

Environmental Assessment

King Blvd Waterline Extension Sandoval County, New Mexico

Section 595 Water Resources Development Act



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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

%	Percent
°	Degrees
ac-ft	Acre-feet
AFY	Acre-feet per year
AMSL	Above mean sea level
ASA (CW)	The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Aspen CRM	Aspen Cultural Resource Management
bgl	Below ground level
BMP	Best Management Practice
BOR	U. S. Bureau of Reclamation
C°	Celsius
CDC	Center of Disease Control
cm	Centimeters
CoRR	City of Rio Rancho
CWA	Clean Water Act
dB	Decibels
DWB	Drinking Water Bureau
EA	Environmental Assessment
EDR	Environmental Database Report
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
F°	Fahrenheit
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
ft	Feet
gpm	Gallons per minute
gpm/ft	Gallons per minute per feet
in	Inches
HTRW	Hazardous, Toxic and Radioactive Waste
HZI	Huitt-Zolars. Inc.
IPaC	Information Planning and Consultation
km	Kilometers
m	Meters

mi	Miles
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NM	New Mexico
NMDGF	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
NMED	New Mexico Environmental Department
NMEMNRD	New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department
NMERT	New Mexico Environmental Resource Tool
NMHPD	New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
OD	Outside diameter
O&M	Operations and Management
OSC	New Mexico Office of the State Engineer/Interstate Stream Commission
RME	Rocky Mountain Ecology, LLC
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SLO	State Land Office
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
U.S.	United States of America
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Location

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Albuquerque District in cooperation with, and at the request of the City of Rio Rancho (CoRR), is planning the King Blvd Waterline Extension (Project) to improve critical water supply infrastructure to the CoRR.

The work would be conducted under Section 595 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-53), as amended. The Act authorizes the USACE to provide aid in the form of design and construction for water-related environmental infrastructure, resource protection, and development projects in Arizona, Idaho, Montana, rural Nevada, New Mexico, rural Utah, and Wyoming. 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. The Non-Federal sponsor for the proposed project is the CoRR and the project area is within publicly owned right-of-way.

The proposed project area is in Rio Rancho, Sandoval County, New Mexico (NM) (Figure 1), west of the Northern Meadows neighborhood in western Rio Rancho. Well 9 is located approximately 5.4 kilometers (km) or 3.4 miles (mi) west of the intersection of King and Rainbow Blvd and is where the water tank and well improvements occurred (Figure 2 & 3). The new waterline would be placed within the King Blvd right of way and extend from Well 9 to the King/Rainbow Blvd intersection. All project elements remain within the CoRR municipal boundary, and access can be gained from the Unser/King Blvd intersection. The legal description for the project area is Township 13N; Range 1E; Section 25, and Township 13N; Range 1E; Sections 28 – 31, and 33. The site was developed in the mid 1980's. The current facilities are over 30 years old and are deteriorating. Well 9 was never equipped to meet its permit limits, and the well hole is not straight, resulting in maintenance issues. The well has seen a decrease in production due to sanding and is susceptible to power outages.

The CoRR planned the design and construction of overall project improvements required for Well 9 in three phases over a minimum of five years. Upgrades began with Phase I (new 3-million-gallon (MG) Reservoir only) completed in April 2023. Phase II - Geohydrology / Well Re-drilling began in October 2022 and was completed in January 2024. The CoRR's Well 9R is permitted under New Mexico Office of the State Engineer RG-26259-POD3. Construction on this well began in July of 2023 and the final well video survey was performed in January of 2024. At a depth of about 1,420 feet (ft) or 433 meters (m), the well can produce up to 1,400 gallons per minute (gpm) for about 5 years if the well is pumped 100 % of the time. This pumping rate and pumping schedule will allow the CoRR to maximize its water right associated with this point of diversion. If the well is pumped 100% of the time for 1 year, the corresponding diversion would be 2,259.8 acre-feet (ac-ft). Greater pumping rates could be obtained if the pump were placed in the blank section from 1,640 to 1,660 ft (500-506 m).

The pilot borehole was drilled to a depth of 2,006 ft (611 m) below ground level (bgl) and discrete-interval zone sampling was performed in the open borehole to assess arsenic

concentrations and other water quality parameters in the aquifer with depth. The deepest zone sampled was from 1,940 to 1,970 ft bgl, and the shallowest from 1,590 to 1,620 ft bgl. Water-quality results indicated that the arsenic concentration exceeded the New Mexico Environment Department, Drinking Water Bureau (NMED/DWB) standard in each sample, and concentration increased with increasing depth. To minimize the production of arsenic, the well was completed to total depth of 1,885 ft bgl. The well is constructed with 18.625-in. outside diameter (OD) high-strength low-alloy steel, 18.625 inches (in). OD Type 304L stainless steel casing, and Type 304L stainless steel wire-wrapped screen.

A step-drawdown pumping test was performed on December 23, 2023, at rates of 600, 700, 800, 900, and 1,000 gpm. Specific capacity ranged from 7.36 gallons per minute per foot of drawdown (gpm/ft) at a pumping rate of 600 gpm, to 7.01 gpm/ft at a pumping rate of 1,000 gpm. A constant rate pumping test was performed from December 28 to 31, 2023 at 950 gpm for about 65 hours with a specific capacity of 6.33 gpm/ft of drawdown. Depth to water at the start of the constant rate test was 1095.90 ft bgl.

Laboratory analysis of water quality was performed for all parameters required by the NMED/DWB. Of the parameters analyzed, only arsenic exceeded the primary drinking water standard of 0.01 mg/L, having a concentration of 0.048 mg/L. The pH was 8.64 and exceeds the secondary NMED/DWB drinking water standard of 8.5, a non-enforceable aesthetic standard. Total dissolved solids concentration was 241 mg/L. E. Coli and total coliform bacteria were absent in the water. See Appendix B for water quality analysis details.

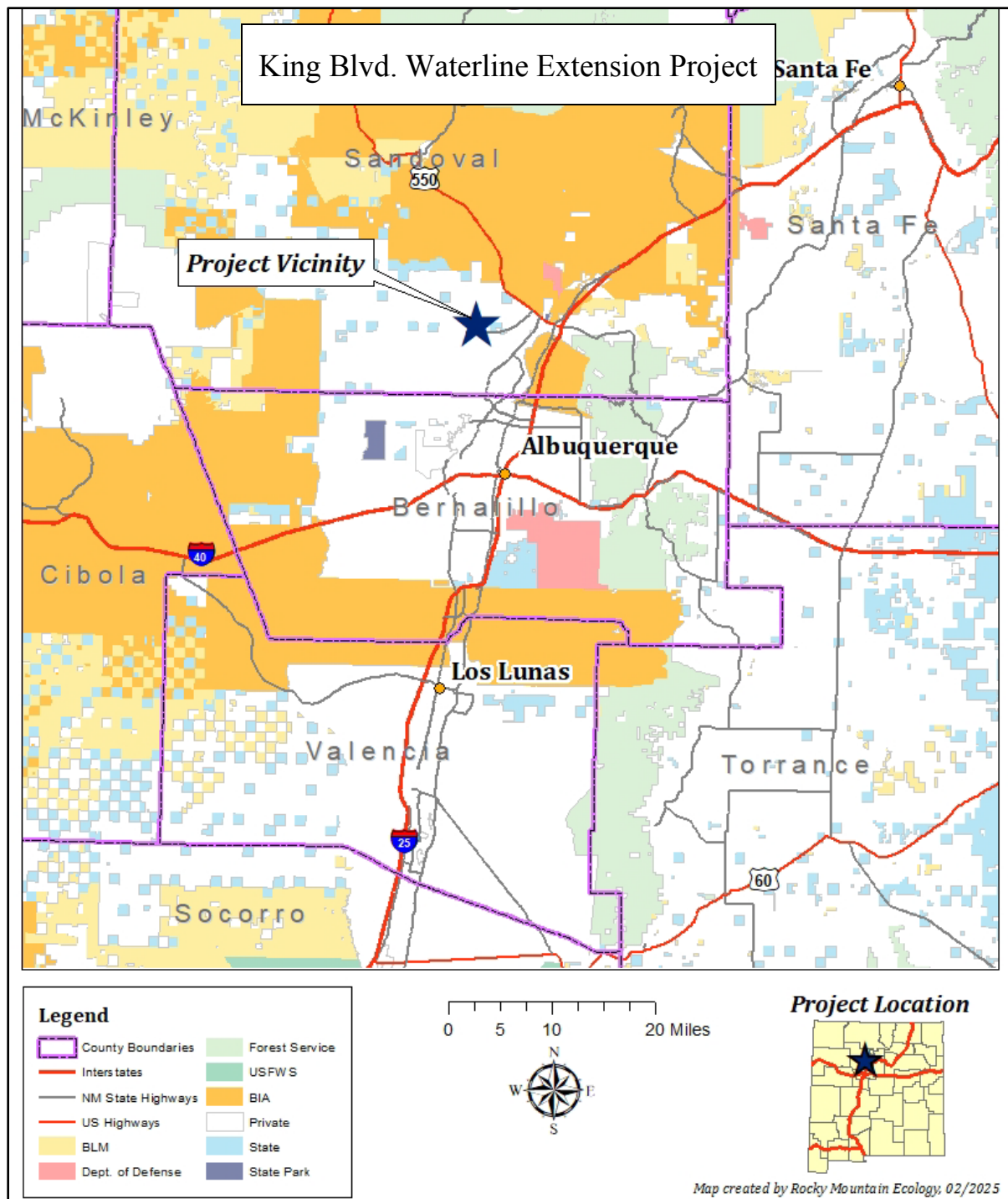


Figure 1. King Blvd Waterline Extension Project Location.

