

Bureau of Reclamation Begins Planning Phase of the Pojoaque Basin Regional Water System

Introduction

The US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Albuquerque Area Office (Reclamation) is proposing to design and construct a regional water system (RWS) serving the Pojoaque Basin in Santa Fe County, New Mexico. The RWS would deliver potable water to the Pueblos of Nambé, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, and Tesuque, and to county residents by diverting and treating water from the Rio Grande. The water would then be transmitted, stored, and prepared for delivery to local residents, as authorized by the Aamodt Litigation Settlement Act (Public Law 111-291, Title VI; 124 Stat. 3065) (Settlement Act), which was signed on December 8, 2010. Reclamation is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the environmental and socioeconomic effects of various alternatives for the project, including constructing the RWS.

Once a Record of Decision for the EIS is signed and other conditions of the Settlement Act are satisfied, Reclamation would begin construction of the RWS. After construction is complete, titles to the infrastructure and facilities would be transferred to the Pueblos, Santa Fe County, and the Regional Water Authority, who would be responsible for ongoing operation and maintenance of the RWS.

Project Background

The issue of scarce water resources in the Pojoaque River Basin was first litigated in 1966, in the case *State of New Mexico ex rel. State Engineer v. Aamodt* (No. 66cv6639 MV/LCS (D.N.M.)), to determine the nature and extent of the claimants' water rights. In May 2006, a draft Settlement Agreement was signed by the Pueblos of Nambé, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, and Tesuque; the City of Santa Fe; Santa Fe County; the State of New Mexico; and representatives of Pojoaque Basin residents. This draft settlement agreement allowed for up to 4,000 acre-feet of water to be diverted from the Rio Grande and the construction of the Pojoaque Basin Regional Water System; about 2,500 acre-feet of water would be allocated to the four Pueblos, and up to 1,500 acre-feet would be allocated to Santa Fe County customers. The technical details of the RWS described in the draft Settlement Agreement were subsequently developed in an engineering report

prepared by HKM Engineering, Inc. (available on the project website at www.PojoaqueBasinEIS.com). The final Settlement Agreement, dated April 2012, does not require County residents to hook up to the RWS. County residents within the Pojoaque Basin would have the option of signing on to the Settlement Agreement under one of three options or not signing on at all. The Settlement Act ratified the terms of the Settlement Agreement and authorized Reclamation to plan, design, and construct the RWS.

Project Overview

The proposed project would divert, treat, transmit, store, and deliver water to Pueblo and non-Pueblo residents of the Pojoaque Basin as part of the RWS. The water would be diverted at Pueblo de San Ildefonso, either by diverting surface water into a side channel intake structure or by collecting groundwater that is hydrologically connected to the river through the use of horizontal collector wells. The collected water would then be treated at a water treatment facility and transmitted to storage facilities through underground pipelines. Water would be stored in large tanks and underground aquifers. The RWS would include pipelines and pump stations to serve the four Pueblos and County water customers in the Pojoaque Basin. General requirements of the project are outlined in the HKM Engineering, Inc. report, but specific aspects and alternatives will continue to be developed throughout the planning process.

What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

The NEPA was passed in 1969 and laid the foundation for environmental review in the United States. Two major requirements of the NEPA are that agencies analyze the environmental impacts of federal actions and engage the public in the decision-making process.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

An EIS is a detailed analysis of a project that the proposing agency views as having significant environmental impacts. The EIS provides a discussion of effects on the human environment from the proposed action and other reasonable alternatives (including a No Action alternative).

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to provide safe and reliable potable water to the residents of the Pojoaque Basin. The need is to reduce reliance on groundwater and to allow the Pueblos and settlement parties to utilize the water rights under the terms and conditions of the Settlement Agreement.

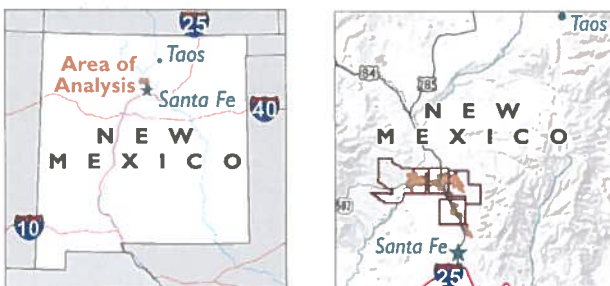
Project Objectives

- Provide a source of water for drinking, fire suppression, and future growth in the Pojoaque Basin;
- Reduce dependence on local groundwater sources;
- Improve alluvial recharge on portions of the Rio Tesuque with channel modifications;
- Provide a barrier dam and infiltration project on the Rio Pojoaque;
- Develop a design for Rio Grande water diversion facilities; treatment, transmission, storage and distribution facilities; and well fields, in accordance with the Settlement Agreement, that best meets the needs of settlement parties, while limiting the impacts on sensitive resources; and
- Provide opportunities for additional construction projects, proposed and paid for by the four Pueblos, Santa Fe County, or a Pojoaque Basin Regional Water Authority, to improve existing or develop new water-related infrastructure.

