



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6

1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200

DALLAS TEXAS 75202 2736

November 6, 2003

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

To All Interested Agencies and Public Groups:

In accordance with the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), "Regulations For Implementing The Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act," at 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1500, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has performed an environmental assessment of the following proposed action.

Proposed Action: Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) grant for the proposed improvements to the Water Treatment and Distribution System for the city of Los Fresnos.

Applicant: City of Los Fresnos, Cameron County, Texas

Table with 2 columns: Description and Cost. Rows include: Estimated Cost for the Water Treatment Plant Improvement (\$5,770,000.00), Estimated Cost for the Water Distribution System Improvements (\$3,378,000.00), and Total Estimated Costs for the Proposed Improvement Projects (\$9,148,000.00).

Proposed Action. The city of Los Fresnos in Cameron County, Texas, located at latitude 26° 03' 51"- longitude -97° 28' 53", proposes to upgrade and extend water service to existing subdivision areas. The proposed project will increase the capacity of the water treatment plant (WTP) from 1.0 million gallons per day (MGD) to 2.5 MGD to meet water demands of the area for the next 20 years. The WTP system reached its maximum daily demand capacity of 1.0 MGD in 2000, and needs to be upgraded throughout the city to comply with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regulations. The system is able to supply the current demands for a 2000 Census population of 4,512, but improvements are needed to extend water service to existing residential areas and serve a population projected to reach 8,908 by the year 2020.

Water distribution line work will occur within the city, towards the proposed Ocean Trails Subdivision east of town, and to an existing subdivision west of town. The improvements will include additions and upgrades to the existing water distribution system, which consists of lines ranging in size from 2 inches to 12 inches, some of which are over 50 years old. No acquisition of land to accommodate the proposed expansion of the WTP is anticipated, and the water storage facilities will have sufficient capacity to meet TCEQ requirements past 2020. Also, new Safe Drinking Water Act regulations may have a significant impact on the type of additional treatment that may be required. It would be cost effective to incorporate the new requirements with any capacity improvements or expansions.

Findings: The major federal action is the possible grant funding from the Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) administered by the North American Development Bank (NADBank), and possible grants from the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) and the EPA financed Colonia Wastewater Treatment Assistance Program (CWTAP). Additional funds will be provided by the Rural Development Agency. The Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) has provided funding for preparation of the Environmental Information Document (EID). The BECC must certify the project before BEIF funds will be allocated to the city. The exact funding has not been finalized.

On the basis of the EA, the Regional Administrator has made a preliminary determination that the project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not warranted. The project individually, cumulatively, or in conjunction with any other action will not have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the environment. Comments regarding this preliminary decision not to prepare an EIS and to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) may be submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733. All comments will be taken into consideration. This preliminary decision and the FNSI will become final after the 30-day comment period expires if no new information is provided to alter this finding. No administrative action will be taken on this decision during the 30-day comment period. Copies of the EA and requests for review of the Administrative Record containing the information supporting this decision may be requested in writing at the above address, or by telephone at (214) 665-8150.

Responsible Official,

Richard E. Greene
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR THE PROPOSED
CITY OF LOS FRESNOS, CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS
WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Project. In 2000, the water treatment plant (WTP) system of the city of Los Fresnos in Cameron County, Texas, located at latitude 26° 03' 51"- longitude 97° 28' 53"(Fig.1), reached its maximum daily demand capacity of 1.0 million gallons per day (MGD). The system needs to be upgraded throughout the city to comply with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regulations. The system is able to supply the current demands for a 2000 Census population of 4,512, but improvements are needed to extend water service to new and existing subdivision areas and serve a population projected to reach 8,908 by the year 2020. Also, new Safe Drinking Water Act regulations may have a significant impact on the type of additional treatment that may be required. It would be cost effective to incorporate these new requirements with any capacity improvements or expansions.

1.2 Project Description. The city of Los Fresnos proposes to upgrade its water service to extend service to existing and new subdivision areas. The proposed project will increase the capacity of the WTP from 1.0 MGD to 2.5 MGD to meet water demands of the area for the next 20 years. The improvements will include additions and upgrades to the existing water distribution system, which consists of lines ranging in size from 2 inches to 12 inches, some of which are over 50 years old. The distribution line work will be within Los Fresnos, towards the proposed Ocean Trails Subdivision east of town, along State Highway 100 (SH100), and to an existing subdivision west of town. The location of the WTP is indicated on Figure 2. No acquisition of land is anticipated to accommodate the proposed expansion of the WTP, and the water storage facilities, including the elevated storage, will have capacities that meet TCEQ requirements past 2020. No colonias will be served by this project. The city has an on-going EDAP project that addresses water and sewer service for local colonias.

