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## **APPENDIX D**

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## **APPENDIX D**

### **Categorization of Wellton-Mohawk Division Lands**

This appendix describes the determination of which Wellton-Mohawk Division lands could be transferred to the District at no additional cost and which lands would be made available to the District for purchase at fair market value.



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## APPENDIX D CATEGORIZATION OF WELLTON-MOHAWK DIVISION LANDS

Lands included in the proposed Wellton-Mohawk Title Transfer Project would be transferred to the District at no additional cost or purchased by the District, depending on the way the lands were originally acquired by Reclamation. This appendix to the FEIS describes the land acquisition history, the proposed transfer method for each land category, and the basis for determining the transfer method for each land category.

### 1 GENERAL HISTORY OF WELLTON-MOHAWK DIVISION LANDS

This section describes the acquisition process for the federal land administered by Reclamation for the Division that began in the late 1940s and ended in the 1990s. For the purposes of this document, the history of land acquisition is divided into two periods.

#### 1.1 INITIAL LAND ACQUISITION PERIOD

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Reclamation secured land for construction of irrigation facilities, protective dikes, stormwater floodways, and additional farm units in the Division. The land was obtained in the following ways:

- Withdrawal of federal lands from the public domain under BLM administration. The term “withdrawal” refers to the process by which federal lands are made available for a Reclamation project. As a general rule, when Congress authorizes Reclamation to construct or develop a project, Reclamation is able to withdraw federal land from the public domain administered by BLM.
- Acquisition of lands belonging to the Gila Valley Power District (GVPD). Acquired GVPD lands provided acreage for the construction of Division facilities and development of farm units.
- Acquisition of lands and ROWs belonging to the Mohawk Municipal Water Conservation District (MMWCD). Acquired MMWCD lands were primarily ROWs along various irrigation ditches and levees that pre-dated the construction of the Division.
- Acquisition of private land and flowage easements on private land. Private land and flowage easements were acquired for the Division as needed to supplement the available acreage.

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## 1.2 ACREAGE ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

Since the 1950s, Reclamation has made acreage adjustments to accommodate additional construction and other federal purposes. Previously acquired land was used as ROW for construction of the Main Conveyance Channel, drainage wells, the Gila River Flood Channel, and mitigation areas. Reclamation also exchanged federal land for private land, sold portions of the unused land, and acquired additional private land.

Portions of the acquired GVPD and MMWCD acreage not used for Division uses were exchanged for private lands needed for the Gila River Flood Channel and mitigation areas. Reclamation also sold GVPD lands to private individuals with the proceeds from the sales used to reduce the District's repayment obligation for facilities construction.

Reclamation acquired approximately 9,125 acres from private landowners under the Salinity Control Act of 1974 (P. L. 93-320) and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act of 1988 (P. L. 100-512). Of this, approximately 646 acres were used as ROWs for the Gila River Flood Channel and mitigation areas. The remaining 8,479 acres are currently vacant federal lands under Reclamation's administration. The rescission of the irrigable designation of approximately 3,600 acres in the 1970s under P.L. 93-320 did not change their status as withdrawn lands not used for Division purposes. However, in the 1990s, some of these withdrawn lands were converted to ROWs for the Gila River Flood Channel and adjacent mitigation areas.

The net result of the land transactions described above is that Reclamation currently owns approximately 47,626 acres within or adjacent to the Gila Project, which Reclamation proposes to transfer to the District at no additional cost (beyond the cost previously included in the District's repayment obligation) or to be purchased by the District.

## 1.3 CURRENT CATEGORIES OF LANDS FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

To help distinguish between lands to be transferred to the District at no additional cost and lands to be purchased by the District, the lands involved in the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative are divided into the following three categories:

- ROWs and easements for facilities (for transfer to District at no additional cost)
- Lands not used for Division purposes and ROWs acquired from GVPD and MMWCD and included in District repayment (for transfer to District at no additional cost)
- Lands not used for Division purposes that were acquired or withdrawn by Reclamation and not included in District repayment (for purchase by District)

1 Reclamation lands are divided among the first three categories based on the way they were  
2 acquired and their current use. Maps in this FEIS (Appendix C) illustrate the federal land  
3 locations.

#### 4 **1.4 RIGHTS-OF -WAY AND EASEMENTS FOR FACILITIES**

5 The ROWs and easements included in the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative are divided  
6 into two groups:

- 7     ➤ Irrigation and drainage systems ROWs, including irrigation and drainage systems  
8         and other facilities associated with irrigation and return flow operations, and
- 9     ➤ Flood channel ROWs, including the Gila River Flood Channel and mitigation areas.

10 Irrigation and drainage systems ROWs include land used to construct the facilities and  
11 provide access for the operation and maintenance of the irrigation system. This also includes  
12 flowage easements on private land along protective dikes and stormwater floodways. These  
13 ROWs and easements typically occupy narrow parcels along canals, dikes, floodways, and  
14 other facilities. The ROWs and easements were acquired in the 1940s and 1950s by  
15 Reclamation via withdrawals and acquisition of GVPD, MMWCD, private lands, and  
16 flowage easements.

