

# Decision Memo

Pine Creek Well Pipeline & Drinker  
Pleasant Valley Ranger District  
Tonto National Forest  
Gila County, Arizona T10N, R14E, Sec. 31 of the GSRBM

## Background

The Pine Creek Well Pipeline and Drinker project on the Pleasant Valley Ranger District within the Bar X group of allotments, just off of FR 2993 and along FR 457, approximately 10 air miles northwest from Young, Arizona. (See map in appendix A)

## Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to provide adequate water for wildlife and permitted livestock in portions of the Bar X allotment not currently served by any water sources. The Forest Service in coordination with the permittee needs to take this action in order to provide the best management practices to this allotment.

Development of these additional drinkers will enhance grazing distribution and will lessen grazing impacts around all water sources. Additional water sources will provide better habitat for wildlife in the area as well as more hunting opportunities for the public. The permittee has sought and been approved for funding to accomplish this work through the AZG&F Department.

The Tonto NF Plan has the following requirements on page 41:

- Provide a minimum of four waters per section in small game and one water per section in big game key areas.
- Continue close coordination with State and other federal agencies for the benefit of plant and animal species.
- Maximize coordination with the Arizona Game and Fish Department regarding State listed species and their habitats.
- Using Desired Future Condition as a guide, optimize wildlife outputs in all management units by coordination of other resource activities and direct habitat improvement projects.

## Conservation Measures and Best Management Practices

All necessary archeological and biological clearances have been accomplished for this project.

## Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Actions

I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this project that would preclude the use of this category. This determination is based on the absence or the negligible level of adverse effects on the following resource conditions:

- a. Federally-listed threatened, endangered and/or Region 3 sensitive species or designated critical habitat. A site-specific Biological Assessment & Evaluation was completed and signed on 3/13/15.
- b. There are no effects to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.
- c. There are no congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas within the project area.
- d. There are no inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas within the project area.
- e. There are no research natural areas within the project area.
- f. American Indian religious or cultural sites; and archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas. A 100% archaeological survey was completed and signed by the Forest Supervisor on 5/28/15.

## Public Involvement

On 7/15/2015, a scoping letter was mailed out to 15 individuals and organizations outlining the proposed action. No comments were generated by this scoping letter.

My assessment is that this project falls within the categories of actions listed in the Forest Service National Environmental Policy Handbook (FSH) that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. This category is found in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30. 36 CFR 220.6(e)(9). *Implementation or modification of minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when an allotment management plan is not yet in place.*

## Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the Forest Plan, Forest Service Policy, and other management considerations. The project was designed in conformance with the Forest Plan and other federal and state law, policy, and direction applicable to the resources present in the Tonto NF. *The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 104-33, as amended)* requires the U.S. Forest Service to provide for biological diversity on National Forest Service lands consistent with overall multiple-use objectives and to maintain viable wildlife populations in the planning area. The Forest Plan discloses forestwide standards and guidelines and management area direction.

Implementation of this decision will not violate any Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment including:

- *Clean Water Act, as amended*
- *Clean Air Act, as amended*
- *Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended*
- *American Antiquities Act of 1906 and Historic Preservation Act of 1966*
- *Executive Order 13186 of 2001, Migratory Bird Treaty Act*
- *Executive Order 12898 of 1994, Environmental Justice*
- *Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management*

## Decision

I have decided to authorize the permittee to install a new water storage tank and associated drinkers, as well as approximately 1 mile of surface pipeline. The project will be located along FR-457. Ground disturbance would include surface leveling using either a small dozer or hand tools in order to install the new water tank and drinkers; the pipeline will be hand rolled out across the surface, but will be buried (using hand tools) where it crosses two roads.

This decision includes the following design features for resource protection:

- All drinkers will be fitted with wildlife escape ramps
- System to remain charged with water and available to wildlife year round.

## Implementation Date

This project is not subject to appeal. I anticipate implementing this project during the winter of 2016.