Estimated Cost for the Water Treatment Plant Improvement	\$5,770,000.00
Estimated Cost for the Water Distribution System Improvements	\$3,378,000.00
Total Estimated Costs for the Proposed Improvement Projects	\$9,148,000.00

2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

2.1 Alternatives Available to the EPA.

2.1.1 Approval for Grant Funding for the Project as Proposed. EPA can recommend approval of the grant funding for the proposed purpose.

2.1.2 Approval of Grant Funding for a Modified Project. Information received during the EA process could result in identification of significant adverse impacts that would require modification of the project to mitigate the impacts. Modification of the project may allow the EPA to accept the project as modified and recommend approval of the grant funding.

2.1.3 Recommend Preparation of an EIS. A determination that the project as proposed could result in potentially significant adverse impacts to the environment that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated would preclude a recommendation of approval of the grant funding. The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would then be recommended to evaluate the potentially significant impacts. The EIS process includes a scoping meeting to identify critical facts and issues, a Draft EIS, a public comment period on the Draft EIS, a public hearing on the Draft EIS, the Final EIS, a public comment period on the Final EIS, and a Record of Decision.

2.2 Alternatives Considered by the Applicant. The two components of the proposed action are improvements to the potable WTP and the distribution system. The proposed alternatives are for the WTP only; alternatives were not developed for the distribution system since no other reasonable alternatives were identified to meet the purpose and need for the improvements.

2.2.1 Water Distribution System Improvements. The only distribution system alternatives considered were the No-action Alternative and the Action Alternative.

Alternative 1 - No-action Alternative. Under the No-action Alternative, no improvements would be made and the existing situation would continue in non-compliance and unable to provide adequate drinking water service.

Alternative 2 - Action Alternative. The Action Alternative would consist of the immediate, five-year and the twenty-year distribution system improvements based on a linear population growth and land use projections.

Proposed Immediate Improvements: Replace fire hydrants and isolation valves.

Proposed Five-Year Improvements: Construction of 8-inch and 6-inch water lines to service an existing subdivision and the Ocean Trails Subdivision planned for construction on the eastside of town. Placement of a new section of 8-inch loop along F.M. 1847 and construction of 8-inch and 6-inch lines to replace the distribution lines on Whipple Road, and on the south, west and northeast sides of town.

Proposed Twenty-Year Improvements: Installation of a new section of 8-inch water line along Henderson Road; a new 8-inch loop to tie the 8-inch line on SH100 to the existing 10-inch line that feeds the elevated storage tank on Whipple Road to service development in the northwest part of town; a new 8-inch line to tie to the existing 8-inch lines on the south and east sides of town; and a new 6-inch line to service development southwest of town. The proposed 20-year improvements include the Immediate and Five-year improvements.

2.2.2 Water Treatment Plant Alternatives.

Alternative 1 - No-action Alternative. The No-action Alternative would result in the city of Los Fresnos not being able to provide adequate drinking water supply and water pressure to the existing and proposed subdivisions. Without the upgrades and water distribution line improvements, the city would not be able to meet permit requirements and remain in non-compliance with TCEQ regulations.

Alternative 2 - Increase WTP Capacity. Alternative 2 would construct a new WTP on land owned by the city adjacent to the existing WTP site. Water treatment capacity would be increased from 1.0 MGD to 2.5 MGD to meet the projected 20-year demand for water of the area. Filter capacity would be increased by 150 percent, the flocculation/transfer pump structure would be modified, and ultra-violet disinfection would be incorporated. This expansion is not possible using conventional filtration technology because of the arrangement and space between the existing process units. The new site would have to meet all TCEQ buffer zone requirements. The WTP improvements of Alternative 2 are estimated to cost \$7,330,000; associated improvements to the water distribution system are estimated at \$3,378,000, for a total estimated cost of \$10,708,000.

