

Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project

10.0 PLAN OF APPROACH AND PROJECT TIME LINE

To expedite the Project, the Navajo Nation, the City of Gallup and Reclamation have developed a plan of approach. This approach includes a time line for NEPA Compliance, preparing the Planning Report/EIS, Construction Authorization, and Starting Construction. In addition, the planning report and the Environmental Impact Statement will be compiled into a single document. This schedule anticipates Congressional authorization for design and construction by October 2002 and a Record of Decision on the EIS by February 2003.

Any major action supported by federal funding, such as the construction of the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act. The NEPA legislation requires that careful consideration be given to the human and natural environments to attain the widest range of beneficial use of natural resources without environmental degradation, risk to human health, safety and welfare, or destruction of cultural and historic resources. Article 22.1 of NEPA requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assure compliance with the NEPA objectives. The EIS should present a detailed description of the proposed action (a definite plan), discuss probable environmental impacts, analyze the cost and environmental mitigation potential of alternatives to the proposed action, and solicit and consider public comment concerning the proposed action. To the fullest extent feasible, the parties will utilize NEPA compliance, and the funds made available to carry out planning and NEPA compliance to prepare the technical analysis needed for a definite planning document.

In addition to NEPA requirements, the Navajo Nation and the City of Gallup must acquire the water rights, acquire the appropriate rights-of-way, determine repayment obligations, and assess the ability to pay for the proposed Project. On a separate and concurrent track, the participants are seeking Congressional authorization. It is anticipated that authorization will be obtained by October 2002. The legislation will authorize the construction of the Project, subject to the completion of NEPA compliance, and it will describe the repayment obligation. Based on the current schedule, the Draft Planning Report/EIS will be available prior to authorization.

The NEPA public scoping meetings were held in Shiprock, Farmington, Crownpoint, Window Rock and Gallup during April and May 2000. In January 2001 the City and the Navajo requested two new Secretarial water contracts. According to the schedule these contracts will be executed by April 2002. The major components of the time line follow:

- Conduct the appraisal level cost estimates of the facilities by October 2001
- Conduct the appraisal level cost estimates of the operation, maintenance, and replacement by October 2001
- Conduct the Cultural Resource Impact Analysis by October 2001
- Conduct the Terrestrial, Riparian, and Aquatic Impact Analysis by October 2001
- Conduct the Social and Economic Analysis by October 2001

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- Conduct the Repayment Analysis by October 2001
- Conduct the Water Availability Analysis and Draft Water Supply Contracts by October 2001
- Conduct the Hydrologic Impact Analysis by October 2001
- Define the water supply by October 2001
- Analyze alternatives, complete the Draft Planning Report and select the preferred plan by December 2001
- Submit water contracts for Congressional authorization by January 2002
- Complete Analyses that depend on the water supply by February 2002
- Develop the Biological Assessment and submit to the USFWS by February 2002
- Prepare the Preliminary Draft Planning Report/EIS by March 2002
- Execute the Secretarial water contract by April 2002
- Obtain a Biological Opinion from the USFWS and Coordination Act Report by June 2002
- Publish the Preliminary Draft Planning Report/EIS by June 2002
- Public Review and comment on the Draft Planning Report /EIS by July 2002
- Draft required legislation and obtain Congressional authorization beginning January 2002 through October 2002.
- Respond to comments and prepare the Final Draft Planning Report/EIS by November 2002
- Print the Final Planning Report/EIS by January 2003
- Record of Decision by February 2003
- Start Construction by March 2003