



# CERTIFICATION AND FINANCING PROPOSAL

## SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION STARR COUNTY, TEXAS

*Submitted: June 25, 2012*

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### INDEX

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	2
<b>1. ELIGIBILITY</b> .....	3
<b>2. CERTIFICATION CRITERIA</b>	
2.1 Technical Criteria	
2.1.1. Project Description .....	3
2.1.2. Technical Feasibility .....	7
2.1.3. Land Acquisition and Right of way Requirements .....	9
2.1.4. Management and Operations .....	9
2.2 Environmental Criteria	
2.2.1. Compliance with Applicable Environmental Laws and Regulations .....	10
2.2.2. Environmental Effects/Impacts .....	12
2.3 Financial Criteria	
2.3.1. Sources and Uses of Funds .....	14
<b>3. ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION</b>	
3.1 Public consultation .....	15
3.2 Outreach activities .....	15

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION STARR COUNTY, TEXAS

- Project:** The Project consisted of the construction of a solid waste transfer station in Starr County, Texas (the “Project”).
- Project Objective:** To provide adequate solid waste disposal services to the residents of Starr County and thus minimize the potential for illegal dumping and associated environmental and health risks.
- Expected Project Outcomes:** The environmental and human health outcomes anticipated for the Project include the capacity to properly manage the transfer and disposal of up to 300 tons of solid waste per day in compliance with federal and state laws for the next 20 years.
- Sponsor:** Starr County, Texas
- Project Cost:** US\$1,431,007
- SWEP Amount:** US\$450,000

**Uses & Sources:**  
 (US\$ millions)

Uses	Amount	%
Construction	\$1.43	100.0
TOTAL	\$1.43	100.0
Sources	Amount	%
NADB SWEP	\$0.45	31.4
Loan	\$0.98	68.6
TOTAL	\$1.43	100.0

## CERTIFICATION AND FINANCING PROPOSAL

### SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION STARR COUNTY, TEXAS

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#### 1. ELIGIBILITY

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##### **Project Type**

The Project falls in the eligible category of municipal solid waste.

##### **Project Location**

The Project site is located north of Rio Grande City in Starr County, Texas, approximately 10 miles north of the U.S. Mexico border.

##### **Project Sponsor and Legal Authority**

The public sector project sponsor is Starr County, Texas; a free entity established under Article 1, Section 1, of the Constitution of the State of Texas (the “County” or the “Sponsor”).

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#### 2. CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

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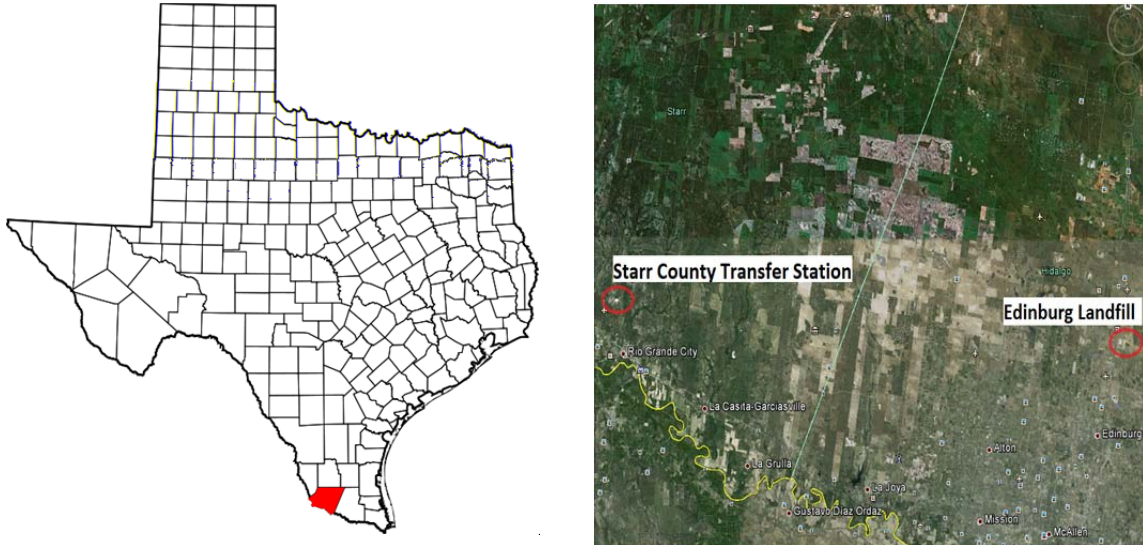
##### 2.1. TECHNICAL CRITERIA

