



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF WATER

**Categorical Exclusion**

**For the Inland Empire Utilities Agency Regional Water Recycling Plant No. 5 Expansion Project**

**Pursuant to 40 CFR § 6.204(a)(1)(ii)**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is planning to award a loan under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) to the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) of Chino, California. The EPA intends for this loan to fund the Regional Water Recycling Plant No. 5 (RP-5) Expansion Project.

The EPA's authorization of funding for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§ 4321-4370(f). According to the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, 40 CFR § 1508.4, a federal agency may categorically exclude an action from detailed environmental review as long as the action does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. An action undertaken by the EPA can qualify as a categorical exclusion if it falls under any category within 40 CFR § 6.204(a) and does not exhibit any of the extraordinary circumstances listed in § 6.204(b).

**Project Description**

The Inland Empire Utilities Agency is expanding their regional wastewater treatment facility, RP-5, to meet future flow and load projections. The project consists of two main components:

1. RP-5 Liquids Treatment System Expansion: IEUA plans to increase liquid treatment capacity from 15 million gallons per day (MGD) to 22.5 MGD with 45 MGD peak hourly flow capacity. The liquid treatment structures and systems allow the future capacity of the plant to be increased to 30 MGD with 60 MGD peak hourly flow capacity by the addition of equipment at the Membrane Bio-Reactor (MBR) Facility and Fine Screens Facility. The system expansion consists of the following elements:
  - a. Expansion of Influent Pump Station Capacity – The project includes removal of three existing pumps and replacement with six similarly sized pumps.
  - b. Headworks Improvements – The project includes upgrading the treatment plant headworks with new screens, a grit chamber, a fine screen facility, and improvements to the screenings and grit building.
  - c. Power Center Nine will house the power and control equipment for the Influent Pump Station, Headworks, and Fine screens Facility.
  - d. Expanded Primary Clarification System – The project will include two new primary clarifiers similar to existing clarifiers, as well as four new covers for all the clarifiers.
  - e. Installation of a new centralized odor control system for both liquids and solids treatment.

- f. Aeration Basin Improvements – The project will retrofit the existing basin to be compatible with the MBR system. Modifications include:
    1. Expansion of the influent flow channels
    2. Installation of new mixed liquor return pumps and mixers
    3. Replacement of the aeration system piping and diffusers
    4. Five new high speed turbo blowers will replace the existing two blowers.
    5. A new blower building will house three of the blowers and Power Center Six which provides power and control for the aeration system.
    6. The existing plant compressed air system will be replaced.
  - g. The MBR basins will be constructed in the footprint of two of the existing secondary clarifiers. The other two secondary clarifiers and existing return activated sludge (RAS) pump station will be demolished. The new MBR system consists of the following:
    1. MBR facility will be equipped with eight MBR trains, associated pumping equipment, and a new RAS and waste activated sludge (WAS) pump station.
    2. MBR blower building will house four scour air blowers and a compressed air system
    3. Power Center Five will house all the electrical equipment and control system for the MBR systems.
  - h. The existing tertiary filter system will be demolished once the MBR facility is complete.
  - i. The existing chlorine contact basins will be covered with fiber reinforced plastic (FRP) covers.
  - j. New utility service connection and standby generators
2. Relocation of RP-2 Solids Treatment to RP-5: IEUA plans to relocate solids treatment from Regional Plant 2 (RP-2) to RP-5. The new system at the RP-5 facility will be constructed to support a plant capacity of 30 MGD and sized to accommodate future expansion to 40 MGD. The system will treat flows from both RP-5 and another of IEUA's treatment facilities, the Carbon Canyon Reclamation Facility. The construction consists of the following elements:
    - a. Installation of rotary drum thickeners;
    - b. Installation of a new two-phase acid-gas anaerobic digestion facility;
    - c. Installation of new boiler facility;
    - d. Installation of new flares;
    - e. Installation of struvite control systems;
    - f. Installation of a dewatering facility;
    - g. Construction of a new food waste receiving station; and
    - h. Installation of a new digester gas utilization facility.

The project also includes other off-site project components. IEUA plans to make improvements to the Mountain Avenue lift station and force mains, which are located on Mountain Avenue to the east of the RP-5 facility. IEUA will also make improvements to the El Prado Golf Course lift station, and the Butterfield Ranch lift station and force main both located to the south of the RP-5 facility.

The proposed project is located at the RP-5 site at 6063 Kimball Avenue, Chino CA 91708. The approximately 50-acre project site is bordered by Kimball Avenue to the north, El Prado Road to

the southwest, and Mountain Avenue to the east. The project will serve San Bernardino County.

