



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Phoenix Area Office
6150 West Thunderbird Road
Glendale, AZ 85306-4001

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Memorandum

To: All Interested Persons, Organizations, and Agencies

From: Leslie A. Meyers **LESLIE MEYERS**
Area Manager

Digitally signed by
LESLIE MEYERS
Date: 2021.08.23
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Subject: Notice of Public Scoping for Preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Proposed GSC Farm, LLC – Town of Queen Creek Water Partial Assignment and Transfer – La Paz, Pinal, and Maricopa Counties, Arizona (Action by September 24, 2021)

The Bureau of Reclamation is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) describing the potential impacts from the Town of Queen Creek's (Queen Creek) proposed GSC Farm, LLC – Queen Creek water partial assignment and transfer. GSC Farm, LLC (GSC Farm) has an entitlement to an annual diversion of up to 2,913.3 acre-feet of Arizona fourth-priority mainstream Colorado River water for irrigation use within GSC Farm's contract service area. GSC Farm's total consumptive use of its entitlement is 2,083.1 acre-feet per year (AFY). GSC Farm's entitlement is authorized under the Contract for the Delivery of Colorado River Water for Use in Arizona, between GSC Farm and the United States of America, Contract No. 13-XX-30-W0571, dated December 23, 2013, and as amended by Amendment No. 1 dated December 3, 2014 (collectively, the GSC Contract). GSC Farm's water entitlement is presently used to irrigate approximately 485 acres of farmland, owned by GSC Farm, located within the Cibola Valley Irrigation and Drainage District in La Paz County, Arizona.

On December 17, 2018, GSC Farm and Queen Creek entered into a purchase and transfer Agreement for a Mainstream Colorado River Water Entitlement providing for the partial assignment and transfer of GSC Farm's Arizona fourth-priority Colorado River water entitlement to Queen Creek to aid in providing resiliency and stability for Queen Creek's long-term municipal water needs. GSC Farm and Queen Creek submitted to the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) a request for consultation for the proposed partial assignment and transfer. When a non-federal Arizona Colorado River water entitlement holder desires to transfer its Colorado River water entitlement, they must cooperate, confer with, and obtain the advice of the director of ADWR in accordance with A.R.S. § 45-107(D). Pursuant to A.R.S. § 45-107(A), ADWR consults, advises and cooperates with the Department of the Interior

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regarding the proposal, and on September 4, 2020, the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR), recommended approval of the partial assignment and transfer of 1078.01 AFY of GSC Farm's entitlement to Queen Creek on a consumptive use basis. ADWR issued a supplement on January 20, 2021, modifying its recommended transferrable volume to 2,033.01 AFY and recommending that GSC Farm retain 50 AFY of consumptive use of its Arizona fourth priority Colorado River water entitlement for future use on the land owned by GSC Farm.

Proposed Action

Under the proposed action, Reclamation would approve: (1) the partial assignment and transfer of 2,033.01 AFY of Arizona fourth priority Colorado River water between GSC Farm and Queen Creek; (2) a Colorado River water delivery contract between the United States and Queen Creek for the 2,033.01 AFY; (3) an amendment of the existing Colorado River water delivery contract between GSC Farm and the United States to reduce GSC Farm's Arizona fourth priority Colorado River water entitlement to 69.93 AFY for domestic use; and (4) a Wheeling Contract with Queen Creek to wheel the 2,033.01 AFY to the Queen Creek service area.

Queen Creek proposes to use existing infrastructure to divert and convey the transferred water, and no ground disturbing activities are planned to occur. The mainstream water assigned and transferred to Queen Creek would be diverted at the Mark Wilmer Pumping Plant and transported via the Central Arizona Project (CAP) to one or more existing Groundwater Savings Facilities (GSFs). Three potential GSFs in the Queen Creek service area have been identified for use by Queen Creek. All are served by existing turnouts from the CAP and no new infrastructure would be required to deliver the water to any one of these GSFs.

Reclamation has determined that an EA is the appropriate level of review under NEPA. The purpose of an EA is to allow the Bureau of Reclamation to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). The EA will evaluate the impacts of the Proposed Action on the human and natural environments. As part of this EA process, Reclamation is seeking your participation in identifying any potential issues with or effects of the proposed action. Comments should be submitted to: Bureau of Reclamation, ATTN: GSC-QC Water Transfer EA, 6150 West Thunderbird Road, Glendale, Arizona, 85306, or via email to: proposedwatertransfer@usbr.gov, or submitted online through: www.gscfarmqckwatertransfer.com, no later than September 24, 2021.

For additional project information and directions on submitting comments, please visit the website: <https://www.gscfarmqckwatertransfer.com/>.

For additional information regarding this memorandum, please contact Sean M. Heath, Reclamation's Phoenix Area Office, Environmental Resource Management Division Manager, via email at sheath@usbr.gov.

Please be aware that by law, your name, address, and other personal identifying information may be made publicly available at any time. You may request that your personal identifying

information be withheld from public review by stating so prominently at the beginning of your comment. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so; however, we will honor your request to the extent allowable by law. All comments from organizations or businesses will be available for public inspection in their entirety.