

# ***Decision Notice for the Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotment Range Improvements Project – Group A Improvements***

U.S. Forest Service  
Globe Ranger District, Tonto National Forest  
Gila County, Arizona

## ***Introduction***

Sedow Allotment is approximately 40,000 acres in Gila County, about 10 miles north of Globe, Arizona. It is located in the northern portion of the Globe Ranger District of the Tonto National Forest. Sedow Allotment is broken into 17 separate grazing pastures. Haystack Butte Allotment is approximately 15,600 acres in Gila County, about 12 miles north of Globe, Arizona and adjacent to the north of Sedow Allotment. Haystack Butte Allotment has 10 separate grazing pastures.

In order to fully implement deferred/rest rotation grazing management to meet conservation objectives of the Forest Plan, better livestock distribution is required. With historic continuous grazing, placement of a few head of cattle at each spring and water was sufficient. Under this management method, cattle would congregate continuously at these water sources leaving no opportunity for the surrounding vegetation to rest and regrow. With less vegetation around springs and water sources, erosion can increase. To reduce these effects, modern rotational grazing management instead rotates cattle, in herds, from one pasture to another allowing the vegetation to recover and regrow before cattle return to the area. However, the existing springs on the Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments do not distribute water to support the rotationally managed livestock herds. Furthermore, many areas of the allotments that contain available forage are underutilized by livestock due to lack of water, distance from available water, and poor spring flows during drier years.

## ***Purpose of and Need for Action***

Grazing is one of many multiple uses that the Forest Services must consider when looking at managing federal land (*Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960, Wilderness Act of 1964, Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, National Forest Management Act of 1976*). On the Tonto National Forest, the decision to authorize cattle grazing often lies with the district ranger, and includes the number of cattle, where and when they are permitted within the allotment, and any ancillary actions that are necessary for the authorization.

**This is not a project to authorize livestock grazing** on the Sedow or Haystack Butte Allotments. For this project, the Globe District Ranger will decide whether or not to authorize additional

improvements on the allotments as described in the proposed action based on the analysis in this document and supporting project record<sup>1</sup>.

This project, as described in the proposed action, is necessary to allow the existing grazing authorization for Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments to continue to comply with Forest Plan direction by managing grazing to achieve conservative utilization of forage. There is also a need to authorize the permittee to install water enhancements to allow cattle to be more reliably rotated around pastures to achieve resource goals. Specifically, we need to:

- Supply additional water for livestock, not presently available due to minimal spring water production, to enhance livestock distribution.
- Assist in livestock management and monitoring on Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments.
- Fully implement deferred/rest rotation grazing management to meet conservation objectives of the Forest Plan, Areas 2F and 2B.

## ***Decision and Rationale***

The Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotment Range Improvements Project Final Environmental Assessment EA (Final EA) documents the environmental analysis and findings upon which this decision is based. Based upon my review of the Final EA and the supporting project record, I have decided to implement many of the improvements proposed in the Proposed Action, as described in the Final EA. These selected improvements have been analyzed for all appropriate resources and have been determined to have no significant effect on the human environment<sup>2</sup>. This group of improvements will be referred to as Group A (Figure 1 and Figure 2). This decision will apply only to Group A improvements.

The remaining improvements (identified as Group B in the Final EA) have also been analyzed (Figure 1). However, due to their proximity to habitats of Threatened or Endangered species, further consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in compliance with the *Endangered Species Act*, may be required before I can authorize these improvements. In the event this consultation results in changes to Group B improvements, design features related to these improvements, or the analysis of said improvements, I commit to issuing a supplemental analysis for public review in compliance with NEPA regulations. Once consultation has been completed, and additional analysis changes finished, if necessary, a separate decision will be issued for these Group B improvements.