### **Eligibility for Categorical Exclusion**

This project is eligible for a categorical exclusion under 40 CFR § 6.204(a)(1)(ii), which requires that projects be:

“Actions relating to existing infrastructure systems (such as sewer systems; drinking water supply systems; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) that involve minor upgrading, or minor expansion of system capacity or rehabilitation (including functional replacement) of the existing system and system components (such as the sewer collection network and treatment system; the system to collect, treat, store and distribute drinking water; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) or construction of new minor ancillary facilities adjacent to or on the same property as existing facilities.”

The proposed project includes upgrades at one of IEUA’s regional water recycling plants, RP-5. It constitutes a minor expansion, because it will affect only one of the system’s plants and the majority of the work associated with the project will occur on the existing footprint of the plant.<sup>1</sup> This minor upgrading of a water reclamation facility is expressly listed as a permissible categorical exclusion under 40 CFR § 6.204(a)(1)(ii).

Additionally, in order to qualify as a categorical exclusion, a project cannot fall within any of the exceptions listed under 40 CFR § 6.204(a)(1)(ii). Accordingly, projects cannot be designated categorical exclusions if they:

“involve new or relocated discharges to surface or ground water; will likely result in the substantial increase in the volume or the loading of pollutant to the receiving water; will provide capacity to serve a population 30% greater than the existing population; are not supported by the state, or other regional growth plan or strategy; or directly or indirectly involve or relate to upgrading or extending infrastructure systems primarily for the purposes of future development.”

No new discharge facilities will be constructed to operate the RP-5 facility because the existing discharge facilities at the plant will continue to be used and will be adequate to deliver treated effluent discharges to Chino Creek. The plant also converts a portion of the wastewater to recycled water, which will be stored in recycled water storage facilities until it is delivered to recycled water users and will not impact the existing volume of discharge from the facility.<sup>2</sup> The concentration of pollutants in the effluent is not likely to increase and this project is not likely to place a substantially higher quantity of pollutants into the receiving water. The project is also being undertaken so that RP-2 may be decommissioned and to allow RP-5 to treat biosolids produced at RP-5 and the Carbon Canyon Reclamation Facility, and to meet the current service area demand. It is not being undertaken to provide capacity to a population 30 percent greater than the existing population or to upgrade infrastructure for future development. The project does

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<sup>1</sup> Predesign Report Vol I and II, RP-5 Liquids Treatment Expansion and Solids Treatment Facility (Facility Plans) (February 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Facility Plans (February 2017).

not conflict with any regional growth strategy as the project location is a fully developed urbanized area with no significant changes in land use or demography expected in the future. Finally, the project's purpose is not to upgrade infrastructure for future development; instead, it is meant to expand treatment capacity at RP-5 to meet current demand and relocate biosolids treatment facilities from a decommissioned treatment plant.

### Extraordinary Circumstances

The EPA has determined that none of the following extraordinary circumstances outlined in 40 CFR § 6.204(b) apply to the proposed project:

1. *The proposed action is not known or expected to have potentially significant environmental impacts on the quality of the human environment either individually or cumulatively over time.* This project is being developed to upgrade and expand an existing water recycling facility and will not have potentially significant environmental impacts either individually or cumulatively over time.<sup>3</sup>
2. *The proposed action is not known or expected to have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on any community, including minority communities, low-income communities, or federally-recognized Indian tribal communities.* The site of the proposed action has a population that is 47 percent minority, which is less than the state and San Bernardino County average of 62 percent and 70 percent respectively. There are fewer low-income households in the vicinity of the proposed project site (15 percent) than there are in the state or county – these values are 34 percent and 40 percent, respectively. Additionally, there are no federally recognized Indian tribal communities within 0.5 miles of the project site.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, implementation of the project would not result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations, and federally recognized tribal communities.
3. *The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect federally listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat.* The EPA generated a list of species with a potential to occur in the project area using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's IPaC project planning tool.<sup>5</sup> No critical habitats for any of the species on the list occur in the RP-5 Expansion project area (including off-site components). A biological resource survey of the site was conducted by a qualified biologist and the evaluation determined that there is no native habitat on the RP-5 site and the site does not contain any federally listed threatened or endangered species. The report also concluded that the project will have no impact to any of the species on the IPaC list. The EPA reviewed this report and concurs that the project will have no effect to listed species.<sup>6</sup>
4. *The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect national landmarks or any property with nationally significant historic, architectural, prehistoric, archaeological, or cultural value, including but not limited to, property listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.* A cultural resources survey was conducted for the project and only one historic-era resource was identified within the area

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<sup>3</sup> Facility Plans (February 2017).

<sup>4</sup> EPA EJSCREEN Report (February 2020).

