April 29, 2022

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

TO ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES AND PUBLIC GROUPS:

As required by the rules of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), 31 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §371.41, for projects to be funded through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Program and environmental review consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act, 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 Arp, Smith County, Texas
TWDB DWSRF Project No. 62905
Distribution System Improvements
Total Financing Amount: $7,367,173
(L1001436 and LF1001437)

The City of Arp (City) is proposing to use $7,367,173 in financing from the DWSRF for a distribution system improvements project in order to replace the older portions of the water distribution system and install new water meters system wide. The water is distributed to the town through a combination of 8-inch and smaller cast iron pipe (CIP), galvanized iron pipe (GIP), asbestos cement (AC) pipe, and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe water lines. The CIP and GIP pipes were first installed when the system was created in the 1920s, the AC pipes were installed in the mid-1960s, and the PVC was installed when line replacements were performed starting in the late 1990s.

The AC pipe water lines have passed their useful life, and damaged linings have introduced asbestos fibers into the water system. As a result, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has cited the City since 2017 for exceeding the maximum contaminant level (MCL) of asbestos fibers in their water samples. In addition, the CIP and GIP pipes have long passed their useful life, causing the City to experience over 150 water line breaks in the year of 2020. Consequently, over the last five years there has been an average 40% water loss rate across the system, which is well over the average 17.3% acceptable water loss rate for rural areas established by the Region I Water Planning Group.

Our Mission
Leading the state’s efforts in ensuring a secure water future for Texas and its citizens

Board Members
Brooke T. Paup, Chairwoman | Kathleen Jackson, Board Member
Jeff Walker, Executive Administrator
To remedy contaminant and line brake issues, the City proposes to: (1) replace approximately 45,800 linear feet of CIP, GIP, and AC with 6- and 8-inch High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) water lines; (2) install an Auto-Meter Reading (AMR) system with 465 meter replacements, meter boxes, and associated valves; (3) install 60 fire hydrants with associated valves and piping; (4) install 81 6- and 8-inch gate valves; and (5) multiple connectors and 1-inch HDPE pipe segments to connect customer meters to the distribution main. The proposed pipeline construction will take place within existing rights-of-way (ROW) and easements and includes two existing railroad crossings. Existing lines will be replaced by new lines in the same or proximate locations. The existing AC lines will be abandoned in place to avoid soil contamination.

Environmental impacts should be similar to rehabilitation activities and limited to those associated with horizontal drilling, excavation, pipe installation, and road repair. In some cases, the depth of excavation may be greater than the existing pipe, and the location of the replacement pipe may not be immediately adjacent to the existing line (e.g., opposite side of street).

Portions of the project have been funded by a USDA Rural Development Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households (SEARCH) Grant to the City. On June 24, 2020, the USDA State Environmental Coordinator issued a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for the project pursuant to 7 CFR, Subpart B, 1970.53(c)(6), Categorical Exclusion without an Environmental Report. As a condition of the USDA CE, the City completed an intergovernmental review process with the East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) on July 16, 2020. Documentation of the USDA-issued CE and correspondence with ETCOG is on file with the TWDB.

There are no previously recorded significant or potentially significant historical or cultural sites within the project footprint, according to the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) Archeological Sites Atlas, nor is the proposed project within a protected area surrounding a historic cemetery, structure, or district. The THC atlas does include the historic-age foundation of a jail approximately 375 feet to the west of the line on Front St., outside the project’s area of potential impacts.

The proposed project includes one stream crossing at Kickapoo Creek along State Highway 135 (E. Longview Street) and does not include any mapped wetlands. Construction at this potential water of the U.S. will be performed in compliance with the terms and conditions of Nationwide Permit 58 for Utility Line Activities for Water and Other Substances without
requiring a preconstruction notification of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The proposed project is not located within the 100-year floodplain; therefore, coordination with the local floodplain administrator was not required. In addition, the proposed project is not expected to impact threatened or endangered species or habitat.

The decision to grant a Categorical Exclusion is allowed because the specified project elements should 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 §371.41; or
3. the project may violate or has violated federal, state, local, or tribal laws.

The City has committed to the mitigation measures and has the ability and authority to do so. The project also must comply with the following conditions:

- Existing asbestos cement pipe will be abandoned in place;
- Compliance with the terms and conditions of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Nationwide Permit 58 for Utility Line Activities for Water and Other Substances, with impacts to waters of the U.S., including wetlands, beneath the threshold to require a pre-construction notification (PCN) from the USACE;
- Standard emergency condition for the discovery of cultural resources; and
- 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.

Sincerely,

T. Clay Schultz

T. Clay Schultz, Ph.D., Director
Regional Water Project Development