Decisions to be Made

The federal action is for Reclamation to evaluate whether and how to design and construct a water treatment and distribution system for the Pojoaque Basin in accordance with the Settlement Agreement and the Settlement Act. Reclamation's decision will determine the appropriate design alternative, if any, for the water system and approve or deny project construction. The terms of the settlement parties' water entitlement and use are established under state and federal law through the Settlement Agreement and will not be altered by the decisions made in this EIS.

Project Area

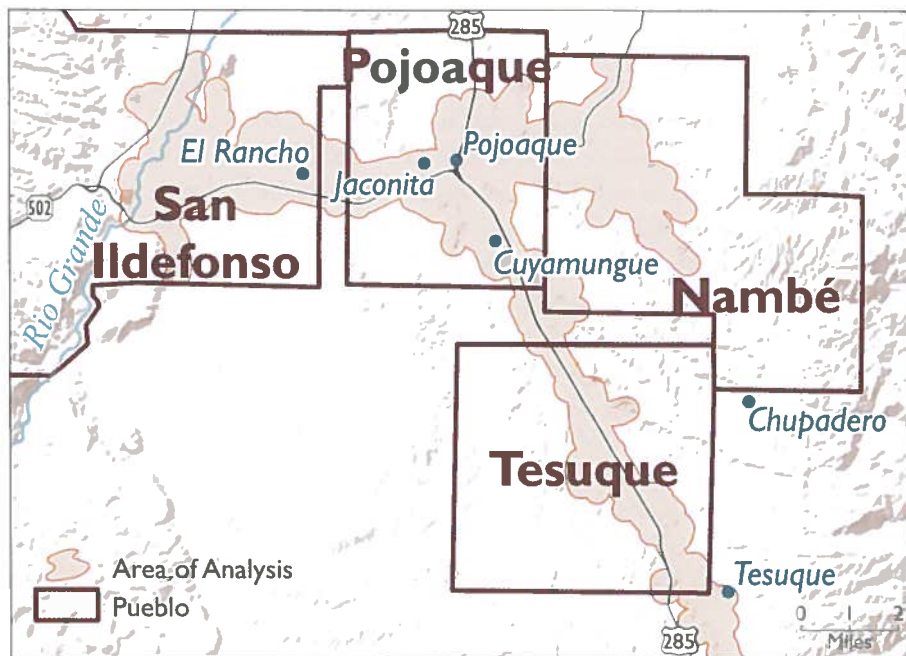


Want more information?
Visit the project website at
www.PojoaqueBasinEIS.com
for detailed information on the project, EIS developments, the Aamodt Litigation Settlement Act, and how to get involved!

We Want to Hear From You!

Do you want to get involved in the planning phase of the project? Or just looking for more information? Attend one of the public scoping meetings to learn more about the project, visit with Reclamation staff, view maps, and submit comments. **All meetings will run from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, and will include a brief presentation at 6:30 pm.** Presentation materials will be on display throughout the meeting and will also be available on the project website (**www.PojoaqueBasinEIS.com**). Comments can be submitted in person at the public scoping meeting, by fax or US mail to the Bureau of Reclamation, or electronically through the project website. Locations for the public scoping meetings are listed below.

City	Date	Location
Tesuque NM	Mon 4/1/13	Tesuque Valley Elementary School Cafeteria 1555 Bishops Lodge Road, Tesuque, NM 87574
Pojoaque NM	Tues 4/2/13	Pojoaque Valley High School District Campus West Wing Conference Room 1574 State Road 502 West, Santa Fe, NM 87506
Santa Fe NM	Wed 4/3/13	Santa Fe Community College Jemez Rooms 1&2 6401 Richards Avenue, Santa Fe, NM 87508
Española NM	Thurs 4/4/13	Northern New Mexico College Cafeteria 921 N. Paseo de Oñate, Española, NM 87532
Taos NM	Tues 4/9/13	Taos Convention Center Rio Grande Hall, Room A 120 Civic Plaza Drive, Taos, NM 87571



Data Collection Activities are Beginning!

