

Public Notice
Red Cloud Mine Road Improvement Project
Proposed *De Minimis* Section 4(f) Finding

The Federal Highway Administration, Central Federal Lands Highway Division (FHWA-CFLHD), in cooperation with Yuma County and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), is proposing improvements to Red Cloud Mine Road. The Project begins at the intersection of Red Cloud Mine Road and Martinez Lake Road and extends approximately 3.0 miles to the intersection with Wildlife Way on the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Yuma County, Arizona. The current roadway is at grade or incised and major storm events inundate the roadway. The roadway is the only access to and from the Imperial NWR and during and after major storms the road becomes impassible until its graded. The purpose of the Project is to improve the resilience and reliability of the roadway to accommodate all-weather road access.

From Martinez Lake Road to Snipe Road, the Project includes approximately 2.0 miles of on-alignment improvements. The existing grade of the roadway would be raised by up to 3.0 feet in washes and the roadway widened to accommodate two 12-foot travel lanes and 2-foot shoulders. Beginning at its intersection with Snipe Road, approximately 1.0 mile of Red Cloud Mine Road would be realigned up to 1,100 feet east-northeast until its intersection with Wildlife Way on the Imperial NWR. This would shift the roadway out of wider wash channels and allow it to cross narrower portions of the channels. Intersection geometry at Snipe Road would be improved and the remaining approximately 500 feet of Snipe Road would be reconstructed on the existing roadway alignment. The Project would pave the entire 3.0 miles and install embankment stabilization, culverts, and low-flow or vented crossings to improve drainage.

Due to road realignment, approximately 0.5 mile of new road would be constructed on the Imperial NWR. The existing Red Cloud Mine Road alignment, which extends approximately 0.3 miles onto the refuge until it intersects with Wildlife Way, would be abandoned, obliterated, and restored. To facilitate these improvements, permanent and temporary easements are required within the Imperial NWR. Due to the proposed use of the Imperial NWR for a transportation use, Section 4(f) regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 apply to the Project. Section 4(f) affords protection to historic properties and publicly-owned parks and recreation areas, such as the Imperial NWR.

FHWA-CFLHD anticipates a *de minimis* impact finding, as defined in 23 CFR 774.17, after consideration of avoidance, minimization, mitigation or enhancement measures. A *de minimis* finding may be made when impacts on a Section 4(f) property will not adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes that qualify the property for protection. The Project has been developed in coordination with USFWS. During construction, access to the refuge would be maintained. In the long-term, the Project would benefit Imperial NWR by improving all-weather access for refuge visitors and employees. To ensure consideration of all issues concerning the Project, we request you submit your comments to FHWA-CFLHD on or before **August 30, 2019**. Please submit your comments to: Dustin Robbins, Project Manager, Central Federal Lands Highway Division, Suite 380, Lakewood, CO 80228 or dustin.robbins@dot.gov.