17 The flood channel ROWs contain low-lying federal lands used for the Gila River Flood  
18 Channel and the areas developed as mitigation facilities under the Section 404 permit issued  
19 by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. These Reclamation lands consist of (1) withdrawn lands; (2)  
20 acquired GVPD lands and acquired federal lands; and (3) private lands acquired under P.L.  
21 93-320.

22 The federal ROWs and easements comprise approximately 28,197 acres. Except for ROWs  
23 on withdrawn lands, the costs associated with ROWs acquisition were included in the  
24 District's repayment obligation. The ROWs on withdrawn lands were assigned to their  
25 respective facilities. Consequently, the federal ROWs and easements would be transferred to  
26 the District without additional cost.

#### 27 **1.5 LANDS AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY ACQUIRED FROM GVPD AND MMWCD** 28 **AND INCLUDED IN DISTRICT REPAYMENT**

29 This category consists of lands that Reclamation acquired from the GVPD and the  
30 MMWCD for Division purposes, but that have not been used for ROWs or farm unit  
31 development. These lands comprise approximately 4,544 acres in and adjacent to the  
32 District. Their acquisition costs were included in the District's repayment obligation and,  
33 therefore, would be transferred to the District without additional cost.

1   **1.6    ADDITIONAL LANDS TO BE PURCHASED**

2   This category includes approximately 9,104 acres of land acquired by Reclamation from  
3   private landowners under the Salinity Control Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-320) and the Salt River  
4   Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-512), as  
5   described in Section 1.7.3. A portion of this land was used as ROW for the Gila River Flood  
6   Channel and mitigation areas. Thus, the acquired acreage in this category is less than the  
7   amount purchased under the two actions cited.

8   Additionally, this category includes 5,781 acres of land withdrawn from the public domain  
9   in the 1940s for Division purposes but not used for ROWs or development of farm units.  
10   Some of these withdrawn lands had their irrigable classification rescinded under P.L. 93-  
11   320.

12   The total amount of land in this category is approximately 14,884 acres. This land is currently  
13   under Reclamation's administration within and adjacent to the Gila Project. The acquisition  
14   cost of the lands in this category was not included in the District's repayment obligation.  
15   Therefore, under the Proposed Action, the land would be purchased at fair market value.

16   **2    SUMMARY**

17   Table D-1 lists the lands and acreages in the categories described in Section 2. The location  
18   of the land in each category is shown on maps in Appendix C of the FEIS. Descriptions of  
19   individual parcels of land comprising each category are on file at Reclamation's Yuma Area  
20   Office, in Yuma, Arizona, and the District's administrative office in Wellton, Arizona.



1 **TABLE D-1 LANDS INCLUDED IN WELLTON-MOHAWK TITLE TRANSFER**

<b>Land Category and Type</b>	<b>Type of Transfer</b>	<b>Approximate Acreage</b>
<b><i>Rights-of-Way and Easements for Facilities</i></b>		
Land for irrigation and drainage systems, including protective dikes, floodways, the administrative complex, and employee housing.	Transfer at no additional cost	16,859
Gila River Flood Channel lands and adjacent mitigation areas.	Transfer at no additional cost	11,338
<i>Subtotal for Category</i>		<i>28,197</i>
<b><i>Lands and Rights-of-Way Acquired from GVPD and MMWCD</i></b>		
GVPD and MMWCD lands and ROWs acquired by Reclamation but not used for Division purposes.	Transfer at no additional cost	4,544
<i>Subtotal for Category</i>		<i>4,544</i>
<b><i>Additional Lands to be Purchased</i></b>		
Lands acquired under P.L. 93-320 and P.L. 100-512 that were not used for Gila River Flood Channel ROWs.	Purchase	9,104
Withdrawn lands that were not used as ROWs or for development of farm units.	Purchase	5,781
<i>Subtotal for Category</i>		<i>14,884</i>
<b><i>Total</i></b>		<b><i>47,626</i></b>

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## **APPENDIX E**

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## **APPENDIX E**

### **Land Use Evaluation**

This appendix evaluates the effect that the land ownership changes under the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative would have on land use in the project area.



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## APPENDIX E

### LAND USE EVALUATION FOR THE PROPOSED WELLTON-MOHAWK TITLE TRANSFER

#### 1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS APPENDIX

This appendix evaluates the future effect of land ownership changes under the proposed Wellton-Mohawk Title Transfer. Because the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative would result only in an administrative action, direct environmental impacts would not occur. However, the public has expressed concern in scoping comments regarding future land development and potential impacts on native species and natural ecological processes. Consequently, this appendix to the EIS has been prepared to facilitate a future land use assessment with and without project conditions. Specifically, this paper seeks to answer the following questions:

- Question 1 – Use of Transferred Land. How would the proposed change in land ownership affect the use of the transferred lands?
- Question 2 - Land Use Pattern in the Project Area. How would the proposed change in land ownership affect the growth pattern in the project area?
- Question 3 – Effect on Growth Rate. How would the proposed change in land ownership affect the rate of growth in the project area?

The Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative and the lands to be transferred are not described in detail in this appendix, but can be found in Chapter 2 and Appendix D of the EIS. As discussed, the facilities and facilities ROWs included in the title transfer would continue to be operated and maintained by the District as under current management, with only administrative changes occurring in the absence of Reclamation’s oversight. Therefore, the analysis in the EIS assumes that no changes in land use or environmental conditions would occur within facility ROWs (including the Gila River Flood Channel) as a result of the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.

