Draft Environmental Assessment

Mountain View Phase I Culvert for Middle Rio Grande Flood Protection Bernalillo to Belen, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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Draft

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Location

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Albuquerque District in cooperation with Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), is planning to construct a culvert in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain (Proposed Action or Mountain View Phase I Project) just north of the Interstate 25 (I-25) crossing of the Rio Grande in Bernalillo County (Figure 1). The culvert would allow for an access road connecting the Albuquerque Riverside Drain maintenance road with the landside and Barr Interior Drain maintenance roads. The Proposed Action would facilitate construction of and be incorporated into the Mountain View section of the proposed Middle Rio Grande Flood Protection Bernalillo to Belen, Bernalillo County, New Mexico (Bernalillo to Belen Flood Projection Project) and would also provide infrastructure that would improve access for MRGCD maintenance activities and firefighting activities in the bosque.

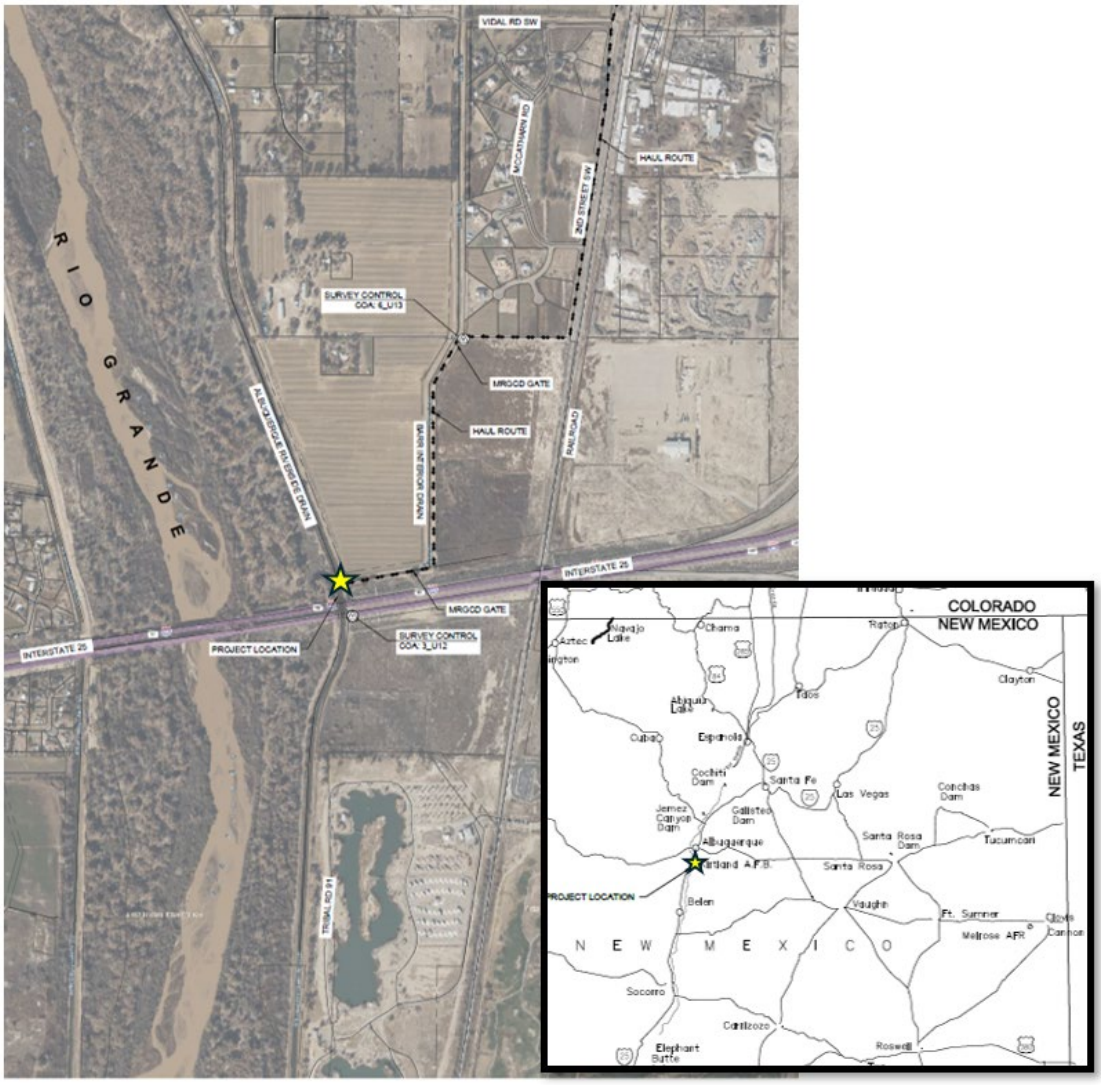

Figure 1 Mountain View Phase I Culvert Project Location

The project site is located at the Albuquerque Riverside Drain at the southern end of the Mountain View Unit of the proposed Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection Project (USACE 2019) (Figure 2). The proposed culvert would be the first phase of the Mountain View Unit of the Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection Project. The Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection project would include construction of approximately 48 miles of engineered levee to replace existing spoil bank along four levee segments (some along both sides of the river) and implementation of environmental compensatory mitigation. The Mountain View levee unit would tie into high ground on the North end at the AMAFCA South Diversion Channel and on the South end would tie in at the I-25 embankment.

Construction of the Proposed Action is planned to begin when funding for construction becomes available, anticipated to be 2026 or 2027; construction is expected to last for approximately five months.

The Albuquerque Riverside Drain is an earthen canal that parallels the landside toe of the existing spoil bank levee which runs north to south along the east side of the Rio Grande. The Riverside Drain at the proposed culvert site is abutted on the east by a dirt road between the drain and adjacent agricultural land. The existing spoil bank levee abuts the Albuquerque Riverside Drain to the West. An access road runs along the top of the spoil bank. The river side of the spoil bank is an active floodplain that supports riparian woodland, shrubland, and grassland (bosque habitat) (see Appendix A for representative photographs).

