

# **Summary: BOR Employee Diverted Water From Federal Canal to Private Ranch**

**Report Date: July 29, 2020**

**Report Number: 19-0716**

The OIG investigated allegations that a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) employee illegally diverted water from a BOR canal to a private ranch.

Our investigation confirmed the BOR employee approved the water diversion, but we did not find evidence the BOR employee received any personal benefit, financial or otherwise, as a result. The BOR employee said they approved the water diversion because they were trying to solve the ranch owner's concern that construction in the area had blocked flood-water overflow from coming onto the ranch owner's property. The BOR employee further said they were concerned that the ranch owner would terminate an agreement that allowed the BOR to operate a pump station—which the BOR uses to protect endangered species in the area by pumping water to dry areas—on the ranch owner's property because the terms of the agreement allowed the ranch owner to terminate the agreement if the ranch owner believed the BOR impeded any of their projects.

We further found the BOR employee circumvented engineering and environmental approval by funding the project through an existing operations and maintenance contract instead of a new contract, which would have triggered the BOR's review and approval process. The BOR employee said they believed the project was within the scope of work of the existing contract and did not seek approval before authorizing the water diversion.

This is a summary of an investigative report that we issued to the BOR Commissioner.