#### 2 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

##### 2.1 FINDINGS

**Land Use Planning.** The project area is included in a recent countywide planning effort, which produced the *Yuma County 2010 Comprehensive Plan (2010 Plan)* (Yuma County, 2001). The 2010 Plan calls for the preservation of the rural agricultural and open space character of the project area, designating approximately 90 percent of the land to agricultural and open space categories. The remainder is in residential and industrial categories, with

1 designated zones where development should occur. The county has designated the District  
2 as a Rural Planning Area under the administrative jurisdiction of the District. This action,  
3 coupled with the county's efforts at cultivating citizen awareness of and participation in land  
4 use planning, bodes well for the management of future growth in accord with the county's  
5 development plan.

6 **Projected Land Use under the No Action Alternative.** Under the No Action Alternative,  
7 the Division ROWs would continue to be managed for the operation and maintenance of  
8 Division facilities. Reclamation would retain the vacant land in federal ownership and could  
9 sell or exchange individual tracts for public purposes at the request of local, state, or federal  
10 agencies. Ultimately, the vacant federal land originally withdrawn from the public domain  
11 would be returned to the public domain, with limited sales of certain parcels by the Bureau  
12 of Land Management, following NEPA evaluation of specific proposals for disposal. The  
13 rest would become surplus to Reclamation's requirements and could be offered for sale to  
14 the public at some future date, in response to specific requests. Each such request would be  
15 subject to NEPA evaluation before transfer or sale would be completed. Surplus lands would  
16 be managed according to federal law until they are disposed. Once in private hands, the  
17 lands would be available for development in accord with local zoning and planning  
18 provisions.

19 **Projected Land Use with the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.** Following the  
20 proposed transfer of ownership, the District administration would manage the transferred  
21 lands with emphasis on agricultural and open space preservation. Certain lands within  
22 agricultural zones would be made available to farmers for use as stockyards and storage  
23 areas. Approximately 9,800 acres have been identified as candidate lands for residential,  
24 commercial, or enhanced agricultural development, based on such factors as proximity to  
25 the Interstate 8 transportation corridor, prior agricultural use, and distance from mitigation  
26 areas. In view of existing constraints on development in the project area, only a minor part  
27 of this acreage would be developed, and development would occur slowly and selectively.  
28 Both the county and the District intend to guide the growth of the project area to preserve its  
29 agricultural and open space character. Current plans to develop the lands of the Proposed  
30 Action/Preferred Alternative include the proposed Arizona Clean Fuels petroleum refinery  
31 and associated infrastructure.

32 **District Administration's Adherence to the County 2010 Plan.** The land uses anticipated  
33 by the District administration are in accord with Yuma County's land use plan for the  
34 project area. Notably, the District's land use policy calls for preservation of undisturbed  
35 open-space lands.



**Comparison of No Action Alternative and Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.**

Under the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative, the amount of development that may occur on the transferred land is unknown. Under the District's management policy, future development would be channeled towards land previously disturbed or in the Interstate 8 corridor. Lands on which natural values predominate would be preserved from development. These determinations would be made by the District, which 1) advocates preservation of the agricultural and open space values of the project area, and 2) would have the ability to control growth patterns by virtue of ownership of the land. Local constraints on development also have a dampening effect on community or commercial development.

Under the No Action Alternative, approximately 5,800 acres of federal land (the withdrawn lands) would ultimately be returned to the public domain. Eventually, the remainder of the lands is projected to be declared as surplus by Reclamation and sold. However, this scenario is subject to uncertainties regarding the amount, timing, and final nature of any potential land sales.

As a practical matter, little distinction can be made as to the physical difference between the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative in terms of location and type of future land development. However, the timing of land availability may have a significant influence on the care and consistency with which land use decisions are made. Under the Proposed Action, the District would begin to exercise its management role over the vacant federal lands as soon as the transfer is made. Under the No Action Alternative, several decades may pass before many of the same lands become available as candidate lands for development. During this period, growth in the project area would be based on a more fragmented pool of land available for development, which would detract from existing land use planning.

**2.2 CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings presented above, the following conclusions were reached regarding the effects of the proposed change in ownership of the vacant federal land involved in the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.

- **Question 1 – Use of Transferred Land.** The use of some of the vacant federal land would change as the result of 1) making a portion of the land available to individual farmers for supplementing existing farms and improving the agricultural productivity, and 2) making a portion of the land available for community and commercial development consistent with local zoning and development planning. Most of the land would not have a change in land use. The No Action Alternative would have a deferred and reduced effect on land use similar to that of the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.