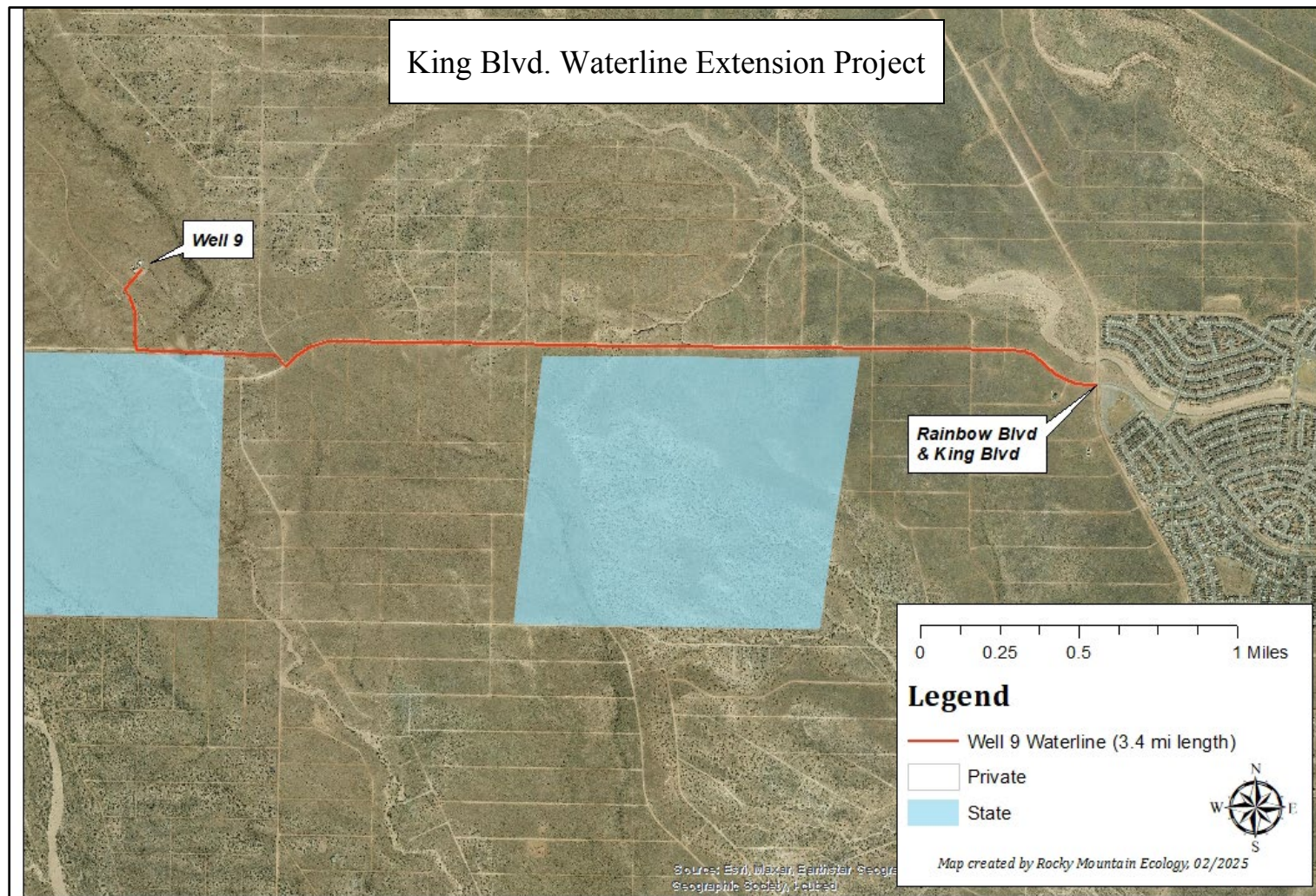


Figure 2. King Blvd Waterline Extension Project Location with aerial imagery.

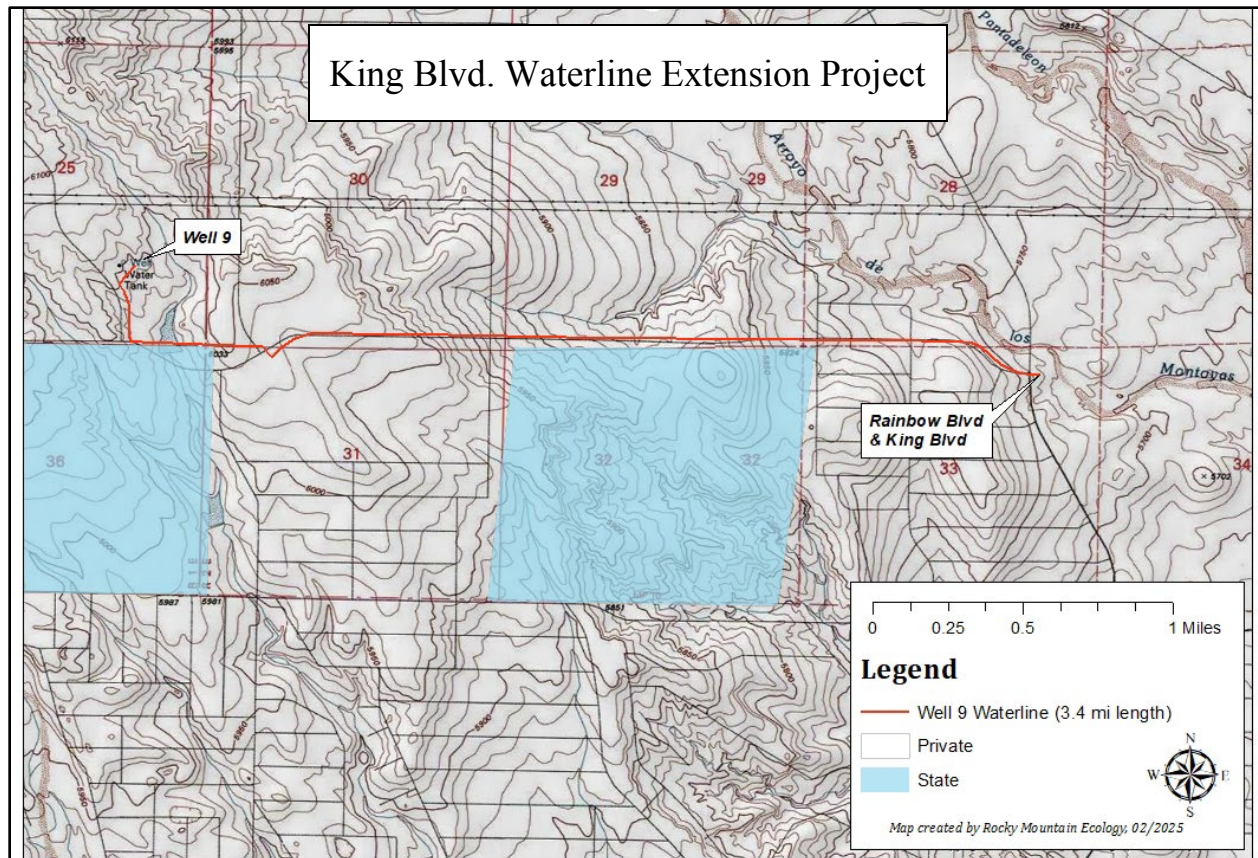


Figure 3. King Blvd Waterline Extension Project Location with topographic map

1.2 Purpose and Need

Well 9 is in a critical location for existing and future operations of the CoRR's water distribution system. The existing 200,000-gallon water storage tank (Reservoir 9) services the City's Pressure Zone 6A and is hydrologically capable of serving zone 6B as well. Reservoir 9 is filled by Well 9 which was constructed in 1984 which had an original production rate of approximately 950 gpm. Sand production has deteriorated pumping capacity and requires pump replacement every 2 to 4 years based on communications with the CoRR's Operations and Management (O&M) personnel. Additionally, the well was never equipped to fulfill either of its permit limits of 2,419 acre-feet per year (AFY), or continuous pumping of 1,500 gpm under permit RD-26259. It is expected that the combined peak day demands of Zones 6A and 6B, at full build out, will be approximately 28 million gallons per day (MGD). Given this demand and the City's design standard for total storage, the storage requirement to serve the Zones is approximately 13 MG. As they currently exist, the combined storage of Reservoir 9, along with Tank 13 and Mariposa 1, which also serve these zones, are not adequate to meet the demands with a storage shortfall of 5.0 MG.

