

DECISION MEMO
BAR X 2011 PIPELINE EXTENSIONS
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
TONTO NATIONAL FOREST
PLEASANT VALLEY RANGER DISTRICT
GILA COUNTRY, ARIZONA

BACKGROUND

This project consists of improving three existing water developments in three pastures within the Bar X Allotment. Existing water developments would be improved by extending pipelines and adding storage units and/or stockwater drinkers in advantageous locations. Project elements include:

1. Upper Dry Creek Pasture

Good livestock distribution in this pasture is limited by precipitation, ephemeral flow in Mexican Canyon, water storage in the pasture's sole dirt tank, and forage production. The solitary dirt tank is located in the headwaters of Mexican Canyon in the northeast portion of the pasture. Limited stockwater in the southwest portion of the pasture leads to uneven distribution of livestock across the landscape. There is an existing well on the permittee-owned bordering private property. Livestock distribution and utilization in this pasture would be enhanced by extending the pipeline from the well to strategically placed storage units and drinkers in the southwest portion of Windmill Pasture. Gravity flow stockwater to the drinkers would be controlled to manage livestock distribution.

2. Lower Dry Creek Pasture

Good livestock distribution in this pasture is limited by precipitation, ephemeral flow in Dry Creek and forage production. There are no dirt tanks within this pasture. An existing storage unit and drinker are located on the south-most corner of this pasture. There is another, split-pasture drinker on the Haigler/Upper Dry / Lower Dry pasture boundary in the north-most corner. Some of the highest production rangelands occur on the north slopes of the knoll in the southeast portion of this pasture; however, good livestock distribution into these uplands is limited by distance to stockwater. Livestock distribution and utilization in this pasture would be enhanced by extending the existing pipeline from south-most corner of the pasture to a strategically placed storage unit and drinker north of the knoll. Gravity flow water to the drinker would be used to control livestock distribution.

3. Haigler Pasture

Good livestock distribution in this pasture is limited by precipitation, ephemeral flow in a tributary of Alderwood Canyon and water storage in the pastures two dirt tanks. One dirt tank is located in the east central part of the pasture while the other occurs on west central pasture boundary. An existing storage unit and drinker are located on the south-most corner of this pasture below FS Road 200. High production forage occurs in the northeast region of this pasture; however, good livestock distribution into these uplands is limited by distance to stockwater. Livestock use of this pasture would be enhanced by extending the existing pipeline to a strategically placed storage unit and drinker about ½ mile further north on the same mesa. Gravity flow stockwater would used to control livestock distribution.

Ground disturbance at the proposed water storage unit and drinker locations would be limited to a "cut and fill" to level the base for the units as necessary. Pick and shovel would be used to cut up to one foot of soil from the uphill side of the slope and use it to fill the downhill side, forming a level staging area. Units would be located in naturally occurring openings with very rocky soils and limited vegetation. Although there is not expected to be any, overflow would be directed into dense vegetation away from the sites. Intake and overflow pipelines would be buried for 20 feet from the base of drinkers and a 20 foot perimeter of the drinker would be covered with local rock to eliminate trampling, wallowing and compaction of soil and plumbing materials directly around the drinker.

Ground disturbance along the above ground pipelines from well to storage units to drinkers would be limited to 18 inch rebar strategically placed to anchor the pipeline on slopes, staked on the downhill side and "horse-shoed" uphill over the pipe.

Archeology surveys and biological assessments are completed and work would be authorized through Term Grazing Permit Modification prior to any ground disturbing activities on these project locations.

All drinkers would be equipped with wildlife escape ramps to prevent entrapment of small mammals and birds and would be designed so that bats would not risk hitting brace wires or structures while drinking.