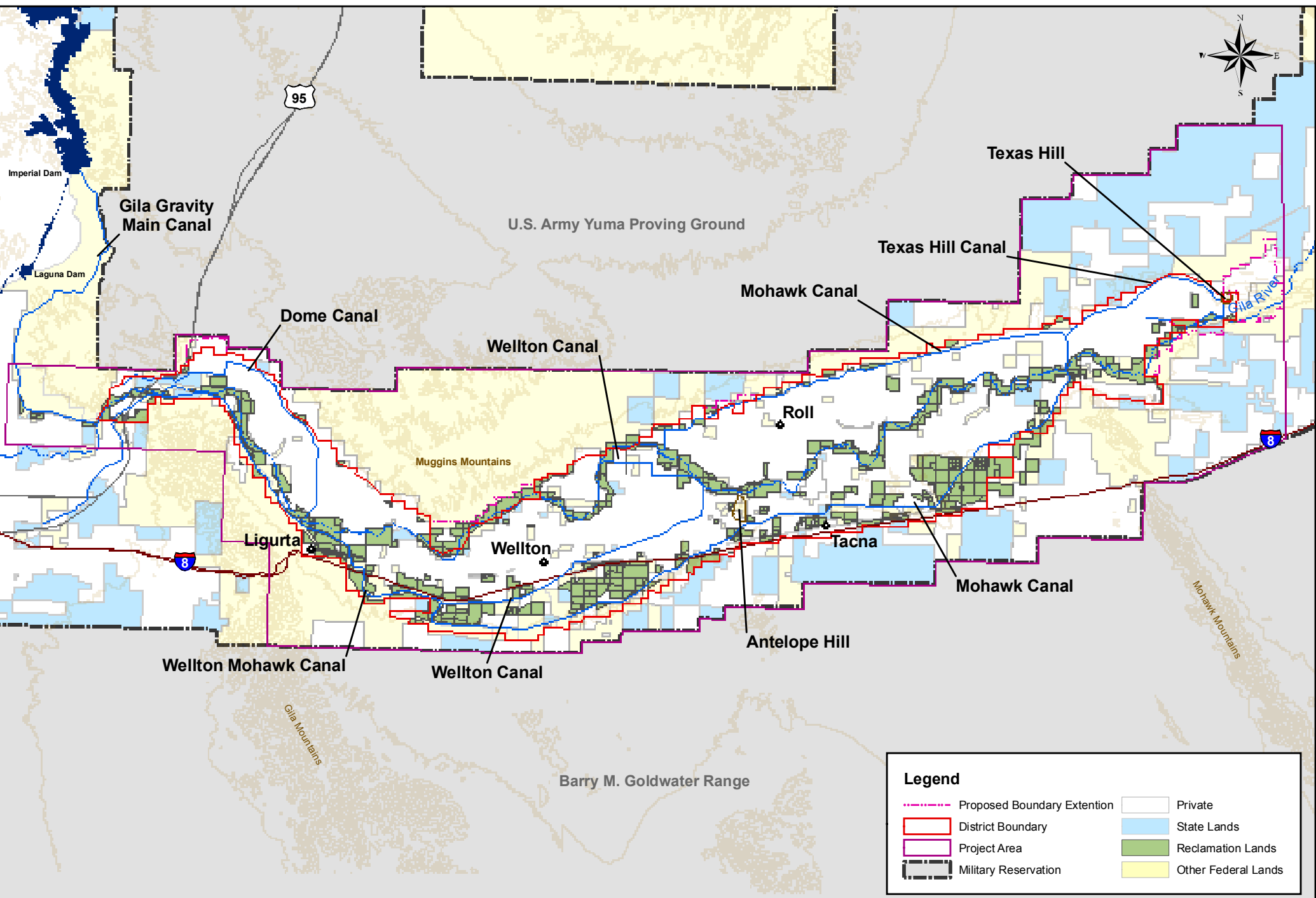
- 1       • Question 2 – Land Use Pattern in Project Area. The proposed uses of the transferred  
2 lands would be integrated into the prevailing agricultural, rural residential, and open  
3 space character of the project area. The candidate lands for community and  
4 commercial development would increase the acreage available for future community  
5 and commercial development in the areas identified for development in the 2010  
6 Plan. This would increase the likelihood that growth would be localized in areas  
7 identified in the county land use projections and reduce future demands on prime  
8 agricultural land for conversion to other uses. Thus, the change in land ownership  
9 would complement and support the proposed pattern of growth in the project area.  
10 The No Action Alternative would have a deferred and less influential effect on land  
11 use similar to that of the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.
- 12       • Question 3 – Effect on Growth Rate. No significant developmental pressure would  
13 affect the lands to be transferred. The project area appears to contain sufficient  
14 private and State Trust lands to support projected growth trends under the 2010 Plan,  
15 with its emphasis on agricultural and open space preservation. In addition, the  
16 District would manage the transferred land under a policy strongly oriented towards  
17 agricultural and open space preservation. In combination, these factors lead to the  
18 conclusion that the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative would not stimulate  
19 growth in the project area.

### 20   **3   GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS, DEVELOPMENT, AND LOCAL PLANNING** 21       **OBJECTIVES**

#### 22   **3.1   GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

23   The project area, for purpose of this analysis, is defined as the east-west strip of land lying  
24 between the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground boundary on the north and the Barry M.  
25 Goldwater Range on the south, as shown on Map E-1. The project area extends along the  
26 Gila River corridor from approximately 8 miles east of Yuma to the east side of Texas Hill,  
27 a distance of approximately 47 miles. The average width of the project area is about 10  
28 miles. The area encompasses approximately 260,000 acres.