The archaeological survey for the this project, follows the approach outlined in *Appendix H: Standard Consultation Protocol for Rangeland Management of the First Amended Programmatic Agreement Regarding Historic Property Protection and Responsibilities Among New Mexico Historic Preservation Officer, and Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer, and Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, and Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, and USDA Forest Service Region 3*. Per the procedures outlined in Section II.C, "the standard Section 106 process will be implemented on all range improvements

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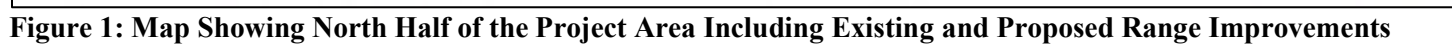
<sup>2</sup> The Finding of No Significant Impact can be found in the Final EA.

and ground disturbing activities that are identified for this project.” These surveys have been completed and a report on their results will be available before I sign my decision for this project. *Appendix, Standard Consultation Protocol for Rangeland Management* developed pursuant to Stipulation IV.A of the Programmatic Agreement, is considered to be the “standard operating procedure” for treating potential grazing impacts to heritage resources on the Tonto National Forest. Effects to these resources can be found in the Heritage Resources section of the Final EA.

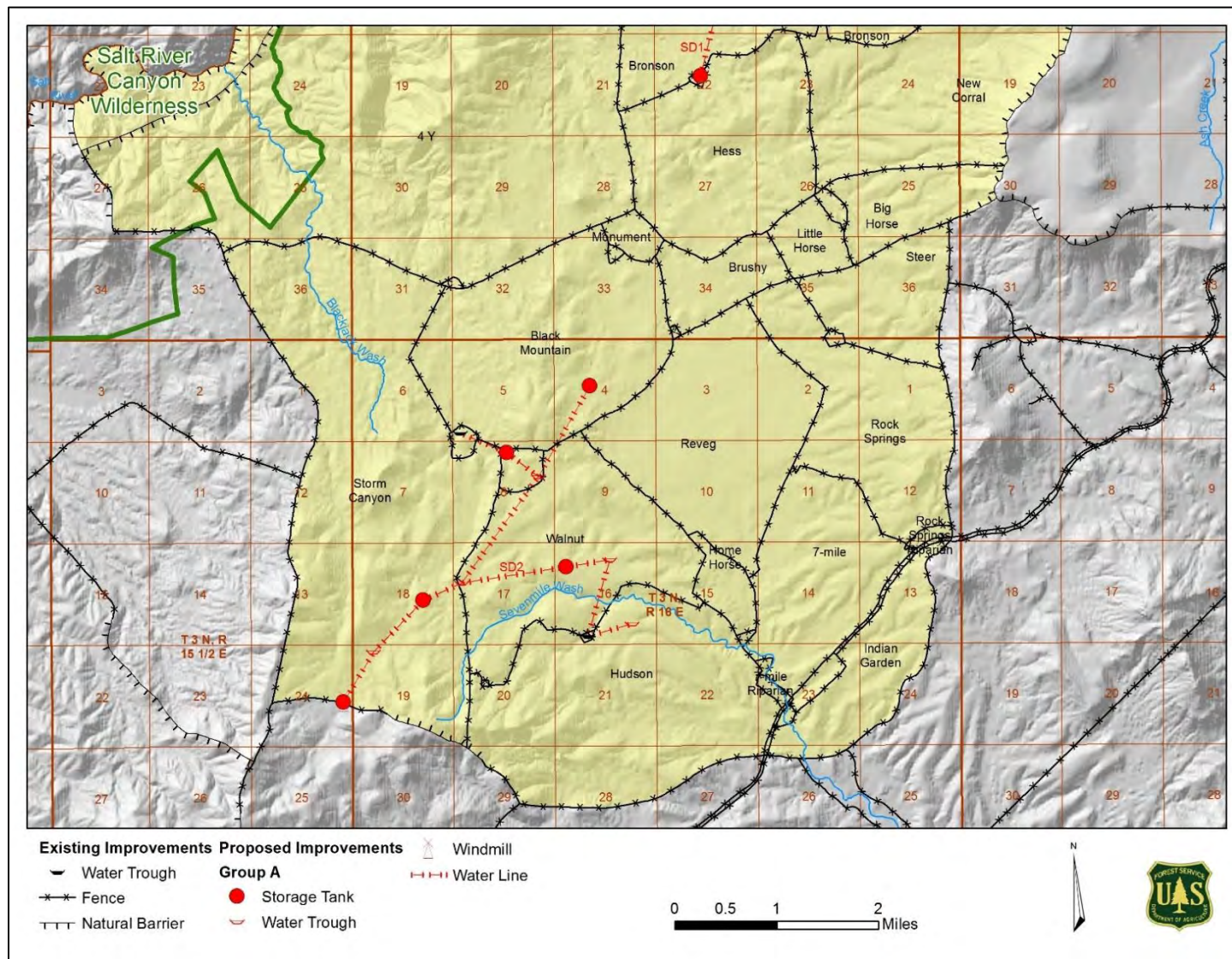
Ongoing drought conditions on the Tonto National Forest have only exacerbated the need for this project. As a result, I have decided to authorize the Group A improvements only. Specifically, I have decided to implement the following:

### ***Proposed Action***

The proposed action was developed to achieve the desired conditions and consists of improvements and design features. The proposed action follows current guidance from Forest Service Handbook 2209.13, Chapter 90 (Grazing Permit Administration; Rangeland Management Decision Making).







**Figure 2: Map Showing South Half of the Project Area Including Existing and Proposed Range Improvements**

## Sedow Allotment Project Descriptions and Locations

The Tonto National Forest proposes authorization of new water developments in order to increase the distribution of the currently authorized livestock numbers within the allotments (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Specifically, the authorization to drill two new water wells on the Sedow Allotment to supply 303 and Yankee Joe waterlines to directly provide water to five pastures, and indirectly support one, which will enhance livestock distribution across the allotment. Yankee Joe waterline will also indirectly affect water distribution in 4Y pasture due to waterlines extending from Storm Canyon pasture which is fed by Walnut spring. Any needed maintenance to existing stock tanks, trick tanks, or springs, shall occur prior to any new enhancement installation. Specific well locations will be determined after seismic testing is completed and shall be referred to as Testing Location.

### *303 Waterline (SD-1)*

At the Testing Location, a proposed well will be drilled and a waterline will be placed alongside Forest Service Road 217 to three new troughs ending at an existing trough in JU trap. The exact location of the proposed well will be determined in consideration of effects to range, riparian, wildlife, and heritage resources. A 10,000 gallon above ground water storage tank will be placed near the second trough to allow gravity to move the water. Total waterline length will be approximately 2.25 miles.

The 303 waterline project, SD-1, is located in Bronson pasture in Township 4 North, Range 16 East, Sections 4, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 24.

### *Yankee Joe Waterline (SD-2)*

From the proposed well at the Testing Location, a waterline will be placed supplying eight water troughs. The exact location of the proposed well will be determined in consideration of effects to range, riparian, wildlife, and heritage resources. Six troughs will be new and the other two will be updated. Three above ground water storage tanks, between 3,000 and 5,000 gallons in capacity, will be placed to gravity feed water to the remaining waterline. One corral will be modernized and one water trough will be placed inside. Total waterline length is 6.5 miles.

Yankee Joe waterline project, SD-2, is located in Black Mountain, Hudson, Storm Canyon, and Walnut pastures in Township 4 North, Range 15 East, Sections 11, 15, and 22.

