained soils that formed in recent alluvium on the flood plain along the Rio Grande. Slopes are 0 to 1 percent. Agua soils are mainly associated with Brazito, Gila, and Vinton soils. In a representative profile, the surface layer is light brown loam about 10 inches thick. Next is about 14 inches of brown loam and pink very fine sandy loam. Below this to a depth of 60 inches or more is very pale brown fine sand. The soil is moderately alkaline throughout. Permeability is moderate to a depth of about 24 inches and rapid below.

Agua loam

This level soil is in the irrigated Rio Grande Valley. It has the profile described as representative of the series. In most areas the water table is below 60 inches, but in some it fluctuates between 45 and 60 inches. Slopes are 0 to 1 percent. Runoff is very slow and the hazard of erosion is slight.

Agua silty clay loam

This level soil is in the irrigated Rio Grande Valley. It has a profile similar to that described representative of the series, but the surface layer differs in texture. In most areas the water table is below 60 inches, but in some it fluctuates between 45 and 60 inches. Slopes are 0 to 1 percent. Runoff is very slow, and the hazard of erosion is slight.

Gila Series

The Gila series consists of deep, well-drained soils that formed in recent alluvium on the flood plains along the Rio Grande and Rio Puerco. Slopes are 0 to 2 percent. Gila soils are associated with Agua, Anapra, Hantz, Vinton, and Brazito soils. In a representative profile the surface layer is brown loam about 7 inches thick. Next is about 37 inches of stratified brown and light yellowish brown very fine sandy loam and sandy loam. Below this to a depth of 60 inches or more is pale brown sand. The soil is moderately alkaline throughout. Permeability is moderate.

Gila loam

Slopes are 0 to 1 percent. Runoff is slow, and the hazard of water erosion is slight.

Gila clay loam

The surface layer texture is about 10 inches thick. Slopes are 0 to 1 percent. Runoff is slow, and the hazard of water erosion is slight.

Vinton Series

The Vinton series consists of deep, well-drained soils that formed in recent alluvium on the flood plains of the Rio Grande. Slopes are 0 to 3 percent. Vinton soils are associated with Brazito, Bluepoint, Agua, and Gila soils. In a representative profile, the surface layer is brown sandy loam and pinkish gray loamy sand and pinkish gray very fine sand. The soil is moderately alkaline throughout. Permeability is moderately rapid.

Vinton loamy sand

The surface layer is pale brown. In most areas the water table is below 60 inches, but on about 1.5 percent of the acreage it fluctuates between 45 and 60 inches. Slopes are 0 to 1 percent. Runoff is very slow, and the hazard of soil blowing is moderate to severe.

Vinton sandy loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes

In most areas the seasonal water table is below 60 inches, but on about two percent of the acreage it is between depths of 45 and 60 inches and the soil is moderately saline. Runoff is slow, and the hazard of soil blowing is severe.

3.1.2 Climate

The climate in the vicinity of the project is classified as arid. The average maximum temperature is 70ºF and the average minimum temperature is 44ºF. The average annual precipitation is 7.88 inches. Summer is the rainy season. Half of the annual precipitation falls during the period July to October, typically as brief but often near ten inches in the valley. The snow season in the valley generally extends from November to early in April, but snow seldom stays on the ground for more than one day. The average frost-free season at Albuquerque is 190 days, from mid-April to late in October. Relative humidity averages less than 50 percent and generally less than 20 percent on hot sunny afternoons. Winds blow most frequently from the north in winter, and from the south along the river valley in summer. Wind speed averages nearly nine miles per hour for the year. The information in this section was obtained from the soil survey from Bernalillo County (USDA 1977). There would be no effect to climate by the proposed project.

3.1.3 Water Resources

Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (CWA; 33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*) as amended, regulates point-source discharges of pollutants into waters of the United States and specifies that storm-water discharges associated with construction activities shall be conducted under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) guidance. Construction activities associated with storm-water discharges are characterized by such things as clearing, grading, and excavation, subjecting the underlying soils to erosion by storm-water, which results in a disturbance to one or more acres of land. The NPDES general permit guidance would apply to this project because the total project area is approximately one acre. Therefore, a Storm-Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is required and would be prepared by the contractor for this project. Impacts from storm-water are expected to be negligible.

