

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT

A. Project Identification:

Applicant: City of Aurora
Project No.: D311553
City: Aurora **County:** Hamilton **State:** NE
Total Project Amount: \$800,000
Proposed DWSRF Loan Amount: \$645,760
Proposed DWSRF Loan Forgiveness Amount: \$154,240

B. Community Description:

Location: Aurora is located in eastern part of Nebraska, at the intersection of State Highways 14 and 34, to the north of Interstate 80.

Population: The 2010 census population of Aurora is 4,479.

Current Water System Facilities: The City's public water system (PWS) consists of five municipal wells, a 300,000 gallon water storage tank and a distribution system. Three of the wells were drilled before 1978, and thus exceed the average life of a supply well in the State's PWSs.

C. Project Description: In March 2016, the City's Engineer completed a design report that evaluated the siting of a new well with transmission main. In October 2013, monitoring of Aurora's most recently drilled Well No. 2005-1 detected Nitrates at 10.2 mg/L, and subsequent quarterly monitoring showed results ranging between 9 mg/L and the drinking water standard of 10 mg/L. A second well has showed similar testing results. The new well will be drilled northeast of Aurora, and test hole data has shown low level of Nitrates, at 1.6 mg/L.

D. Alternatives Considered:

Several well sites were investigated by the City, with all showing low Nitrate levels. Deeper sites showed elevated levels of Arsenic and thus were avoided for the final project siting. The proposed well site will re-establish a primary well for the City, without water quality concerns or those due to the age of their existing wells.

E. Environmental Impact Summary:

Primary:

Construction: Temporary impacts caused by construction include noise and dust, a limited potential for soil erosion, and fuel/oil spills. The City will make

application to the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District for a well construction permit. The new well will be registered with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR). Review and approval for a construction permit will be required from the Engineering Services Program of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Environmental: The construction contracts will require that the contractors return the area to its original or better condition. The wellhouse will occupy a very small area of land (<1,500 square feet) and will have little, if any effect on area species. All of the land area to be impacted during construction was previously disturbed through farming or highway construction.

The proposed project was reviewed by numerous Federal and State agencies for environmental impacts. Two indicated the project would have no effect. The Department of the Army noted the applicability of their Section 404 permit requirements based upon the general project map initially provided. However, the final plans were reviewed by DHHS and there are no Waters of the U.S. in the immediate project vicinity.

Financial: An application for a DWSRF loan has been received for \$800,000 to fund the system improvements. The City is eligible for a 20-year loan with an interest rate of 2% plus an administrative fee of 0.69% on the outstanding principal balance assessed annually. Further, Aurora qualifies for 19.28% of loan forgiveness State Fiscal Year 2017 program criteria. Therefore, the projected annual DWSRF Debt Service (including 10% coverage) is estimated at \$48,119. Aurora's 2017 water rate for a typical residential connection is \$12.25 per month for the first 3,000 gallons of used, with an additional \$1.90 use charge for every 1,000 gallons of water furnished thereafter. That equates to a water bill of \$21.75 per month, based on a common household water use of 8,000 gallons. Aurora has 2,031 active service connections. A monthly capital maintenance charge has been approved for \$1.50 for 2016, \$1.75 for 2017 and \$2.00 for 2018 per user to address the new debt service.

Secondary:

Population Impacts: The new well is not primarily needed for future growth, but to address concerns with existing wells that either have elevated levels of Nitrates or are aging. However, the improvements will be reasonably sized to accommodate for population growth. The Nebraska Department of Aeronautics raised a concern due to the proximity of the project to the Aurora Airport. The City made contact with the Airport Manager, whom indicated that the project posed no issues with the operation of air traffic and control at the airport.

Land Use and Trends: The location of the well is on land owned by the City. The well site has been approved by the DHHS. In addition, all new water mains will be placed below ground at depths that will not interrupt any planned practices. The Nebraska State Historical Society noted that the project will have no effect for archeological, architectural, or historic properties.

Environmental: The proposed project will have no effect on the availability of water quantity in the area. The minimal amount of solid waste generated by the project will be disposed in a licensed landfill. No safety, vibration, noise or aesthetic considerations were identified other than the normal noise and disruptions associated with building and water main construction.

Environmental Justice: The project will not produce any environmental justice concerns. All structures will be placed in areas previously disturbed or on City owned property, and the services provided by the proposed project will be available to everyone in Aurora, equally. No segment of the community's population is impacted disproportionately from related effects.

Mitigation measures necessary to eliminate adverse environmental effect:

Proper construction techniques will be utilized to minimize soil erosion and other potential impacts of construction. Traffic flow may be affected by construction when water main construction is being done along the City road right-of-ways; however, safety control measures (i.e., signs, etc.) will be implemented. An NPDES Construction Stormwater permit for runoff associated with construction activity and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be required by NDEQ for this project if more than one acre of land is disturbed. The Community can designate the General Contractor as the authorized representative on the stormwater permit notice of intent submitted to the NDEQ. Authorization of stormwater runoff from the construction activity must be in place prior to commencing construction.

Irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources: The resources committed to the project include the equipment, materials and energy used in construction.

F. Measures Taken to Insure Environmental Soundness:

Public Involvement: A Public Hearing was held April 12, 2016 to discuss the proposed project and the potential impacts to existing water rates, with 40 days advanced posted notice. A presentation of the proposed project was made by the Engineer, including the project and engineering report.

Public Opposition or Opinions: No comments were made by the public.

Coordination and Documentation with Other Agencies and Special Interest Groups:

Facility Planning: Design Summary for the 2016 Water Supply Improvements, City of Aurora, NE, JEO Consulting Group, March 11, 2016

Federal: Department of the Army, February 2, 2016, letter
Department of the Interior, February 19, 2016, letter

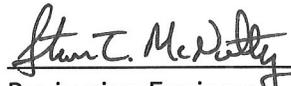
State: Department of Aeronautics, February 2, 2016, email
Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, April 25, 2016, letter
Department of Natural Resources, February 12, 2016, memorandum
Nebraska State Historical Society, January 21, 2016, letter

Tribal: Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, January 29, 2016, letter

Consulting Engineers: JEO Consulting Group, Grand Island, NE

Public Groups: City of Aurora Residents

- G. Positive Effects to be Realized from the Proposed Project:** The project will allow Aurora to maintain compliance with the Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act and ensure future water availability. Test hole data shows that the proposed well should meet all drinking water standards per Title 179, Regulations Governing Public Water Supply Systems. As such, the project is considered reasonable, not contrary to conservation or the public welfare and is a beneficial use of resources by the City of Aurora.
- H. Reasons for Concluding there will be no Significant Impacts:** Review of the engineering report and supporting information indicates that the proposed project will result in no significant impact on the environment. Federal and State agencies reported no impact will result to historical and tribal resources. All necessary permits for construction will be obtained from the appropriate agencies (e.g., NRD, etc.), if necessary.



Reviewing Engineer



Date

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