Well 9 was drilled to a depth of 1,540 ft (469 m). According to records, the well was not drilled plumb and has a dog leg in the alignment which has created maintenance issues at the facility. The well is also susceptible to lightning strikes, causing periodic outages; thus, limiting water

supply to the CoRR. The limited storage of Reservoir 9 has been inadequate during recent events, and Reservoir 13 is required to supplement supply for the customers in Pressure Zone 6A and below.

Well 9 is undersized, deteriorating, and in need of upgrades. Several current factors limit the effectiveness of the facility. A single 10-inch transmission line limits conveyance capacity to developed areas of the CoRR. Over the years, Well 9 has seen decreased production, and the existing 200,000-gallon ground storage tank has recently been inspected and is recommended for replacement. In order to reliably supply existing and future customers, Well 9 needs to be redeveloped. The deteriorated condition of Reservoir 9 is cause for concern. Consequently, the CoRR has been observing and testing the water quality at this site. To date, the water supplied from the facility continues to meet Drinking Water Standards (JSAI 2024).

The CoRR does not have any outstanding debt related to any aspect of the Well 9 proposed improvements. The CoRR self-funded the engineering and land acquisition for Phase I and entered in a cost-share agreement with the USACE for the construction of the 3 MG steel reservoir. The City has committed to cost-sharing total project cost of \$15,150,000.00 to finance the design and construction of Phases II and III. Phase II (completed) consisted of well re-drilling and Phase III (Proposed Action) consists of upgrading the existing water supply infrastructure by installing a new water transmission line along King blvd.

1.3 Regulatory Compliance

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared by Rocky Mountain Ecology (RME) for the USACE and the CoRR 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.*)
- EO 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.*)
- EO 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment
- EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands
- Department of Defense' Procedures for Implementing NEPA
- Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 U.S.C. 4201 *et seq.*)
- EO 13112, Invasive Species
- Federal Noxious Weed Act (7 U.S.C. 2814)
- Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, P.L. 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.*
- EO 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds
- EO 13751 - Safeguarding the Nation from the Impacts of Invasive Species

This EA also demonstrates compliance with all relevant State of New Mexico and local regulations, statutes, policies, and standards aimed at protecting the environment, including water and air quality, endangered species, 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. The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)) has removed most of the sections from 33 CFR 230 and indicated that the Civil Works program will follow the DoD implementing procedures for NEPA issued on 30 June 2025. Actions that were ongoing as of the effective date of the new rule will continue to use the rule in place at the time the action was started. Therefore, this EA follows the USACE Procedures that were in place at the time the draft EA was prepared.

2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), all agencies involved in or supporting projects that use federal funding are required to assess alternative courses of action. These alternatives may include design and/or location adjustments to minimize or reduce the impacts of a Proposed Action. The NEPA process helps decision-makers evaluate current and future conditions concerning the timing and implementation of an action at a specific site. Ultimately, the selected design, based on the alternatives evaluated, can be implemented to serve the best interests of both the public and the environment.

This NEPA analysis considers two alternatives: the No-Action Alternative, which serves as the baseline for comparison, and the Proposed Action, which aims to address CoRR's needs for improving Well 9's water delivery infrastructure by constructing a new water transmission line along King Blvd.

2.1 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative generally means that the Proposed Action would not take place. Under the No-Action Alternative, the current land and resource uses would continue to occur in the project area and no mitigation measures would be required. Under this alternative, construction of the waterline extension along King Blvd would not take place.

The No-Action Alternative should be perceived as an unsound course of action due to the urgent need of critical water supply infrastructure repair and improvement.

2.2 Proposed Action

Phase III (Proposed Action) consists of re-equipping Well 9's water delivery infrastructure by constructing a new water transmission line along King Blvd. Design of Phase III began in January 2025 with an anticipated construction start early in 2026. The CoRR proposes to install a new section of waterline between a newly redrilled Well 9 and an existing water system (Figure 4). The proposed waterline would extend from the newly redrilled Well 9 in Section 25 of Township 13 North, Range 1 east south and then east, passing through Section 31, 30, 29, 28 and 33 to join existing water infrastructure at the end of the currently paved portion of King Blvd. NW in Rio Rancho. Except for a 600 meter (m) long segment in Section 25 and 24, it would be

installed within the beds of three existing unpaved roads (King Blvd NW, Serenade St. NW, and Phoenix Rd. NW.). The total area of disturbance, including staging area (Figure 5.), access routes and the installation of the new section of the waterline would be 33.4 acres. The trench for the pipe would be excavated with heavy machinery at a minimum depth of 3 ft. Construction activities related to the Proposed Action would be conducted with standard earth-moving equipment, including, but not limited to, backhoes, excavators, a front-end loader, trenchers, compaction equipment, and water trucks. Land ownership includes CoRR land within the existing Well 9, as well as the right-of-way for the waterline expansion along King Blvd.

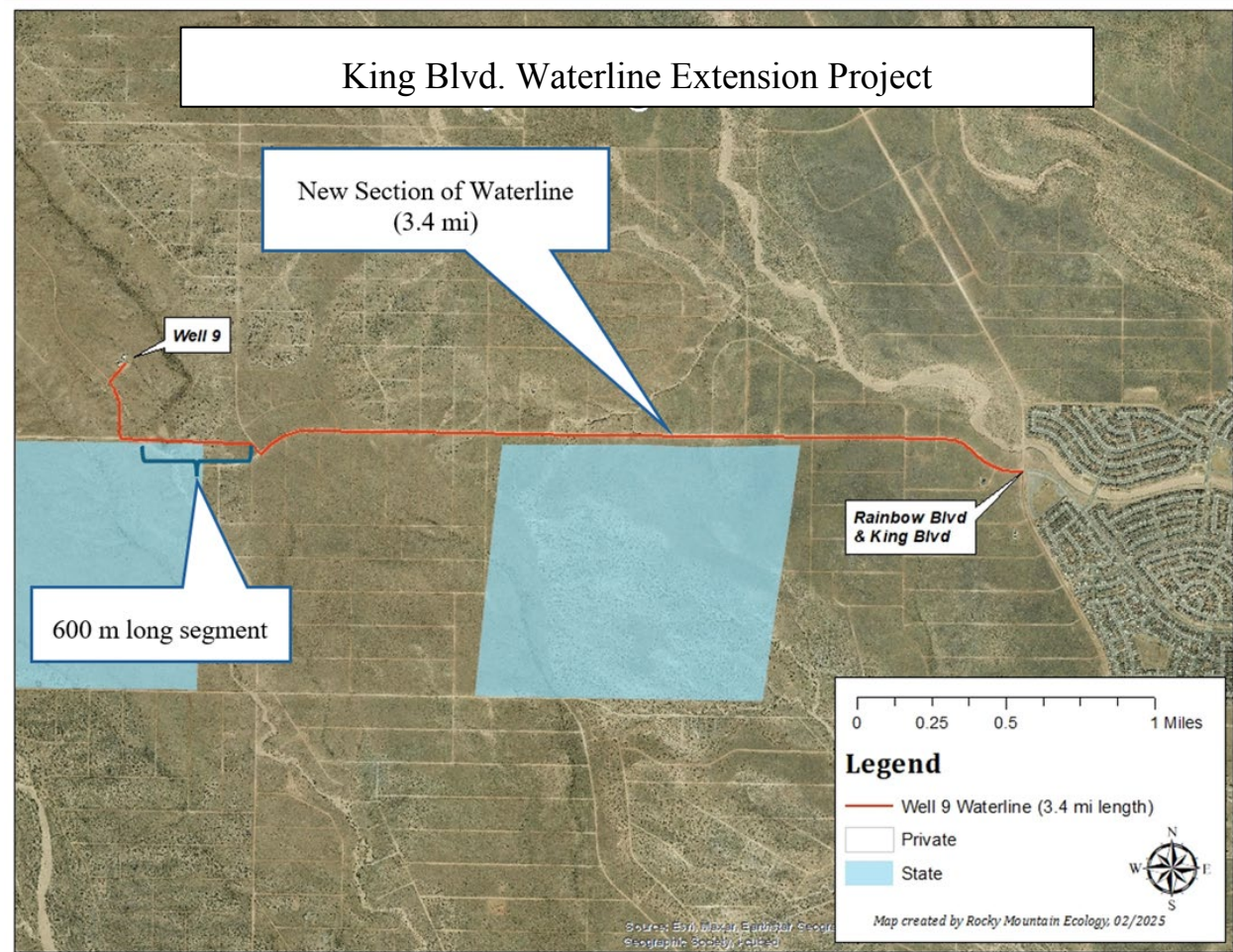


Figure 4. Illustration of Proposed Action (King Blvd Waterline Extension)