Section 404 of the CWA, (CWA; 33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*) as amended, provides for the protection of waters of the United States through regulation of the discharge of dredged or fill material. The Corps' Regulatory Program (33 CFR Parts 320-330) requires that a Section 404 evaluation be conducted for all proposed construction that may affect waters of the United States. Section 404 of the CWA does not apply to this project, as there would be no discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

Section 401 of the CWA, (CEA; 33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*) as amended, requires that a Water Quality Certification Permit be obtained for anticipated discharges associated with construction activities or other disturbance within waterways. Section 401 of the CWA does not apply to this project, as there would be no discharge associated with construction activities or other disturbance within waterways.

3.1.4 Floodplains and Wetlands

Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management) provides Federal guidance for activities within the floodplains of inland and coastal waters. The order requires Federal agencies to take action to reduce the risk of flood loss, to minimize the impact of floods on human safety, health, and welfare, and to restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values

served by floodplains. The one-acre property is located within two types of special flood hazard areas inundated by 100-year flood (Flood Insurance Rate Map 1996). These areas are in potential flood depths of one to two feet. Because the proposed project includes development within the historical floodplain, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ordinances must be implemented. The community ordinance for Bernalillo County states that structures in the floodplain should be elevated above the base flood elevation. This ordinance will be followed. If the County issues a permit to build the structure, the Corps would presume that no significant impacts would occur to the floodplain. The Corps anticipates that the County will issue a permit to build. Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) requires the avoidance, to the greatest extent possible, of both long and short-term impacts associated with the destruction, modification, or other disturbance of wetland habitats. There are no wetlands within the project area, and therefore, no impacts to wetlands would occur.

3.1.5 Air Quality, Noise, and Aesthetics

The Southwest Valley of Bernalillo County is in New Mexico's Air Quality Control Region No.2 for air quality monitoring and Bernalillo County is "in attainment" (does not exceed State and Federal Environmental Protection Agency air quality standards) for all criteria pollutants (NMED/AQB 1995). Air quality in the project area is generally good. The closest Class I area is Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, approximately 90 kilometers (57 miles) to the south of the project area. Class I areas are special areas of natural wonder and scenic beauty, such as national parks, national monuments, and wilderness areas, where air quality should be given special protection. Class I areas are subject to maximum limits on air quality degradation. All vehicles involved in transporting rubble and spoil from the project site to the deposition area will be required to have passed a current New Mexico emissions test and have required emission control equipment.

The proposed project would result in a temporary but negligible increase in suspended dust particles from construction activities. Equipment with water sprinklers would be used during construction to minimize dust. A Fugitive Dust Control Permit is needed when there will be surface disturbance to three-quarters of an acre or more. Because the proposed project would disturb more than three-quarters of an acre, the contractor will need to apply and obtain an approved permit from the Bernalillo County Office of Environmental Health. Air quality in the Southwest Valley, Bernalillo County and the National Wildlife Refuge would not be affected by the proposed project or by the no-action alternative.

Background noise levels in the proposed project area are relatively low. According to the Noise Center for the League for the Hard of Hearing (League for the Hard of Hearing, 2004), a typical, quiet residential area, has a noise level of 40 decibels. A residential area near heavy traffic has a noise level of 85 decibels. Heavy machinery has a noise level of 120 decibels. During construction, noise would temporarily increase in the vicinity during vehicle and equipment operation. The Noise Center advises that noise levels above 85 decibels will harm hearing over time and noise levels above 140 decibels can cause damage to hearing after just one exposure. However, the increase in noise during construction would be minor and temporary, ending when construction is complete. Therefore, the proposed project would have no significant affect on noise.

Aesthetically, the terrain of the project area is characterized by houses, streets, farmland, etc., typical of a semi-urban area. The area receives minimal recreational use with the intent of viewing scenery. The recommended plan would have no effect on existing aesthetic conditions.