##### 2.1.1. Project Description

##### **Geographic Location**

Rio Grande City, the county seat of Starr County, is located between the cities of Laredo (approximately 100 miles to the west) and McAllen (approximately 41 miles to the east) in the southeastern part of the state of Texas and is directly across the Rio Grande River from the city of Camargo, Tamaulipas. Waste deposited at the transfer station will be trucked to the landfill in the city of Edinburg, which is approximately 52 miles east of Rio Grande City. Figure 1, below, shows the approximate geographic location of the Project.

**Figure 1**  
**PROJECT VICINITY MAP**



**General Community Profile**

Starr County's population per the 2010 Census was 60,968, with a total of 14,869 households in the county.<sup>1</sup>

The county's economic activities are primarily agriculture, livestock, commerce, oil production, and general services.<sup>2</sup> The top three employment sectors in the county are government with 5,633 employed, health care and social assistance (4,753) and retail trade (2,386).<sup>3</sup>

The median household income for the county is US\$22,418, considerably lower than the Texas state average of US\$48,286, and the U.S. average of US\$50,221.<sup>4</sup> Based on 2010 Census Bureau figures, 38.5% of the population are below the federal poverty levels, compared to the state average of 17.1%, and the national average of 14.3%. The average cost of water, wastewater and solid waste services in Starr County is US\$87.59, which represents 4.69% of the MHI.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2010. Texas Association of Counties

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis 2008.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 estimates.

**Table 1  
 PUBLIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Service	Coverage
Water system:	
Water coverage <sup>1</sup>	96%
Water supply source	Surface water – Rio Grande River
Wastewater collection coverage <sup>2</sup>	48%
Wastewater treatment coverage <sup>3</sup>	100%
Street paving coverage <sup>4</sup>	25% rural county roads

<sup>1</sup> Calculated connections to centralized water system, Water System Data Base, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

<sup>2</sup> Calculated the population with connections to the centralized wastewater collection system, USEPA Clean Water Needs Survey 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Percentage of wastewater collected receiving treatment.

<sup>4</sup> Percentage of county owned roads with paved surface, Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), 2004.

**Solid Waste Profile**

According to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) publication, there are 190 active landfills in the state of Texas with three located in Starr County: City of Roma, City of La Grulla and the Starr County Municipal Solid Waste Landfill (MSWL) located in Rio Grande City.<sup>5</sup>

Starr County’s Municipal Solid Waste Landfill (MSWL) will reach its design capacity in the near future; additionally, due to the multiple permits and processes, including capital to finance and operate it, the construction of a new landfill is not in the near term. Furthermore, nearby existing facilities, particularly in the City of Edinburg, contain adequate capacity to handle the county’s needs, thus resulting in the decision to construct a transfer station. Starr County has an existing agreement with the City of Edinburg. In addition to the agreement, there is also a contract with a private hauling company, *Grande Garbage Collection*, to transport the waste. By constructing the transfer station and disposing of the solid waste in existing regional landfills, the county will continue to provide adequate solid waste management services to the population.