## Haystack Butte Allotment Project Descriptions and Locations

The Tonto National Forest proposes the authorization of new water developments in order to increase the distribution of the currently authorized livestock numbers within the allotments. Specifically, the authorization to drill one new water well on Haystack Butte Allotment, the extension of existing waterlines, and placement of several above ground water tanks and troughs to supplement existing water system (Figure 1 and Figure 2). This will enhance livestock distribution across the allotment. Any needed maintenance to existing stock tanks, trick tanks or springs shall occur prior to any new enhancement installation. All proposed projects are located north of Globe, Arizona, on the Globe Ranger District. Specific well locations will be determined after seismic testing is completed and shall be referred to as the Testing Location.

## *Cottonwood Pasture*

### ***Headquarters Well (HD-1)***

One new water well will be drilled at the Testing Location near Haystack headquarters and one solar powered water pumping system will be installed. A waterline will be placed from the water pumping system to the existing above ground water storage tank location just south of Haystack Butte headquarters and one new above ground 10,000 gallon water storage tank will be placed adjacent to two existing above ground water storage tanks. Water will be used to facilitate cattle distribution throughout the allotment.

Headquarters Well project, HD-1, is located in Breeding pasture in Township 4.5 North, Range 16 East, Section 35.

### ***Cottonwood Pasture Waterline (HD-2)***

For HD-2 there are a total of three new 5,000 gal tanks and 3 troughs. These troughs would be fed off new storage tanks. The last trough will be fed from an existing trough at Butte trap and corral.

Two of the new adjacent, above ground 5,000 gallon water storage tanks will be placed just west of where Forest Service Road 303 ends. It is less expensive and a less visible profile to add two smaller storage tanks as opposed to one large one.

An above ground waterline to a third, above ground, 5,000 gallon water storage tank will be placed in Cottonwood pasture.

An existing waterline will be extended at Boundary pasture corrals alongside Haystack Butte and Chrysotile boundary.

Cottonwood Headquarters Waterline project is located in Cottonwood pasture in Township 4.5 North, Range 16 East, Sections 27, 33, 34, and 35.

### ***Windy Ridge Waterline (HD-3)***

An existing waterline from Yellow-jacket water lot will be extended and new above ground waterline and four water troughs will be placed alongside Forest Service road 985, also known as Windy Ridge road.

One new above ground water storage tank and trough will be placed at end of proposed Windy Ridge waterline at Black Mesa corral.

Windy Ridge Waterline project, HD-3, is located in Cottonwood pasture in Township 4 North, Range 16 East, Sections 3 and 4.

### *Upper River Pasture*

#### **Black Mesa Waterline (HD-5)**

Place above ground waterline and one water trough at White Ledges Gap from proposed above ground water storage tank at Black Mesa corrals.

Black Mesa Waterline project, HD-5, is located in Upper River pasture in Township 4 North, Range 16 East, Sections 4 and 5.

### *West Steer Pasture*

#### **West Steer Water Storage Tank (HD-7)**

The existing waterline from above ground water storage tank in West Steer pasture near Forest Service road 303 will be extended. New above ground waterline will be placed alongside Forest Service road 303, turning east, and leaving road just north of Switchback dirt water tank.

One new water trough will be installed in Cottonwood pasture.

West Steer Water Storage Tank project, HD-7, is located in West Steer pasture in Township 4 North, Range 16 East, Section 2.

### *Bronson Pasture*

#### **Bronson Pasture Waterlines (HD-8)**

Existing waterline will be extended north from Bronson pasture Trick Tank. New above ground waterline and one water trough will be installed.

Existing waterline from water the trough on the ridge east of Bronson pasture Trick Tank will be extended. New above ground waterline and three water troughs will be installed.

Existing waterline from above ground water storage tank alongside Forest Service road 2512 will be extended. New above ground waterline and one water trough will be installed.

Bronson Pasture Waterline project, HD-8, is located in Bronson pasture in Township 4 North, Range 16 East, Sections 1 and 2, and Township 4 North, Range 17 East, Sections 6 and 7.

#### **Basin Waterline (HD-9)**

Existing waterline from Upper Ash Creek pasture will be extended from existing Turkey well solar pumping location. A new 2500 gallon above ground water storage tank will be installed near existing trap and one water booster pump will be installed.