3.2 Biological Resources

3.2.1 Vegetation Communities

The project sites are part of the Plains Mesa Sand Scrub vegetation community as described by Dick-Peddie (1993). However, soils and vegetation of the project sites have been greatly disturbed by urbanization over the years. A site visit on February 27, 2004 by Corps personnel revealed very scattered yard and open space consisting of broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), sand sagebrush (*Artemisia filifolia*), wild rose (*Rosa spp*), Douglas rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*), western sticktight (*Lappula occidentalis*), kochia (*kochia scoparia*), Russian thistle (*Salsola iberica*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), oldfield threeawn (*Artistida oligantha*), tumble pigweed (*Amaranthus albus*), tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*), and Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*).

3.2.2 Wildlife

Numerous wildlife species occur in the adjacent riparian areas of the Middle Rio Grande Neotropical migrants and resident avian species frequent the area and live within the Bosque. According to Brown (1982) these species may include: Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), Red-Tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Great-Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), Downey Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*), Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*), White-Crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), White-Breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*), Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), Black-Headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), House Finch (*Carpodacuc mexicanus*), American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), Black-Crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Black-Chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*), Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), Broad-Tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*), Pied-Billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*), Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*), Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), and various waterfowl (*Anus spp*, *Aythya spp, Oxyura jamaicensus, Aix sponsa*). In addition, various mammals and reptiles such as mice, rabbits, skunks, coyote, beaver, and lizards may also transit through the project area.

3.2.3 Special Status Species

While all Federal, State, and Tribal agencies have a responsibility for the protection and conservation of plant and animal species in the proposed project area, two agencies have this task as their primary responsibility. The United State Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), under authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531), as amended, has the responsibility for Federal listed species. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) has the responsibility for state-listed wildlife species. Each agency maintains a continually updated list of species that are classified, or are candidates for classification, as protected based o their present status and potential threats to future survival and recruitment into

viable breeding populations. These types of status rankings represent an expression of threat level to a given species survival as a whole and/or within local or discrete populations. Special status species that potentially occur in Bernalillo County and may occur near the proposed project area are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Special Status Species Listed for Bernalillo County, New Mexico, that have the Potential to Occur in the Vicinity of the Proposed Project Area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status (USFWS)[a]	State of New Mexico status (NMDGF)[b]
Animals			
Bald Eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	T	T
Black-footed Ferret	*Mustela nigripes*	E	---
Mexican Spotted Owl	*Strix occidentalis lucida*	T	---
Rio Grande Silvery Minnow	*Hybognathus amarus*	E	E
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	*Empidonax traillii extimus*	E	E
Whooping Crane	*Grus Americana*	E	E
Mountain Plover	*Charadrius montanus*	T	---
Neotropic Cormorant	*Phalacocorax brasilianus*	---	T
Common Black-Hawk	*Buteogallus anthracinus anthracinus*	---	T
American Peregrine Falcon	*Falco peregrinus anatum*	---	T
White-eared Hummingbird	*Hylocharis leucotis borealis*	---	T
Bell's Vireo	*Vireo bellii*	---	T
Gray Vireo	*Vireo vicinior*	---	T
Baird's Sparrow	*Ammodramus bairdii*	---	T
Spotted Bat	*Euderma maculatum*	---	T
New Mexican Jumping Mouse	*Zapus hudsonius luteus*	---	T
Plants			
Santa Fe Milkvetch	*Astragalus feensis*	---	R
La Jolla Prairie Clover	*Dalea scariosa*	---	R
Sapello Canyon Larkspur	*Delphinium sapellonis*	---	R
Sandia Alumroot	*Heuchera pulchella*	---	R
Plank's Campion	*Silene plankii*	---	R

[a] **Endangered Species Act (ESA)** (as prepared by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services) **status:** Only Endangered and Threatened species are protected by the ESA.

E= Endangered: any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

T= Threatened: any species that is likely to become and endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

C= Candidate: taxa for which the Services has on file sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to support proposals to list them as endangered or threatened species.