<sup>5</sup> IPaC Resource List (November 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Biological Survey for the Recycled Water Plant No. 5 Expansion Project, (April 2018).

of potential effect: Fujiwara Farm (P-36-010606). However, the resource no longer exists since the buildings have been removed in 2002 for construction of the existing RP-5 facilities and IEUA headquarters. The Native American input during the survey also did not identify any sites of traditional cultural value in the vicinity of the area of potential effects (APE).<sup>7</sup> The EPA made a No Historic Properties Affected finding since the project will not affect historic properties.<sup>8</sup> The State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation provided a concurrence letter with the EPA's determination of No Historic Properties Affected on December 17, 2019.<sup>9</sup>

5. *The proposed action is not known or expected to significantly affect environmentally important natural resource areas such as wetlands, floodplains, significant agricultural lands, aquifer recharge zones, coastal zones, barrier islands, wild and scenic rivers, and significant fish or wildlife habitat.* The project area does not contain any mapped Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplains, wetlands, significant agricultural lands, aquifer recharge zones, barrier islands, federally recognized wild and scenic rivers, and the project is not located in a coastal zone.<sup>10</sup> The project will not have an impact on significant fish or wildlife habitat since the quantity and quality of the discharge to the Chino Creek will remain the same after project completion. The project is also not located within designated essential fish habitat.<sup>11</sup>
6. *The proposed action is not known or expected to cause significant adverse air quality effects.* The project area is designated as a non-attainment or maintenance area for particulate matter (PM) 2.5, PM 10, and ozone. The project area is designated as attainment for all other criteria pollutants. Both the construction and operation emissions associated with this project were evaluated in the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations memo.<sup>12</sup> Construction related emissions are anticipated to derive from the exhaust of mobile equipment and fugitive dust from earthmoving. The use of 2010 or newer haul trucks, construction equipment meeting at least Tier 4 standards, and watering unpaved roads to suppress dust from construction equipment will assist in decreasing construction related emissions. As a result, no construction-related emissions will exceed de minimis levels for the criteria pollutants. The operational emissions will consist of increased motor vehicle trips for transporting biosolids to composting facilities and will not exceed de minimis levels for the criteria pollutants. Therefore, neither the construction nor operational emissions are anticipated to impact the area's attainment of air quality standards.<sup>13</sup>
7. *The proposed action is not known or expected to have a significant effect on the pattern and type of land use (industrial, commercial, agricultural, recreational, residential) or*

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<sup>7</sup> Identification and Evaluation of Historic Properties, Regional Water Recycling Plant No. 5 (RP-5) Expansion Project, (October 2017).

<sup>8</sup> EPA Request for Concurrence On "Section 106" Compliance for IEUA's RP-5 Project to California SHPO, (November 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Section 106 Consultation Concurrence Letter, California Office of Historic Preservation, (December 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Financial Assistance Application, Environmental Package Construction, (CEQA Plus Documentation)

<sup>11</sup> IEUA Facilities Master Plans Final Program Environmental Impact Report (Final PEIR), (February 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations for RP-5 Memo, (June 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Calculations for RP-5 Memo, (June 2018).

*growth and distribution of population including altering the character of existing residential areas, and is not expected to be inconsistent with state or local government, or federally-recognized Indian tribe approved land use plans or federal land management plans.* The project is located within existing facilities and the main project site contains an existing water reclamation facility (RP-5). The surrounding land uses of the proposed action are industrial, institutional, transportation, and recreation. The proposed upgrades for the RP-5 facility would be located within the existing plant or treatment. In addition, the pipelines and off-site facilities will be installed within public rights-of-way or existing facility locations and would not conflict with land use designations. As such, there would be no conflicts with land use designations or existing land uses.<sup>14</sup> The project is expected to be consistent with local, state and tribal land use plans.

8. *The proposed action is not known or expected to cause significant public controversy about a potential environmental impact of the proposed action.* The project is necessary to expand treatment capacity for future service area growth and allow for the planned decommissioning of an existing treatment facility. The project will result in beneficial outcomes, such as improvements to an existing water recycling facility. As such, it is not expected to cause significant public controversy.
9. *The proposed action is not known or expected to be associated with providing financial assistance to a federal agency through an interagency agreement for a project that is known or expected to have potentially significant environmental impacts.* The proposed action is to provide financial assistance to a municipal entity to construct improvements to a water reclamation facility.
10. *The proposed action is not known or expected to conflict with federal, state, local government, or federally-recognized Indian tribe environmental, resource-protection, or land-use laws or regulations.* The project will comply with all applicable federal, tribal, state and local laws and regulations.

## **Finding**

The EPA finds that the proposed action is eligible for exclusion from detailed environmental review under 40 CFR § 6.204(a)(1)(ii) and will not involve any of the extraordinary circumstances delineated under 40 CFR § 6.204(b). Consequently, the EPA will not prepare an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment for the proposed project. The EPA may revoke this categorical exclusion if changes in the proposed action render it ineligible for exclusion or if new evidence emerges which indicates that serious local or environmental issues exist or federal, state, or local laws would be violated.

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Andrew D. Sawyers, Director  
Office of Wastewater Management

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Date

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<sup>14</sup> CEQA Final Program Environmental Impact Report (February 2017).