



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**  
REGION 6  
1201 ELM STREET, SUITE 500  
DALLAS, TEXAS 75270-2102

August 29, 2019

**Categorical Exclusion**  
**For the Doña Ana County South Central**  
**Wastewater Treatment System Rehabilitation Project**  
**New Mexico Colonias Program**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 intends to provide grant funds to upgrade the South Central Wastewater Treatment System in order to provide wastewater collection services to the Sleepy Farms community located in the area of Vado, New Mexico.

EPA's approval of grant funding for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §4321 – 4370(f). In accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulation, 40 CFR §1508.4, a federal agency may categorically exclude certain actions from detailed environmental review that do not individually, or cumulatively, have a significant effect on the quality of the environment. To qualify for a categorical exclusion, a project must conform to one of the categories listed in 40 CFR §6.204(a) and it must not involve any of the extraordinary circumstances identified in 40 CFR §6.102(b).

**Project Description**

The Doña Ana County (DAC) South Central Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) was formed as a water utility to provide wastewater services to serve six unincorporated communities. The communities of Vado, Del Cerro, La Mesa, San Miguel, Berino, and Chamberino are located approximately 13 to 18 miles south-southeast of Las Cruces, New Mexico and 27 miles north of the U.S./Mexico Border. Each of the unincorporated communities is scheduled to have wastewater services by the year 2020. The DAC South Central WWTP is estimated to provide service to approximately 17,400 people.

This project would provide sewer gravity connection services to 29 existing dwellings in the Sleepy Farms community. Houses in the project area currently use septic tank systems or cesspools, many of which are unpermitted and are not functioning properly. These septic tanks and cesspools would be decommissioned as the new household hookups are brought online. In order for the waste collection system to sufficiently process increased flows resulting from the project implementation, the Vado Lift Station #7 would also require rehabilitation. The proposed project includes the following changes to the existing wastewater collection infrastructure:

- Household hook-ups for 29 houses to gravity sewer lines.
- 8-inch pipe throughout already disturbed planning area.
- Gravity collection system would include approximately 4,700 feet of gravity pipe and 5,000 feet of force main pipe.

## Eligibility for Categorical Exclusion

In accordance with the EPA's regulations for implementing the NEPA, 42 USC §4321-4370f, EPA Region 6 has determined this project to be eligible for a categorical exclusion under 40 CFR §602.4(a)(1)(ii), which allows projects to be categorically excluded when the projects involve:

"Actions relating to existing infrastructure systems (such as sewer systems; drinking water supply systems; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) that involve minor upgrading, or minor expansion of system capacity or rehabilitation (including functional replacement) of the existing system and system components (such as the sewer collection network and treatment system; the system to collect, treat, store and distribute drinking water; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) or construction of new minor ancillary facilities adjacent to or on the same property as existing facilities."

The proposed project qualifies for the categorical exclusion set forth under 40 CFR §602.4(a)(1)(ii) as it involves minor upgrading and expansion of existing infrastructure systems and system components. In addition, the project does not involve new or relocated discharges to surface or ground water; will not result in the substantial increase in the volume or the loading of pollutant to the receiving water; will not provide capacity to serve a population of 30% greater than the existing population; and will not directly or indirectly involve upgrading or extending infrastructure systems for the purpose of future development.

### Extraordinary Circumstances (40 CFR §6.204(b)(1) through (b)(10))

EPA has reviewed the proposed project and determined that it does not involve any extraordinary circumstances listed in 40 CFR §6.204(b)(1) through (b)(10). The proposed construction activity will take place in previously disturbed utility corridor and no new land disturbance would be required.

### Finding

EPA finds the proposed action conforms to the category of actions eligible for exclusion from detailed environmental review under CFR 40 CFR §6.204(a)(1)(ii) and will not involve any extraordinary circumstances. Accordingly, EPA will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed action. EPA may revoke this categorical exclusion if changes in the proposed action render it ineligible for exclusion or if new evidence emerges which indicates that serious local or environmental issues exist or federal, state, or local laws would be violated.

Sincerely,



Arturo J. Blanco  
Director

Office of Communities, Tribes and  
Environmental Assessment