

5.1 Comments and Responses for Federal Agencies

5.1 COMMENTS AND RESPONSES FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES	5-1
LETTER - F1. INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION. SIGNATORY - SYLVIA A. WAGGONER.....	5-3
LETTER - F2. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. SIGNATORY - C.O. MINCKLEY, PH.D.	5-6
LETTER - F3. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE. SIGNATORY - STEVE CAMERON.	5-7
LETTER - F5. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR-FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. SIGNATORY - STEVE THOMPSON.	5-10
LETTER - F6. U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION IX. SIGNATORY - ENRIQUE MANZANILLA.	5-19



OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
UNITED STATES SECTION

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

MAR 21 2002

ACTION BY		
EXEC DATE		
102 25 '02		
DATE	DESCRIPTION	INITIALS
CLASSIFICATION		
CONTROL NO.		
FOLDER I.D.		

United States Bureau of Reclamation
Attn: Mr. Bruce D. Ellis
Phoenix Area Office
P.O. Box 81169
Phoenix, AZ 85069-1169

Dear Mr. Ellis:

The United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has reviewed the *Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) titled, Imperial Irrigation District Water Conservation and Transfer Project and Draft Habitat Conservation Plan* dated, January 2002. The review comments on the EIR/EIS (Volume 1) are followed by those on the Habitat Conservation Plan (Volume 2).

Volume 1:

F1-1 [**Pages ES-1 and 1-35.** Note that the proposed Inadvertent Overrun and Payback Policy (IOP) does not apply to Mexico and the deliveries made under the United States-Mexico Water Treaty of 1944. The IOP establishes requirements for payback of inadvertent overuse of Colorado River water by Colorado River users in the Lower Division States. This proposal affecting the Lower Division States does not include Mexico. In addition, the IOP does not conform to the Water Treaty of 1944.

F1-2 [**Section 1.4.1, page 1-21, sentence 3.**

- Delete *17 miles* and insert *23.7 miles* to revise the distance stated for the international boundary.

F1-3 [**Section 1.5.3, page 1-35, paragraph 2, sentence 1.**

- Insert wording found in the first comment for pages ES-1 and 1-35.

F1-4 [**Section 3.16, page 3.16-3, paragraph 1, sentence 2.**

- Delete *1994*
- Insert *1944* to correct the referenced year of the U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty.

**Letter - F1. International Boundary and Water Commission.
Signatory - Sylvia A. Waggoner.**

Response to Comment F1-1

The commenter is correct. Reclamation has revised the proposed IOP policy to clarify that it does not apply to Mexico.

Response to Comment F1-2

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in Section 4.2, Text Revisions in this Final EIR/EIS.

Response to Comment F1-3

The commenter is correct. Reclamation has revised the proposed IOP policy to clarify that it does not apply to Mexico.

Response to Comment F1-4

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in Section 4.2, Text Revisions in this Final EIR/EIS.

Section 6.0, page 6-3, reference 8.

- Delete *International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC)*
- Insert *United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC)*

Section 8.0, page 8.0-2, reference 4.

- Insert *International Boundary and Water Commission, U.S. Section, Yuma, AZ*

Volume 2:

Section 2, page 2-4, the Alamo Canal subsection, sentence 1.

- Delete *mexico* and insert *Mexico*.

Section 2, page 2-5, the New River subsection, sentence 1.

- Insert after the word *residues* the words: ... *agriculture return flows, and storm water drain water* ...

Section 2, page 2-5, the New River subsection, sentence 3.

- Specify the period of the reported New River flow of *100 KAFY* at the international boundary which is stated as being ...*up through the late 1970's*.
- Reference the source of the reported flow, because it is a little high based on the IBWC Western Water Bulletin average annual discharge of approximately 82.5 KAFY for the New River at the international boundary from 1943 through 1979.
- Reference the source of the reported average discharge of *150 KAFY* for the period of 1979 through 1982 at the international boundary, because that value is a little high based on the flow average of 115 KAFY which is calculated from the IBWC Western Water Bulletin's reported annual discharges for the New River at the international boundary from 1979 through 1982.
- Clarify the end of sentence 3 which states:

... *and from 1983 through 1987 to values higher than 250 KAFY*. Reword to indicate that the flow average for 1983 through 1987 is approximately 250 KAFY, based on the IBWC Western Water Bulletin, and there were flows *greater than that* during the period.

Response to Comment F1-5

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in Section 4.2, Text Revisions in this Final EIR/EIS.

Response to Comment F1-6

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in Section 4.2, Text Revisions in this Final EIR/EIS.

Response to Comment F1-7

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in the HCP in Attachment A in this Final EIR/EIS.

Response to Comment F1-8

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in the HCP in Attachment A in this Final EIR/EIS.