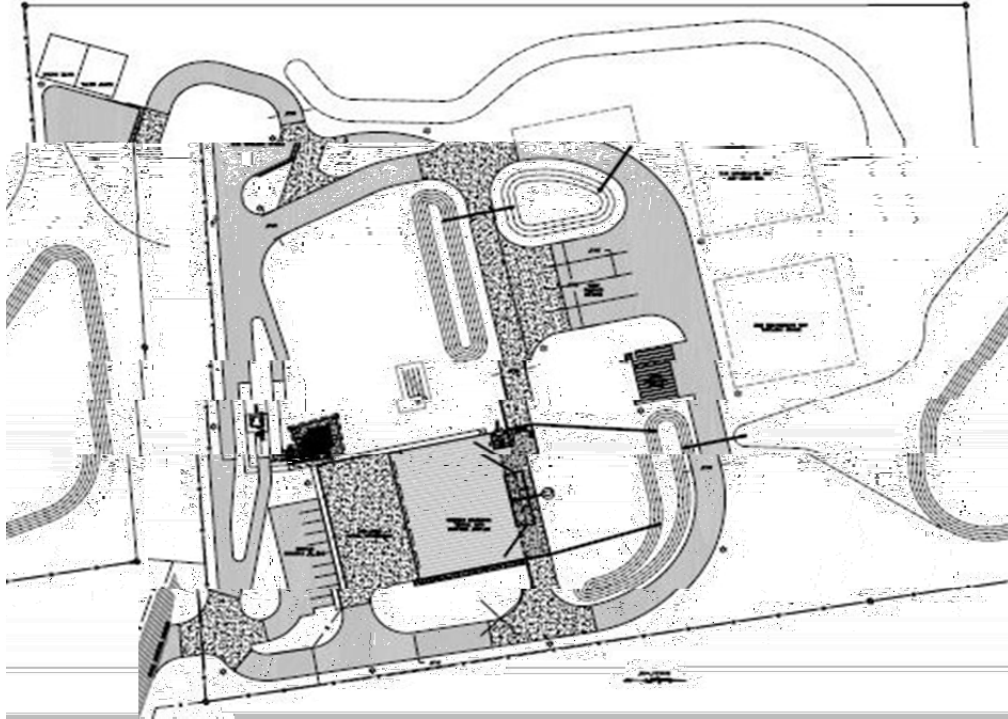
**Project Scope and Design**

The scope of the Project included the construction of a Municipal Solid Waste Transfer Station (see Figure 2 below). The Project meets the national criteria for waste disposal as established under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). The facility was planned and designed using the recommendations of the EPA’s Waste Transfer Station Manual for Decision Making, and meets TCEQ’s minimal design criteria and standards for the development of Transfer Station Facilities as established under Title 30 Texas Administrative Code (30 TAC), Chapter 330. The facility is designed to serve the county’s solid waste system for the next 20 years.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: TCEQ, Municipal Solid Waste in Texas: A Year in Review, FY 2010 Data Summary and Analysis, published October 2011.

**Figure 2**  
**TRANSFER STATION PLAN LAYOUT**



All Project milestones have been completed. Project construction was initiated in March 2010 and finished in October 2010. The transfer station began operations in November 2010. The constructed and operating Municipal Solid Waste Transfer Station is shown below.

**Figure 3**  
**STARR COUNTY SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION**



## 2.1.2. Technical Feasibility

### Selected Technology

The County conducted a Solid Waste Management Technical Study to assess the need for a MSW Transfer System. The final report summarizes the results of the research, review and evaluation of transfer station and citizens' collection station configurations and technologies features that were suitable for Starr County. The evaluation of alternatives considered the available locations of disposal sites, potential haul routes for economical transfer of MSW waste, as well as the service population density to determine the general vicinity of the most suitable location for the transfer station. Additionally, it was necessary to determine the optimum distance for a transfer station to be more cost effective than direct haul for Starr County; that distance is approximately 9.5 miles one way or 19 miles roundtrip to a disposal site. The preliminary evaluation of project alternatives consisted of the following assessment matrices:

- Potential Transfer Station and Landfill Disposal Location Comparison. The first matrix analyzed the travel distances and transfer costs for several combinations of landfill disposal facility and potential transfer station location options.
- Potential Transfer Station and Population Areas Location Comparison. This matrix compares the location of populated census tract areas with the above potential transfer station locations.

