



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1201 ELM STREET, SUITE 500
DALLAS, TEXAS 75270-2102

September 17, 2019

**Categorical Exclusion
For the City of Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico
Wastewater Collection Improvements Project**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 intends to provide grant funds to the City of Ojinaga, Junta Municipal de Agua Y Saneamiento (JMAS) for the Wastewater Collection Improvements for the City of Ojinaga, Chihuahua, Mexico.

EPA's approval of grant funding for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §4321 – 4370(f). In accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulation, 40 CFR §1508.4, a federal agency may categorically exclude certain actions from detailed environmental review that do not individually, or cumulatively, have a significant effect on the quality of the environment. To qualify for a categorical exclusion, a project must conform to one of the categories listed in 40 CFR §6.204(a) and it must not involve any of the extraordinary circumstances identified in 40 CFR §6.102(b).

Project Description

In 2002, the City of Ojinaga's JMAS conducted a study in the Master Plan for Water and Sewer System Improvements that identified major issues and recommended improvements for the city wastewater collection system. According to the findings, much of the wastewater collection system in the downtown area has exceeded its useful life and that many sections of the sewer pipeline are in various states of deterioration. This has led to frequent sewage spills and the collapse of sewer lines and manholes. These occurrences can pose potential health risks to the residents of Ojinaga due to contamination of subsurface and possibly even groundwater. Furthermore, frequent repairs have caused the increase in the utility's operation and maintenance costs, not to mention patch-paving work on city streets.

The findings also indicate that there are many instances of hydraulic deficiencies in the wastewater collection system in the downtown area, and many households have poorly designed cesspools. Due to the high water table in the area, this poses a substantial risk of groundwater contamination.

In 2017, the JMAS developed the Comprehensive Wastewater Collection System Rehabilitation Final Design. The environmental and human health benefits for this project include:

- Improvements to the wastewater collection infrastructure including up to 1,700 existing residential wastewater connections
- The elimination of up to 0.35 million gallons a day (MGD) of untreated or inadequately treated wastewater discharges into open drains
- The reduction of public health risks associated with sewage spills and groundwater contamination
- The reduction of operation and maintenance costs associated with repairing worn down sewage infrastructure

Eligibility for Categorical Exclusion

In accordance with the EPA's regulations for implementing the NEPA, 42 USC §4321-4370f, EPA Region 6 has determined this project to be eligible for a categorical exclusion under 40 CFR §602.4(a)(1)(ii), which allows projects to be categorically excluded when the projects involve:

"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 qualifies for the categorical exclusion set forth under 40 CFR §602.4(a)(1)(ii) as it involves minor upgrading and expansion of existing infrastructure systems and system components. In addition, the project does not involve new or relocated discharges to surface or ground water; will not result in the substantial increase in the volume or the loading of pollutant to the receiving water; will not provide capacity to serve a population of 30% greater than the existing population; and will not directly or indirectly involve upgrading or extending infrastructure systems for the purpose of future development.

Extraordinary Circumstances (40 CFR §6.204(b)(1) through (b)(10))

EPA has reviewed the proposed project and determined that it does not involve any extraordinary circumstances listed in 40 CFR §6.204(b)(1) through (b)(10). The proposed construction activity will take place in previously disturbed utility corridor and no new land disturbance would be required.

Finding

EPA finds the proposed action conforms to the category of actions eligible for exclusion from detailed environmental review under CFR 40 CFR §6.204(a)(1)(ii) and will not involve any extraordinary circumstances. Accordingly, EPA will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed action. 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.

Sincerely,



Arturo J. Blanco
Director

Office of Communities, Tribes and
Environmental Assessment