USACE prepared a General Reevaluation Report and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (GRR/SEIS) for the proposed Middle Rio Grande Flood Protection Bernalillo to Belen, New Mexico: Mountain View, Isleta and Belen Units Project (USACE 2019). The GRR/SEIS was completed as a supplement to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project prepared in 1979 (USACE 1979).

The construction of a culvert in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain at this location was not formally included in the GRR/SEIS or EIS. Therefore, this Environmental Assessment (EA) tiers off the GRR/SEIS, incorporated herein by reference, which evaluated various alternatives that would reduce flood risk to developed areas and agricultural infrastructure and reduce costs of maintenance and repair of the existing spoil bank.

1.2 Authority

The Proposed Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection Project is authorized by the following:

- Flood Control Act of 1941, Section 4 (Public Law 118-272);
- Flood Control Act of 1948 (Public Law 118-272);
- Water Resources Development Act of 2024 Section 1401 (Public Law 118-272).

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose of this EA is to evaluate the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action which would constitute phase I of the Mountain View Unit of the Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection Project. The need for the Proposed Action is:

- To reduce cost of maintenance and repair of the existing spoil bank system by allowing for improved MRGCD access.
- To provide access to the bosque for firefighting activities. Currently the only Riverside Drain crossing between the I-25 and the South Diversion Channel reach, is the Valle de Oro crossing which is located approximately 1.5-miles north of I-25.

- To facilitate construction of and provide a tie-in for the Mountain View Unit of the Middle Rio Grande Flood Protection Bernalillo to Belen project.

1.4 Regulatory Compliance

This EA was prepared by the Corps in compliance with all applicable Federal Statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders (EO), as amended, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*);
- Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*);
- National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq*.);
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470aa *et seq.*);
- Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*);
- Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management;
- National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*);
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (25 U.S.C. 3001 *et seq.*);
- Executive Order 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment;
- Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands;
- Department of Defense's Procedures for Implementing NEPA;
- Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 U.S.C. 4201 *et seq.*);
- Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species;
- Federal Noxious Weed Act (7 U.S.C. 2814);
- Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-140, Section 438, 121 Stat. 1492, 1620 (2007));
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, (16 U.S.C. 703, *et seq.*);
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401; 16 USC 661 *et. seq.*);

This EA also reflects compliance with all applicable State of New Mexico and local regulations, statutes, policies, and standards for protecting the environment such as water and air quality, endangered plants and animals, hazardous, toxic, and radioactive waste (HTRW), and cultural resources.

This EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq*.) and the Department of Defense NEPA implementing regulations.

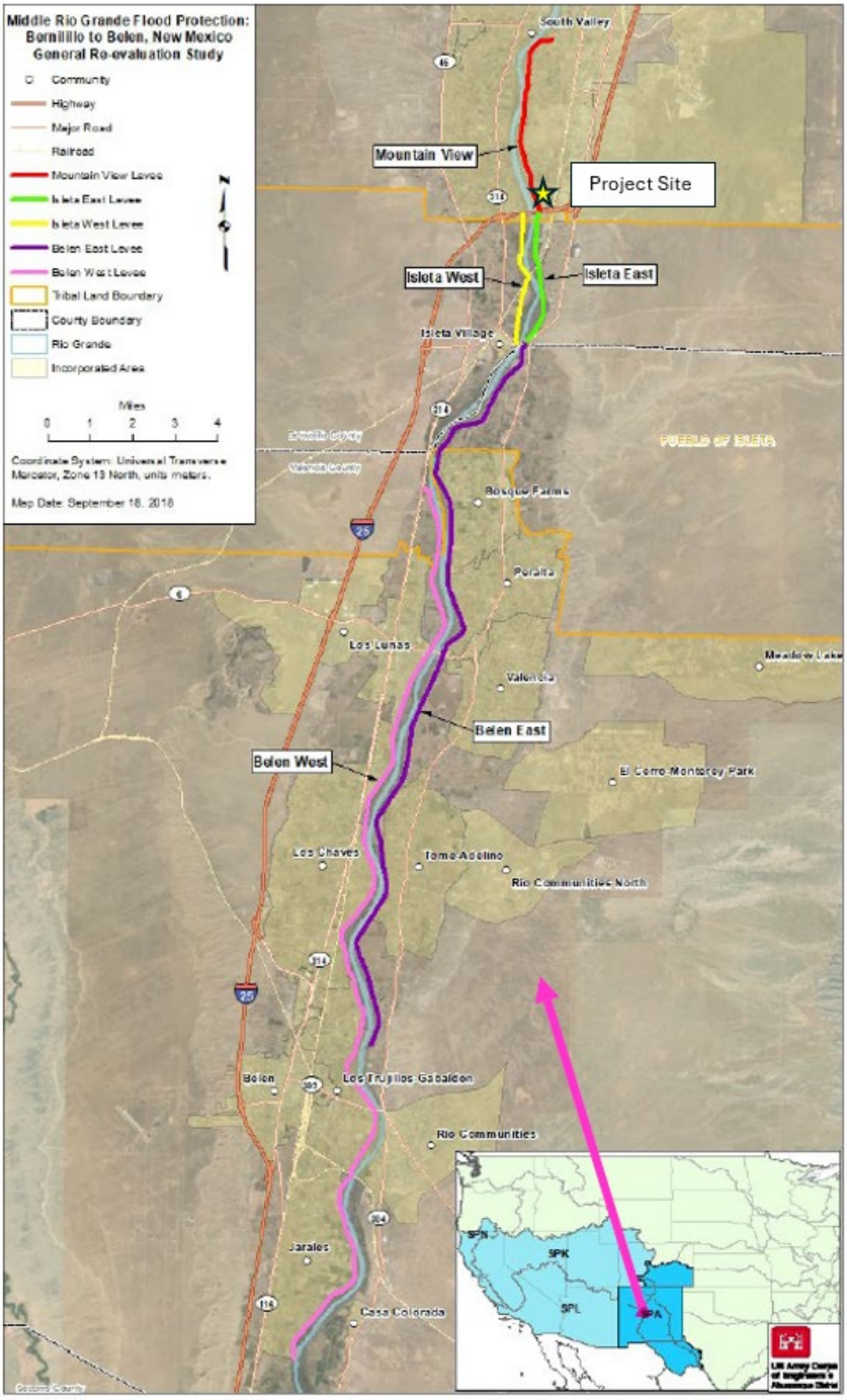

Figure 2. Project site in relation to the Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection Project