When reviewing the results of these analyses, it was determined that the combination of a transfer station located near Rio Grande City and the use of the City of Edinburg Landfill offered the best choice in terms of transfer costs and proximity to service area.

Additionally, a review of the two basic types of transfer station configurations was also conducted. The two types are: a) transfer station only layout and b) multi purpose transfer station. Upon completing the assessment, it was determined that since the residents of Starr County currently dispose household waste as well as white goods, brush, construction demolition debris, and tires, a multi purpose transfer station would allow for this continued level of service.

The final assessment was the review of the six available transfer technologies. The available systems are as follows: Open Top Transfer Trailers; Sur Pit; Compactor System; Pre compactor System; Baler; Intermodal Container System. Given the particular characteristics of the County, only two technologies were able to match their needs. The systems selected for comparison were Open Top Transfer Trailer and Compactor System Technologies. Based on the review of Starr County solid waste management data and needs, and on the basis of the evaluation of the transfer station technologies characteristics, an Open Top Transfer Trailers system was selected for the proposed Starr County Transfer Station. Overall, the use of an open top transfer trailer will result in one less trip to a disposal facility when the volume of waste is at 160 tons/day.

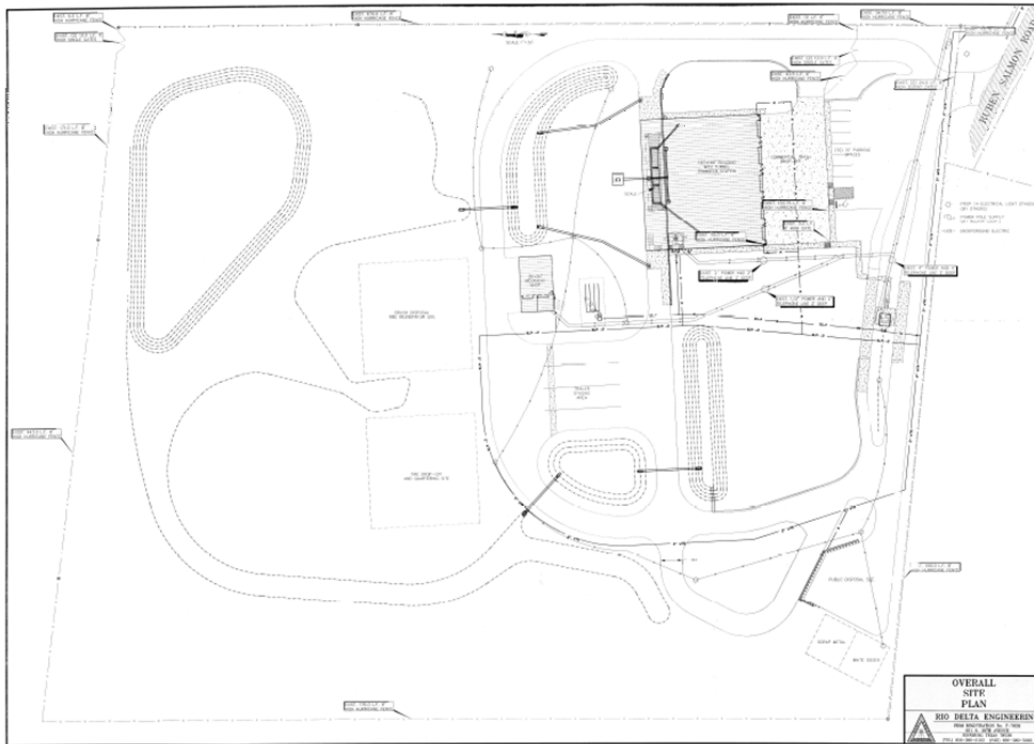
Based on these decisions, the MSW transfer facility meets the minimum national criteria for waste disposal as established under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). The facility was planned and designed using the recommendations of EPA's Waste Transfer Station



