

# Chapter 2: Alternatives

## Introduction

This EA evaluates two alternatives; (1) the proposed action, and (2) taking no action. Reclamation anticipates completing a separate EA to evaluate other supplemental water options as they are further defined. As discussed above, action is required prior to the summer of 2007 to ensure there is adequate water available to keep the river continuous during the irrigation season.

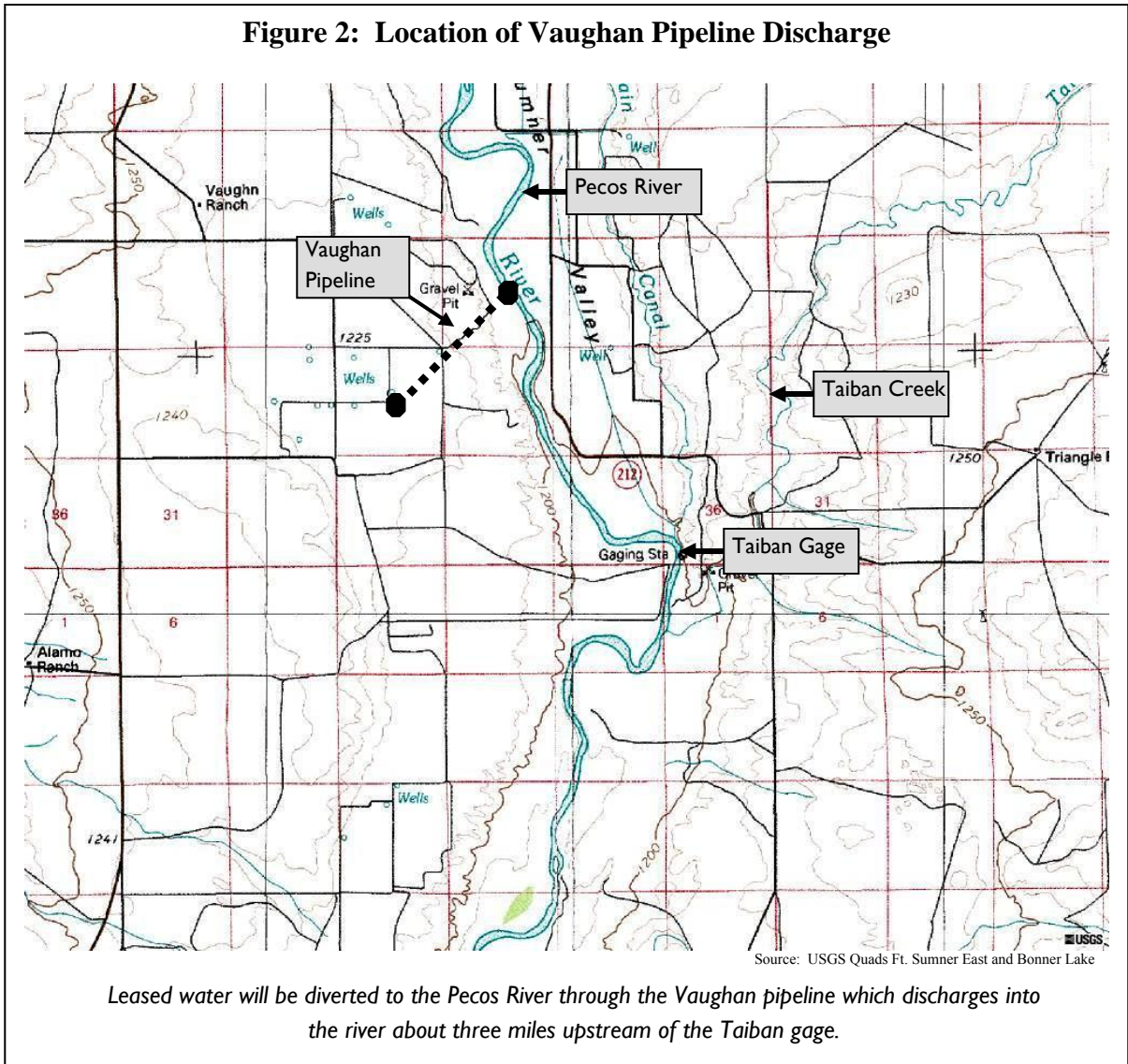
## Proposed Action

Reclamation is proposing to enter into a long-term lease from 2007 through 2032 with the ISC for ground water rights associated with about 770 acres of agricultural land located about one mile west of the Pecos River and about seven miles south of the town of Ft. Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico. The state purchased the land for the water rights as part of the State of New Mexico Strategic Water Reserve (SWR) program. The ISC is the responsible agency for the SWR program and manages the water for SWR purposes. The lease may be extended another 25 years if mutually agreeable by ISC and Reclamation. The affected water rights are New Mexico Water Right File Numbers FS-14, FS-21 & FS-22 combined, and FS-32.

The leased water would be pumped from ground water wells and delivered to the Pecos River through a pipeline to supplement streamflow for the benefit of the Pecos bluntnose shiner. Reclamation would annually lease a minimum of 1,100 acre-feet of water, and up to a maximum of 2,564.26 acre-feet, as needed, depending on river flow conditions.

The ISC is constructing a two-mile long pipeline (Vaughan Pipeline) to transport the water from the well field to the river. The existing wells have a capacity of about 10 cfs, but additional wells could be developed to produce up to 15 cfs, which is the operational capacity of the pipeline. All permits and consultation requirements for the construction and operation of the infrastructure (including discharge of the water into the river) have been obtained by the ISC. The point of discharge into the river is about three miles upstream of the Taiban gage, which is the upstream boundary of the upper reach of critical habitat for the shiner (Figures 1 and 2).

**Figure 2: Location of Vaughan Pipeline Discharge**



Ownership, operation, and maintenance responsibilities of the infrastructure would remain with the ISC. Reclamation would notify the ISC verbally and by e-mail when Reclamation wants the water delivered to the river or to cease such deliveries. The action would be implemented within 48 hours of the request. Leased water would not be delivered to the river during block releases of irrigation water from Sumner Reservoir for delivery to the Carlsbad Irrigation District. The lease terms require that the agricultural land to which the leased water rights are appurtenant would be fallowed and not irrigated. The ISC would establish native grasses on the lands and control invasive weeds.

## **No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative Reclamation would not enter into a long-term lease with ISC for their ground water rights near Ft. Sumner. Reclamation would consider other lease options and continue to develop other sources of supplemental water. The ISC would retain the water rights and would use the infrastructure to deliver water to the Pecos River to help manage river flows to meet State-line delivery requirements or other Strategic Water Reserve purposes. Reclamation would not be able to use the rights to meet the requirements of the Biological Opinion, and therefore, the no action alternative does not meet the purpose and need.

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