2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

All agencies that take part or assist in projects that utilize Federal funding are mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate alternative courses of action. Alternatives can include design and/or location considerations that may mitigate or reduce impacts generated by a given action. In general, the NEPA process can provide decision makers with an evaluation of the present and future conditions with regards to the implementation and timing of an action at a given site. Finally, a particular design chosen from alternatives evaluated can then be implemented in the best interest of the public and environment.

Two alternatives are considered for this NEPA analysis including the No Action Alternative, which is used as the comparison basis, and the Proposed Action, which addresses the needs of USACE and MRGCD to improve access for maintenance, firefighting and levee construction.

2.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed culvert crossing within the Albuquerque Riverside Drain would not be constructed. USACE would not complete Phase I of the Mountain View Unit and MRGCD would not have improved access for maintenance and firefighting. 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 would not support the USACE effort to increase flood protection or MRGCD's need for improved access.

2.2 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would install box culverts within the Albuquerque Riverside Drain where the Mountain View Unit of the proposed Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection Project ends at the abutment for the I-25 bridge crossing the Rio Grande. At this location, the proposed levee must cross over the Albuquerque Riverside Drain in order to tie into high ground. The crossing would also provide an additional point of access for firefighting in the bosque as well as maintenance access for MRGCD.

The Proposed Action would install new twin barrel, precast concrete box culverts (two 12'x 4'culverts) within the Albuquerque Riverside Drain (Figure 3). The new culvert crossing would be sized to maintain the existing channel capacity of the Albuquerque Riverside Drain. Associated features for the new culvert include cast-in-place concrete headwalls, concrete channel lining, riprap aprons/armoring, aggregate surfacing and seeding. An existing section of the Riverside Drain beneath the I-25 bridge is lined with reinforced concrete for approximately 150 feet and would remain in place. A staging area would be located on MRGCD land adjacent to I-25 between the project site and railroad tracks running north to south along 2nd street.

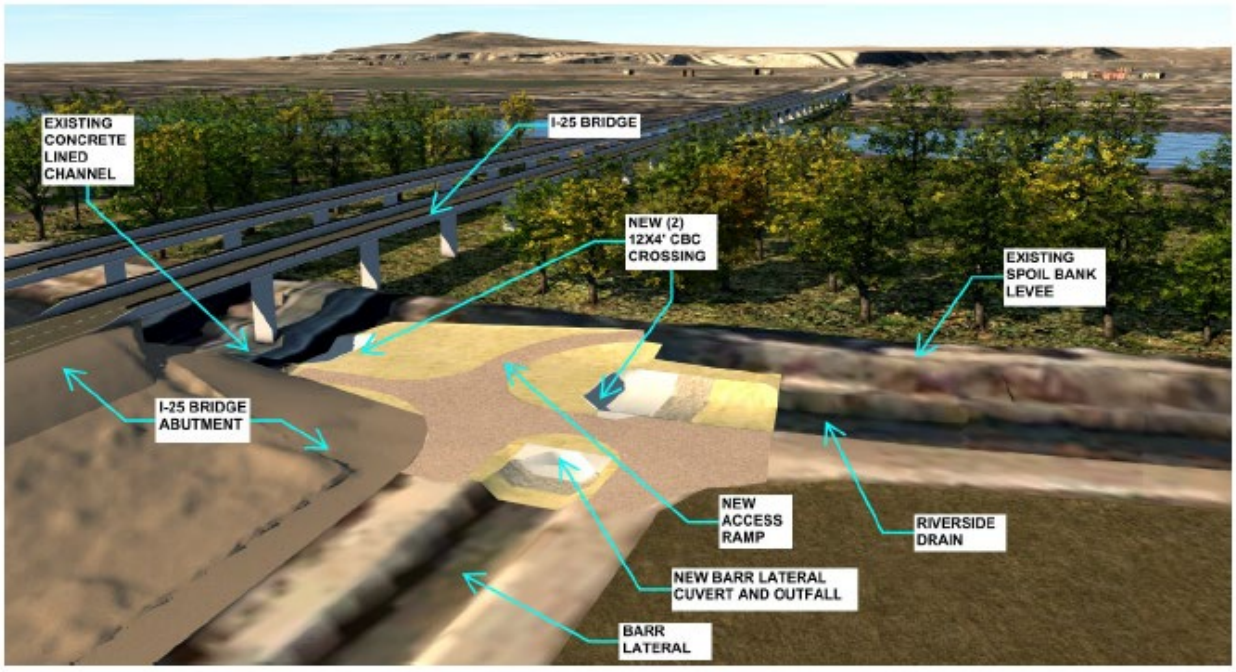

Figure 3. Proposed Project Elements

The inlet and outlet of the culverts would be concrete lined. The wingwalls would be founded on spread footings and the culvert would be founded on a slab on grade and 12 inches of gravel bedding underlain by a geogrid to add to stability of the saturated material. A gate structure would be installed at the outlet of the culvert and founded on spread footings. Riprap would be placed at the inlet, before the concrete lined portion, to protect from erosion.

The Barr Lateral Drain discharges to the Albuquerque Riverside Drain approximately 150 feet upstream of the I-25 bridge via a 48-inch reinforced concrete pipe culvert. To accommodate the new Albuquerque Riverside Drain crossing, the existing Barr Interior culvert and outfall would be reconstructed; the existing culvert would be removed and salvaged to MRGCD.