SC= Species of Concern: taxa for which information now in the possession of the Service indicates that proposing to list as endangered or threatened is possible appropriate, but for which sufficient data on biological vulnerability and threat are not currently available to support proposed rules.

P= Proposed for listing in the identified category listed above.

S/A= Similarity of Appearance.

[b] **State of New Mexico status:**

E= Endangered Animal species whose prospects of survival or recruitment within the state are in jeopardy.

T= Threatened Animal species whose prospects of survival or recruitment within the state are likely to become jeopardized in the foreseeable future.

SC= Species of Special Concern.

Special status animal species listed by USFWS (USFWS 2002) and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish for Bernalillo County (NMDGF 2002) that might occur in or near the project area but are not anticipated to occur include the following:

The American Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) is a Federally delisted species with an approved recovery plan, and a State threatened species. The peregrine falcon may fly over the construction area during spring and fall migrations. The peregrine prefers breeding habitat that is in isolated wooded areas with cliffs that create "gulfs" of air in which the peregrine may forage. The Peregrine's preferred wooded-forested habitat does not occur in or near the project area. Due to the ease of mobility of the peregrine and the limited disturbance of the proposed project, there would be no effect to the American Peregrine Falcon.

Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*), a State Threatened species, favors shrubby short-grass habitats. The sparrow is a migrant to New Mexico, occurring mainly in autumn primarily in the eastern plains and southern lowlands, but is considered rare to uncommon and a vagrant. The sparrow may fly over the construction area during migration; however, due to the ease of mobility and the limited disturbance of the proposed project, there would be no effect to Baird's sparrow.

The Black-footed Ferret (*Mustella nigripes*) a Federal listed Endangered species, prefers mixed shrub habitat. The distribution of the Black-footed Ferret is closely sympatric with that of prairie dogs and all viable breeding populations have been associated with prairie dog colonies, which they use for food and shelter. There were no prairie dog towns observed at or near the proposed project area during the site visit. Being that the one-acre lot has been a waste yard for some time, the vegetation that occurs within the project site is very disturbed. Due to lack of preferred habitat and no presence of prairie dog towns, there would be no effect to this species by the proposed project.

The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), a Federal and State Threatened species, is normally found near major waterways and larger lakes where adequate food supplies may be found. The Bald Eagle is known to occur in New Mexico primarily during the late fall and winter months. The Bald Eagle utilized large trees for perching and forages primarily for fish, ducks, and carrion along river and at local reservoirs. The Bald Eagle may fly over the construction area. However, due to the ease of mobility for the Bald Eagle and the limited disturbance of the proposed project, there would be no effect to the Bald Eagle.

To minimize the potential for disturbing Bald Eagles that may be present during construction, efforts would be made to schedule all work outside of the Bald Eagle high use months of December, January, and February. If a Bald Eagle is present within 0.5 mile of the construction sites in the morning before project activity starts, or following breaks in work, the contractor would be required to suspend all activity until the bird leaves of its own volition, or a Corps biologist, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, determines that the potential for harassment is minimal. However, if an Eagle arrives during construction activities, or if an Eagle is beyond 0.25 mile of the site, construction would not be interrupted. If Bald Eagles were found consistently in the immediate project areas during the construction period, the Corps would contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine whether formal consultation under the Endangered Species Act is necessary.

The Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*), a Federal listed Threatened species, occurs in short-grass prairies, usually associated with prairie dog towns. There were no prairie dog towns observed at or near the proposed project area during the site visit. Being that the one-acre lot has been a waste yard for some time, the vegetation that occurs within the project site is very disturbed. Due to lack of preferred habitat and no presence of prairie dog towns at or near the proposed project site, there would be no effect to this species by the proposed project.

The Whooping Crane (Grus americana) was listed as a Federally Endangered species on March 11, 1967 (32 FR 4001; 35 FR 8495). Whooping Cranes are associated with marshes, potholes, prairies, and agricultural fields. In New Mexico, they generally winter at Bosque del Apache in association with Sandhill Cranes (*Grus Canadensis*). They often feed in agricultural fields or wetland units and roost on sand bars in the Rio Grande or nearby wetlands. Agricultural fields exist in this part of Bernalillo County, just outside of Albuquerque City limits, but are not present at or near the proposed project site. Given the limited nature of the proposed project and lack of preferred habitat at or near the proposed project site, there would be no effect to this species by the proposed project.