Figure 5. Close-up of Well 9, depicting the proposed Staging Area (red outline)

3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

3.1 Physical Environment

3.1.1 Physiography, Geology, and Soils

The project is located within the Albuquerque Basin sub-region of the Arizona/ New Mexico Plateau Ecoregion (Griffith et al. 2006; Bailey 1988, 1995, 1998) and is located within the Rio Grande – Albuquerque sub-basin of the Rio Grande Watershed (USGS 2025). The basin is filled with thick sediments of mostly Quaternary and some Tertiary age, with a few areas of volcanic rocks and lava-capped mesas. The Santa Fe Group aquifer is the drinking water source for Albuquerque and most of the Middle Rio Grande Valley. The Albuquerque Basin sub-region contains a largely thermic soil temperature regime, with a mix of sand scrub and desert grassland vegetation. Annual flooding of terraces and benches has been eliminated. The general topography within the greater project area slopes gradually to the east towards the Rio Grande Valley. The elevation of the project area ranges from approximately 6,050 ft (1,844 m) above mean sea level (AMSL) at its' western extent at Reservoir 9, to 5,745 ft (1,751 m) at the eastern terminus at the intersection of King and Rainbow Blvd. The project corridor has a slight eastern aspect with an average slope of 5 %. The warmest average daily maximum temperature in Rio Rancho, NM occurs in June and July at 90.0 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) (32.2 degrees Celsius [°C]),

while the coldest average daily minimum temperature of 26.0 °F (-3.3°C) occurs in January. Annual precipitation averages 9.47 in (24.05 centimeters [cm]) in Rio Rancho, NM (WRCC 2025). The population of Rio Rancho between 2000 and 2010 increased by 69%, which in 2010, totaled 87,521 people.

Table 1. Soils Mapped in the Project Area

Map Unit	Symbol	Landform	Parent Materials
Grieta fine sandy loam	142	Fan remnants, ridges, plateaus, and mesas	Eolian deposits over alluvium derived from sandstone
Clovis fine sandy loam	143	Plains, fan remnants, and mesas	Eolian deposits over alluvium derived from sandstone and shale
Grieta-Sheppard loamy fine sands	145	Fan remnants, ridges, plateaus, and mesas	Eolian deposits over alluvium derived from sandstone
Zia-Clovis association	211	Plateaus and fan remnants	Eolian deposits over alluvium derived from sandstone and shale

Above, Table 1. provides a summary of the soils within the project area which consist of four types: Grieta fine sandy loam, 1 to 4 percent slopes. These are well-drained soils and occur within the Loamy (R042BE052NM) Ecological Site (NRCS 2025). They are found on plains, fan remnants and mesas with a parent material of eolian deposits over slope alluvium derived from sandstone and shale. These soils have no frequency of ponding or flooding. Clovis fine sandy loam, 1 to 4 percent slopes. These are well-drained soils and occur within the Loamy (R035XA112NM) Ecological Site (NRCS 2025). These soils have no frequency of ponding or flooding. Grieta-Sheppard loamy fine sands, 2 to 9 % slopes. They are found on ridges, plateaus, fan remnants, and mesas with a parent material of eolian deposits over slope alluvium derived from sandstone. These soils have no frequency of ponding or flooding. Zia-Clovis association, 2 to 10 % slopes soils.

The following best management practices (BMPs) will be applied to minimize soil impacts during 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 and comply with local sedimentation and erosion-control regulations.
- All fuels, oils, hydraulic fluids, and other similar substances would be appropriately stored out of the floodplain. Construction equipment would be inspected daily and monitored during operation to prevent leaking fuels or lubricants from entering any surface water.
- BMPs would be implemented regarding the treatment and disposal of waste material. Waste material would be disposed of properly at commercial disposal areas or landfills.
- A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan would be required. According to the plan, water resources would be protected with silt fencing, geotextiles, or straw bales, to address and prevent runoff of sediment from areas disturbed by construction.
- Areas disturbed by construction and not developed would be revegetated with native grasses and other species that make up the vegetation community.
- In compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, impacts to nesting birds would be avoided by scheduling work outside of the migratory/nesting season or conducting a nest survey at least 3 days prior to any vegetation disturbance or removal.

The Proposed Action could cause minor, short-term, negative impacts to soils during construction; however, these effects will be minimized through the implementation of BMPs and will cease once the project is completed.

Under the No-Action alternative, there would not be short-term effects to soils; however, critical water infrastructure for the CoRR would continue to deteriorate and fail to meet future needs.

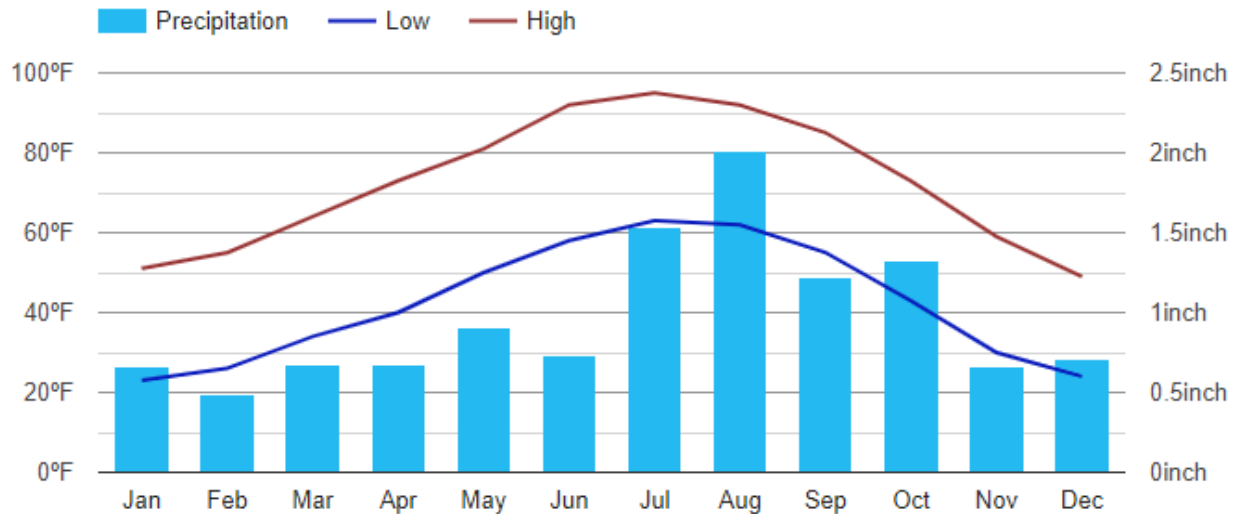
3.1.2 Climate

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. Rio Rancho, NM is within an arid climate zone due to its location in the rain shadow of the Sandia Mountains to the east and the Continental Divide to the west. This arid climate zone receives roughly 9 in of precipitation annually on average (Table 2). The region is known for its hot summers with large diurnal range in temperatures. Winters are moderate with average high temperatures hovering around freezing.

Changing conditions at the planetary scale are expected to result in increased temperatures, longer periods of drought, decreased snowpack runoff, as well as potentially more frequent and

severe storms. Stronger, more frequent storms and associated weather patterns would increase erosion of the drainage pattern surrounding Well 9.

Table 2. Climate data for the Rio Rancho, NM area (1981-2010)(U.S. Climate Data 2022)



3.1.3 Water Resources

The watershed and hydrology in the area are affected by land and water use practices. The degree to which hydrologic processes are affected by land and water use depends on the location, extent, timing, and the type of activity. Factors that currently cause short-lived alterations to the hydrologic regime in the area are limited to the existing Well 9 itself, which has an outflow structure that discharges occasional water as part of the water pumping process. In addition, the existing well site contains a low degree of vegetation density, which likely promotes sheetflow during heavy precipitation events.

The project area spans two sub-watersheds: Headwaters Arroyo de las Calabacillas (HUC 12-130202030102) in the western extent of the project area, and Arroyo de los Montoyas (HUC 12-130202030105) in the eastern extent of the project area (USGS 2025).

Runoff from the western extent of the project area flows to the southeast as an overland sheetflow which then percolates into the ground. During heavy precipitation events, that runoff could reach an adjacent unnamed ephemeral arroyo that intersects the waterline extension alignment approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the southeast of Well 9. That arroyo eventually converges with the Calabacillas Arroyo after approximately 3.3 river mi. Runoff from the eastern extent of the project area flows to the northeast as an overland sheetflow which then percolates into the ground. During heavy precipitation events, that runoff could reach an adjacent unnamed ephemeral arroyo that parallels King Blvd between 300 ft and $\frac{1}{4}$ mi to the north. That arroyo eventually converges with the Arroyo de los Montoyas after approximately 1.6 river mi. Both the Arroyo de los Montoyas and the Calabacillas Arroyo empty into the Rio Grande River, a

Traditional Navigable Water (TNW). However, these arroyos are not considered relatively permanent waters and are instead considered non-jurisdictional ephemeral drainages.