New above ground waterline and four water troughs will be placed alongside Forest Service road 304B.



Basin Waterline project, HD-9, is located in Bronson pasture in Township 4.5 North, Range 16 East, Section 36, and Township 4.5 North, Range 17 East, Section 31.

### *Upper Ash Creek Pasture*

#### **Cypress Waterline (HD-10)**

Existing waterline in Upper Ash Creek pasture will be extended from existing Turkey well solar pumping location to an additional new solar pumping location located adjacent to two existing water storage tanks. New above ground waterline will be placed along with two new above ground water storage tanks, and four new water troughs alongside Forest Service road 1130.

Cypress Waterline project, HD-10, is located in Upper Ash Creek pasture in Township 4.5 North, Range 16 East, Sections 25 and 36, and Township 4.5 North, Range 17 East, Section 30.

#### **Middle and Lower Ash Creek Waterline (HD-11)**

Existing waterline from Upper and Middle Ash Creek pastures at Haystack guzzler, also known as UFO trick tank will be extended. New above ground waterline and four new water troughs will be installed alongside Forest Service road 3127.

New above ground waterline and two new water troughs will be installed alongside Forest Service road 1052 in Middle Ash Creek pasture.

Middle and Lower Ash Creek Waterline project, HD-11, is located in Middle and Lower Ash creek pastures in Township 4.5 North, Range 16 East, Sections 13 and 24.

## **Design Features**

The following design features are proposed to decrease or eliminate potential adverse effects to natural resources from the proposed water improvements:

- All water storage tanks must have closed tops.
- All waterlines must be no smaller than 1.25 inch diameter.
- Water troughs must be kept at a useable height for livestock. A portion of the trough may be buried below grade to achieve this.
- Overflow pipe must be installed on all troughs, with water piped to nearest drainage or at a minimum of 50 feet away.
- Water from new wells should be pumped during higher flow periods and less or none at low or base flow periods.
- Disturbance to obligate riparian vegetation should be minimized, including but not limited to willows, cottonwoods, and sycamores.
- Spring developments will not dewater the spring and must maintain a residual flow for riparian obligate and wildlife species.
- All water troughs must have escape ramps built of expanded metal or similar materials and extend to bottom of trough and sides. Ramp should be firmly secured to trough rim so not to be knocked loose by animals. Access ramps shall be constructed of durable material such as concrete or metal. Slope will not exceed 45 degrees.

- Poles, posts, or trough frames must not be taller than trough or cross above trough.
- Waterline air or drain vents must be covered with fine mesh to prevent rodents or dirt from entering line. All above ground waterline supported structures will be maintained to keep pipe at gradient and prevent sagging.
- Troughs should be placed on rocks or concrete to prevent mud holes or sinkholes. Troughs should be painted a color which best blends with surrounding landscapes if using galvanized steel or other reflective surfaces.
- Storage tanks should be painted a color which best blends with surrounding landscapes.
- Where and when practical, as determined by the permittee and Forest Official, water should be available for wildlife year-round.
- Inspect and remove any wildlife to an appropriate habitat before removing water from troughs.
- Adequate levels of snags and dead and downed wood will be retained in the project area though some may be removed during project construction.
- All improvement components (e.g., cut sections of pipe, left over metal) used for construction must be removed from Forest and properly disposed of.
- In disturbance areas after development is finished, development sites should be mulched for soil rehabilitation. Mulch should be weed free, to avoid invasive or noxious weeds.
- There are five proposed water troughs in the Salt River Canyon Wilderness. These need to be composed of native materials, where practicable, and consider the visual impacts to the casual observer.
- All pipelines leading to the troughs in the Wilderness must be buried.
- To maintain the visual quality objectives in the uplands the pipeline should also be buried, where practicable, especially along the roads.
- In order to allow for future road maintenance, pipelines should be placed at least 8 to 10 feet from the edge of the road.
- If necessary, a Minimum Required Decision Guide (MRDG) will be completed prior to any use of motorized or mechanized equipment in the Salt River Canyon Wilderness.
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## *Other Alternatives Considered*

