

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE  
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

HPC Project Number:

19-106

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

<b>Project Title:</b>	West Escudilla PJ and Grassland Restoration Project		
<b>Game Management Unit:</b>	1	<b>Region:</b>	1
<b>Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):</b>		<b>Was the project presented to the LHPC?</b>	
Springerville/Alpine HPC		Yes	
<b>Project Location:</b> (Please provide lat/long in decimal degrees or meters of project area using datum WGS84 or NAD83. If project is larger than one point, please include them all. Provide an accompanying shapefile as an attachment for the project area).			
<b>LATITUDE/NORTHING: LONGITUDE/EASTING:</b> <b>MULTIPLE LOCATION COORDINATES:</b> Please separate coordinate pairs with names & commas. (ex. Bob's Tank 34.365, -110.663. Clear Spring 34.55, -110.107, etc.): This project occurs over 616 acres on the Springerville Ranger District within the Dry Lakes-Nutrios Creek watershed. A shapefile and map of the area has been included. Township: T8N R30E			
<b>Project Type:</b>	Pinyon Juniper and Grassland Restoration		
<b>Water Project Action</b> (if applicable):			
<b>Habitat Restoration Action</b> (if applicable):	Pinyon Juniper and Grassland Restoration		
<b>Other Project Type and Action</b> (if applicable):			
<b>Has this project been submitted in previous years?</b>	No		

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Describe the proposed action only. Please use plain English, what action are you proposing? (If applicable, please reference any completed compliance including EAC#).

**Brief Project Summary:**

This project will involve thinning conifer trees in Great Basin PNV and Pinyon-Juniper Savannah across 616 acres on the Springerville Ranger District (Figure 1). This is part of a larger landscape effort (approximately 39,480 acres) to restore grassland and pinyon/juniper vegetation types on the Apache NF through vegetation treatments and prescribed fire. The Forest Service, through range betterment and fuels funds, will be thinning an additional 1604 acres in 2020 and prescribed burning those areas post-treatment. Encroaching conifer trees will be reduced through mastication or cutting, lopping, and scattering to an average canopy cover of <10% following the desired conditions for the Great Basin Grassland PNV. In the Pinyon Juniper Savannah PNV, pinyon and juniper trees will be left in groups with a target canopy cover of 10% to 20% across the landscape. This project will improve big game habitat by reducing conifer encroachment into grasslands and increasing understory herbaceous vegetation growth and vigor.

In the upcoming years, we will continue to get additional funding from other sources (NRCS, RMEF, and FS funds) to restore additional acres across the greater project area. Using these additional funds as match in future years, we would like to make this a multi-year project (5 years) where we would continue to receive \$90,000 each year. Funds distributed in additional years would be matched by a minimum of 1 to 1. In subsequent years, additional information would be supplied to HPC on specific location and number of acres to be treated prior to funds being distributed.

**Primary Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit:** Elk (30%); Pronghorn (30%); Mule Deer (40%);

**Implementation Schedule**  
(Month/Day/Year)

**START DATE: 5/1/2020**

**COMPLETION DATE: 12/31/2025**

## PROJECT FUNDING

### Project Funding

\*Qualifying Cost Share should be restricted to support (materials, compliance, and or labor) of the proposed action ONLY (same time and place). Please do not include previously purchased supplies or past completed work.

#### HPC Funds Requested

**Amount: \$90,600/year**

#### Cost Share or Matching Funds

**Amount: \$204,455**

#### Percent Match:

#### Total Project Cost

**Amount: \$ 294,455**

### Itemized Use of Funds

Please email separate quotes if HPC funds are to be used to purchase materials or contracted labor: [HPC@azgfd.gov](mailto:HPC@azgfd.gov).