Clearing, grubbing and stripping of the project area would be required. All stripped topsoil would be stockpiled on site and utilized for seeding in accordance with project specifications. Water in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain would be diverted around the work areas and the permanent work area would be dewatered until construction is complete. Following work, disturbed areas would be reseeded.

Construction of the proposed project is planned to begin when funding for construction becomes available, anticipated to be 2026 or 2027; construction is expected to last for approximately five months.

3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND FORESEEABLE EFFECTS

3.1 Physical Environment

3.1.1 Physiography, Geology, and Soils

The Project area is located within the inner Rio Grande valley. The inner Rio Grande valley is underlain primarily by saturated, unconsolidated sandy alluvium which consists predominantly

of sand and gravel with discontinuous interbeds of silt and clay (Kelson et al. 1999). Groundwater in the inner valley is very shallow, with depths beneath most of the valley of less than 40 feet (Hitchcock and Kelson 2007).

Typical alluvial deposits along the proposed new levee are variable and discontinuous. Foundation materials along the proposed levee alignment are predominantly sands, silty sands, and sandy clays. Geotechnical investigations at the culvert site classified soils predominantly as sands with finer grained material lenses encountered at approximate depths of 4 feet and 26 feet below ground surface. Results from the boring logs indicate soil consistency of very soft to medium stiff for fine grained materials and very loose for medium dense granular materials. Groundwater was observed in borings at a depth of 5.5 feet below ground surface. However, groundwater conditions can change with varying seasonal and weather conditions, and other factors.

The Proposed Action would require clearing, grubbing and stripping of the areas where culverts would be installed. Grading would take place to create a relatively level surface and foundation material (slab on grade and 12 inches of gravel bedding underlain by a geogrid) would be placed where culverts would be installed. Stripped topsoil would be stockpiled on site and utilized for seeding in accordance with project specifications.

The following best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to reduce impacts to soils from construction:

- Activities would be limited to the designated or otherwise approved areas shown on the construction drawings for construction areas, staging, and access.
- Construction areas would be watered for dust control.
- Construction would comply with local sedimentation and erosion-control regulations.

The Proposed Action would have short-term, minor adverse effects to soils during construction, but these impacts would be minimized by implementing best management practices and would end upon project completion.

Under the No Action alternative, there would be no effects to soils.

3.1.2 Climate

The Project area is in the Albuquerque Basin Ecoregion, part of the deep physiographic basins of the Rio Grande rift (Griffith, et al. 2006). This ecoregion is lower in elevation, drier, and warmer than the surrounding ecoregions to the north, east, and west. The region is known for its hot summers with large diurnal range in temperatures. Winters are moderate with average high temperatures hovering around freezing. Peak precipitation occurs during the late summer/early fall during the peak of the North American Monsoon, with a secondary peak in winter. There would be no adverse effects to the climate from the Proposed Action or the No Action alternative.

3.1.3 Water Resources

Hydrology and Hydraulics

The Albuquerque Riverside Drain is an earthen canal with vegetation on its bank running parallel to the landside toe of the existing spoil bank levee that runs north to south along the east side of the Rio Grande. The Albuquerque Riverside Drain carries water runoff (irrigation and

stormwater) away from agricultural areas and intercepts groundwater flowing laterally from the Rio Grande. The Albuquerque Riverside Drain empties in the Rio Grande downstream of the project site just inside Isleta Pueblo. The Barr Lateral Ditch (perpendicular to the Albuquerque Riverside Drain) discharges into the Albuquerque Riverside Drain at the upstream end of the proposed Albuquerque Riverside Drain culverts.

Hydrologic analysis for sizing the proposed culverts to avoid increasing upstream surface water elevation was based on the maximum flow that can occur in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain without causing flow to overtop unto adjacent O&M roads. The Proposed Action would have minimal effect on hydrology and hydraulics of the Albuquerque Riverside Drain. The proposed culverts would improve channel conditions. The gate to be installed downstream of the culvert would add protection to the leveed area in the event the Rio Grande backflows up the Albuquerque Riverside Drain.

The No Action Alternative would have no effect on hydrology and hydraulics.

Water Quality

Water quality in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain is impacted by pollutants from stormwater and agricultural runoff. Flows in the drain would be diverted around the permanent work area and the work area would need to be kept clear of water until the construction of the culvert crossing is complete.

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. The NPDES general permit guidance would apply to the Proposed Action as the total project area is over one acre in size. Therefore, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required. A SWPPP would be prepared prior to the start of work and all conditions would be implemented during project work.

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 construction that may affect waters of the United States. Section 401 of the CWA, as amended, requires that a Water Quality Certification Permit be obtained for anticipated discharges associated with construction activities or other disturbance within waterways

Because the Albuquerque Riverside Drain discharges to the Rio Grande, a Water of the U.S., placement of the culvert would require a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The project qualifies for Nationwide Permit (NWP) 14 for Linear Transportation Projects and all applicable conditions of this Nationwide Permit must be met (see Appendix B). The State of New Mexico has provided conditional Water Quality Certification (WQC) under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act for NWP 14 and all relevant conditions for this certification must be met (see Appendix C). Section 401 WQC conditions related to preventing uncured concrete coming in contact with surface or groundwater would be implemented.

The following best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to minimize impacts to water resources during construction:

- Prior to start of construction, a SWPPP would be prepared and construction would comply with all conditions of the SWPPP.
- Prior to start of construction, a USACE approved dewatering plan would be developed and dewatering methods would adhere to the approved plan.
- All relevant conditions of 404 NWP14 and associated 401 WQC conditions would be implemented (see Appendix B and C).
- Construction impacts to the Albuquerque Riverside Drain would be limited to between November 1 and February 28 to avoid irrigation season.

Water quality impacts from construction of the Proposed Action are expected to be negligible and short-term and all applicable permits and regulations would be followed during construction.

Under the No Action alternative, there would be no water quality impacts due to construction.