Manual for Decision making, and meets TCEQ's minimal design criteria and standards for the development of MSW Transfer Station Facilities as established under Title 30 Texas Administrative Code (30 TAC), Chapter 330. The MSW transfer facility was designed to store and transfer municipal solid waste as defined under 30 TAC §330.3(88), class 2 non hazardous industrial waste as defined under 30 TAC §335.506, class 3 non hazardous waste as defined under 30 TAC §335.507, and construction and demolition waste as defined under 30 TAC §330.3(33). The operating life of the site is estimated to be a minimum of 15 years, and will depend upon the county's future volume of waste material ultimately requiring transference to the disposal site. The design allows for a rate of up to 300 tons per day of solid waste acceptance, with an estimated disposal rate of 80,000 tons annually and 270 tons of daily storage allowance.

The Project in general includes a 13,200 square foot, pre engineered metal building and foundation, a 756 square foot office building, 1,725 lineal feet of 8" water lines, 6,086 square yards of 2" HMA, 3,350 square yards of 6" reinforced concrete pavement, and other associated improvements. The general site plan is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**  
**STARR COUNTY TRANSFER STATION SITE PLAN**



Municipal solid waste will be delivered at five unloading positions and then transferred to transfer trailers parked within the tunnel on the south section of the building. The waste will be transported to a permitted municipal solid waste landfill for disposal. Storage and processing areas have been designed to control and contain spills and contaminated water from leaving the

facility. In addition, spill control kits (i.e., absorbents socks, skimmer socks, oil absorbent granules, mat pads, etc.) will be maintained on site.

On September 21, 2009, Starr County obtained the registration and authorization to operate the transfer station from TCEQ under the MSW Registration No. 40238.

### **2.1.3. Land Acquisition and Right-of-way Requirements**

The proposed Transfer Station facility has been constructed in a site located on the north side of Rio Grande City, Texas. The site is an undeveloped tract of approximately 10 acres with access to major roads. The site was already owned by Starr County and its ownership dates back to August 18, 1997, as stated on the recorded deed.

For permits, registrations, and amendments; a map for land uses and resources as well as a list of adjacent potentially affected landowners were elaborated as part of TCEQ Registration Application requirements. The map shows all property ownership within 500 feet of the facility.

The County meets the requirements of Title 30 TAC Section §330.59 in regards to property ownership as well as legal authority of the site, including responsibility for the operation, maintenance and closure and post closure care of the facility. Furthermore, the development and operation of the facility does not require the establishment of additional right of way other than what is already in place. Ingress and egress to the property is through an existing road under ownership and care of the County. The facility site conforms to the requirements for a transfer station as stated in 30 TAC §330.543-561 in regards to location restrictions.

### **2.1.4. Management and Operations**

The Starr County Gas System/Landfill Department is responsible for the management and operation of the MSW Transfer Facility. The department has adequate resources and staff for the daily operation, monitoring and reporting of the stations day to day tasks. Staff includes a Facility Supervisor/Lead Operator, two equipment operators, a scale house attendant, and a laborer. The personnel have the appropriate training and licenses to perform the necessary duties. As previously mentioned, the transfer station has been in operation since November 2010.

The MSW Transfer station has a site operation and maintenance manual in place as part of its approved Type V Municipal Solid Waste Transfer Station registration. A site operation plan (SOP) is required for all permitted and registered municipal solid waste facilities in accordance with Title 30 TAC Section 330.65. A site operating plan provides general operating procedures for facility management of day to day operations at the site and a description of how the applicable items in Subchapter E (operational standards for MSW Storage and processing Units) of Chapter 330 will be implemented. The plan outlines the necessary tasks to guarantee an adequate operation of the facility, prevention of accidents, and procedures for emergencies on site. The SOP will be retained during the active life of the facility.