29   The District extends the length of the project area and averages roughly half the width of the  
30 project area, as shown on Map E-1. The District's boundaries encompass approximately  
31 130,000 acres of predominantly agricultural land characterized by irrigated farms and cattle  
32 operations. The District, thus defined, is administered by the Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation  
33 and Drainage District, an irrigation and drainage district created, organized, and existing  
34 under and by virtue of the laws of the State of Arizona, with legal authority to own lands and  
35 facilities and to contract with Reclamation for diversion of Colorado River water for  
36 delivery to land owners.



**Legend**

Proposed Boundary Extension	Private
District Boundary	State Lands
Project Area	Reclamation Lands
Military Reservation	Other Federal Lands

**Wellton-Mohawk Title Transfer**

**Map E-1 Land Ownership in Project Area**



Not to Scale. For illustrative purposes only.



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## 1    **3.2    EXISTING DEVELOPMENT**

### 2    **3.2.1    Greater Yuma Area**

3    To the west of the project area lies, what will be termed for convenience in this document,  
4    the “greater Yuma area”. The greater Yuma area consists essentially of the Gila Valley  
5    along the Gila River, the Yuma Valley along the Colorado River, and the Somerton-San  
6    Luis area between the Yuma Valley and the international boundary with Mexico. This area  
7    contains a mixture of agricultural, community, light industrial development, and military  
8    installations (U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground and U.S. Marine Corps Naval Air Station).  
9    Yuma is a regional transportation hub whose role is supported by its location with respect to  
10   agricultural areas of Arizona and California, and its proximity to the port of entry for  
11   shipping and tourism along the international boundary with Mexico. As trade and traffic  
12   with Mexico increase under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), this role  
13   is also projected to increase. The area is popular as seasonal residence for persons seeking to  
14   escape winter weather in the northern states, who arrive in motor homes or travel trailers and  
15   swell the population of the greater Yuma area in the winter months. Their presence adds to  
16   the demand for goods and services in the area. The population of the greater Yuma area in  
17   2000 was approximately 121,000.

### 18   **3.2.2    Project Area**

19   The project area has a rural agricultural character, consisting of irrigated farms and cattle  
20   operations with intermittent open space, much of it vacant and undisturbed land. The project  
21   area has one incorporated community (Wellton) and two small communities (Tacna and  
22   Roll). Wellton and Tacna are adjacent to both Highway 80 and Interstate 8 with future  
23   development projected to center around these two communities. The community of Roll lies  
24   in the midst of an agricultural area north of the Gila River, and is not projected to be a center  
25   for development. The population of the project area in 2000 was approximately 5,700.

26   The Gila Mountains have acted as a dividing line between the “community of interests” of  
27   the greater Yuma area and the project area. In the past, this demarcation has tended to set the  
28   project area apart from the growth of the greater Yuma area. However, as growth occurs in  
29   the greater Yuma area, growth in the project area is also stimulated as people relocate to  
30   regain the feeling of open space.

## 31   **3.3    LAND USE PLANNING IN THE PROJECT AREA**

32   The Yuma County Planning Department has recently prepared the 2010 Plan. The 2010 Plan  
33   was formulated through participation of a local citizen’s advisory group and addresses land  
34   use planning for the project area. The 2010 Plan refers to the project area as the Dome  
35   Valley/Wellton Planning Area, which has virtually the same boundaries as the project area

1 defined for this analysis in Section 1. The land use goals for the project area, transcribed  
2 from the 2010 Plan, are expressed as follows:

- 3 • Preserve farmland
- 4 • Improve potable water quality
- 5 • Improve management of solid waste disposal
- 6 • Plan for future residential growth
- 7 • Develop additional parks and recreational resources
- 8 • Preserve open space lands

9 There is a public recognition that population growth will occur and that it is important to  
10 plan for it in a systematic way. There is also recognition that random growth tends to affect  
11 agriculture adversely. The 2010 Plan designates approximately 90 percent of the land in the  
12 project area in agricultural and open space categories. The remainder is in residential and  
13 industrial categories, with designated zones adjacent to the Town of Wellton and the  
14 community of Tacna as potential areas for such growth. The 2010 Plan includes the  
15 establishment of a Rural Planning Area in the project area, to be administered by the  
16 District. Land uses contemplated in the 2010 Plan are not predicated on the implementation  
17 of the land ownership change in the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.

18 On August 19, 2002, the Yuma County Board of Supervisors formally adopted Resolution  
19 No. 02-36 establishing the Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District Rural Planning  
20 Area (Appendix A). The formation of the Rural Planning Area will allow the District to  
21 evaluate proposed land use changes in relation to agricultural stability and to otherwise  
22 assist the county in managing future growth in the project area.

#### 23 **4 CURRENT LAND OWNERSHIP**

24 The project area contains a mixture of private lands, District-owned lands, Arizona state  
25 lands, and federal lands under the jurisdiction of Reclamation and BLM. The entire project  
26 area contains approximately 260,000 acres, divided among ownership as listed in Table E-1.  
27 Reclamation lands are dedicated to the Wellton-Mohawk Division of the Gila Project  
28 (Division). Some of the Reclamation lands lie outside the District boundaries.  
29 Approximately 130,000 acres of land lie within the District, whose land ownership is  
30 divided approximately as listed on Table E-1.