3.1.4 Floodplains and Wetlands

Executive Order 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 Proposed Action is located within a high-risk flood zone in the unincorporated area of Bernalillo County (Figure 4). The culverts to be installed are sized to avoid increasing upstream surface water elevation based on the maximum flow that can occur in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain without causing flow to overtop unto adjacent O&M roads. The gate to be installed downstream of the culvert would add protection to the leveed area in the event the Rio Grande backflows up the Albuquerque Riverside Drain. Therefore, neither the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative would affect the impacts of floods associated with storm events on human health and safety.

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 to wetland habitats. There are no wetlands in the project area and no impacts to wetlands would occur from the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative.

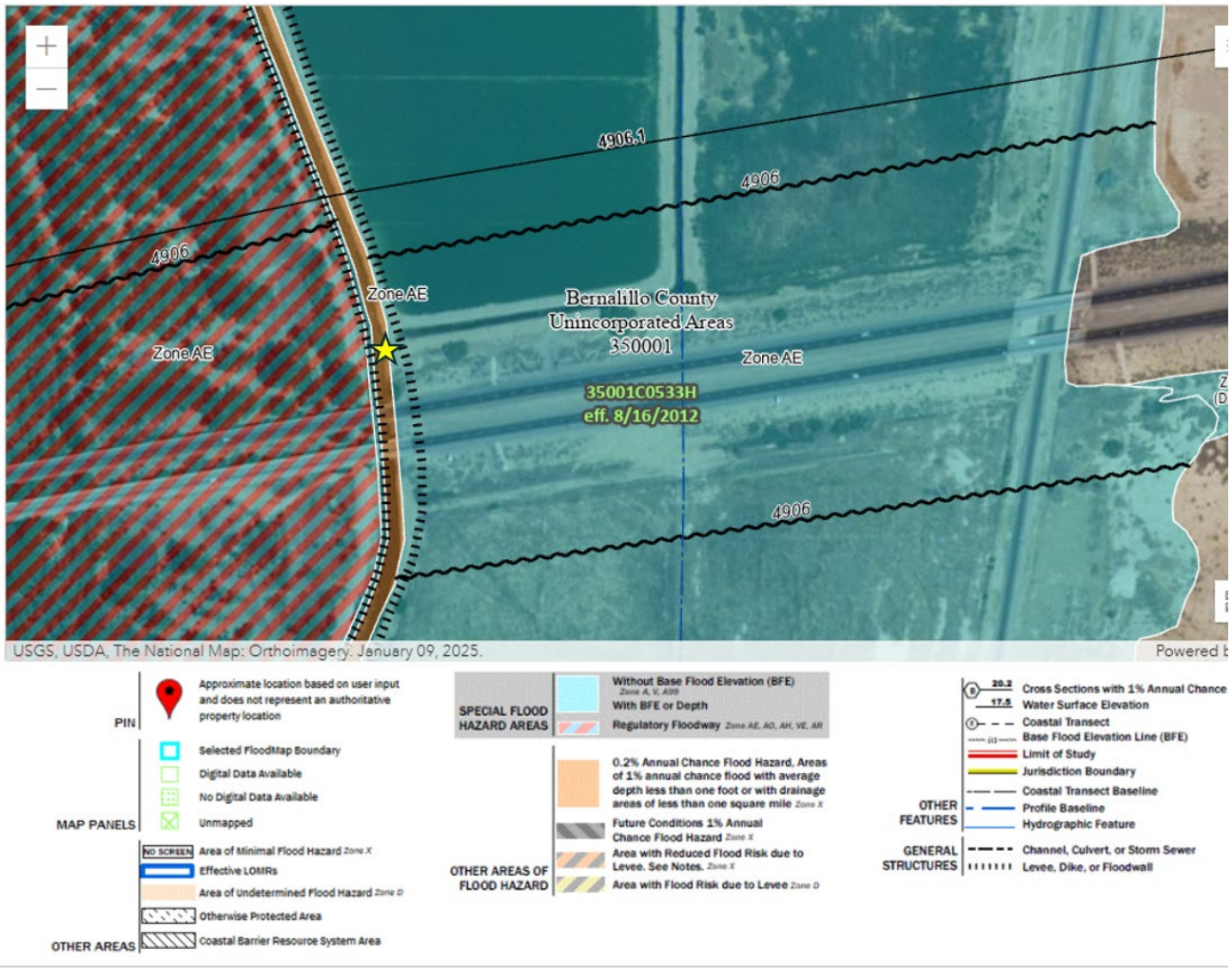

Figure 4. FEMA Flood Map

3.1.5 Air Quality, Noise and Aesthetics

The Proposed Action is in New Mexico's Air Quality Control Region 2 for air quality monitoring and Bernalillo County is "in attainment" (does not exceed state and federal air quality standards) for all criteria pollutants (U.S. EPA, 2023).

The Proposed Action would result in a temporary but negligible increase in suspended dust particles from construction activities in the vicinity of the project site. However, air quality in Bernalillo County, would not be affected by the Proposed Action. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no significant effect on air quality. The No Action alternative would have no effect on air quality.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC 2024), 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. The Noise Center (Center for Hearing and Communication 2024) advises that noise levels above 85 decibels would harm hearing over time, and noise levels over 140 decibels can cause damage to hearing after just one exposure.

During construction, noise would temporarily increase in the vicinity during vehicle and equipment operation. The baseline level of noise at the project site is already high due to traffic on I-25, the increase in noise during construction would be minor and temporary, and increased noise levels would end when construction is complete. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no significant effect on noise. The No Action alternative would have no effect on noise.

Aesthetically, the Project Area can be characterized as an open disturbed area bordered by agricultural land as well the active floodplain of the Rio Grande that supports riparian woodland, shrubland, and grassland (see Appendix A). The project area includes operations and maintenance roads and is adjacent to the I-25 bridge over the Rio Grande. Under the Proposed Action construction work would be confined to the project area and existing dirt roads, and construction staging areas would be confined to the extent possible to previously disturbed ground. Installation of the culvert crossing in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain would not change the aesthetics of the area as numerous dirt access roads are already present in the vicinity and the I-25 bridge crosses over the Albuquerque Riverside Drain just south of the project area. The Proposed Action and No Action Alternative would have no effect on the aesthetic values or scenic quality in the area.