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 (U.S.) 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 project as the total project area is over one acre in size. Therefore, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required and prepared by the contractor for this project.

Section 404 of the CWA (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), as amended, provides for the protection of waters of the U.S. through regulation of the discharge of dredged or fill material. The USACE Regulatory Program (33 CFR Parts 320-330) requires that a Section 404 evaluation be conducted for all construction that may affect waters of the U.S. The subject unnamed arroyos that could be impacted in the project area are ephemeral and do not experience permanent flow. Therefore, they are not considered a water of the U.S. and no 404(b)(1) analysis under Section 404 of the CWA would be required.

Section 401 of the CWA, as amended, requires that a Water Quality Certification be obtained for anticipated discharges associated with construction activities or other disturbance within waterways. Because there would be no discharge to waters or wetlands of the U.S., a Water Quality Certification would not be required.

The following 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.

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

Under the No-Action Alternative, there would not be water quality impacts from construction; however, improvements to critical water infrastructure would not take place.

3.1.4 Floodplains and Wetlands

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) offers federal guidance for activities within floodplains of inland and coastal waters. The order mandates that federal agencies take measures to reduce flood risks, minimize the effects of floods on human safety, health, and well-being, and preserve and restore the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains.

The project area is currently mapped in Zone X and Zone A on Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Number #35043C1875D, Effective Date 3/18/08 (Figure 6.). This zone includes “areas of 0.2% annual chance floods; areas of 1% annual chance floods with average depths of less than 1 ft or with drainage areas less than 1 square mi; and areas protected by levees from 1% annual chance floods” (FEMA 2008). During the field survey, the arroyo crossing that occurs just southeast of Well 9 was noted to have no indicators of flow, including low-flow channels, floodplains or upper terraces. Further, the area that will be crossed by the waterline has been subject to previous anthropogenic influence, which has already altered the floodplain via

installation of an earthen tank. Therefore, the Proposed Action and No-Action Alternative would not have impacts on floodplains.

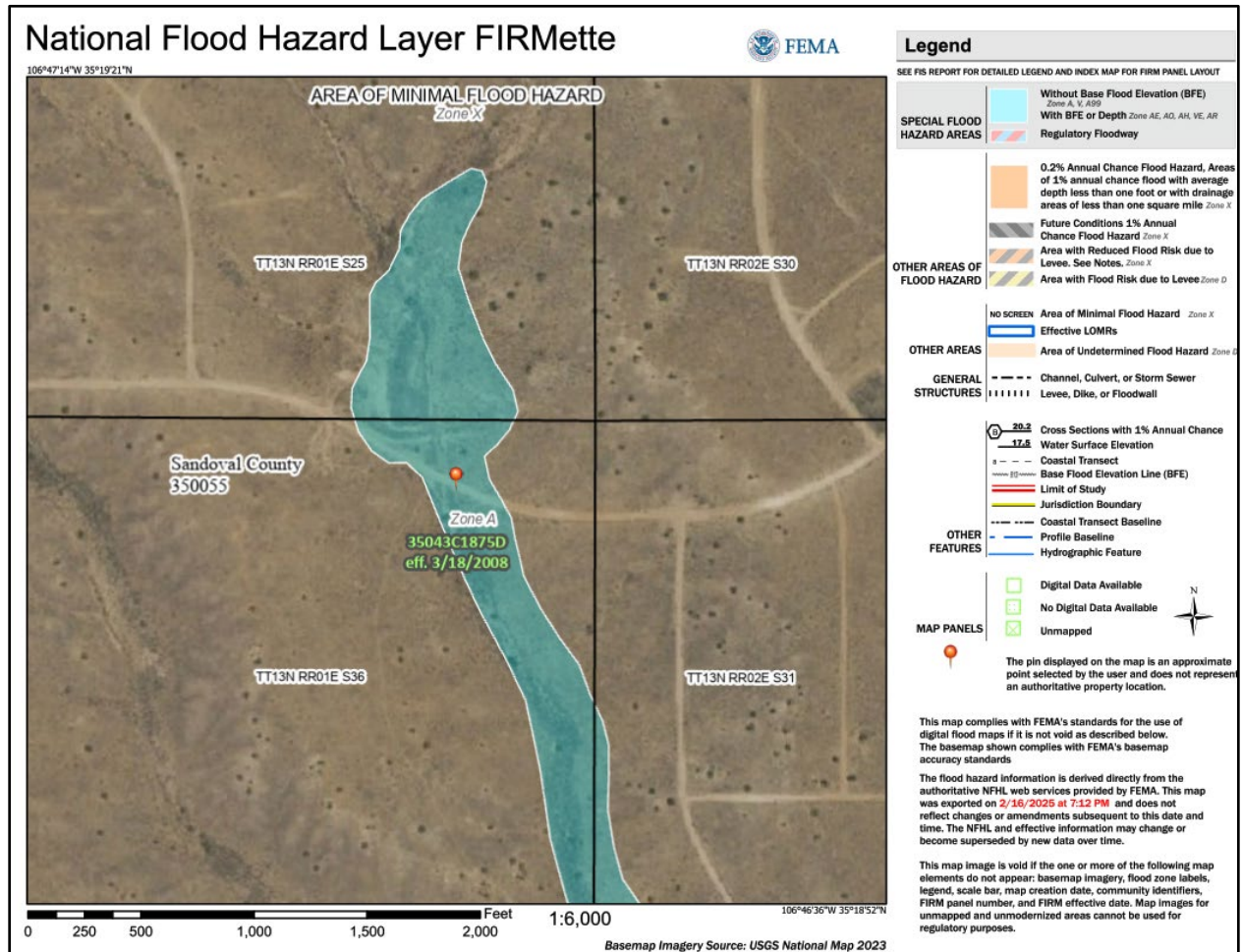


Figure 6. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for the Project Area (FEMA, 2008).

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 jurisdictional wetlands within or nearby the project area, and therefore, impacts to wetlands would not occur from the Proposed Action or the No-Action Alternative.

3.1.5 Air Quality, Noise, and Aesthetics

The project area is in New Mexico's Air Quality Control Region 2 for air quality monitoring. Sandoval County is "in attainment" (does not exceed State and Federal Environmental Protection Agency air quality standards) for all criteria pollutants (NMED/AQB 2025). Air quality in the project area is generally good. The closest Class I area is Bandelier Wilderness, located approximately 85 mi to the north of the project site. Class I areas are special wilderness areas of scenic beauty and natural wonder, 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 construction would be required to pass a current New Mexico emissions test and have required emission control equipment. The project would maintain the work area within or outside the project boundaries free from particulates in accordance with Federal, State, and local air pollution standards. Because the Proposed Action would disturb more than three-quarters of an acre, appropriate erosion and sediment controls would be implemented under a Fugitive Dust Control Permit for the project obtained from the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Air Quality Program. Water sprinklers and other methods would be used during construction to minimize dust.

The Proposed Action would cause a temporary, minimal increase in suspended dust particles due to construction activities near the project site. However, air quality in Rio Rancho and Corrales, Sandoval County, would be unaffected by both the Proposed Action and the No-Action Alternative.

The project site is located within a low-noise area, with minimal vehicular traffic and no nearby industrial or commercial activities. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), a typical quiet residential area experiences a noise level of 40 decibels (dB). In contrast, heavy machinery can generate noise a noise level of 120 dB. During construction, the proposed action would involve the use of standard construction equipment including, but not limited to backhoes, excavators, a front-end loader, compaction equipment, and a water truck. Typically, these types of equipment generate noise levels ranging from 80 to 120 dB. Construction activities would take place during designated, normal daytime hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), and would end when construction is complete. During construction, an increase in noise would constitute minimal and temporary impacts, primarily due to the vacant land that surrounds the project corridor in which there is a lack of human occupation to impact with noise. Once construction is complete, the site would return to its pre-construction noise levels, with no residual noise impacts. No long-term noise impacts would be incurred by the Proposed Action, as the construction equipment would be removed from the site and the completed project would not generate any significant noise. The No-Action Alternative would not have an effect on noise.

Short-term aesthetic impacts to the project area would occur during the construction period due to the presence of construction equipment. However, these would be months in duration only. Construction activities would be visible only from residents along the western boundary of Northern Meadows neighborhood, and incidental people passing through the western extent of the project. At the conclusion of construction, the underground waterline extension would not be visible, and given the expansive nature of the project area, coupled with the very low use of the area, aesthetic impacts would not measurably increase from current levels.

Neither the Proposed Action nor the No-Action Alternative would influence the aesthetic values or scenic quality in the area.