Response to Comment F1-9

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in the HCP in Attachment A in this Final EIR/EIS.

Section 2, page 2-5, the New River subsection, sentence 6. Briefly elaborate on the end of the sentence which states ... *with the remainder of the flow coming from Mexico.*

- Include Mexico's average annual flow in the New River that goes into the Salton Sea;
- Characterize the Mexican flow into the Salton Sea basically by reporting categories such as industrial and municipal wastewater discharges, agriculture return flows and drain water, as were reported for the United States flow into the Salton Sea from the New River;
- Reference the period of the data used for the United States and the Mexican flows into the Salton Sea, and state the total of all flows into the Salton Sea for that period.

Section 2, page 2-12, the New River subsection, sentence 1.

- Revise as stated in the comment for Section 2, page 2-5, sentence 1.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to call Mr. Steve Fox at (915) 832-4736.

Sincerely,


Sylvia A. Waggoner
Division Engineer
Environmental Management Division

Response to Comment F1-10

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in the HCP in Attachment A in this Final EIR/EIS.

Response to Comment F1-11

The suggested changes have been made and are reflected in the HCP in Attachment A in this Final EIR/EIS.



U.S. Department of the Interior
 Fish and Wildlife Service
 Arizona Fishery Resources Offices-Parker
 60911 Hwy 95
 Parker, Arizona 85344
 FAX (520) 667-4015



Letter - F2. U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service. Signatory - C.O. Minckley, Ph.D.

15 April 2002

Mr. Elston Grubaugh
 Manager of Resources, Management, and Planning Department
 Imperial Irrigation District
 P.O. Box 937
 Imperial, CA 92251

Dear Mr. Ellis:

This is the Arizona Fishery Resources Office - Parker comment on the *Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Imperial Irrigation District Water Conservation and Transfer Project and Draft Habitat Conservation Plan.*

F2-1

The comment pertains specifically to the population(s) of desert pupfish which occur within area to be impacted by this project and particularly those occurring in "... drains that discharge directly into the Salton Sea, shoreline pools of the Salton Sea, and desert washes at San Felipe Wash and Salt Creek." (Pg. 3.2-61, this document). All of these habitats are at risk from this project due to dewatering and frankly none of them have been considered optimum pupfish habitat for at least the last two decades due to dewatering, the resultant increasing salinity, and predation/competition from introduced species. The steps suggested in this document would only prolong a deteriorating situation for this species and prolong the inevitable. I would suggest constructing a large pupfish habitat, filled by ground water or pumping to secure this species in perpetuity. Such a habitat would also benefit shorebirds and other aquatic species using the area.

F2-2

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

C.O. Minckley Ph.D.
 Project Coordinator

cc: L. Fitzpatrick, AESO
 E. Grubaugh, IID

Response to Comment F2-1

The comment suggests that the habitat for desert pupfish in the drains that discharge directly to the Sea, in shoreline pools, and in washes of San Felipe and Salt Creeks is at risk of dewatering from the proposed conservation and transfer of water. The Draft EIR/EIS and HCP identified potential impacts of the Project on the suitability of desert pupfish habitat in the drains that discharge directly to the Sea. In accordance with the anticipated level of take of pupfish, the HCP identified several measures designed to avoid, minimize, and mitigate any take of desert pupfish resulting from covered activities. These measures adequately and fully mitigate the impact of any take in the drains and contain provisions for improving the quality (i.e., reduce selenium concentration) and quantity (i.e., configure and manage drain channels on exposed seabed) of pupfish habitat in the HCP area. With the revision to the strategy for mitigating Salton Sea impacts (see the Master Response on *Biology—Approach to Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS), IID would avoid any potential impacts related to water conservation on shoreline pool habitat. Changes in flow in San Felipe and Salt Creeks would not be affected by the proposed conservation and transfer of water. While it is acknowledged that the habitat created in IID's drains is not optimal and that other factors influence the viability of the pupfish population, IID's obligation extends only to mitigating the impact of any take of pupfish. IID is not required to contribute to recovery. Nonetheless, IID's conservation strategy for desert pupfish goes beyond mitigating impacts and does contribute to recovery. This is reflected in IID's commitment to take a positive step toward recovery by creating and maintaining a refugium pond consistent with the guidance provided in the Desert Pupfish Recovery Plan.

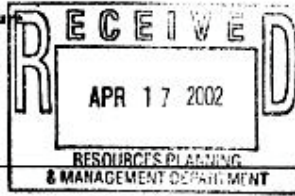
Response to Comment F2-2

Please refer to the Master Response on *Biology—Approach to the Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
177 North Imperial Avenue
El Centro, CA 92243

United States Department of Agriculture



April 15, 2002

Mr. Elston Grubaugh, Manager
Imperial Irrigation District
Resource Planning & Management Dept.
P.O. Box 937
Imperial, CA 92251

RE: EIR/EIS for the Imperial Irrigation District/San Diego County Water Authority Water Conservation and Transfer Project.

