



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

REGION 6

1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200  
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

February 14, 2010

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

**TO ALL INTERESTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC GROUPS:**

In accordance with the environmental review regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and the implementing environmental review procedures at 40 CFR Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act", the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that the following action is eligible for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) and is exempt from further environmental review.

Drinking Water System Improvements Project  
Proposed by the City of McAlester  
Located in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma

Estimated EPA Share: \$291,000

Estimated Local Share: \$882,500

**BACKGROUND**

The City of McAlester (City) is located in the southeastern portion of Oklahoma approximately 130 miles southeast of Oklahoma City and has an estimated population of 18,000 residents. The City operates its own drinking water treatment plant to serve the water needs of the citizens living in the area. The City has proposed to rehabilitate portions of its drinking water treatment plant in order to provide adequate levels of water treatment and increase operational efficiency.

The project includes rehabilitation of three filters and a clear well and installation of a filter to waste piping, including operating valves. If filter and clear wells are allowed to fail, there could be problems associated with maintaining proper and safe levels of treatment. These conditions could cause a public health hazard for the citizens living in the area. In addition, installation of a filter to waste piping, including operating valves, would allow further automation of the plant treatment process. Increased automation would lead to increased operational efficiency.

The Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriations Act for the EPA included special Congressional funding for water and wastewater construction projects. The funding recipient was selected to receive funding support through these special appropriations for improvements to the operation of the drinking water treatment plant. These improvements should enable the City to continue to protect the health and welfare of the citizens living in the area by improving the operational capability of the water treatment system.

The project was initially reviewed for environmental impacts by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The review by the OWRB determined that no significant adverse environmental impacts should result from implementation of the proposed project, and that the project qualifies for the issuance of a CE. The results of the OWRB are acceptable to the EPA, and provide adequate and reasonable assurance that no significant adverse environmental impacts should result from the project. The funding recipient has requested that the project be granted a CE by the EPA, and be excluded from the full environmental review and assessment requirements of NEPA.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The City is proposing the following improvements to correct the operational inadequacies associated with the treatment facility:

1. Rehabilitation of three filters;
2. Rehabilitation of a leaking clear well; and
3. Installation of a filter to waste piping, including operating valves.

All project-related rehabilitation and installation activities will occur entirely within the footprint of the existing treatment plant. No new land will be acquired, and no persons or businesses will be displaced by the project. After completion, the rehabilitated filters and clearwell and installation of new filters should insure increased operational functionality of the drinking water system. The project will not enlarge or expand the capacity of the treatment plant, which would not qualify for exclusion from full NEPA review.

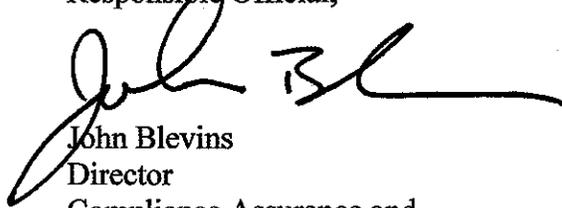
### **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION**

The proposed project qualifies for a CE. The project is a small-scale, routine action solely directed toward minor rehabilitation of existing equipment and installation of new equipment. The proposed action will not individually, cumulatively over time, or in conjunction with any other federal, state, local, or private actions, have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and may be exempted from environmental review under NEPA. No adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on cultural resources, endangered and threatened species and their critical habitat, floodplains, wetlands, prime farmlands, or aquifer recharge zones were identified. There are no Environmental Justice concerns with the proposed project since all residents in the area will benefit equally from the treatment plant improvements.

**APPROVAL**

The request for the issuance of a CE is approved. This approval will be revoked if at any time the project no longer meets the eligibility for a CE, new evidence determines that significant local or environmental issues exist, or that federal, state, local or tribal laws are being or may be violated by implementation of the project.

Responsible Official,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Blevins", written over the printed name.

John Blevins  
Director  
Compliance Assurance and  
Enforcement Division

cc: Kevin Priddle, Mayor  
City of McAlester

J.D. Strong, Executive Director  
Oklahoma Water Resources Board