3.2 Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste Environment (HTRW)

Suspected soil contamination was encountered during the geotechnical investigation conducted in June 2024. Odor and staining observed by USACE geologists and engineers suggest the potential presence of residual concentrations of fuel, such as weathered diesel. The source of suspected contamination is presently unknown and the extent of suspected contamination has not been defined. Based on the limited field observations available, the suspected contamination appears to be proximate and may be parallel to the Riverside Drain. Contamination has not been confirmed by laboratory analysis or otherwise reported as a known release.

All work would comply with Federal, State and local, regulations and requirements pertaining to the environmental protection, including water, air, solid waste, hazardous waste and substances, oily substances, and noise pollution.

MRGCD is responsible for work required to ensure the project area is clear of HTRW contamination. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have no effect on known HTRW. Soil sampling of the access road and staging area is planned to document the environmental condition of both areas prior to construction.

The No Action Alternative would have no effect on HTRW.

3.3 Biological Environment

3.3.1 Vegetation Communities

The existing spoil bank alignment defines the edge of the Rio Grande floodway and associated bosque habitat. Bosque habitat adjacent to the project area includes an overstory of Rio Grande cottonwood mixed with non-native Russian olive; shrubs include New Mexico olive and coyote willow. The landward side of the spoil bank levee toe is currently maintained as an access road and supports only sparse weedy vegetation. Vegetation along the banks of the drain is comprised of willows and marsh vegetation such as bullrush species (*Schoenoplectus*) mixed with weedy

species. Bankline vegetation along the Albuquerque Riverside Drain is regularly disturbed by MRGCD maintenance activities and the project area is in an area of high existing disturbance due to being adjacent to the I-25 bridge.

Activities would be limited to the designated or otherwise approved areas. Approximately 200 feet of bank line vegetation on either side of the Albuquerque Riverside drain would be disturbed in order to install culverts. Areas disturbed and not incorporated into the culvert crossing would be seeded with native grasses and forbs (Figure 5). No bosque riparian habitat would be disturbed by the Proposed Action.

Because of the limited impacts to vegetation within an already disturbed area, impacts to vegetation as a result of the Proposed Action would be negligible.

The No Action alternative would not result in any impacts to vegetation.

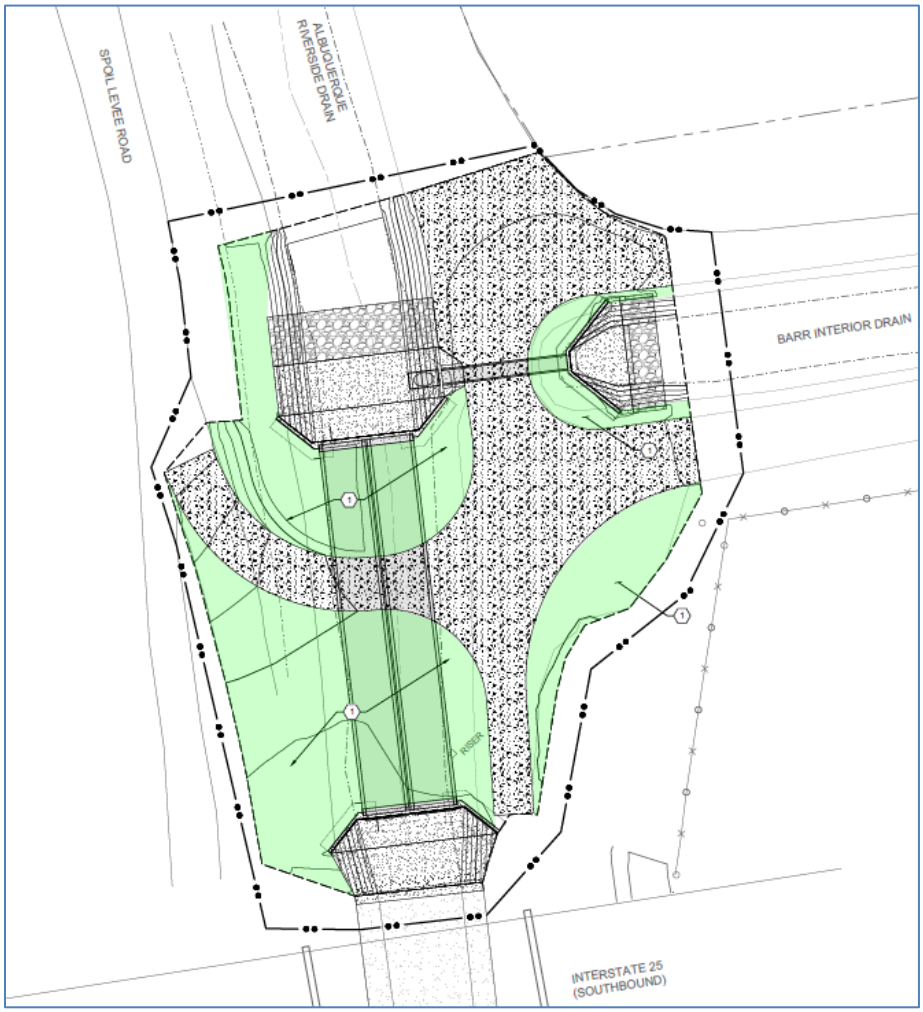

Figure 5. Area of disturbance with areas to be seeded in green.

3.3.2 Wildlife

The Rio Grande is a major migratory corridor for songbirds (Yong and Finch, 2002), waterfowl, and shorebirds. Both the river channel and the drains adjacent to the bosque provide habitat for species such as mallards, wood ducks, great blue herons, snowy egrets, belted kingfishers, and black phoebes. Agricultural fields and grassy areas are important food sources for songbirds and waterfowl during migration and winter. Common non-avian species that could occur in the project area include various species of mice, rock squirrels, skunks, coyotes, foxes, and various lizards and pollinators. Common fish species in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain include rainbow trout, channel catfish and largemouth bass. Studies by Hink and Ohmart (1984) and Thompson *et al.*, (1994) have characterized wildlife use of the various plant associations that make up the riparian plant community in bosque floodplain habitat.