Alternative 3 - Convert the Treatment system to Microfiltration Membrane. Alternative 3 would convert the system to a microfiltration membrane-based treatment system. The system filters would be replaced with a membrane microfiltration or ultrafiltration system with most of the existing treatment facilities used for pre-treatment, in contrast to the conventional treatment alternative. The membrane unit is compact so that the space problems encountered with Alternative 2 would not be an issue. A backwash pump station would have to be added for the membrane system and the disinfecting issues would need to be addressed. The existing high service and transfer pump facilities would need to be upgraded. The cost of the improvements under Alternative 3 is estimated at \$5,770,000, cost for the associated improvements to the distribution system are estimated at \$3,378,000, for a total cost estimate of \$9,148,000.

2.2.3 Preferred Alternative. The preferred alternative is Alternative 3, to convert the existing WTP from conventional filtration to membrane-based treatment. This alternative has the lowest estimated total cost and would provide a higher quality water treatment than conventional filtration. Alternative 3 would allow the city to utilize the existing process units to maintain uninterrupted service during construction, and would require the least amount of land.

2.3 Recommendation. On the basis of this environmental assessment and other available information, the EPA recommends acceptance of the preferred alternatives and the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact. The treatment processes would meet the purpose and need of the Los Fresnos service area, and would enable the city to comply with State and Federal regulations. The project individually, cumulatively, or in conjunction with any other action, is not expected to result in any significant adverse impact to environmental, social, or economic issues, and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department have found no impact to threatened or endangered species or wildlife habitats.

From records with the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL), it was determined that fourteen (14) prehistoric archeological sites are located within the proposed project area. No sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places or registered as State Archeological Landmarks were found within the project area. Correspondence with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) indicates that no historic properties will be affected by the project, and have given authorization for the project to proceed. All construction in flood plain areas will conform to the requirements under the National Flood Insurance Program, and the proposed project was determined to not be subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) jurisdiction under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Finally, an Environmental Justice analysis was

performed on the potential environmental impacts to low-income and minority communities in the proposed project areas. It was determined that the project would not disproportionately affect these communities.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 Land Use. All line work will be within the city limits, except for two areas. One of these areas is half of a 3000-foot, 8-inch water line along Henderson Road from Paredes Line Road. The other is the proposed Ocean Trails Subdivision of approximately 4.5 acres and located on the eastside of Los Fresnos, adjacent to SH100. The Ocean Trails Subdivision has been platted and is scheduled for development. The area is still a predominantly grassy, open field within an urbanized area. The current land-use is public/open space, bordered on the west by a city-owned area used for rodeo activities, and to the northeast across SH100 by a school district owned ball park area. Five and twenty-year land-use projections for areas surrounding the Ocean Trails Subdivision are multi-family and low density residential development. Most of the proposed construction activity will occur within existing street rights-of-way (ROWS).

The proposed project will have no affect on the existing land use patterns. The proposed project areas have been disturbed by the construction of railroads, roadways, pipe lines, cables, and borrow ditches, and areas within 300 feet of the centerline of the proposed water lines abut roadways. Development has also disturbed the project area with construction of driveways, culverts, and parking areas. Vegetation in the project area consists mainly of grasses and weeds which will be removed during construction.

Soils. According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, potential soils in the area are identified as Olmito silty clay and Laredo silty clay loam, with Olmito silty clay being the predominant soil. Olmito silty clay is not considered a prime farmland soil due to its low permeability. Laredo silty clay loam soils in the area are not classified prime farmland because of flooding from the proximity to the Resaca de los Cuates. Since placement of water lines will occur along pre-existing ROWs, there will be no direct conversion of prime farmland and no impacts to prime farmland are anticipated. All trenched areas will be backfilled with removed soils to maintain the quality of area soils.

3.2 Water Resources. The proposed project will not affect the water quality of the area. Los Fresnos uses surface water for its water supply and plans to purchase water from the new city of Brownville Public Utilities Board plant. The exact amount will depend upon the number of customers served by Brownville. Water consumption rates peak during the summer months, but the demand for water depends on the population served, commercial and industrial usage, and development, and other factors. Los Fresnos has not pursued other water supply sources.