In addition, the New Mexico Department of Minerals, Natural Resources, Forestry Division has the responsibility for maintaining the list of state-listed endangered plant species. The State species list indicates that there are five status plants species that occur in Bernalillo County, the Santa Fe milkvetch (*Astragalus feenis*), La Jolla prairie clover (*Dalea scariosa*), Sapello Canyon larkspur (*Delphinium sapellonis*), Sandia alumroot (*Heuchera pulchella*), and Plank's campion (*Silene plankii*). They are each listed by the State of New Mexico Division of Forestry as an endangered plant on the New Mexico Rare Plants Technical Council 2002 Website (http://nmrareplants.unm.edu/). Although these plants are known to occur in Bernalillo County, they are not likely to occur within the project area. The preferred habitat of two of these plants, Sandia alumroot and Plank's campion, is limestone cliffs and igneous cliffs, respectfully. Santa Fe milkvetch is known to occur on sandy benches and gravelly hillsides in piñon-juniper woodland or plains-mesa grassland. The Sapello Canyon larkspur is often associated with canyon bottoms and aspen groves in lower and upper montane coniferous forest. The La Jolla prairie clover's preferred habitat is open sandy clay banks and bluffs, often along roadsides. None of the above preferred habitat is located within the project area, and therefore there would be no effect to these endangered plants.

3.3 Cultural Resources

The Corps involvement in the Coors 8/9/10 Project is limited to the construction of the vacuum pump station only. The proposed pump station is to be constructed on a one-acre tract and is located in what is generally known as Albuquerque's South Valley (within the Coors Area), Bernalillo County, New Mexico (see Figure 2).

The sponsors, EPA and BCPWD, contracted with Cibola Research Consultants (CRC) in 2002, who conducted a Class III cultural resources inventory of the proposed project areas that covered a total of 38.1 acres. The report entitled, **A Cultural Resource Survey for the Proposed Vacuum Sewer Project in the South Valley Coors Area, Bernalillo County, New Mexico: Areas 8, 9, and 10 Sewer and Storm Drainage Improvements, A Bernalillo County Project,** was written by Michael P. Marshall (2002; NMCRIS Project No. 80237).

The Marshall (2002) survey included the proposed project area but his report did not specifically identify the location of the one-acre tract on the map figures in his report. Therefore, the Corps contacted Marshall by telephone on January 8, 2004, to verify that his survey covered the one-acre pump station tract.

The pump station tract is at least 250 feet away from archaeological sites that Marshall recommended to be monitored during the sewerline construction phase. CRC identified five archaeological sites within or in close proximity to the project areas. Three of the sites, LA 49993, LA 50273, and LA 102332, had been previously identified (Vivian and Clendenen 1965; Marshall and Walt 1985; Marshall 1993). Two additional previously unknown sites, LA 137305 and LA 137306, were identified and documented during Marshall's 2002 survey.

The proposed pump station tract was the same location surveyed by Marshall in 2002, who found no artifacts or cultural resources manifestation within the one-acre tract. Therefore, the Corps is of the opinion that there would be "No Historic Properties Effected" by the proposed construction of the vacuum pump station exclusively.

Should previously undiscovered artifacts or features be unearthed during construction, work would be stopped in the immediate vicinity of the find, a determination of significance made, and a mitigation plan formulated in coordination with the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer and with Native American groups that may have concerns in the project area. Consultation regarding cultural resources is documented in Appendix A.

3.4 Land Use and Socioeconomic Considerations

The southwest valley of the greater Metropolitan Albuquerque area is located in Bernalillo County. The total population of Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2002 was estimated to be 737,324. Within the southwest valley, the ethnic background is: Hispanic, 76.9%; White, 16.4%; Native American, 4.9%; African American, 0.2%; and Other, 0.4%. The annual average wage/salary per job in Bernalillo County was $32,287 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic, 2002). The unemployment rate for Bernalillo County in June of 2004 was 5.3% (New Mexico Department of Labor, updated June 2004). Within the project area, farming is still a major land use. Small truck farms grow chile, corn, squash, tomatoes and fruit. Alfalfa is a

main crop. Dairies and feedlots are also present. There is limited grazing, which is usually confined to families raising 1 or 2 of cattle for their own use.