**TABLE E-1 CURRENT LANDOWNERSHIP IN THE WELLTON-MOHAWK VALLEY**  
**(Rounded to Nearest 1,000 Acres)**

Land Owner	Total Acres	Acres within District	Acres Outside District	Land Uses
District	5,000	5,000	0	Primarily ROWs for Gila River Flood Channel and adjacent wetlands development
Bureau of Reclamation	48,000	48,000	0	30,000 acres of ROWs for facilities; 27,000 acres of vacant land
Bureau of Land Management	86,000	2,000	84,000	Primarily vacant mesa land
State of Arizona	32,000	4,000	28,000	Leased state trust lands, wildlife habitat, and vacant land.
Privately owned	89,000	71,000	18,000	Irrigated farms, community development, rural residential, and vacant land
Total	260,000	130,000	130,000	

## 5 PROPOSED LAND OWNERSHIP CHANGE

The Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative includes a change in ownership of approximately 19,400 acres of vacant federal land that Reclamation proposes to transfer to the District at no additional cost or to be purchased at fair market value. Most lands are within the District; some lie outside the District, generally within two miles of the District boundaries. Map E-2 shows the distribution of the federal lands proposed for land ownership change. These lands were acquired by Reclamation in connection with development of the Wellton-Mohawk Division (the acquisition process is described in Appendix D).

## 6 LAND USE UNDER THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

This section describes the current uses of land in various ownerships and projects the future uses anticipated under the No Action Alternative. Constraints on land development are also discussed.

### 6.1 PROJECT AREA OVERVIEW

Of the 130,000 acres within the District, 62,875 acres are classified as irrigable and are eligible to receive Colorado River water under contracts with Reclamation. The rest of the land in the District consists of agriculture-related land, vacant land, community and scattered residential development, transportation corridors, and ROWs for facilities of the Wellton-Mohawk Division. Commercial and industrial uses account for less than one percent each of the total District acreage. The vacant land is undeveloped land or retired farmland, and includes Reclamation land to be transferred or purchased under the Proposed Action.

1 The Gila River Flood Channel and mitigation areas in the Gila River corridor lie within the  
2 District, occupying a mixture of land owned by Reclamation and the District. The District  
3 operates and maintains the flood channel in accordance with an environmental mitigation  
4 plan developed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of the Clean Water Act  
5 Section 404 permitting process required for channel construction.

## 6 **6.2 RECLAMATION LANDS**

7 The vacant federal lands under consideration are currently being held by Reclamation to  
8 meet any further needs of the Division. Under the No Action Alternative, the lands would  
9 continue to be administered by Reclamation for an indefinite period, pending a decision on  
10 the permanent disposition of the lands. During this period, Reclamation may make available  
11 tracts of the land for public purposes such as parks, schools, and administrative areas for  
12 federal, state, and local agencies, as needs dictate. Reclamation would consider requests for  
13 purchase or lease of lands on a case-by-case basis, through consultation with the District  
14 regarding potential effects on the operation of the Division.

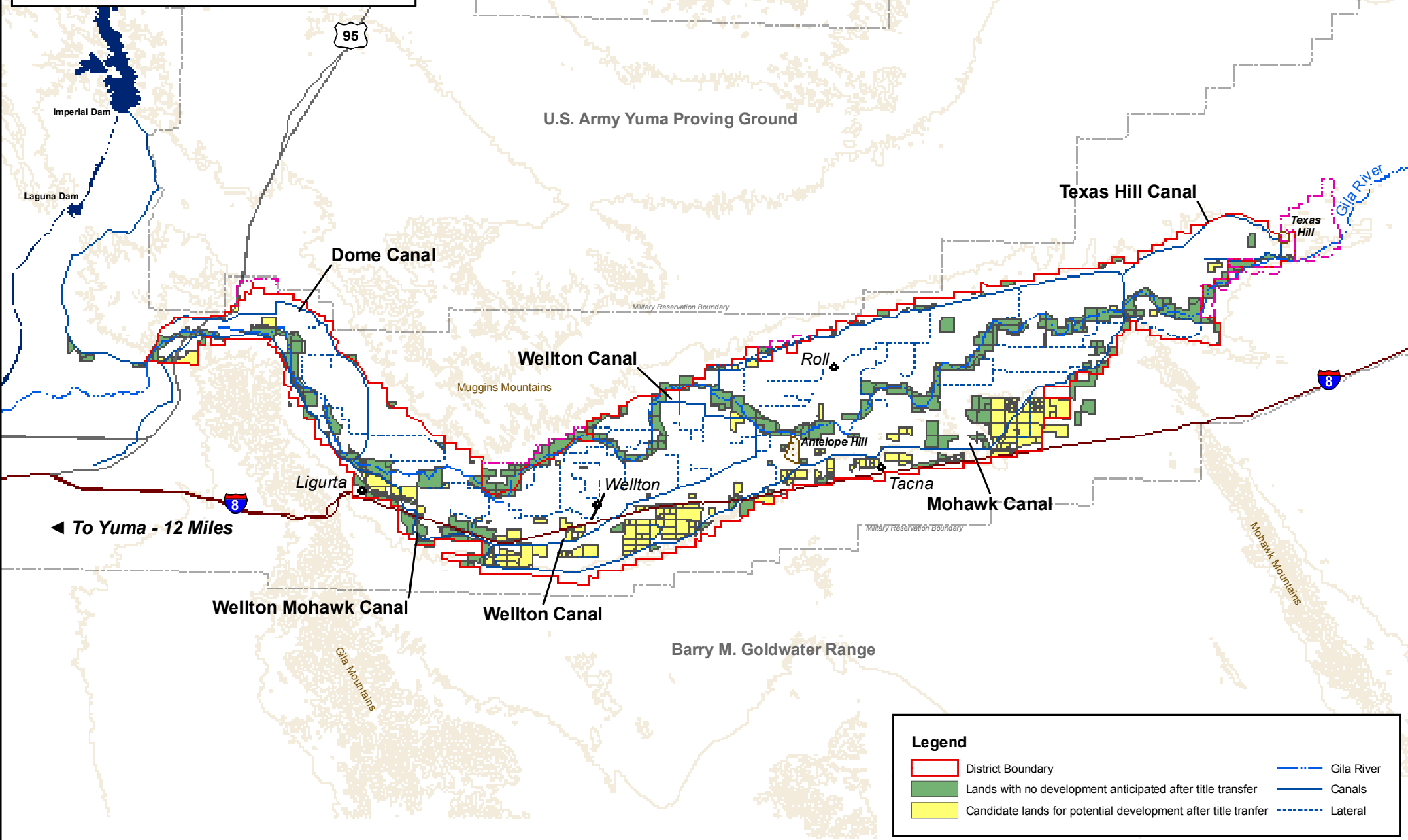
15 Ultimately, the remaining unused lands would be declared surplus to Reclamation's needs  
16 and disposed by 1) relinquishing the withdrawal actions on the withdrawn lands, which  
17 would revert to the public domain under BLM administration, and 2) assigning the  
18 remainder of the lands to the U.S. General Services Administration for public sale. After the  
19 withdrawn lands revert to BLM administration, BLM would evaluate the lands and  
20 determine their suitability for retention in the public domain or disposal through sale or  
21 exchange. For purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that BLM may dispose of (by sale or  
22 exchange) scattered parcels in the interior of the District that are not adjacent BLM land  
23 outside the District boundary.