No mitigation measures are anticipated to be needed since construction will not affect the groundwater and no new discharge points will be constructed. The microfiltration or ultrafiltration membranes being used are different from reverse osmosis membranes and do not remove salt. The backwash water will not be salty brine water and will be treated to further concentrate the solids, and recycled into the reservoir or the head of the plant. The sludge will be very similar to conventional water treatment plant sludge and will be will be removed to a landfill

like normal water treatment plant sludge. The solids removal system will be part of the sedimentation basin improvements and will probably increase the quantity of solids produced. A storm water pollution prevention plan will be obtained.

3.3 Air Quality. During construction, fugitive dust emissions will increase in the vicinity of the construction area resulting in a temporary decrease in ambient air quality. Watering and/or surfactants may be used on disturbed areas, and trucks hauling spoil material may be required to cover or wet the material during transportation, should fugitive dust become a problem.

Noise. The only noise from the project will be from vehicles during construction. Operation of the system will not generate any significant level of noise.

3.4 Biological Resources. All construction will take place in previously cleared, urbanized areas. The new WTP will be constructed at the existing WTP site and construction of water lines will occur in previous disturbed street ROWs. The proposed project would not disturb open space areas that might provide habitat for bird or animal species. Due to its proximity to SH100 and existing recreational areas, development of the Ocean Trails Subdivision is not likely to impact federally list endangered or threatened plant or wildlife species or their habitat since the area is a predominantly grassy, open field, urbanized area, bordered on the west by a city-owned area used for rodeo activities.

Birds. There are three species of birds that are listed on the federal endangered or threatened species lists possibly occurring in Cameron County. The brown pelican and piping plover are unlikely to be found in the Los Fresnos area because the area does not contain adequate coastal or shore habitat, and the project area lacks the savanna, open country or barren area habitat associated with the northern aplomado falcon.

Reptiles. There are three reptile species on the federal endangered list and two reptile species on the federal threatened list believed to occur in Cameron County. All of these species are various species of sea turtles. Habitat for all of these species occurs in gulf and bay systems. There is no coastal habitat in the project area, thus listed reptile species will not be affected.

Mammals. There are two endangered mammalian species that may occur in Cameron County. Only one jaguarundi has been observed in Cameron County in the last 15 years, but there are indications of a small community of ocelots in extreme southern part of the county. Habitat for both of these medium-sized cats is in dense brush close to water; both cats avoid cleared or open areas.

Plants. The South Texas ambrosia, star cactus and Texas ayenia are listed as federal endangered plant species. Habitat for the South Texas ambrosia is in open prairies and shrub lands on deep clay soils. Star cactus occur on gravelly saline clays or loams over the Catahoula and Frio formations, on gentle slopes and flats in grasslands or shrub lands. Texas ayenia occur in woodlands on alluvial deposits on flood plains and terraces along the Rio Grande.

The FWS has responsibility for protection of migratory birds under the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Nests of species protected by the Act could be encountered during

construction and the FWS recommended that the proposed disturbed areas first be surveyed, or that construction avoid the general nesting period of March through August. The FWS also recommended that care be given to not disturb native trees in the project area and requested that all landscaping associated with the project use native vegetation species that are drought-tolerant, adaptable, and less water consuming. The city will have these mitigative efforts documented by the contractor and verified by the city as deemed necessary to comply with the recommendations of the FWS. The contractor will also be required to survey the proposed disturbed areas in the event the work is to occur in densely wooded areas. Should any sensitive area or species be encountered during the construction activity, work will be suspended in the area and the FWS and TPWD be contacted for guidance. A copy of the FWS letter is included in Section 6.0 of this document.

3.5 Flood plain Management and Wetland Protection. The proposed construction improvements should not be affected by and will have no significant effect on flood areas or drainage patterns. Except for the reservoir and some utility lines, all improvements associated with the proposed project will be outside the 100-year flood plain. The reservoir has been designed with mitigation measures for flood conditions such as overflow drainage and protective berms. All new lines will be underground and construction will be required to be within the provided limits to prevent further disturbance of the flood plain, as well as inconvenience the residential homes. Flood plain mitigation measures are to follow requirements of the COE Nationwide Permit 12 for utility lines.

Wetland Protection. There are no wetlands in the area affected by the proposed project. The majority of the wetlands in the Los Fresnos area are associated with the Resaca de los Cuates, Agua Negra, isolated ponds and roadway bar ditches. The water reservoir area is bounded on its west and south sides by wetlands created by the man-made berms surrounding the reservoir. The wetlands have developed over time and are in previously disturbed areas. The isolated ponds consist mostly of natural depressions and are scattered throughout the city.