## **2.2. ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA**

Starr County's Municipal Solid Waste Landfill (MSWL) was near its design capacity. Due to the multiple impediments the construction of a new MSWL requires an extensive permitting process and substantial capital and operational cost, therefore the construction of a new landfill is currently not practical. Furthermore, the proximity of several existing facilities with appropriate capacity to handle the county's needs resulted in the decision to construct a Transfer Station. By constructing this new Transfer Station and disposing of the solid waste in existing regional landfills the county will continue to provide adequate solid waste management services to the region.

### **2.2.1. Compliance with Applicable Environmental Laws and Regulations**

#### **Applicable Laws and Regulations**

The Project complied with all environmental, cultural laws and regulations based on the application of the general requirements of the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 330, as required by TCEQ for municipal solid waste transfer facilities, as well as Chapter 361 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

In addition, the Project Sponsor conducted consultation with other agencies in consideration of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which would be required for potential federal funding sources that could have been requested for the Project. Although federal sources were not provided for the Project, a list of applicable laws and regulations considered in the noted consultation process is shown below:

- Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
- Threatened and Endangered Species Act

#### **Environmental Studies and Compliance Activities**

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – Registration Application. The Project Sponsor submitted a Registration Application on December 2008. The application includes general information about the Project, facility location, maps, property owner information, legal authority and evidence of competency.

Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA). A revision of the proposed development of the transfer station was submitted to the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) of the USDA in compliance with NEPA and FPPA requirements. The conclusion was that the soils at the proposed Project are not classified as important farmland soils. Using accepted erosion control methods during the construction phase was urged by the NRCS.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). A review of cultural resources was conducted to ensure compliance with the Antiquities Code of Texas and Section 106 of the (NHPA). No sites have been recorded within a 1 mile radius of the proposed Project area.

Additionally, a background review on the Texas Historical Commission (THC) Archeology Sites Atlas (Atlas) revealed that the proposed Project area had not been previously surveyed for cultural resources. No sites including any listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or designated as State Archeological Landmarks (SALs) were found within or adjacent to the boundaries of the proposed Project area, no sites had been recorded within a 1 mile radius of the proposed Project area. A total of 7 previously recorded sites are located within a 1.5 mile radius of the Project area which was not affected during Project construction.

Corps of Engineers. A jurisdictional determination for possible permits required regarding the construction of a municipal solid waste transfer station was submitted to the Corps of Engineers. The proposed Project was not subject to the Corps of Engineers' jurisdiction.

Threatened and Endangered Species Act. To initiate the consultation with Texas Parks and Wild Life Department (TPWD), the Project Sponsor's consultant developed an environmental review for threatened and endangered species affected by the proposed project. Field observations determined that the site appeared to have been significantly disturbed and did not have much vegetation on the site. Information from the Texas Natural Diversity Database, which is maintained by TPWD, was reviewed in order to assess the potential for endangered or threatened species to occur within the Project limits. No known occurrences of State or Federal endangered or threatened species have been documented within or in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Project location. No observation of species happened during the site visits.

According to the Vegetation Types of Texas published by TPWD in 1984, the general vegetation type for the Project area is described as Mesquite Blackbrush Brush. Information from the Texas Natural Diversity Database, which is maintained by TPWD, noted three species occur in the vicinity of the site: Wright's yellow show (*Amoreuxia wrightii*), Texas mimosa (*Mimosa wherryana*), and *Thelocactus bicolor var flavidispinus*. The implementation of the Project does not affect either the vegetation or the species in the proposed location.

Also considering these finding and because the Project was constructed in a land historically used as a caliche pit, the US Fish and Wild Life Service (USFWL) annotated that the Sponsor determined that due to the disturbed soils in the area, there will not be impacts to listed species. USFWL recommended that activities related to vegetation removal or disturbance, should avoid the peak nesting period of March through August. Any landscaping associated with Project plans should be limited to seeding and replanting with native species.

#### **Pending Environmental Tasks and Authorizations**

The proposed Project was implemented according to the specifications and technical requirements for environmental protection in order to provide adequate solid waste disposal. There are no pending environmental tasks or authorizations.