3.2 Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste Environment

Although a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) is not required for this project, a review of the project's location, scope, and activities suggests that the risk of encountering

HTRW is low. The project area is in a semi-rural setting, with no known industrial or commercial activities in the vicinity that could have generated HTRW. An Environmental Database Report (EDR) was conducted, which revealed evidence of one Finding within one mile of the project area. This Finding was identified through the Environmental Protection Agency Enforcement and Compliance History Online (EPA-ECHO) which reveals potential indicators of HTRW. The identified site is the Rio Rancho Well 9R itself, at the western terminus of the project area. Upon reviewing the EPA-ECHO site there are no violations identified, and the site is in good compliance standing, therefore, this finding will have no impact from the project's activities.

In addition to the Finding identified, the EDR report identified two sites occurring at greater distances than the applicable ASTM-21 standards. These sites were reviewed for potential impact to the project area and were determined to have no impact on the project's activities. Furthermore, the New Mexico Open Enviro Map was reviewed for any gaps in the EDR report; no additional findings were identified through this research. See Appendix E for the full EDR report.

The project's activities include the construction of a new waterline, which will involve excavation, pipe laying, and backfilling, as well as the re-equipping of the new well, arsenic treatment, and installation of a new Water Main in Transmission King Blvd. These activities may involve some disturbance of the soil, but they are not typically associated with the generation of HTRW. A field survey of the project area confirmed that no evidence of HTRW was present, and the project's design and construction plans include measures to prevent the introduction of HTRW into the environment.

To ensure that the project is constructed in a safe and environmentally responsible manner, the following BMPs will be implemented:

- All equipment will be washed prior to initiation of work at the study site and following completion of all tasks.
- Fueled equipment that enters the site will be inspected at least once every working day for dripping or leaking fluids.
- Dripping or leaking equipment will be repaired immediately at an off-site location.
- All fueled equipment will carry a spill control kit which would allow the immediate control of small fuel drips and spills, and removal of stained soil resulting from this project work.
- No hazardous materials will be used in the execution of this project.

If areas of concern or contaminants are identified during construction all activities within the area would be postponed, and the USACE would coordinate with the CoRR to determine the appropriate course of action. As outlined in Engineering Regulation 1165-2-132, for cost-shared projects such as the proposed, the local sponsor is responsible for ensuring that the development and execution of federal, state, and/or locally required HTRW response actions are accomplished at 100% non-project cost.

The No-Action Alternative would not have an effect on known HTRW within or near the proposed construction project.

The Proposed Action would not have an effect on known HTRW within or near the proposed construction project.

3.3 Biological Environment

3.3.1 Vegetation Communities

The project occurs within the Albuquerque Basin sub-region of the Arizona/ New Mexico Plateau Ecoregion which exhibits a mix of sand scrub and desert grassland vegetation. (Griffith et al. 2006)

A general biological survey of the project area was conducted by RME on February 10th, 2025. The project area is located within a zone that harbors plant species indicative of the Plains-Mesa Sand Scrub vegetation type (Dick-Peddie 1993). Dominant species throughout the project area include tree cholla (*Cylindropuntia imbricata*), four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and prickly pear (*Opuntia polyacantha*). Other species noted during the survey include one-seed juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), thinleaf yucca (*Yucca angustissima*) and desert joint fir (*Ephedra trifurca*). During site visit, no rare plant species or rare plant communities were observed within or around the project area.

The portion of the project area harboring the existing Well 9 has been previously disturbed and most of the native vegetative community is absent, resulting in a primary/dominant vegetative component of Russian thistle. Saltcedar (*Tamarix chinensis*), a Class C noxious weed as defined by the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA 2020), was observed in a depression approximately ¼ mi southwest of Well 9.

No major impacts to vegetation from the Proposed Action are expected, except for the 600 m segment of waterline that would deviate from King Blvd NW. This segment of waterline extends for approx. 0.41 mi and could result in temporary impacts to vegetation on a linear patch approx. 2 acres in size. Re-establishment of vegetation in this area could take several years but could be shortened with implementation of BMPs like reseeding and recontouring. An indirect impact of removing the vegetative cover is the increased potential for colonization of this 600 m segment by aggressive, non-native species.

The construction site would be accessed utilizing existing roads, and no new roads would be created. To accelerate the reestablishment of native vegetation immediately after construction is complete, areas that are not for parking or vehicle mobility would be reseeded with a native seed mix. This mitigation measure has been incorporated into the design and specification plans of the contract.

The following BMPs would be implemented to minimize impacts to vegetation:

- Activities would be limited to the designated or otherwise approved areas and would be shown on the construction drawings for construction areas, staging, and access.
- Any area disturbed by construction and not covered by an impervious surface would be revegetated by applying a native seed mix. For post-construction restoration of the project area, NMDGF recommends that only native plant species are used in the reclamation seed mix and that the mix is designed to enhance local pollinator habitat. The

seed mix and mulch should be certified weed-free to avoid inadvertently introducing non-native species to the reclamation site. Any alternate plant species, used to substitute for primary plant species that are unavailable at the time of reclamation, should also be native. When possible, seeds should be sourced from the same region and habitat type as the reclamation site and should include seeds from a region that represents potential future climatic conditions at the site.

The Proposed Action would result in minor adverse effects to vegetation within the project area, as some minor vegetation clearing would be needed for construction. However, these impacts would be minimized through the implementation of BMPs. Given the limited disturbance, the site's previously disturbed condition, and the mitigation measures to protect vegetation, the Proposed Action is not expected to cause significant adverse effects. The No-Action Alternative would not have an impact on vegetation.

3.3.2 Wildlife

Wildlife species expected to be encountered on site are limited to those adapted to arid environments as the site is an open area with low-growing, scattered shrubs, and with no source of consistent surface water. The project area contains the existing Well 9 which could deter wildlife from that portion of the project area. Wildlife that could be present in the vicinity of the project footprint include various small mammals, diverse avifauna, reptiles, invertebrates and big game species (Brown and Lowe 1980). Wildlife typical of the general area include coyotes (*Canis latrans*), desert cottontails (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), kangaroo rats (*Dipodomys spp.*), common ravens (*Corvus corax*), turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*), mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*), western kingbirds (*Tyrannus verticalis*), red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), bull snakes (*Pituophis catenifer sayi*), and whiptail lizards (*Cnemidophorus spp.*).

Scattered small burrow holes exist along the proposed waterline alignment where it deviates from King Blvd NW (600 m. segment, see Figure 4). These burrows are likely used primarily by small mammals, invertebrates, lizards, snakes, and rabbits. The following bird species were observed around the existing Well 9 facility and proposed waterline alignment: multiple house finches (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), several white-crowned sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), one western bluebird (*Siala mexicana*), and two curve-billed thrashers (*Toxostoma curvirostre*). No inactive or active nests were in or adjacent to the project area. No burrows that could potentially harbor Burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*) were noted during the biological survey.

Migratory Birds: Migratory birds and occupied nests are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Removal of active nests would require a permit from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Common migratory birds, which may use the area as habitat, include various species of songbirds, owls, corvids, hawks, finches, doves, thrashers, and meadowlarks.

Disturbance of wildlife from construction of the Proposed Action would be temporary and limited to the project area footprint. The following measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to wildlife:

- Project work would be conducted between September 15 and April 15, outside the breeding bird season. Should any work need to take place within the breeding bird season, all potential nesting habitat to be disturbed in the work area must be surveyed for

nesting birds by a qualified biologist. For any active nest found with eggs or nestlings, the area of the nest would be avoided by implementing buffers and any other requirements deemed necessary in consultation with USFWS.

- Any trenches, holes or hollow areas/equipment left overnight would be covered to prevent trapping of wildlife. Makeshift ramps (e.g. using ladders, bricks or 2x4 frame lumber) would be securely and strategically placed to allow animals to safely escape. Earthen escape ramps should be installed at least every 30 m and be no steeper than 1:1.
- The potential exists in approaching wildlife further becoming a nuisance. Measures to prevent negative wildlife interactions or wildlife damages to property include keeping tools and other equipment closed to the extent possible to prevent inhabitation of wildlife. Trash and uneaten food must be policed to prevent wildlife attraction and the development of nuisance behavior.
- Because soil is proposed for removal, NMDGF recommends surveying the project area for any burrowing wildlife species prior to the initiation of any soil moving activities (in addition to burrowing owl and prairie dog surveys recommended in the NMERT-generated report [See Appendix F]). If disturbance of any detected burrowing wildlife cannot be avoided, then a qualified biologist should be engaged to capture and move any such wildlife.

Due to the limited amount of disturbance within the project area, the previously disturbed nature of the habitat, and measures that would be implemented to reduce impacts to wildlife, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse effects on wildlife. The No-Action Alternative would not have an effect on wildlife.