By letter dated February 14, 2003, the COE identified the Resaca de los Cuates, and Agua Negra and adjacent wetlands to be jurisdictional wetlands areas. The only construction affecting these areas will be the installation of an 8-inch water line at the Henderson Road crossing of the Resaca de los Cuates, and an 8-inch water line at the Paredes Line Road crossing of the Agua Negra. The proposed improvements should have minimal impact on wetland areas and qualify for coverage under the Nationwide Permit 12 for utility line activities. This area is located in an urbanized zone and would not interfere with wetlands.

3.6 Cultural Resources. TARL has identified the Palo Alto Battlefield as an existing site 0.6 km south of the Los Fresnos Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) boundary¹. This site was made a National Historic Site in 1992, and is protected as part of the National Park Service. TARL named six (6) other sites that could contain archeological material within the CCN boundary located at 0.6 km southwest and 0.8 km north-northwest of the intersection of Paredes Line Road and SH100, 0.8 km west-northwest and 0.4 km northwest of the intersection of Paredes

¹ Water and Wastewater Service Provider Boundary.

Line Road and Stanford Road, 0.9 km west of Paredes Line Road and Bingley Road, and 0.5 km southwest of Old Alice Road and Henderson Road. TARL identified no other recorded cultural sites warranting Trinomials.

A similar search request was made to the THC on November 5, 2002. In a letter dated November 7, 2002, the THC determined that no historical properties would be affected by the project and gave clearance for the project to proceed. The THC determined that most of the project area appears to fall outside of the area containing archeological sites and we would have no concerns about the project adversely affecting anything significant. A copy of the THC letter is located in Section 6.0 of this document. A copy of the TARL correspondence was forwarded to the THC. No additional comment has been received from THC regarding the TARL findings.

It is not anticipated that any construction work will occur outside of the city's current CCN boundary, thus impacts to the Palo Alto Battlefield should be non-existent. If cultural materials are encountered during construction, work will cease and the State Historical Preservation Officer and the State Environmental Coordinator will be notified.

3.7 Socio-economic and Environmental Justice Issues. A basic Environmental Justice² (EJ) analysis was performed utilizing the EJ Index³ to assess potential disproportionately high and adverse effects of the proposed project on minority and low income communities. The EJ study is based on three criteria: (1) whether the community currently suffers, or has historically suffered, from environmental and health risks or hazards, (2) whether a potential for disproportionate risk exists, and (3) whether the community has been sufficiently involved in the decision-making process.

The EJ analysis compares (1) the percentage of minority people, (2) the percentage of economically stressed households earning less than \$20,000 a year, and (3) the population within a one-half and four mile radius of the site against state-wide percentages. The index for the one square mile area around the proposed project was calculated to be "48", and the index for the 50 square mile area around the facility was calculated to be "32" (Fig.3). According to Census 2000 data, approximately 41.7 percent of households within a one-square mile radius of Los Fresnos earn less than \$20,000 per year, and approximately 91.0 percent the residents are minority. These percentages are disproportionately high as compared with the state percentages of 23.6 percent and 47.6 percent, respectively. The percentages are generally a characteristic of the colonias and

² The EPA defines environmental justice as conveyed by the Executive Order, as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. The goal of fair treatment is not to shift risks among populations, but to identify potential disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority populations and low income populations and identify alternatives to mitigate those impacts.

³ The EPA Region 6 EJ Index Methodology defines demographic criteria and applies basic principles of science to evaluate the potential impacts on minority and low-income communities. The methodology uses Geographical Information System maps, U.S. Census demographic data, and a mathematical formula to analyze one square mile and 50 square mile geographic areas around a project site. The index indicators range from 0, where the factors affecting minorities are considered to be in proportion when compared to the state average, to 100, where the factors are considered to be greatly disproportionate when compared to the state average.

other communities along the U.S.-Mexico border, which make the index a good indicator for high project priority to receive financial assistance.