I also considered a no action alternative, or not authorizing additional water developments to the Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments. Per *36 CFR 220.7(b)(2)(ii)*, “The EA may document consideration of a no-action alternative through the effects analysis by contrasting the impacts of the proposed action and any alternatives(s) with the current condition and expected future condition if the proposed action were not implemented.” Throughout the analysis for this project, the effects from implementing the proposed action are compared to the effects of continuing management utilizing only the existing water improvements, which complies with direction in *36 CFR 220.7(b)(2)(ii)*.

I did not select this alternative because it does not meet the purpose and need for this project, as previously detailed.

## Public Involvement

On January 31, 2018, the Forest Service released a scoping letter to 315 interested and affected parties soliciting comments on this project<sup>3</sup>, which also signaled the combination of notice and comment per 36 CFR 218.24. Concurrently, on January 31, 2018, a Public Notice was published in the *Arizona Silver Belt*, the newspaper of record for Globe Ranger District, notifying the public that the Preliminary EA was available on the Schedule of Proposed Actions and beginning the 30 day public comment period. Five written comment letters were received. All relevant issues raised during the combined process were considered by the Globe District Ranger when developing alternatives, mitigations, and environmental analyses for the current action<sup>4</sup>.

Many commenters were concerned that some of the improvements proposed in this project had been originally included in a previous project, the Salt River Allotments Vegetative Management Project, which would have authorized grazing, authorized extensive range improvements, and authorized other vegetation management actions across six grazing allotments bordering the Salt River including the Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments. That project was cancelled by the Tonto National Forest. This project only authorizes water developments to be built consistent with the current livestock authorization for the Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments and Forest Service policy. Some of these water developments were identified as needed within the Salt River Six project. That need has not changed and is the focus of this proposed action.

Other comments remarked on the intersection of the proposed range improvements and the current grazing authorization on the Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments. They were concerned that this project would replace a complete allotment grazing analysis and reauthorize grazing or increase grazing with this decision. As specified in the Final EA, this project **does not** authorize, reauthorize, or change the current grazing authorization in any way. The Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments remain on the Forest's rescission schedule so grazing authorization can be considered on these allotments within a future project. The current project does not replace that analysis.

Commenters also highlighted ongoing drought conditions and the pressure that drought conditions place on existing riparian areas. They also wondered why we were proposing to add water developments to these allotments as opposed to modifying the number of permitted livestock in response to these conditions. Livestock management under drought conditions is managed under the existing grazing authorization decision and using direction found in Regional Forest Service policy found in Forest Service Handbook, Southwestern Region Supplement 2209.13-2006-1. (Grazing Permits Administration Handbook FSH 2209.13 Chapter 10.) This is not a project that would change that management or change the number of livestock authorized; however, since this project was proposed on January 31, 2018, the Tonto National Forest, under direction from Congress, is working with all the permittees forestwide to address grazing management under the current conditions. One avenue that is being examined is the need for additional range improvements on a broad scale across allotment boundaries. This project is outside of

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<sup>3</sup> Mailing lists of all agencies and persons contacted are available in the project record.

<sup>4</sup> For a complete detail of how comments on the Preliminary EA were addressed, see the Response to Comment Report in the project record.

that effort, but some of the improvements may meet the congressional direction and improve conditions currently facing the Tonto National Forest. Additionally, by adding additional water sources in the uplands and away from springs and riparian areas, livestock distribute across a pasture more evenly. If the only water source is in a spring or riparian area, then those areas have concentrated use that can quickly exceed utilization standards. By increasing water sources, livestock tend to travel around the allotment to more prime forage areas, not needing to go as far to access any specific water source, thereby relieving pressure on springs and riparian areas.