Hand thin and lop live and dead pinyon, juniper, and shrubs (low complexity)  
\$125/acre for 372 acres = \$46,500

Hand thin and lop live and dead pinyon, juniper, and shrubs (medium complexity)  
\$180/acre for 245 acres = \$44,100

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

Please indicate the status of the Project's compliance. if you are unsure, please reference:

HPC Compliance Checklist (<https://www.azgfd.com/wildlife/hpc/forms/>).

If you have questions regarding the requirement of an EAC, contact AGFD's Project Evaluation Program:

(<https://www.azgfd.com/wildlife/planning/projevalprogram/>).

\*\*\*Please email supporting compliance documents to [HPC@azgfd.gov](mailto:HPC@azgfd.gov) \*\*\*

<b>AGFD EA Checklist Completed:</b>	N/A	<b>Completion Date:</b>	
<b>NEPA Completed:</b>	Yes	<b>Completion Date:</b>	8/2/2017
<b>State Historic Preservation Office/ Archaeological Clearance:</b>	Completed	<b>Completion Date:</b>	11/1/2019

Cost Share or Matching Funds (for volunteer labor rates please refer to the worksheet below)

Range Betterment Funds to thin 400 additional acres	\$35,000
FS Fuels funding to thin 1204 acres	\$50,000
Archeological surveys	\$41,755
Prescribed Fire (FS funds to burn 2220 acres)	\$77,700

**Total \$204,455****CONTACT INFORMATION****Applicant**

The project applicant is the responsible party for seeing the work through to completion.

**APPLICANT NAME:** Stan Baker**PHONE:** [REDACTED]**ORGANIZATION:** Mule Deer Foundation**ADDRESS:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]**EMAIL:** [REDACTED]**AGFD Project Proponent**

The Project Proponent is responsible for compliance, implementation, and annual/final reporting requirements.

**AGFD CONTACT NAME:** Sam Williams**PHONE:** 602-527-3303**Cooperators****COOPERATOR NAME(S), ORGANIZATION, ROLE IN PROJECT:**Stan Baker, Mule Deer Foundation-Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, managing agreement and contractors  
Jacob Jaeger, Cooperative Mule Deer Biologist Mule Deer Foundation, managing contractors**PROJECT NEED AND DESCRIPTION**

Please use direct language: why is this project important? What problem will be solved? How will you implement it, and how will the habitat be enhanced? Please include # of acres, methods, roles, and any phases. Please be specific and thorough.

**NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:**

The purpose of this project is to restore the structure and function of grasslands and pinyon-juniper savannah vegetation types by reducing tree densities, reestablishing natural fire regimes, and promoting grassland-associated wildlife species. As a result of historical livestock grazing, fire suppression, changes in wildlife populations, and climate change, these areas have experienced substantial encroachment and infilling by woody species (Figures 2-4). Dense juniper stands reduce light and water availability, leading to the decline of native grasses and herbaceous plants. The loss of this native understory increases surface runoff, which in turn increases erosion into nearby tributaries. This has reduced habitat quality and connectivity, and impacted nutrient cycling and water availability. Restoring grassland improves wildlife habitat; specifically, this project will improve habitat for mule deer, pronghorn, and elk that use this area as winter migration corridor and for birds of prey like, kestrel, red-tail hawks, and northern harriers that rely on grasslands as foraging habitat.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:**

Phase 1 of this project will involve thinning conifer trees in Great Basin Grassland PNV and Pinyon-Juniper Savannah across 616 acres on the Springerville Ranger District. Approximately, 245 acres will receive the grassland restoration treatment and 382 acres will be thinned in the Pinyon Juniper Savannah vegetation type. Encroaching conifer trees will be reduced through mastication or cutting, lopping, and scattering to an average canopy cover of <10% following the desired conditions for the Great Basin Grassland PNV. In the Pinyon Juniper Savannah PNV, pinyon and juniper trees will be left in groups with a target canopy cover of 10% to 20% across the landscape. Groups should strive to obtain structural diversity with all size and age classes represented across the landscape, but should focus around large historic pre-settlement trees. Groups will vary from 2-9 trees in a variable mosaic pattern. Gambel oak trees will not be cut or counted as a leave tree for spacing. Leave trees in order of preference are Gambel Oak, Pinyon Pine, Single Stem Juniper, and Multiple Stem Juniper. Specific prescriptions will be finalized by the district silviculturalist before implementation.