Over the course of the next year, you may notice an increase in the number of people and equipment working within the project area. These are professionals performing various surveys and studies to assess on-the-ground conditions and help develop project alternatives. This is part of the engineering design and data collection phase of the project, and will include:

- Archeological and historic resources surveys
- Biological and wetlands surveys
- Geotechnical investigations and exploratory drilling for aquifer storage and recovery wells
- Land surveys
- Geomorphology and hydrology surveys



Geotechnical investigations will occur along Highways 285 and 502 to assess soil conditions so that foundations and buried pipelines can be properly designed. This investigation will involve some excavation and drilling. In some cases, a 40,000-pound drill rig will be used (see the photo above). If you see one of these near the highways or on Pueblo land, you can be sure that it is the geotechnical investigation and not oil and gas development. Every pit and hole for the investigation will be filled in with native soil and restored after the investigation is complete.

These surveys and studies will be completed by Reclamation and its subcontractors and could include heavy machinery and photography equipment. But don't worry, there will be no permanent impact on the area from these surveys. Surveyors are also trained to avoid taking photos of sensitive cultural resources.

Next Steps

The preliminary schedule on this page outlines major steps in the EIS process and formal opportunities for public involvement at each step. While there are various ways to get involved, submitting a comment during the public scoping period and later during the comment period for the draft EIS are the most effective ways to make your voice heard in the EIS process.

Preliminary dates have been provided for informative purposes only and are subject to change.



Public Scoping

What Happens:

- Gather public comments on project scope
- Publish scoping report summarizing public comments
- Use public comments in determining issues and alternatives

February 2012 through April 2013

Draft EIS

What Happens:

- Publish draft EIS
- Public review and comment period
- Accept public comments on draft EIS

Publish draft EIS Late 2015

Final EIS

What Happens:

- Review and incorporate public comments
- Revise draft EIS
- Publish final EIS

Publish final EIS Late 2016

Record of Decision

What Happens:

- Write and publish Record of Decision (ROD)

Publish ROD Early 2017

Public Involvement Activities:

Public scoping meetings (April 1-9, 2013)

Project newsletter and project website updates

Submit public comments via e-mail, postal mail, fax, web, or in person at meetings

Public Involvement Activities:

Public distribution of draft EIS
Public meetings

Project newsletter and project website updates

Submit public comments via e-mail, postal mail, fax, web, or in person at meetings

Public Involvement Activities:

Public distribution of final EIS
30-day public review period

Project newsletter and project website updates

Public Involvement Activities:

Public distribution of Record of Decision



This is the first in a series of newsletters from the Bureau of Reclamation regarding the proposed design and construction of the Pojoaque Basin Regional Water System to serve the Pueblos of Nambé, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, and Tesuque, and other residents in Santa Fe County, New Mexico. This edition of the newsletter provides an overview of the project, the NEPA process, and guidance on how to get involved, including a schedule of public scoping meetings and how to submit comments. Contact us at PojoaqueBasinEIS@usbr.gov if you would like to be removed from the mailing list or to receive future mailings via email.

Want More Information?

Get on the mailing list: Send a request to PojoaqueBasinEIS@usbr.gov

Visit the project website: www.PojoaqueBasinEIS.com

Attend public meetings: Public meetings will be held in five locations across northern New Mexico and are open to the public.

Submit comments: Comments may be submitted at a public meeting or by using one of the methods listed below. To be most helpful, comments should be provided by May 3rd, 2013. You can submit comments even if you have not attended a public meeting.

Online: www.PojoaqueBasinEIS.com
E-mail: PojoaqueBasinEIS@usbr.gov
Fax: 505-462-3780
Postal Mail: Molly Thrash
 Bureau of Reclamation
 Albuquerque Area Office, ALB-842
 555 Broadway NE, Suite 100
 Albuquerque, NM 87102

Public Meeting Schedule

Tesuque, NM	Monday, 4/1/13
Pojoaque, NM	Tuesday, 4/2/13
Santa Fe, NM	Wednesday, 4/3/13
Española, NM	Thursday, 4/4/13
Taos, NM	Tuesday, 4/9/13

See Page 2 of the newsletter for meeting times, locations, and format

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