

TO ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES AND PUBLIC GROUPS:

As provided by the state environmental review process adopted in the rules of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), 31 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) § 375.61, for projects to be funded through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Program and consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 United States Code § 4321, et seq., the TWDB staff has determined that the proposed action identified below may be exempted from formal environmental review requirements:

City of Rio Grande City, Starr County, Texas
TWDB CWSRF Project No. 73874
Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion
Total Financing Amount: \$7,495,615
Commitment Nos. L1001073 and LF1001123

The City of Rio Grande City (City) is proposing to use \$7,495,615 in financing from the CWSRF Program to expand the capacity of their wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) from 1.5 million gallons per day (MGD) to 1.94 MGD and correct deficiencies at the WWTP. The four proposed primary construction activities include construction, repair, and upgrade of the liquid treatment processing units; construction, repair, and upgrade of the sludge processing units; sitework to improve plant functionality; and demolition and removal of abandoned facilities. Specifically, the proposed project includes construction of a new plant lift station with four pumps equipped with variable frequency drives; upgrade of the carousel basin to have a 1.94 MGD capacity; construction of two new 68-foot in diameter final clarifiers; construction of a new return activated sludge (RAS)/waste activated sludge (WAS) pump station with three RAS pumps and two WAS pumps equipped with variable frequency drives; expansion of the chlorine contact basin to provide sufficient volume to meet a required 20-minute detention time at peak flow, and construction of a new non-potable water system pump for the plant; improvements to the chlorination facilities to meet Texas Commission on Environmental Quality facility and safety requirements; improvements to the Parshall flume to provide for continuous totalized flow readings on the plant effluent; repurpose of the final clarifiers to sludge holding tanks; construction of a new sludge transfer pump station to pump sludge from the holding tanks to the proposed new belt filter press; and construction of a new one-meter belt filter press and two small conventional drying beds to provide backup for when the belt filter press is down for maintenance. The proposed project components will include piping, electrical, controls, stairways, walkways, plant roads, drainage, fencing, gates, and platforms necessary to make the processing units fully functional. All work will be within the existing boundary of the WWTP.

To ensure that there will be no adverse environmental impact associated with the construction of the proposed project, the City coordinated with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section (IBWC). The THC conducted a project review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. In an email dated January 17, 2023, the THC concluded that no historic properties are present or affected by the project as proposed. In a letter dated December 16, 2022, the IBWC stated that the proposed project, located within the existing WWTP limits, is outside of the jurisdiction of the IBWC and no further NEPA action on behalf of the IBWC is required; however, subsequent changes in the design of the proposed project that would include modification to the existing outfall at the bank or bed of the Rio Grande River would require review by the IBWC.

The decision to grant a Categorical Exclusion is allowed because the specified project elements will not cause significant adverse impacts to the quality of the environment. Documentation supporting this determination is on file at the TWDB.

This determination shall be revoked if it is found that

- (1) the project no longer meets the requirements for a Categorical Exclusion as a result of changes in the project;
- (2) the project involves extraordinary circumstances as described in 31 TAC § 375.62; or
- (3) the project may violate or has violated federal, state, local, or tribal laws.

The proposed project must comply with the following environmental conditions:

- Standard emergency condition for the discovery of cultural resources
- Standard emergency condition for the discovery of threatened and endangered species

Comments regarding this determination may be submitted to the Director of Regional Water Project Development, Texas Water Development Board, P.O. Box 13231, Austin, Texas 78711-3231 or via email at RWPD-Environmental@twdb.texas.gov.