#### **Compliance Documentation**

The following formal authorizations were obtained:

- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Application Approval (June 23, 2009)

- Corps of Engineers concurrence letter (March 6, 2008)
- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service concurrence letter approval according to NEPA and FPPA requirements (July 1, 2008)
- United States Fish and Wild Life Service concurrence letter (February 19, 2008)

### **2.2.2. Environmental Effects/Impacts**

The environmental impacts associated with the construction of the facility were minimal and included dust emissions, air pollutant emissions from heavy equipment, and the presence of additional workers and vehicles in the construction site and the access roads to the facility.

The daily operation of the new transfer station also requires that mitigation activities be implemented, particularly when it comes to noise and air emissions from the operation of heavy trucks and heavy duty facility equipment. Overall, when transfer stations are operated properly the environmental benefits clearly outweigh the potential negative impacts. In summary the possibility of long term negative impacts to the environment due to air pollution, as well as contamination of surface and groundwater sources during construction and operation of the facility are significantly minimal.

#### **Existing Conditions and Project Impact – Environment**

The implementation of the Project is, in general, a positive environmental impact since the construction of the facility does not have a long term adverse impact on the environment. The Transfer Station Facility was designed, constructed, and operated to process solid waste material in a confined structure and prevent its release into the surrounding environment. The facility's drainage plan and the established operating procedures insure that there is minimal contact between any rainfall runoff and the refuse, and in the case that any water does come in contact with the waste, such as direct rainfall, are discharged to the assigned ponding areas on site. These measures are aimed at protecting existing surface and groundwater sources. Other issues addressed by the existing operating procedures are provisions related to wet weather, windblown waste, endangered species, special waste storage and disposal, and fire control.

#### **Mitigation of Risks**

The proposed mitigation measures during the construction of the Project were the application of water to reduce dust where necessary, vehicle tune up to reduce air pollutants emissions, placement of traffic preventive signs to avoid dangerous situations, establish haul routes that avoid congested or sensitive areas, create buffer zones, etc.

#### **Natural Resource Conservation**

The Project reduces environmental degradation by improving the solid waste collection and disposal system, and by having a Transfer Station Facility compliant with EPA's Solid Waste Disposal Facility Criteria Act (40 CFR Part 257 and 258), and TCEQ's regulations for Municipal Solid Waste as established by the Texas Administrative Code.

No action alternative

The deficient management of solid waste can cause environmental problems that could impact the air quality, underground water conditions, soil, and increase the possibility of fire in illegal dumpsites, as well as the development of vectors. The transfer station design and construction, as well as its operation, are in compliance with current TCEQ requirements to process municipal solid waste material and prevent its release into the environment. This Project minimizes the possibility for illegal dumping in the County, and as such the potential environmental and health risks associated.

**Existing Conditions and Project Impact – Health**

The implementation of the Project contributes to reduce or avoid the risk of disease to human health and the negative impacts to the environment associated with the inadequate management of urban waste. The project's main purpose is to dispose of municipal solid waste without creating a nuisance or hazard to the public health, safety and the environment. The inadequate disposal of solid waste could be a source of air pollution, soil contamination and surface and underground water contamination. The Transfer Station construction would prevent the illegal disposal of solid waste, pollution of the groundwater sources and reduce soil contamination, and as a result protect the environment and human health by averting direct contact with decaying matter.

**Transboundary Effects**

Transboundary environmental impacts are not anticipated since the location of the Transfer Station Facility is not adjacent to the US Mexico Border. Additionally the MSWTS will not receive or send waste from sites outside the United States. The Project will not have any international impact, as all operations are within the confines of the facility site.

**Other Local Project Benefits**

The proper processing of solid waste reduces the amount of refuse being confined since a screening process allows the recovering of material from the waste stream that can be recycled, and as a result extend the life of the landfill as well and benefitting the local area by reducing the cost of disposal for the community. Furthermore, the screening process will allow for the separation of inappropriate waste that might not be allowed at the disposal facility.