24 The ultimate uses of the non-ROW lands are speculative at this time. It appears that some of  
25 the land would be desirable for public purposes, considering the locations in proximity to  
26 existing community development. Development would contend with naturally occurring  
27 development limitations such as topography, rural residential zoning, domestic water supply,  
28 physical barriers posed by canals, railroad, Interstate 8, and legal barriers posed by existing  
29 ROW. For purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that some of the Reclamation lands would  
30 be developed for public purposes inside and outside of the District after a period of time. It  
31 is further assumed that a time would elapse before Reclamation might reach the point of  
32 declaring the non-ROW lands to be excess. This assumption is based on the fact that  
33 Reclamation has no current plans to dispose of the land in the absence of the Proposed  
34 Action/Preferred Alternative.

35 Following the future projected land sales by the U.S. General Services Administration and  
36 BLM, some of the non-ROW land would ultimately become available for community or  
37 commercial development. Considering the predominant direction of, and constraints on, land









The lands proposed for the title transfer are shown in either green or yellow. The yellow lands are candidates for a limited amount of development. The green lands are projected to remain as open-space lands. Rights-of-way for facilities are not shown on this map.



◀ To Yuma - 12 Miles

**Legend**

 District Boundary	 Gila River
 Lands with no development anticipated after title transfer	 Canals
 Candidate lands for potential development after title transfer	 Lateral

**Wellton-Mohawk Title Transfer**

**Map E-2 Candidate Lands for Development after Title Transfer**



Not to Scale. For illustrative purposes only.



1 use planning in the project area, such lands would tend to be the same lands that might be  
2 developed following the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative.

### 3 **6.3 STATE LANDS**

4 State of Arizona lands are primarily State Trust lands, which the state generally makes  
5 available for lease to provide revenue. Many of the State Trust lands in the project area are  
6 leased for agricultural purposes, including project area land in the District and mesa land.

7 State Trust lands may be sold for development purposes. This typically occurs when the  
8 Trust land is adjacent to a developed area with an approved land use plan. The state receives  
9 requests to sell the lands at public auction for community development purposes and there  
10 are sound prospects for providing domestic water and other public utilities. Approximately  
11 14 square miles of State Trust land (approximately 8,900 acres) lie along the Interstate 8  
12 corridor that seem well situated for community or commercial development. The 2010 Plan  
13 contemplates such use of State Trust land. Many of the State Trust lands along the Interstate  
14 8 corridor are currently under lease for agricultural use.

### 15 **6.4 DISTRICT LANDS**

16 The District owns approximately 5,000 acres of land within the District boundaries, which  
17 consist primarily of ROWs for the Gila River Flood Channel and mitigation areas. About  
18 half of this land is encumbered with deed restrictions that preclude its use for other than  
19 environmental purposes. In the future, under No Action conditions, the District would  
20 continue to own and manage these lands.

### 21 **6.5 PRIVATE LANDS**

22 Private lands in the project area range from irrigated land in the District to undisturbed  
23 desert land outside the District. The Town of Wellton and other community areas are  
24 included in this category. Private lands currently provide the room for expansion of  
25 community development and rural residential development. Notably, the Town of Wellton  
26 proposes to annex certain tracts of land south of the present town and along Interstate 8, and  
27 a landowner is preparing to develop housing and a golf course in that area on previously  
28 farmed land.