DECISION

I have decided to implement the Bar X 2011 Pipeline Extension project for all three pastures described above and displayed on the attached maps.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as:

1909.15.31.2 (Categories of Actions for Which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo Are Required)

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. Examples include but are not limited to:

b. Adding a stock watering facility to an existing water line

This category of action is applicable because this project includes adding stock watering facilities to three existing water lines on the Bar X Allotment.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – BE #11-PVRD-RANGE-200 completed by District Wildlife Biologist, Julia Camp on 06/11/2011 records, "While significant alteration of habitat will occur in the project area, it is our determination that a detailed biological evaluation and consultation with the US Fish & Wildlife Service is not required due to the small size of the proposed project and minimal anticipated effects to soils and vegetation."

Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – Forest Hydrologist Lynette Mason recorded on 06/11/2011 that there are no flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds effected by this

project.

There are no congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas within these pastures on the Bar X Allotment.

There are no inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas within these pastures on the Bar X Allotment.

There are no research natural areas present within these pastures on the Bar X Allotment.

An Heritage Program Inventory Assessment was completed by District Para-archeologist Sean Brown 05/19/2011 and clearance recommended by Forest Archeologist Scott Wood and Acting Forest Supervisor Thomas Klabunde on 05/31/2011 documents there are no issues related to American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites .

An Archeological Survey Report was completed by District Para-archeologist Sean Brown on 05/19/2011 and clearance recommended by Forest Archeologist Scott Wood and Acting Forest Supervisor Thomas Klabunde 05/31/2011 documents there are no issues related to Archaeological sites or historic properties or areas. Concurrence by State Historic Preservation Office is pending; if not granted, the project cancellation will be cancelled.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Tonto National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions on 06/08/2011 and updated periodically during the analysis.

Internal coordination for the projects occurred with the following Forest Service personnel: Denise Ryan, Zone Archeologist; Julia Camp, District Wildlife Biologist; Jeremy Human, District Fuels Specialist, Norm Ambos, Forest Soil Scientist; Lynette Mason, Forest Hydrologist, and David Frew, District Recreation Specialist. Term Grazing Permit Holders on neighboring allotments were advised verbally and via e-mail on 03/26/2011.

No significant issues were raised as a result of the scoping.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

In addition to being consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan standards and guidelines as amended for Management Area 5G, this project is also consistent with the following:

Management Indicator Species - Six bird species have been identified in the Forest Plan as Management Indicator Species (MIS) for the Pinyon-Juniper (Woodland) vegetative type. There are approximately 199,550 acres of Pinyon-Juniper/Chaparral vegetation on the Pleasant Valley Ranger District, as identified in the Forest Plan. Effects to MIS Species were considered in preparation of the project Biological Evaluation; project actions were determined to have no adverse effects to MIS populations in this habitat type.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act - In compliance with this Act, the Zone Wildlife Biologist has considered effects to migratory bird species, and has determined that project actions will **have no adverse** effects on these species.

Clean Water Act - Best Management Practices will be followed during project implementation to ensure protection of soil and water resources, in compliance with this Act.

Inventoried Roadless Areas - There are existing Forest System roads within the project area, and the project area is not within an inventoried roadless area (RARE II).

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960; Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974; Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, particularly authorization of livestock grazing permits for a ten-year period required Sec. 402 (a)&(b) (3) and 36 CFR 222.3; and National Forest Management Act of 1976; all exhibiting congressional intent to allow grazing on suitable lands.

Forest Service policy on rangeland management (FSM 2202.1, FSM 2203.1).

Federal Regulation (36 CFR 222.2 (c)), which states that National Forest System lands will be allocated for livestock grazing and these allotment management plans will be prepared consistent with land management plans, and the Clean Water Act of 1948, Clean Air Act of 1955, Endangered Species Act of 1973, and 13186 (Conservation of Migratory Birds), and National Historic Preservation Act 1966, as amended.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a) (4), this decision is not subject to a higher level of appeal. Implementation may begin immediately.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Expected date of implementation of this project is August 1, 2011.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Donna Reed, District Range Staff, Pleasant Valley Ranger District, PO Box 49, Young, AZ 85554; (928) 462-4321.

DONAL L. LUHRSEN

District Ranger

6/20/11

Date

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