The proposed project would take place entirely within the one-acre property. Presently, it is an abandoned lot that is open and very disturbed. The vacuum pump station would provide service to 600 properties within a 3.45 square mile area. Under agreement with the City of Albuquerque, the new pump station will be transferred by the County of Bernalillo to the City of Albuquerque to be included in the wastewater collection and treatment system. Operation and maintenance will be accomplished by the City of Albuquerque. Adjacent property includes residential, conventional single-family residential, mixed single-family residential, commercial strips, a few scattered industrial sites, and a considerable amount of open space now or formerly devoted to irrigated cropland use. The proposed project would not affect land use or socioeconomic resources in the project area.

3.5 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Low-Income Populations; February 11, 1994) was designed to focus the attention of federal agencies on the human health and environmental conditions of minority and low-income communities. It requires federal agencies to adopt strategies to address environmental justice concerns within the context of agency operations and proposed actions. In an accompanying memorandum, President Clinton emphasized that existing laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), should provide an opportunity for federal agencies to assess the environmental hazards and socioeconomic impacts associated with any given agency action upon minority and low-income communities. In April of 1995, the EPA released a guidance document entitled Environmental Justice Strategy: Executive Order 12898. In short, this document defines the approaches by which the EPA will ensure that disproportionately high environmental and/or socioeconomic effects on minority and low-income communities are identified and addressed. Further, it establishes agency wide goals for all Native Americans with regard to Environmental Justice issues and concerns.

The Coors Vacuum Pump Station Project would be conducted under Section 593 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-53; 33 U.S.C. 2201 *et seq*.) as amended. This program is largely intended to provide needed assistance (technical, financial, etc.) to communities in which water resources are degrading and in need of improvement. As such, this project would benefit an area within a minority and low-income community. No adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations are expected. Under the definition of Executive Order 12898, there would be no adverse environmental justice impacts under the proposed action.

3.6 Cumulative Impacts

NEPA defines cumulative effects as "…the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other, past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions."

The footprint of the proposed project lies within an urban/semi-urban residential area that has little resemblance to what was present prior to urbanization. Since the construction work primarily involves the addition of vacuum and sewage pump stations, most environmental impacts associated with the proposed project would have occurred from previous development activities. These impacts have stabilized and have been considered the baseline against which impacts of the proposed project have been compared. Construction of new vacuum and gravity sewer service equipment would occur on already disturbed/developed ground, within existing right-of-way owned by Bernalillo County. This would not significantly impact the current conditions of the local environment. Positive wastewater service improvements are anticipated to occur from the proposed project that would enhance the quality of life for residents in the area. For these reasons, the proposed project when combined with past, present, or future activities in the southwest valley would not significantly add to or raise local cumulative environmental impacts to a level of significance.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

The proposed action evaluated in this draft EA addresses the method and potential effects for the construction of the vacuum and gravity sewer service.

Due to the previously disturbed and semi-urban nature of the project area, impacts to the environment would be insignificant and short-term. This proposed project would provide vacuum and gravity sewer service to approximately 600 properties currently using on-site septic systems in the southwest valley. The proposed project would not result in any moderate or significant, short-term, long-term, or cumulative adverse effects. Therefore, construction of the proposed project would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and is recommended for implementation.

5.0 PREPARATION, CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 Preparation

This Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) was prepared for Bernalillo County by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District (USACE). Personnel primarily responsible for preparation include:

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5.2 General Consultation and Coordination

Agencies and entities contacted formally or informally in preparation of this Draft Environmental Assessment include:

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Appendix A

Cultural Resources Report

Appendix B

Biological Coordination

Appendix C

Public Review Comments and Responses

Appendix D

Notice of Draft EA Availability