The BEIF program is intended to relieve unhealthy living conditions in low income and minority communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. A facilities plan was commissioned to develop feasible and environmentally sound methods of correcting these conditions by eliminating the inadequate on-site wastewater treatment systems and implementing water treatment and distribution systems, and wastewater treatment and collection systems. Without grant funding from the BECC/NADBank programs, Los Fresnos city would have to borrow the funds and increase its utility service rate structure to repay the loans.

Environmental impacts associated with the proposed project will primarily be positive and beneficial for all the residents in the service area. The project will not result in the relocation of any household, and no significant land use changes or change in land values are expected from any of the proposed immediate, 5- and 20-year project elements. The primary adverse consequences will be the potential rates charged to the users. Secondary growth could result from the improvements to the water and wastewater systems and provide new employment opportunities.

3.8 Cumulative and Other Impacts. There are no recent projects in the vicinity of the proposed project area that have had an effect on the environment.

3.8.1 Transportation. Temporary county road or driveway closings may be required during project construction that may inconvenience area residents. These closings will be of short duration and will not have long-term effects on traffic patterns. No new roadways will be constructed as a result of the project.

3.8.2 Coastal Resources. No coastal zone resource will be affected by the proposed project and a storm water pollution plan will serve to protect waterways from any run-off pollution from disturbed areas.

4.0 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Unavoidable Adverse Effects. Unavoidable impacts would result if the No-action alternatives were implemented because area residents would continue without adequate water service. The primary impacts from implementation of the project will be of short duration and primarily involve disruption of pedestrian and traffic patterns, increased traffic around the construction areas, and the fugitive dust generated from the trenching of streets and other pathways for installation of the distribution lines. Dust control measures may include watering of access roads. There will be some noise disturbance during construction.

These impacts are unavoidable, but will be mitigated by prompt backfilling of trenches and limiting the amount of trench openings at any one time. Existing ROWs and public easements will be used for most of the project elements. Noise will be limited by confining work to daylight hours and using a small number of construction equipment. The proposed projects will have no significant adverse impacts on natural resources, water, wastewater, or other community

infrastructure, such as public schools, emergency medical care, public safety, recreation or transportation, are expected to result from the direct, indirect or cumulative effects of the proposed facilities. The availability of a reliable supply of potable water to the area may induce secondary development and possibly accelerate the conversion of land use from agriculture to urban use.

4.2 Relationship Between Local, Short Term Use of the Environment and the Maintenance/enhancement of Long Term Beneficial Uses. The primary short-term use of the environment will be the disturbance created by construction activities. Excavation and trench work to install the water distribution lines may temporarily affect natural drainage patterns. After completion of the proposed improvements, the terrain will be restored to preconstruction conditions. Since construction activities will be greater than one acre, a construction site storm water permit from the EPA would have to be obtained before construction can begin. Project specifications require the contractor to dispose of all construction wastes in accordance with federal, state, and local laws.

The short-term environmental impacts are outweighed by the beneficial impact of having an upgraded WTP system with the treatment capacity to meet both current and future demands. The development of this project will have long-term beneficial impacts on area residents and may result in a better socio-economic and community setting because of the improved potable water supply services. The proposed improvement projects may also have a positive impact on land values in the area. No unacceptable short-or long-term impacts to jurisdictional wetlands, prime farmland, sensitive habitat, or endangered or threatened species have been identified as resulting from this project.

4.3 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources to the Proposed Project. The irreversible and irretrievable commitment of financial resources for this project include grant and loan funds used to construct the project. Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of natural resources include land, and the resources and energy used for construction of the proposed improvements. The majority of the project area will be on land already committed to the same land use.

5.0 COORDINATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following federal and state agencies will be provided a copy of this environmental assessment (EA) for review and comment:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Rural Development Agency
Federal Emergency Management Agency
International Boundary and Water Commission
Border Environment Cooperation Commission
North American Development Bank
Texas Archeological Research Laboratory
Texas Historical Commission
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Texas Water Development Board
Cameron County Engineer's Office
City of Los Fresnos

6.0 MAPS AND CORRESPONDENCE LETTERS

7.0 REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, “*Environmental Report for the Water System Improvements Project,*” for the City of Los Fresnos, Cameron County, Texas, prepared in February 2003 by Naismith Engineering, Inc.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, “*Environmental Report for the Water System Improvements Project,*” for the City of Los Fresnos, Cameron County, Texas, prepared in October 2003 by Naismith Engineering, Inc.