The Mule Deer Foundation will be the steward of this project and will be handling agreements, contractors, and implementation of the work.

**LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S): USFS****PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:**

Monitoring will be conducted during implementation to make sure contractors are following the prescription properly. Post-treatment monitoring will be conducted to evaluate conditions post-treatment. Site-monitoring will occur on a yearly basis to evaluate new sprouting and to determine the best time to follow up with a prescribed burn.

**PROJECT MAINTENANCE:**

There are no structures associated with this project that will need to be maintained. However, the Springerville Ranger District will be using prescribed fire post thinning to help decrease sprouting and new encroachment of conifers and enhance herbaceous vegetation.

**PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:**

Stan Baker

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS LIST:****Have supporting documents been submitted? Yes**

NEPA clearance

Letter from archeologist on status of arch clearance

Proposal with photos and maps

IDIQ for estimated cost for PJ thinning

Shapefile for project area





# West Escudilla Grassland Restoration Project

## Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests - Springerville Ranger District

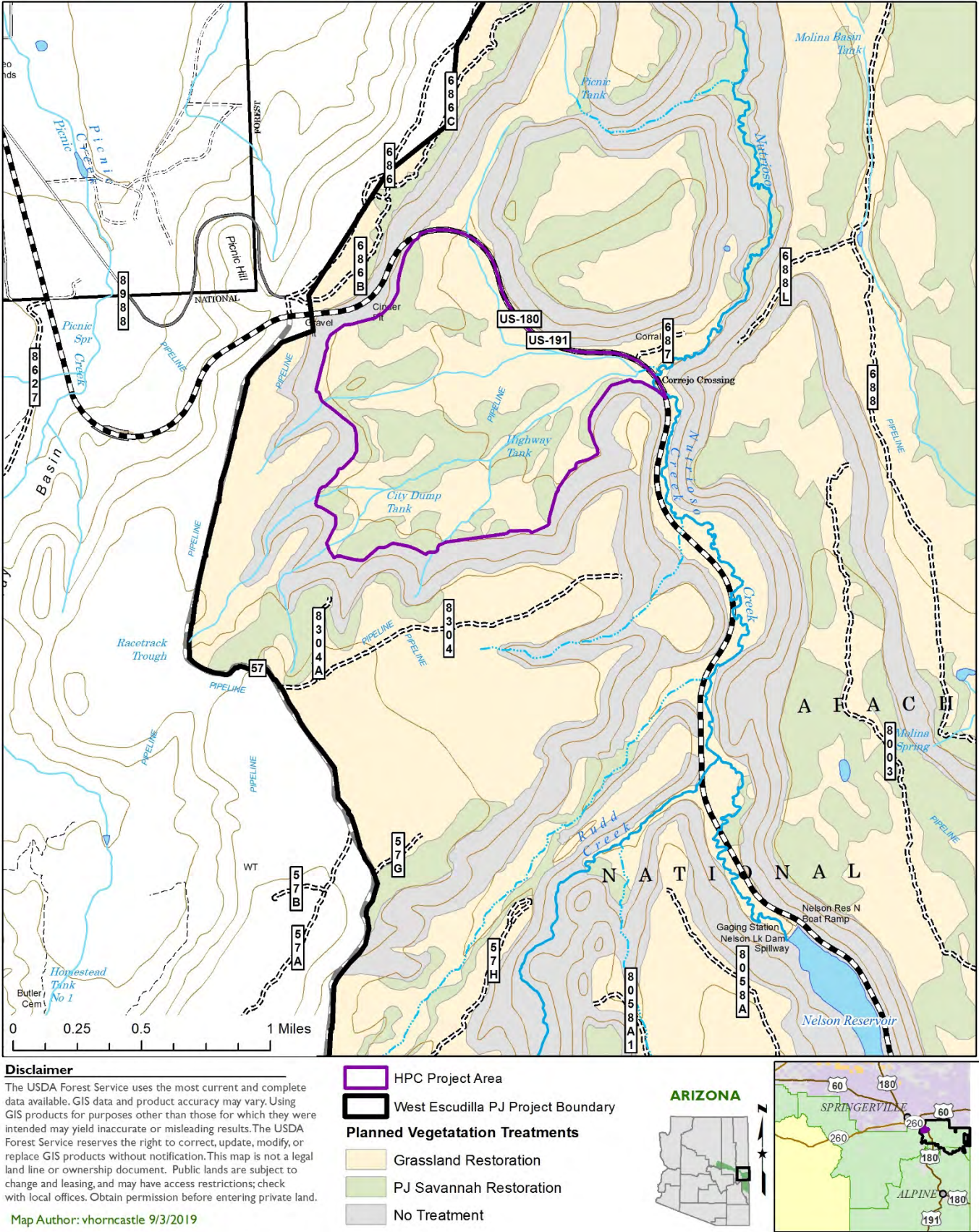


Figure 1. Map illustrating the location of the HPC Grassland and PJ restoration project area. The project is located on the



Springville Ranger District of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest.



Figure 2. Overview picture of the area illustrating conifer encroachment into historical Great Basin grasslands and Pinyon-Juniper Savannah vegetation types.



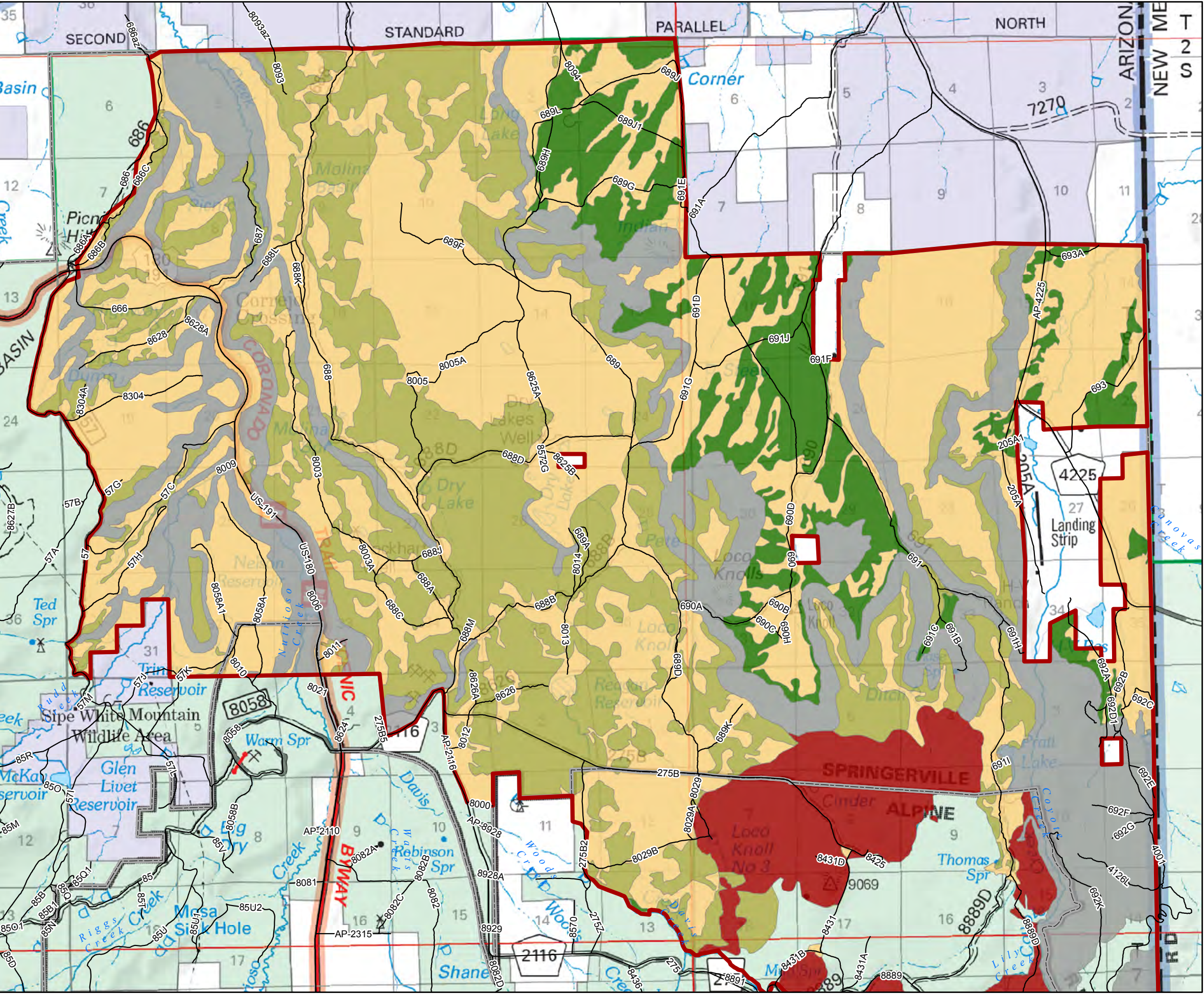
Figure 3. Picture of the project area showing conifer encroachment into the Great Basin grassland.