The Proposed Action would disturb only a small amount of habitat for wildlife. Additional habitat is available around the project area and displaced wildlife could relocate to adjacent habitat during project work. All habitat disturbed but not developed would be reseeded with a native grass mix that also includes forbs that provide pollinator habitat. Work would take place September 1 and April 15, to avoid impacts to nesting birds. To prevent to prevent entrainment of fish during diversion and dewatering of the construction area, pump intakes would be screened (mesh size of 1/4"-3/8").

Based on the limited amount of disturbance within previously disturbed areas; the timing of proposed work, and the implementation of avoidance measures and best management practices, the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to vegetation or wildlife.

The No Action Alternative would not affect vegetation or wildlife.

3.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

The lists of federal and state threatened or endangered species that could occur in the project area have been reviewed (Table 1). Riparian bosque habitat between the spoil bank levee and the Rio Grande could provide suitable nesting and migration habitat for the federally endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) (Flycatcher), the federally threatened Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) (Cuckoo) and the state threatened Bell's Viero (*Vireo bellii*). The federally endangered Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*) (Minnow) occurs in the Rio Grande adjacent to the site and the Rio Grande is designated critical habitat for the Minnow. Rio Grande Silvery Minnows could also be present in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain (Cowley et al. 2007; Lindsay et al. in press). The remainder of the federally listed species would not be expected to occur at the project site.

Pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (UFWS) issued a Biological Opinion to USACE, dated 29 August 2018, that determined that the Bernalillo to Belen Flood Control Project would not jeopardize the continued existence of the of the Flycatcher, Cuckoo or Minnow or adversely modify designated critical habitat for the Minnow or Flycatcher (USFWS 2018).

Table 1. Federally-listed species (USFWS, IPaC) and state-listed species (NMDGF, BISON-M, Bernalillo County

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status- Federal	Status- State
Mexican Wolf	*Canis lupus baileyi*	Experimental Population	-
New Mexico Jumping Mouse	*Zapus hudsonius luteus*	Endangered	Endangered
Spotted Bat	Euderma maculatum	-	Threatened
Yellow-billed Cuckoo (western)	*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*	Threatened	-
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	*Empidonax traillii extimus*	Endangered	Endangered
Bell's Vireo	Vireo bellii	-	Threatened
Gray Vireo	Vireo vicinior	-	Threatened
Baird's Sparrow	Centronyx bairdii	-	Threatened
Bald Eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	-	Threatened
Common Black Hawk	Buteogallus anthracinus	-	Threatened
Mexican Spotted Owl	*Strix occidentalis lucida*	Threatened	-
Peregrine Falcon	*Flaco peregrinus*	-	Threatened
Alpomado Falcon	Falco femoralis	-	Endangered
Broad-billed Hummingbird	Cynanthus latirostris	-	Threatened
White-eared Hummingbird	Basilinna leucotis	-	Threatened
Least Tern	Sternula antillarum	-	Endangered
Neotropic Cormorant	Phalacrocorax brasilianus	-	Threatened
Brown Pelican	Pelecanus occidentalis	-	Endangered
Rio Grande Silvery Minnow	*Hybognathus amarus*	Endangered & Critical Habitat	-
Monarch Butterfly	*Danaus plexippus*	Candidate	-

Status Key E=Endangered; T=Threatened, C=Candidate.

The Biological Opinion included Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) that are required for compliance with the Biological Opinion. Several RPMs are related to studies of the effect of construction noise. Studies on noise disturbance for Flycatcher, Cuckoo, and Minnow are required to be completed within two years of the start of construction (USFWS 2018). USACE has initiated these studies with input from USFWS ahead of construction and is on schedule to comply. USACE has also initiated a floodplain water temperature study in compliance with Biological Opinion RPM 2. Because the Proposed Action does not include levee construction and would take place entirely on the land side if the existing spoil bank, RPMs related to monitoring noise disturbance to Minnow during construction would not be required. In addition, RPMs related to mitigation for loss of floodplain habitat would not be triggered by the Proposed Action since there would be no loss of floodplain habitat.

USACE implemented protocol surveys for Flycatcher and Cuckoo at the project site in 2024 in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion. Surveys were conducted in suitable habitat within a 400-meter radius of the project area. One Flycatcher was detected at the site during the first and second survey periods; no Cuckoos were detected during any survey period. Because Flycatcher presence was only detected during the migratory period and habitat in the bosque adjacent to the project site did not appear to provide suitable nesting habitat, it is unlikely this site could support a breeding territory. Furthermore, all project work would take place outside of floodplain bosque habitat and between September 1 and April 15 outside of the nesting season. No potential habitat for the Flycatcher would be lost.

Impacts to Minnow would be limited to Minnows present in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain during dewatering of the project area. The drain would be surveyed for Minnows prior to dewatering. To prevent entrainment of fish during diversion and dewatering of the construction area, pump intakes would be screened (mesh size of 1/4"-3/8"). This mesh size is adequate to prevent entrainment of silvery minnows.

Based on the limited amount of disturbance, all within previously disturbed areas; the timing of proposed work, and the implementation of avoidance measures and best management practices, it is unlikely that state or federal threatened or endangered species would be affected by the Proposed Action. The existing spoil bank levee provides a buffer between project work and bosque and river habitat and traffic noise from I-25 is significant at this location and would minimize disturbance from noise associated with project work. All applicable RPMs from the Biological Opinion would be implemented.

The No Action Alternative would have no effect on special status species.