3.3.3 Special Status Species

Three agencies have primary responsibility for protecting and conserving plant and animal species within the proposed project area. The USFWS, under authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) (ESA), as amended, has the responsibility for federally listed species. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) has the responsibility for state-listed wildlife species. The New Mexico State Forestry Division (Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department) (NM EMNRD) has the responsibility for state-listed plant species. Each agency maintains an updated list of species that are classified, or are candidates for classification, as protected based on 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 federally-listed by the USFWS and State-listed by the NMDGF for Sandoval County, New Mexico are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Federal and State Threatened, Endangered and Proposed Species Determinations.

Species Category	Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat	Rationale for Elimination for Further Consideration	Status	Determination
USFWS Endangered, Threatened & Proposed Species and Critical Habitat, Sandoval County, NM						
BIRD	Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	Riparian areas with multiple canopy tree structure.	No riparian habitat occurs within the project area.	USFWS Endangered	No effect
BIRD	Mexican spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	Old-growth, uneven-aged ponderosa pine or mixed coniferous forests.	The forest types and structure are absent from the project area.	USFWS Threatened	No effect
BIRD	Western yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	Western cuckoos breed in large blocks of riparian habitats, particularly woodlands with cottonwoods (<i>Populus fremontii</i>) and willows (<i>Salix</i> sp.). Dense understory foliage appears to be an important factor in nest site selection.	The project area lacks riparian habitats with dense understory foliage.	USFWS Threatened	No effect
MAMMAL	New Mexican meadow jumping mouse	<i>Zapus hudsonius luteus</i>	Riparian areas with a dense grass component.	No riparian areas exist within or adjacent to the project area.	USFWS Endangered	No effect

Species Category	Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat	Rationale for Elimination for Further Consideration	Status	Determination
MAMMAL	Mexican gray wolf	<i>Canis lupus baileyi</i>	Generally associated with montane forests and woodlands	No montane forests or woodlands occur within or near the project area.	USFWS Endangered	No effect
INSECT	Monarch butterfly	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Various habitats including forests, woodland, and grassland habitats where suitable forage (i.e., milkweed) is present.	Suitable habitat for the species is absent from the project area. While individuals may occasionally traverse the project area, impacts to individuals or associated habitat are not anticipated from the Proposed Action.	USFWS Proposed Threatened	No effect
INSECT	Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee	<i>Bombus suckleyi</i>	Generally associated with urban parks and gardens, or mountain meadows.	Suitable habitat is absent from the project area.	USFWS Proposed Endangered	No effect
<i>State-Listed Threatened and Endangered, Species, Sandoval County, NM</i>						
BIRD	Costa's hummingbird	<i>Calypte costae</i>	Generally associated with montane forest and lowland riparian forest in NM.	No montane or riparian forest habitat exists within the project area	State NM Threatened	No impact
BIRD	Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Found in a variety of habitats near rivers, large streams and lakes.	River, stream, and lake habitats are not present in the project area.	State NM Threatened	No impact

Species Category	Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat	Rationale for Elimination for Further Consideration	Status	Determination
BIRD	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Steep, sheer cliffs overlooking woodlands, riparian areas or other habitats supporting avian prey species in abundance.	Steep, sheer cliffs overlooking woodlands, and riparian areas are not present in the project area.	State NM Threatened	No impact
BIRD	Northern beardless-tyrannulet	<i>Camptostoma imberbe ridgwayi</i>	Generally associated with dense stands of mesquite along streams.	No mesquite stands or stream habitat exists within the project area.	State NM Endangered	No impact
BIRD	Bell's vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>	Occurs in riparian habitat and upland mesquite thickets.	Riparian habitat and upland mesquite thickets are not present in the project area.	State NM Threatened	No impact
BIRD	Gray vireo	<i>Vireo vicinior</i>	Occurs in dense stands of mixed piñon, juniper and oak scrub associations, usually with a well-developed grass component.	Dense stands of piñon, juniper and oak scrub associations are not present in the project area.	State NM Threatened	No impact

A letter response from the USFWS was generated from their website during February 2025. No potential habitat exists within the project area based on the biological survey and master species lists (Appendix C) for any federally threatened or endangered species. State-listed species with the potential to occur are listed in Table 4. Results from the biological survey indicate a “no effect” determination for federally listed species. This project is expected to have no adverse effects on threatened or endangered species based on the species habitat analysis by RME, and therefore no further consultation with USFWS is required.

Table 4. Listed Species with Potential to Occur in the Project Area

Species Category	Common (Scientific Name)	Status	Habitat & Location	Designated Critical Habitat Present	Species Present or Absent during Survey
BIRD	Baird’s sparrow (<i>Centronyx bairdii</i>)	NM State Threatened	Can be found in a variety of habitats, including desert grasslands with <i>Bouteloua</i> spp. (grama grasses) – tobosa associations and low shrub density.	No	Absent
BIRD	Bendire’s thrasher (<i>Toxostoma bendirei</i>)	Bird of Conservation Concern	Occupies desert grasslands and shrublands, often with scattered cholla, yucca and mesquite.	No	Absent

BAIRD’S SPARROW

An assessment of Baird’s sparrow presence/absence was conducted during the biological survey throughout the project area; however, an extensive, species-specific survey for Baird’s sparrow was not conducted. This species is found in a variety of habitats, from desert grasslands in the southern portion of the state to prairies and mountain meadows in the Northeast and northern mountains. At lower elevations (2,800 – 5,500 ft [583 - 1,676 m]), they are found in grasslands with a strong grama – tobosa grass community and low shrub density. Suitable habitat exists within and beyond the project area. No individuals of this species were located during the biological survey.

The project would likely not directly affect the foraging options for Baird’s sparrow due to the availability of foraging habitat adjacent to the project area. The project could indirectly impact

Baird's sparrows if individuals were utilizing the grassland habitat within the project area. However, no adverse impacts are expected as the availability of large, intact grasslands adjacent to the project area are expansive. Moreover, the project would not likely result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of population viability because foraging sparrows would likely use adjacent areas that were void of construction activities.

BENDIRE'S THRASHER

An assessment of Bendire's thrasher habitat was conducted during the biological survey throughout the project area; however a species-specific survey for Bendire's thrasher was not conducted as the species does not occupy central New Mexico at the time of the survey. During the breeding season, this species is found in desert grasslands and shrublands, often within areas dominated by cholla, yucca, mesquite, palo verde and/or acacia. They are generally found at elevations below 8,000 ft. Suitable breeding season habitat exists within and beyond the project area.

The Proposed Action would likely not directly affect the foraging options for Bendire's thrasher due to the availability of foraging habitat adjacent to the project area. The project could indirectly impact thrashers if individuals were utilizing the habitat within the project area. However, no adverse impacts are expected as the availability of large, intact desert shrublands adjacent to the project area are expansive. The project would not occur during the migratory bird nesting season, therefore, no impacts to nesting thrashers is expected. The project would not result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of population viability because foraging thrashers would likely use adjacent areas that were void of construction activities.

3.4 Cultural Resources

An intensive (Class III) pedestrian archaeological survey of the subject property was conducted January 20, 2025, by Aspen Cultural Resource Management (Aspen CRM). The total area surveyed was 40.93 acres. The cultural resource inventory resulted in the identification and documentation of one archaeological site, a scatter of historic artifacts and a survey marker recorded as LA 206047, one historic cultural property, a historic earthen tank documented as HCPI 55122. No isolates were found. Both cultural resources are recommended as not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as neither meets any of the four criteria for listing. The proposed waterline would cross through the water impoundment area of the earthen tank and would bisect the artifact scatter. There are no recommended mitigation measures.

Site LA 206047 consists of a scatter of historic artifacts and a historic survey marker. The site measures 45 x 32 m and has an area of 1,081 m². The artifacts are surficial and buried cultural deposits are unlikely to be present. Vegetation includes one-seed juniper, ring muhly, Indian rice grass, three-awn, blue grama, four-wing saltbush, sand sage, cholla, prickly pear, Russian thistle, and wolfberry (See 3.3.1 Vegetation Communities).

The survey marker, Feature 1, is a brass-cap mounted on a steel pipe measuring 3 in. in diameter and 10 in. in height. The cap reads: "US GENERAL LAND OFFICE SURVEY/1915/PENALTY \$250 FOR REMOVAL."

The assemblage of scattered artifacts contained fragments of aqua bottle glass, motor oil cans, fragments of a canning jar, food and beverage cans, and a segment of wire rope. The artifacts are consistent in age with the date on the survey marker, but it is unclear whether they were deposited at the time it was installed or if their spatial association is coincidental. For the purposes of this site documentation, they are considered to be a single component dating to the early years of NM Statehood between 1915 and 1925.

This site is recommended as not eligible for listing in the NRHP. It is not associated with any historically significant event or person and does not contain any built elements of importance. Shallow buried deposits may be present, but they are unlikely to be significantly different from those on the surface and would not provide additional information important to our understanding of prehistoric or history. Construction of the proposed waterline extension could result in damage or displacement of artifacts, but there are no recommended mitigation measures.