### ***Finding of No Significant Impact***

After considering the environmental effects described in the Final EA and incorporated information, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have significant effects on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Details of the finding of no significant impact can be found in the Final EA. Thus, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

### ***Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations***

This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan. As discussed in the separate resource sections of the Final EA and in detail in the finding of no significant impact section of the Final EA, the actions associated with the Proposed Action comply with all applicable laws that the Forest Service must comply, including but not limited to: *Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act*; *Wilderness Act*; *Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act*; *Federal Land Policy and Management Act*; *Clean Water Act*; *Endangered Species Act*; and *Migratory Bird Treaty Act*.

### **Forest Plan Consistency**

The Forest Plan provides the following direction for range improvements in Management Area 2B (Globe Ranger District – Salt River Canyon Wilderness) (page 77), “Minimal range improvements necessary for Level B management and protection of the forage and soil resources commensurate with wilderness values.” Level B for range improvements are described as “Improvements are minimal and constructed only to the extent needed to protect and maintain the range resource in the presence of grazing.” (Forest Plan page 243). The Final EA describes the lack of adequate water to support livestock and the need to provide reliable and adequate water within Management Area 2 B (Haystack Butte Allotment – River Pasture). River Pasture is located entirely within the wilderness boundary. Any range improvements in this pasture are necessarily within the wilderness. The proposed improvements represent minimal range improvements necessary to manage livestock in the River Pasture under Level B management, and are therefore consistent with the Forest Plan.

The remaining areas of the allotments outside of the Salt River Canyon Wilderness are located within Management Area 2F. The following direction is listed for this management area, “Manage suitable rangelands at Level D.” (Forest Plan page 87-1). Range Resources Management Level D for range improvements is described as “From all existing range and livestock management technology, practices may be selected and used to develop cost effective methods for achieving improved forage supplies and uniform livestock distribution and forage use..... Cultural practices may be combined with fencing and

water developments to implement complex grazing systems and management methods.” (Forest Plan page 243). The Final EA describes the lack of adequate or reliable water to support authorized livestock within the project area. It also describes the need to provide adequate water for livestock across the Sedow and Haystack Butte Allotments and the need to improve livestock distribution. Water developments identified in Group A within Management Area 2F are consistent with this direction and are therefore consistent with the Forest Plan.

## ***Administrative Review and Objection Rights***

The analysis for this Decision Notice was completed under the authority of the Project-level Predecisional Administrative Review Process per *36 CFR 218 parts A and B*.

On May 30, 2018, the legal notice for the objection period for this project was posted in the *Arizona Silver Belt* and an email was sent to all participants who had standing to object. In this notice, the public was notified that a draft decision based on the final environmental assessment was made following the pre-decisional objection process, pursuant to Forest Service regulations at *36 CFR 218*. Three formal objections were filed and all submitters had complied with *36 CFR 218.8(d)*.

These objections were resolved with minor clarifications included from the draft decision notice to this final decision notice. The Response to Comment Report was also modified to add additional clarifications on two points<sup>5</sup>. An official response to each objector was completed by the Reviewing Officer, Neil Bosworth, Tonto National Forest Supervisor.

## **Implementation Date**

Implementation of activities under the selected action will occur based on this Decision Notice. Once this decision is signed, implementation of the Sedow Haystack Butte Range Improvements project can begin immediately pursuant to regulations at *36 CFR 218*.

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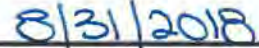
<sup>5</sup> The updated version of the Response to Comment Report has been posted to the project webpage, replacing the previous version.



## Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Jamie Wages, project lead at 7680 S. Sixshooter Canyon Rd., Arizona 85001, phone (928) 402-6200 or [ajwages@fs.fed.us](mailto:ajwages@fs.fed.us).

  
Mark Sando  
Globe District Ranger

  
Date

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