The Project components will reduce the potential for detrimental conditions related to the inadequate management of solid waste that can facilitate spreading contagious diseases. The construction of the transfer station facility promotes community development since it will reduce the potential for contamination caused by inadequate solid waste disposal and thus will improve the quality of life of the community at large.

## 2.3. FINANCIAL CRITERIA

In December 2009, the Project Sponsor met with NADB to discuss the urgency of implementing the transfer station project, demonstrating their need for, and consequently seeking, NADB financial assistance. The pressing issues concerning the Project's completion included the existing landfill's nearing level of capacity, as well as the need to meet TCEQ specifications by addressing the landfill issue or risk fines against the County. NADB informed the Project Sponsor of the certification process related to potential SWEP/loan assistance, including the Bank's financial and procurement policies and procedures. In March 2010, the Project Sponsor informed NADB that the Project had been awarded and construction had begun. Construction began without NADB's review of the procurement documents or the submittal of financial information, as well as other steps in the certification process. Construction of the transfer station was completed in October 2010 and started operating the following month.

In May 2011, it was determined that NADB would accept a SWEP grant application into consideration if the required procurement, financial and engineering information was submitted to NADB and/or BECC. Subsequently, NADB reviewed the procurement documents and concluded that the Project was eligible and in accordance with NADB procurement policies and procedures. The required financial data, including the *late* draft of its financial statement as of September 30, 2010, was submitted in October 2011; the remaining Project costs, projections, and reserves were completed in November 2011, concluding with a recommended contribution of NADB grant sources.

### 2.3.1. Sources and Uses of Funds

The total cost of the Project is US\$**1,431,007**, as shown in Table 2, below, along with the sources of funds.

**Table 2**  
**PROJECT COST AND SOURCES**  
 (US\$ Millions)

Uses	Amount	%
Construction	\$1.43	100.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1.43</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Sources	Amount	%
NADB SWEP	\$0.45	31.4
Loan	\$0.98	68.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1.43</b>	<b>100.0</b>

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### 3. ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

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#### 3.1. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

BECC released the Draft Project Certification and Financing Proposal for a 30 day public comment period beginning June 15, 2012. The following Project documentation has been made available for public review at the Starr County Courthouse and the Courthouse Annex offices and is available for review upon request:

- EPA Decision Makers Guide
- Solid Waste Management Technical study
- Conceptual Design registration
- Bid documents
- Consultation Correspondence
  - United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Services (USDA NRCS)
  - Texas Historical Commission (THC)
  - Corps of Engineers
  - US Fish and Wild Life Service (USFWL)
  - Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
  - Texas Parks and Wild Life Department (TPWD)
- Commissioners Court Meeting Minutes

#### 3.2. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

A Project Steering Committee was established on December 13, 2006. The Committee consisted of County Personnel, City Administrators, Local Organizations, Business Owners as well as members of the community at large. The committee developed a public participation plan which identified appropriate outreach efforts including the following completed activities:

- Project presentations and discussion during regular and special meetings of the County Commissioners Court (July 31, 2009; September 21, 2009; October 21, 2009; November 30, 2009 and August 4, 2010)
- Technical and financial information was made available for public review at the Starr County Courthouse and the Courthouse Annex offices. The information included the Construction Plans and Specifications, Bid Documents, Soils Report as well as other information such as permitting and operational details.

Additionally relevant information on the issue appeared in numerous press articles. The following are just some examples:

- [http://www.themonitor.com/news/county\\_5510\\_landfill\\_trash.html](http://www.themonitor.com/news/county_5510_landfill_trash.html)
- [http://www.themonitor.com/news/county\\_11418\\_landfill\\_grande.html](http://www.themonitor.com/news/county_11418_landfill_grande.html)
- [http://www.themonitor.com/news/trash\\_58364\\_rio\\_rise.html](http://www.themonitor.com/news/trash_58364_rio_rise.html)