



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 2
290 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10007-1866

AUG 14 2008

José Ortiz Vazquez, Executive President
Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority
P.O. Box 7066
San Juan, PR 00916-7066

Dear Mr. Ortiz:

This is in response to the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority's request for a categorical exclusion (CATEX) from substantive environmental review requirements, pursuant to 40 CFR Part 6, for the proposed improvements to the Sergio Cuevas Water Treatment Plant, located in Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico. The project, which involves upgrades to the sedimentation and filtration processes and to the solids handling facility, is being partially funded through a federal Special Appropriation Act Grant.

Based on our review of the supporting documentation, EPA approves the request for the CATEX. Please be reminded that EPA may revoke this CATEX if any of the following conditions occur:

- changes in the proposed action render it ineligible for exclusion;
- new evidence indicates that serious local or environmental issues exist; or
- federal, state, or local laws would be violated.

This CATEX is available for public viewing on EPA Region 2's website, <http://www.epa.gov/region02/spmm/r2nepa.htm#r2docs>. Should you have any questions regarding this decision, please address them to John Filippelli, Chief, Strategic Planning and Multi-Media Programs Branch, at the above address.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan J. Steinberg".

Alan J. Steinberg
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

ENCLOSURE

Sergio Cuevas Bustamante Water Treatment Plant Improvements Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico Special Appropriation Act Grant Project

Background

The Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority owns and operates the Sergio Cuevas Bustamante water treatment plant. The plant serves a total of 532,050 customers in the municipalities of San Juan, Carolina, Canovanas, Guaynabo and Trujillo Alto. This plant is the largest water treatment facility in Puerto Rico. The plant has failed to maintain compliance with its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit discharge limits and is under EPA Civil Action No. 92-1511 (sec).

Proposed Action

The proposed project will help bring the treatment plant into compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and its regulations issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. These regulations establish primary and secondary standards for drinking water quality and include specific requirements for the design and operation of water treatment facilities. Additionally, the project will help bring the plant's performance into compliance with its NPDES permit, which specifies flow and effluent quality limitations. The total estimated project construction cost is \$11,850,000 with \$4,000,000 being provided through a federal Special Appropriation Act Grant.

Alternatives Considered

The following alternatives were evaluated:

Alternative 1: No action - This was rejected because it will not provide for compliance with the NPDES requirements.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action - The proposed action calls for the following:

1. The sedimentation and filtration processes will be upgraded through improvements to the incline chemical mixing chambers, installation of inclined settling plates, upgrade of the sedimentation basin, installation of a filter aid polymer system, and improvements to chlorine system building.
2. The solids handling facility will be upgraded through construction of a new solids thickening tank, increasing the capacity of the solids handling facility equalization tank, and installation of belt filter presses in lieu of the existing drying beds.

Eligibility for Granting a Categorical Exclusion

The project meets the general Categorical Exclusion (CATEX) eligibility criteria found in 40 CFR 6.204(a)(1)(ii). This category includes “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.”

Additionally, the available information on the proposed action does not include a “new or relocated discharge to surface or ground water, or will provide capacity to serve a population 30 percent 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.”

Furthermore, there will be no significant adverse effects on cultural resources, endangered or threatened species, environmentally sensitive areas, or other environmentally important natural resource areas.

Conclusion

The proposed action conforms to the category of actions eligible for exclusion under 40 CFR 6.204(a)(1)(ii). Accordingly, EPA approves this request for a CATEX from detailed environmental review pursuant to our procedures for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act.