Figure 4. Picture of the project area showing conifer encroachment in the PJ Savannah vegetation type.

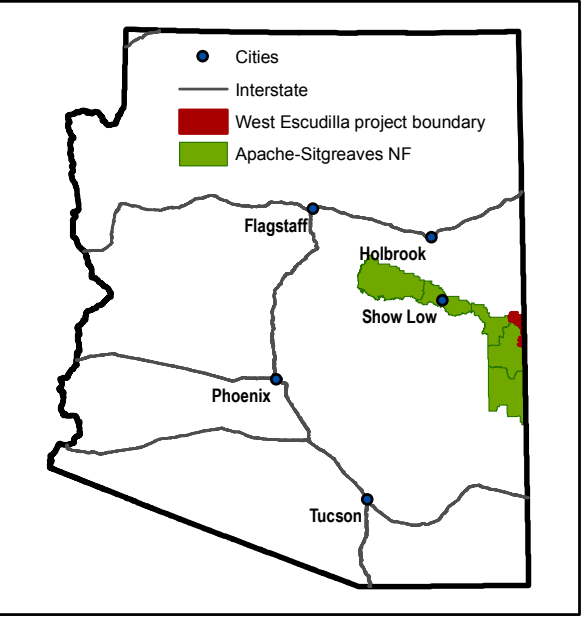




**West Escudilla  
Proposed Treatments**

- Grassland Restoration
- Prescribed Fire With Site Prep
- Woodland - PJ Savannah
- Woodland - Persistent PJ
- No Treatment

- West Escudilla project boundary
- Ranger District
- Road







**File Code:** 2360

**Date:** August 21, 2019

Mr. Kirby Bristow  
Habitat Partnership Committee Coordinator  
Arizona Game and Fish Department  
5000 West Carefree Highway, Phoenix, AZ 85086

Dear Mr. Bristow:

In regards to the Arizona Game and Fish Habitat Partnership Committee proposal for the West Escudilla Grassland and PJ Restoration project on the Springerville Ranger District, the archeological surveys have been completed and we are expecting a final report from the contractor and NHPA consultation completed by mid-Spring 2020. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [esther.morgan@usda.gov](mailto:esther.morgan@usda.gov) or 908-333-6328.

Sincerely,

*//s// Esther Morgan*

Esther Morgan  
Forest Archaeologist

