

STATEMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.0 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

In 1912 when New Mexico became a State, Eddy County contained approximately 9,600 people. The 1910 Census showed 9,684 individuals; by 1920 the population had dropped to 9,116, and population again rose to 15,842 in 1930. With the start of potash mining in 1931, growth between 1930 and 1940 was fairly substantial and showed an increase of nearly 9,000 persons, or a total of 24,311 persons. Between 1940 and 1960 Eddy County continued to grow principally because of the mining operations in the county. By 1960 the population had reached 50,783. However, in 1970 the activity in the mining sector decreased, and the population subsequently dropped to 41,119. Between 1970 and 1975 this trend was reversed, and the population count of Eddy County again began to grow. The 1975 estimate released by the Bureau of the Census showed that Eddy County had grown to 42,400--an increase of approximately 1,300 people.

In 1917 Lea County was organized from parts of Chavez and Eddy Counties. By the time of the 1920 Census, the area now known as Lea County had 3,545 residents. Oil exploration began in southeastern New Mexico in 1924 which brought substantial growth to the county. By 1930 the population had increased to 6,144, and by 1940 had tripled to 21,154. Continued growth through 1960 reflected a population of 53,429 at the time of the Census. However, between 1960 and 1970 Lea County sustained a population decrease of approximately 7.3