### 29 **6.6 CONSTRAINTS ON LAND DEVELOPMENT**

30 There are various constraints on land development for residential or commercial purposes in  
31 the project area. Physical access to many tracts of land is impeded by Division facilities and  
32 transportation facilities. The numerous canals, drains, and protective dikes, and the Gila  
33 River floodway form physical barriers to public access of undeveloped lands in various parts  
34 of the District, as well as some outside the District. Floodways, while not necessarily

1 physical barriers, require special crossing provisions for hydraulic continuity and public  
2 safety. Legal access is also impeded by ROWs for these facilities. Both physical and legal  
3 access are controlled by Reclamation on behalf of the District for operation and maintenance  
4 of Division facilities. Interstate 8 and the railroad that run through the project area pose  
5 similar conditions. County acceptance of new subdivision plans requires that access  
6 provisions be negotiated in advance to the satisfaction of facility owners. Moreover,  
7 arrangements for legal access are a requirement for financing of development.

8 Domestic water supply could severely limit development. The project area is underlain by  
9 groundwater whose mineral content exceeds standards for human consumption. Proponents  
10 of new development on the mesa or elsewhere would need to contract with the District for  
11 domestic water or develop their own groundwater supply and treatment facility. The  
12 District's present contract with Reclamation for diversion of Colorado River water limits the  
13 domestic use of the water to 5,000 acre-feet per year and water deliveries are approaching  
14 this limit. The District has requested Reclamation amend the contract to permit the use of an  
15 additional 5,000 acre-feet of its entitlement for domestic purposes. Development of well  
16 water for domestic use is not a viable option due to the cost of treatment and potential  
17 restrictions on groundwater pumping.

18 Yuma County land use zoning plays a role in determining the residential and commercial  
19 development that may take place. The prevalent rural R-40 zoning classification limits the  
20 density of housing in areas not included in an approved subdivision or community plan.  
21 Topography also adds constraints in the form of desert washes or sloping ground.

## 22 **7 FUTURE LAND USE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION/PREFERRED** 23 **ALTERNATIVE**

24 This section describes the potential use of Reclamation land proposed for transfer to or  
25 purchase by the District, and the effect on lands in other ownerships.

### 26 **7.1 RECLAMATION LAND**

27 The District proposes to manage the vacant federal land to maintain its character as  
28 primarily undeveloped desert land, with minimal development in accordance with its  
29 agricultural goals and the provisions of the Rural Planning Area designation. The acquired  
30 tracts of land would be administered in various ways, depending on conditions and location.  
31 Four categories of use and/or disposition have been identified:

32 **Natural Habitat** - The District intends to leave undisturbed natural habitat in its current  
33 condition and manage it as open space. That land would continue to provide desert habitat  
34 and desert-oriented recreational uses.

1 **Enhanced Farming Operations** - Approximately 1,400 acres of land lie in small tracts  
2 adjacent to existing farms in the District. These lands would provide opportunities to  
3 enhance existing farming operations through such uses as stockyards, and storage areas for  
4 hay and equipment. It is expected that agricultural landowners would acquire such lands  
5 from the District within 10 years after implementation of the Proposed Action/Preferred  
6 Alternative.

7 **Relinquishment of Abandoned Rights-of-Way** - The transfer includes approximately 540  
8 acres of narrow ROWs for irrigation ditches that no longer exist. Many of these ROWs  
9 strips run diagonally across or among farms and encumber land titles. The District would  
10 make arrangements to relinquish these ROWs to the underlying landowners. Relinquishment  
11 would not change the use of the underlying land.

12 **Community and Commercial Development** – Approximately 8,400 acres of land have  
13 been identified as candidate lands for potential community or commercial development over  
14 the next 30 years. The identification of candidate lands by the District was based on 1)  
15 proximity to existing development along the Interstate 8 corridor and elsewhere in the  
16 project area; 2) prior use and disturbance, including abandoned farm operations; 3) a  
17 preference to maintain a buffer between new development and present farming operations;  
18 and 4) distance from the Gila River Flood Channel and adjacent mitigation areas due to  
19 potential flooding. Most of candidate lands are adjacent to residential and industrial areas  
20 identified in the 2010 Plan. The amount of development that would occur on candidate lands  
21 would depend on various factors, including population growth and the compatibility of  
22 development proposals with the county’s land use plan. The District would consider requests  
23 to purchase or lease candidate land on a case-by-case basis.

24 The amount of development that would occur on candidate lands would depend on various  
25 factors, including population growth and the compatibility of development proposals with  
26 the county’s land use plan. The District would be able consider the availability of domestic  
27 water supply, the preservation of agricultural and open space values, and other factors to  
28 regulate development.

## 29 **7.2 STATE LAND**

30 State Trust land and its availability for development are discussed in Section 6. Under the  
31 Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative, the availability of vacant federal lands for  
32 community development would tend to reduce the amount of State Trust land sought for  
33 development in the project area.

## 34 **7.3 PRIVATE LAND**

35 Under the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative, the amount of private land would increase  
36 to the extent that the District sells land to private parties. Initially, this would involve parcels

- 1 of land sold to supplement farming operations. The District's selective release of lands for
- 2 community or commercial development would proceed at a slower pace.