

**CITY OF GOODYEAR
COUNCIL ACTION REPORT**

SUBJECT: Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding for the Conceptual Design of the El Rio Lake	STAFF PRESENTER: Joe Schmitz, Long Range Planner
	CASE NUMBER: None
	OTHER PRESENTER: N/A

PROPOSED ACTION:

Authorize the Mayor to execute the Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding for the Conceptual Design of the El Rio Lake.

BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS ACTIONS:

The Gila River corridor in the West Valley has been the focus of various studies dating back to 1999 when the El Rio Vision document was first developed. This subsequently led to the completion of the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan (WCMP) in 2006 and the El Rio Design Guidelines and Planning Standards (DGPS) in 2016. More recently, the Rio Salado Reimagined Project was expanded to include the El Rio Project, so that Maricopa County, Native American tribes, and all the Valley cities touched by the river may work together to enhance the river corridor and provide an important connection between the East and West Valley.

The El Rio WCMP and DGPS, which were jointly funded by the Cities of Avondale, Buckeye and Goodyear and the Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC), are a blueprint for flood mitigation, economic development, recreational amenities and habitat restoration on the Gila River between the confluence of the Agua Fria River and SR 85. One of the many recommendations of the El Rio WCMP and DGPS was the development of a lake at the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers.

In 2015 the FCDMC engaged a consultant to investigate the feasibility of a lake at the confluence of the rivers. There is an existing impoundment lake owned by the Buckeye Water Conservation and Drainage District (aka, Buckeye Irrigation District) where water is stored behind an earthen dam and diverted to the Buckeye Irrigation District's canal system for irrigation uses. After evaluation, it was the consensus of the project team and stakeholders that the multi-lake scenario was the preferred alternative. A copy of a summary of the alternatives analysis is attached.

The FCDMC is now proposing to initiate a Design Concept Report for the multi-lake scenario and has asked the Cities of Avondale and Goodyear, as well as the Buckeye Water Conservation and Drainage District, to enter into a non-binding memorandum of understanding that would express the parties' willingness to participate and cooperate in this effort. Funding and contract management for the El Rio Lake Project will be provided by FCDMC.

The study area for the El Rio Lake Project consists of approximately 250 acres near the northwest corner of the intersection of the Litchfield Road and Indian Springs Road alignments. The proposed lake could include approximately 200 surface acres of open water; a grade control structure and other flood control features; an irrigation water takeout structure and replaceable earthen dam; active and passive recreational features and other amenities; re-planting native vegetation and improving wildlife habitat. The Project Partners hope to learn the most effective methods for integrating non-structural and soft-structural flood control elements into future flood mitigation projects along the Gila River.

By executing the MOU, the City is agreeing to participate in the project by providing timely review of project materials as they are prepared and outreach to project stakeholders within each Project Partner's jurisdiction. The conceptual design process will develop preliminary concept schematics, identify opportunities for adjacent development and include public outreach efforts. This process will also provide a review of current property ownership and jurisdictional issues in order to assess the feasibility of alternative project ownership scenarios and estimate future project eligibility for grant funding opportunities as well as future project operations and maintenance responsibilities.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

The El Rio Lake project has the potential to be a significant recreational asset for the area and provide the following benefits:

1. Stabilization of riverbed elevations, reducing potential erosion and damage to upstream and downstream infrastructure;
2. Protection existing and future development and infrastructure from flood hazards, especially scour and headcutting resulting from stream capture by previously mined areas;
3. Creation of a regional county park amenity for boating, recreation, bird watching and tourism;
4. Secure and reliable impoundment for the BWCDD water supply with the potential for increased water storage;
5. Water conservation due to facilitated management of invasive salt cedar near the BWCDD impoundment;
6. Increased development opportunities for adjacent properties;
7. Preservation and restoration of some of the Gila River's natural functions and native riparian habitat;
8. Educational opportunities for schools, community groups and other organizations; and,

9. Heightened regional awareness of the Gila River and the importance of water conservation and river management.

While the Non-Binding MOU expresses the City's support for the El Rio Lake Project and promotes cooperation, it is non-binding and understood that participation in the MOU will not limit in any way the legislative discretion of the project partners, now or in the future. Any party to the MOU may opt out at any time with written notice to the other parties. The MOU does not require any direct financial contribution to the project beyond the commitment of staff time devoted to reviewing and commenting on the project.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

There will be no direct financial impact from this project. The MOU specifically states that approval of the MOU does not imply any financial obligations or commitment on behalf of the participants, other than the voluntary contribution of staff resources from time to time, which is not expected to be significant.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the Mayor to execute the Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding for the Conceptual Design of the El Rio Lake, as proposed.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding for the Conceptual Design of the El Rio Lake
2. El Rio Lake Concept Alternatives