## Contact

For additional information contact North Zone Range Staff, Doug Ruppel at  
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4/23/15

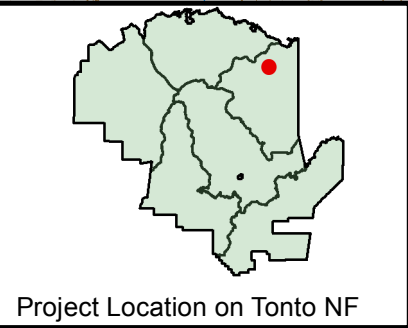
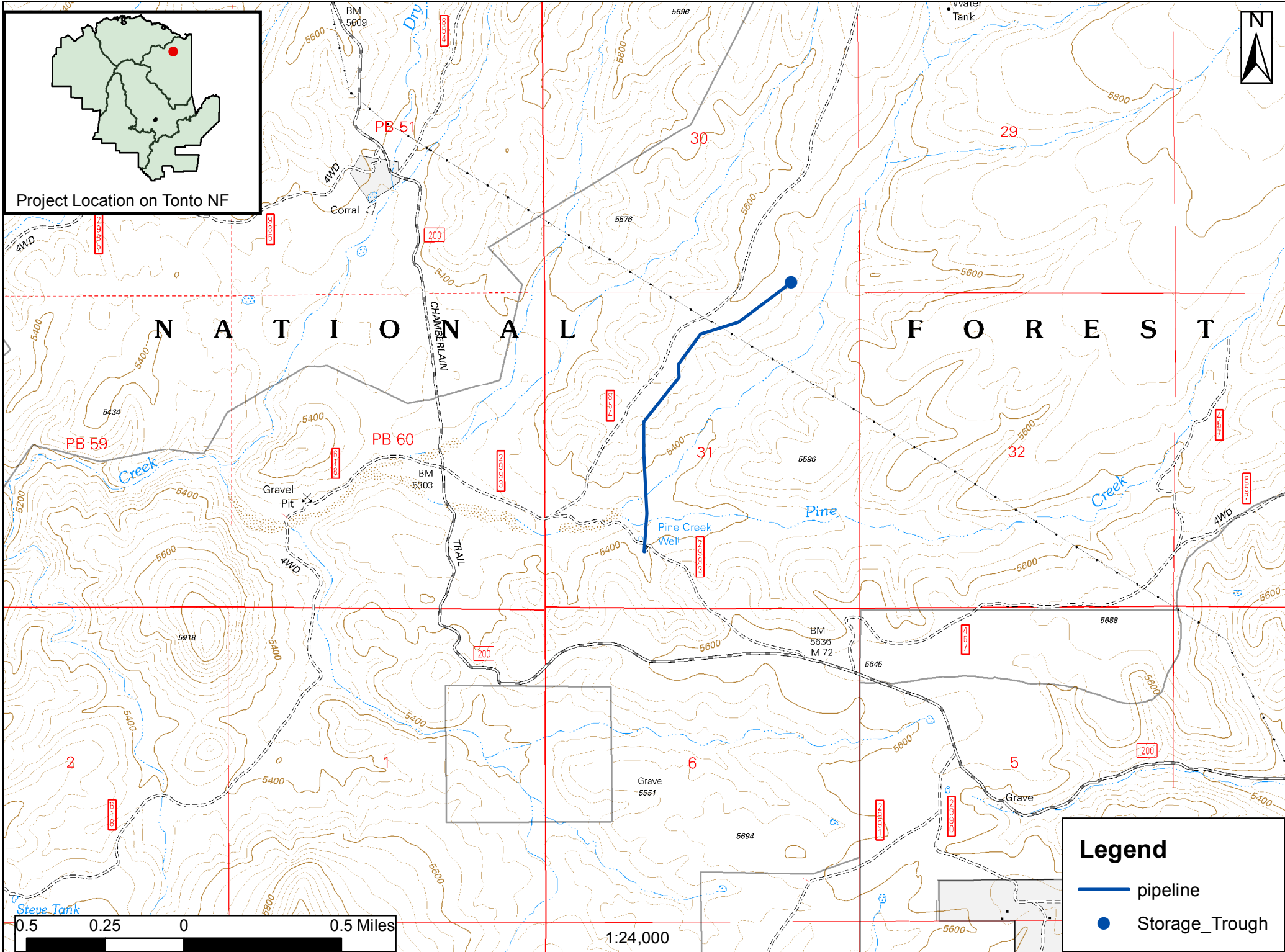
Debbie Cress, Payson District Ranger  
 North Zone, Tonto National Forest

Date

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# Pine Creek Pipeline, Storage and Trough



### Legend

- pipeline
- Storage\_Trough

0.5 0.25 0 0.5 Miles

1:24,000