Dear Mr. Grubaugh,

I have received the information contained in the above project and have the following comments:

F3-1

Some of the main NRCS resource concerns that are germane to our agency are the leaching of salinity from the soil and the possible impact this water transfer will have on U.S.D.A. Highly Erodible Land compliance plans. I am aware that land fallowing is not allowed under this agreement but we know that there are ways to get around it, like changing crop rotation, etc. As you know there are approximately 116,000 acres of highly erodible cropland by U.S.D.A. standards that are susceptible to wind erosion located in the IID service area. Moisture content of the soil is one major component that keeps these Highly Erodible Plans in compliance along with protective crops during the critical wind erosion period (March thru June). If the highly erodible soils are not irrigated and cropped sufficiently enough to meet U.S.D.A. criteria, they could fall out of compliance. This could mean the loss of U.S.D.A. benefits to these landowners.

F3-2

Leaching salinity out of the soil profile and into the subsurface tile drains is also extremely important to Imperial Valley farmers. I just hope that the landowners that sell conserved water remember this so this valuable cropland can remain productive. I believe this water transfer will have a lesser impact on air quality and wildlife issues. It is a well-known fact that salinity concentration in the Salton Sea will probably rise, but I don't know if that can be avoided or not.

F3-3

In conclusion, I have read a newspaper clipping from the San Diego Union Tribune editorial section. I thought you might find it interesting that San Diego's mindset is that the Imperial Valley is awash in water and will be more than willing to sell more water in the near future. They think today many farmers from the Imperial Valley will line up to sell this conserved water.

F3-4

**Letter - F3. Natural Resources Conservation Service.
Signatory - Steve Cameron.**

Response to Comment F3-1

Please refer to the Master Response on *Air Quality—Air Quality Issues Associated with Fallowing* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

Also, refer to the response given for Comment L1-65 as follows:

Water users within IID use water diverted from the Colorado River to irrigate crop land. On average, Colorado River water contains approximately one ton of salt per acre-foot of water. As crops transpire water, the salt remains in the soil. In order to maintain the productivity of the land, the accumulated salts must be leached from the root zone. IID water users apply a small amount of additional leach water to carry accumulated salts below the crop root zone. Approximately 96 percent of farmed fields within the IID water surface area are underlain by tile drainage lines. These tile drainage lines collect the leach water and dissolved salts and convey them to the IID drainage system.

Tile lines are normally placed at depths of 5 to 7 feet below the land surface and maintain the groundwater level at that depth, even in areas with high water tables or poor natural drainage. For all Imperial Valley soils, that depth is sufficient to prevent groundwater, and any salt it may carry, from seeping to the surface. Therefore, should the water conservation and transfer program ultimately include a rotational or short-term fallowing component, groundwater will not impact the stability of the soil surface, nor will the land "sour" due to excessive salt build up. Should the Project include a rotational or short-term fallowing component, participating landowners will be required to control wind-induced soil erosion. During the normal course of their farming operations, IID water users employ soil erosion control best management practices (BMPs). For a list of wind erosion control BMPs, consult the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Conservation Field Book. Please refer to the Master Response on *Air Quality—Air Quality Issues Associated with Fallowing* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

Should the Project include a land retirement component, there is potential for limited surface salinization on low-lying clay soils with poor natural drainage. These soils are located in areas where, in the absence of a functioning tile drainage system, the water table may rise close enough to the soil surface to allow capillary action to induce surface salinization. However, this impact will be avoided by maintaining the subsurface tile drainage system in working order.

Response to Comment F3-1(continued)

Should the water conservation and transfer program ultimately include a land retirement component, and should low-lying clay soils with poor natural drainage be included among the lands retired, IID will require the landowner to maintain the subsurface tile drainage system in working order.

Should the water conservation and transfer program include a land retirement fallowing component, participating landowners will be required to control wind-induced soil erosion, using appropriate NRCS wind erosion BMPs, until the soil surface naturally stabilizes.

Response to Comment F3-2

In identifying an average amount of water conserved per acre with on-farm irrigation system improvements, the hydrologic model, IIDSS, assumes that sufficient water is applied for leaching purposes.

Response to Comment F3-3

Please refer to the Master Response on *Biology —Approach to the Salton Sea Habitat Conservation Strategy* in Section 3 of this Final EIR/EIS.

Response to Comment F3-4

Comment noted.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service strongly encourages the preservation of prime farmland and statewide important farmland for agriculture.

If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,


Steve Cameron
District Conservationist

Response to Comment F3-5

Comment noted.