Site HCPI 55122 consists of an earthen tank that captures water from a wide, shallow drainage. There are no associated artifacts and few or none would be expected at a site of this nature. Vegetation includes one-seed juniper, ring muhly, Indian rice grass, three-awn, blue grama, four-wing saltbush, sand sage, cholla, prickly pear, Russian thistle, and wolfberry.

The earthen tank takes the form of a large depression in which water is retained by a larger earthen berm. The depression is roughly rectangular and measures 80 x 40 m. The earthen berm is currently 75 m long. It may once have been slightly longer; its western end appears truncated by King Blvd NW. At its highest, it is 4 m high, and it is 30+ m wide at its base and 2 m wide at its top. A galvanized metal culvert at the west end appears to have served as an overflow outlet.

There are no associated artifacts, but it is visible in a historic aerial photograph from 1952 and can be said to have been in existence by then; it was likely constructed between 1930 and 1952.

This structure is recommended as not eligible for listing in the NRHP. It is not associated with any historically significant event or person, it does not contain any built elements of importance for their design or construction, and it has no potential to yield additional information. The proposed waterline would bisect the earthen tank, but there are no specific avoidance or mitigation recommendations.

Scoping letters were mailed to tribes having cultural resources interests in Sandoval County, NM including the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Kewa Pueblo, Navajo Nation, Ohkay Owingeh, Pueblo de Cochiti, Pueblo of Isleta, Pueblo of Jemez, Pueblo of Laguna, Pueblo of San Felipe, Pueblo of San Ildefonso, Pueblo of Sandia, Pueblo of Santa Ana, Pueblo of Santa Clara, Pueblo of Tesuque, Pueblo of Zia, and The Hopi Tribe, on March 24, 2020, February 19, 2025, and March 26, 2025. No Traditional Cultural Properties and no Indian Trust Assets are known to occur within or adjacent to the project area. We received three responses to our tribal consultation letters, from the Pueblo of Santa Ana, the Pueblo of Sandia, and Navajo Nation during the 2020 scoping. The responses from Tribes for the 2020 scoping stated no concerns with the project.

During the 2025 scoping process, the Pueblo of Sandia, Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, the Pueblo of Isleta, and the Pueblo of San Felipe provided responses. The Pueblo of Sandia stated no concerns for the waterline project. The Comanche Nation concurred with a statement of “No

[Historic] Properties” identified in the project area. The Pueblo of Isleta replied with “no comments” on the project. The Pueblo of San Felipe requested additional information. Upon follow up with the Pueblo of San Felipe, no further information was requested. See Appendix D for scoping correspondence.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2, consulting parties in the Section 106 process identified for the proposed project include the USACE, New Mexico SHPO, and Tribes having ancestral ties to Sandoval County (as listed above). As the lead federal agency, USACE sent formal consultation letters to the Tribes listed above and New Mexico SHPO on April 22, 2025. USACE received concurrence from New Mexico SHPO on May 21, 2025 (HPD Log 125263).

3.5 Socioeconomic Considerations

The proposed project area is located within the CoRR, and at the time of the last official U.S. census, the City had a population of approximately 87,521 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Between 2000 and 2010, the City experienced a 69 % increase in population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the City’s 2018 population was 98,023, a 90 % growth from 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). Approximately 51% of the population within the 5.0 mi radius of the project is a minority, with most of that Hispanic in origin. The project area is predominately Caucasian in ethnicity. The primary beneficiaries of the proposed improvements would be predominantly Hispanic and Caucasian residents that live and work in the area.

Rio Rancho includes a population in which 9% of the residents live below the federal poverty level, in comparison to 19% across NM. Home ownership in Rio Rancho is 77% versus 69% across NM.

The area of this proposed project contains a lower percentage of minorities than the State, and thus, the outcome would not result in negative social issues. The project would not disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations. It would result in positive impacts to both Hispanic and Caucasian families and businesses in the area, through an improved source of drinking water, which could produce additional positive impacts on the local economy if construction crews were to patronize local businesses for fuel, food and other goods and services.

Implementation of the Proposed Action is not likely to have any impact on the population size of the CoRR or Sandoval County; however, it could have a positive impact on the local economy if work crews were to support local businesses. The Proposed Action is expected to provide improvements to a reliable source of drinking water that would benefit the communities that are within the Zone served by Well 9.

Implementation of the Proposed Action is not expected to have negative impacts in terms of socioeconomics.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Action analyzed in this EA outlines the approach and potential impacts for the planned water facility and infrastructure improvements. Environmental impacts would be minor, short-term, and limited to the construction phase. The project is not expected to cause any moderate or significant short-term or long-term negative effects. As a result, the Proposed Action

is not anticipated to significantly impact the quality of the human and natural environment and is recommended for implementation.

5. PREPARATION, CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 Preparation

This EA was prepared by RME for the USACE on behalf of Huitt-Zollars, Inc. (HZI). Personnel primarily responsible for preparation include:

Clayton P. Bowers	NEPA Specialist/Director, RME
John Searles	Field Biologist, RME
Emily Brown	Archaeologist, Aspen CRM

5.2 Quality Control

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

Rodrigo Sedeno	Biologist, Environmental Resources, USACE
Kaitlyn Fuqua	Archaeologist, Environmental Resources, USACE
Micael Albonico	Geologist, Environmental Engineering, USACE

5.3 Consultation and Coordination

In accordance with 42 U.S.C § 4332 the USACE initiated public involvement and agency scoping activities to solicit input on the 2025 draft EA King Blvd Waterline Extension, Sandoval County, New Mexico.

The public was provided a Notice of Availability (Appendix F) for a 30-day review period of the draft EA from August 17, 2025, to September 15, 2025. A hardcopy of the draft EA was made available for public review at the Loma Colorado Main Library, Rio Rancho NM, during the public review period. An electronic copy of the draft EA was made available in the following USACE webpage, which also contains the final EA post public review:

<https://www.spa.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Environmental-Compliance-Documents/Environmental-Assessments-FONSI/>

The Notice of Availability was published in the Rio Rancho Observer prior to the start of the public review period (Appendix F).

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

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

Mark Horner
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Erin Salano
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Conservation Services Division

Jack Marchetti
Fisheries Management Division
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Laura McCarthy
New Mexico Forestry
New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Toby Velasquez
New Mexico State Parks Director
New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Joey Fleming
New Mexico State Park Division
New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Dana Vackar Strang
Surface Resources Division
New Mexico State Land Office

Eli Martinez
Office of Communities, Tribes and Environmental Assessment
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Michelle M. Ensey
State Historic Preservation Officer
Historic Preservation Division

Comments during a previous public outreach event in March 2024 were received from USFWS, BOR, OSE, and SHPO. A comment response table is provided below:

Table 5. Summary of Comments from Agency and Public Outreach from 2024 and 2025.

Commenter	Comment	Response
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	The USFWS requests that impacts to Bendire's thrasher be included in the NEPA analysis.	Bendire's thrasher has been included in Section 3.3.3 of the EA.
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	The BOR has no comments.	Noted

NM Office of the State Engineer/Interstate Stream Commission	The OSE recommends to properly identify the subject well as “RG-26259 POD3”, rather than “Well 9R”. The OSE advises that other federal, state, county and city agencies may want to review the existing OSE permit for the subject well.	Noted
State Historic Preservation Office	SHPO concurs with the determination of No Historic Properties Affected by the project.	Noted

Comments during the 30-day public review period of the draft EA from August 17, 2025, to September 15, 2025, were received from Agencies and SHPO. A comment response table is provided below:

Commenter	Comment	Response
New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department	The two State parcels directly adjacent to the project are owned by the State Land Office (SLO). We did not see SLO listed as a consulted agency in the draft EA, so we would like to recommend that USACE contact SLO directly for comment if you have not already. We can provide relevant contact info if this would be helpful.	Concur, and contacted SLO to take part of the 30-day Public Review period.
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	• Due to the large amounts of soil proposed for removal, in addition to the burrowing owl and prairie dog surveys recommended in the NMERT-generated report, the Department recommends surveying the project area for any burrowing wildlife species prior to the initiation of any soil moving activities. If disturbance of any detected burrowing wildlife cannot be avoided, then a qualified biologist should be engaged to capture and move any such wildlife. • For post-construction reclamation of the project area, the Department recommends that only native plant species are used in the reclamation seed mix and that the mix is designed to enhance local pollinator habitat. The Department also recommends that the seed mix and mulch be certified weed-free to avoid inadvertently introducing non-native species to the reclamation site. Any alternate plant species, used to substitute for primary plant species that are unavailable at the time of reclamation, should also be native. When	Concur, and incorporated these comments into the EA’s list of BMPs.

	possible, the Department recommends using seeds that are sourced from the same region and habitat type as the reclamation site and suggests including seeds from a region that represents potential future climatic conditions at the site.	
State Historic Preservation Office	SHPO concurs with the determination of No Historic Properties affected by the project.	Noted

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