3.4 Cultural Resources

Implementation of proposed federal actions must comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 U.S.C. § 470 et seq., as amended). Under the NHPA, consideration of historic preservation issues is to be integrated into the early stages of project planning by federal agencies. Under Section 106 of the NHPA, a federal agency is required to account for the effects of proposed actions on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), prior to the expenditure of funds on the action. Section 110 of the NHPA requires the identification and evaluation of any historic properties on federal property that meet the eligibility criteria of the NRHP. The New Mexico Historic Preservation Division (NMHPD) serves as the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Federal agencies are responsible for assessing whether proposed

projects will impact historic or archaeological resources. Federal agencies consult with the SHPO on their NRHP eligibility and effect determinations and seek concurrence or resolution of adverse effects.

Consultation for potential effects to cultural resources from proposed construction – up to and including removing, rebuilding, and replacing the existing levee – was conducted during the planning phase for the Bernalillo to Belen Flood Protection Project, at which time the Corps determined that such work would have "no adverse effect to historic properties" (USACE 2019). The New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with this determination on 21 January 2014 (HPD Log # 98447) (see Appendix C of the SIES, USACE 2019). The Proposed Action includes ground disturbance within the area of potential effect (APE) originally consulted on, and is part of the overall project described during consultation during the planning phase. The Corps has determined that the Proposed Action falls under the earlier "no adverse effect" determination and prior consultation. And therefore is in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

Additional consultation was conducted for the staging area in 2025, with the Corps determining that use of the staging area would result in "no adverse effect." SHPO concurred with this determination on April 3, 2025 (HPD Log # 124881) (Appendix D).

Tribal consultation on this project was conducted in 2010, and regarding the staging area in 2024, with all Native American tribes that indicated they have concerns in Bernalillo and Valencia Counties. To date, no tribal concerns regarding Indian Trust Assets have been brought to the attention of USACE.

Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in adverse effects to cultural resources. The No Action Alternative would also not result in adverse effects to cultural resources.

3.5 Land Use and Socioeconomic Environment

Land Use

Land within the project area, including the staging area, is under MRGCD ownership. Access roads within the project area are used for operations and maintenance by MRGCD and by owners of adjacent agricultural lands. Members of the public may fish in the Albuquerque Riverside Drain and use the spoil bank levee road and adjacent floodplain bosque area for recreational walking. However, the nearest public access point to spoil bank levee and the Albuquerque Riverside Drain is located at the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge approximately 1.5 miles to the north of the project area.

Although some access roads may be temporarily unavailable during project construction, alternate routes would be available. Local recreation may temporarily be limited in the project area during construction. In the long term, the Proposed Action would provide increased access for MRGCD and agricultural maintenance but would not result in increased or reduced public access or use of the area.

Therefore, the Proposed Action would not significantly affect land use.

The No Action Alternative would not affect land use.

Socioeconomic Environment

The project area is located in unincorporated Bernalillo County. The southern portion of the Mountain View neighborhood (generally bounded by Woodward Road to the north, I-25 to the east and south, and the Rio Grande River to the west) lies to the east of the project area. Industrial, agricultural and residential land uses have been in close proximity to each other within the Mountain View community since before zoning was adopted for Bernalillo County in 1973. Mountain View is a rural community with recreational amenities such as the Rio Grande bosque and Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge.

The population of Mountain View has stayed relatively the same over the last 10 years. There are 1,340 households living in Mountain View. Mountain View households are larger on average than those in Albuquerque or the County and have slightly lower median incomes (Table 2) (Bernalillo County 2025). Bernalillo County is currently in the process of gathering public input on an update to the 2009 Mountain View Sector Development Plan. The Sector Plan will help identify future areas to focus community facilities, mixed use development, and commercial services along with any transportation improvements (Bernalillo County 2025).

Table 2. Household Demographics, 2022 (Bernalillo County 2025)

Geography	Total HHs	Median HH Income	Avg. HH Size
MV			
40.01 BG 2	437	$58,427	3.1
40.01 BG 3	260	-	2.1
40.01 BG 4	643	$58,750	3.0
ABQ	240	$61,503	2.3
Bern Co.	281	$62,220	2.4
NM	813	$58,722	2.6
US	125,736	$75,149	2.6

The Proposed Action would not result in effects to the socioeconomics of the Mountain View community or affect development planning.

The No Action Alternative would have no effect on Mountain View socioeconomics.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Action evaluated in this EA addresses the method and potential effects for proposed installation of a culvert crossing of the Riverside Drain. Impacts to the environment would be non-significant, short-term, and related solely to construction. The Proposed Action would not result in any moderate or significant short-term, long-term, or cumulative adverse effects. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and is recommended for implementation.

5. PREPARATION, CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 Preparation

This EA was prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District. Personnel primarily responsible for preparation include:

Stephanie Jentsch	Biologist
Jonathan Van Hoose	Archaeologist
Jonathan AuBuchon	Hydrology and Hydraulics
Keith Winemiller	HTRW

5.2 Quality Control

This EA has been reviewed for quality control purposes. Personnel who reviewed this EA include:

Danielle Galloway	Section Chief, Environmental Resources

5.3 Consultation and Coordination

The public will be provided a 30-day review period of this Draft EA (see Appendix E)

Agencies and entities that were contacted in preparation of this EA include:

Mr. Shawn Sartorius
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office

Ms. Jennifer Faler
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Albuquerque Area Office

Mr. Mike Sloane
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Conservation Services Division

Ms. Jennifer Baca
New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
Office of the State Engineer

Ms. Shelly Lemon
Surface Water Quality Bureau
NM Environment Division

Mr. John Rhoderick
Water Protection Division
NM Environment Department

Dr. Michelle Ensey
State Historic Preservation Officer
Historic Preservation Division

6. REFERENCES

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Appendix A: Site Photos

Intersection of the Barr Lateral Ditch with the Albuquerque Riverside Drain.

Trucks parked on the existing ting Spoil bank levee next to the Albuquerque Riverside Drain between the proposed culvert location and the I-25 bridge.

Section of cement-lined Albuquerque Riverside Drain under the I-25 bridge

Vegetation on the bank lines of the Albuquerque Riverside Drain in the project area