



REGION 6

DALLAS, TX 75270

November 1, 2023

**Categorical Exclusion
for the Town of Tornillo
Wastewater Collection System Expansion
Project Number: 159707**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 intends to provide grant funds to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for the Town of Tornillo proposed expansion of the wastewater collection system project located in the town of Tornillo, El Paso County, Texas.

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 incorporated community of Tornillo, Texas is located in El Paso County and situated approximately 32 miles southeast of the City of El Paso on Interstate-10 and two miles northeast of the Rio Grande. The El Paso County Tornillo Water Improvement District is responsible for providing drinking water and wastewater services to its 3,176 residents. Over 80% of the septic tanks in the area are not registered with the county and are often constructed without drainfield connections. The lack of an adequate sanitation system has given rise to serious problems with ground and surface water contamination which pose a major health risk for residents from constant exposure to waterborne infections. Completion of this project will provide newly installed sanitary sewer lines to the community residents in lieu of the current unregistered septic tanks, cesspools and outhouses.

The Proposed Action includes expansion of the wastewater collection system for the town of Tornillo. Residents in the project area currently use on-site systems such as septic tanks and cesspools to manage house-hold wastewater. The system improvements include installation of new sanitary sewer lines to be connected to the existing Tornillo Water Improvement District (TWID) wastewater collection system to provide first-time services to unserved and previously disturbed areas.

Wastewater collected from the new lines will be treated at the existing wastewater treatment plant, which has adequate capacity to treat the additional flows.

The proposed collections system expansion includes:

- Installing 6,400 linear feet of 4-inch pipe,
- 21,500 linear feet of 8-inch sewer lines, and
- 51 48-inch manholes.

The installation of the new pipe is via open-trench except for the proposed 8-inch line along O.T. Smith Road to be in a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Right-of-Way and installed in steel casing by jacking/boring method. The collected wastewater in these areas will be routed to the existing Lift Station through the existing wastewater collection system and treated at the Tornillo's existing wastewater treatment plant which has enough capacity for the additional flow. All project construction activities will take place in previously disturbed areas and that the new expansion to the collection system will not provide capacity to serve a population of 30% or greater than the existing.

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 §6.204(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 §6.204(a)(1)(ii) as it involves minor upgrading or 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 pollutants 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.

The Proposed Action in Tornillo, Texas is directly related to expansion of the existing wastewater collection infrastructure and is involved with minor expansion of system capacity and system components. Additionally, the Proposed Action will not provide capacity that will serve a population greater than 30% of the existing population of Tornillo, Texas.

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 improvements will take place at the existing facility 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,

Robert Houston
Acting Director
Office of Communities, Tribes and
Environmental Assessment