



DECISION MEMO
ANITA ALLOTMENT FENCE MODIFICATION PROJECT
TUSAYAN RANGER DISTRICT, KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST
COCONINO COUNTY
TUSAYAN, ARIZONA
JULY 2015

I. BACKGROUND

The Anita Allotment Fence Modification Project area is located on the Tusayan Ranger District, south and east of the Town of Tusayan, Arizona. The legal description of the project area is: T29N R2E Sec. 25, 26, 18, 19, & 24, Gila and Salt River Base and Meridian, Coconino County, Arizona. Currently the Anita Allotment is run in conjunction with the Cameron Allotment, and both allotments are managed under one 10-year Term Grazing Permit for 1,295 cow/calf or 1,856 yearlings and 5 horses from May 1st to October 31st.

The Anita Allotment is made up of nine large pastures including: Tusayan; Headquarters; West Skinner; East Skinner; Red Butte; Dillman; Upper Anita; South Anita; and Lower Anita; along with three small traps: Bentley; Old Airport; and Anita Holding (see map 1). Livestock are managed using a rest rotation management system, with best pastures used annually. Scheduling of pasture use varies from year to year utilizing adaptive management in the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI).

The Anita Allotment shares boundaries with private property. Currently the fences along the private land boundaries are not being maintained by the private land owners. The current permittee has been proactive in building relationships with the private land owners and has even maintained these fences. However, these fences continue to be cut and removed by the public and landowners. This has caused safety issues within the Town of Tusayan and the Grand Canyon Airport. When cattle are in the Upper Anita Pasture, they stray through the cut or missing fences onto the Grand Canyon Airport. When cattle are in the Tusayan Pasture, they stray into town and the Highway 64 corridor. For the last two years, these two pastures have not been used by the permittee due to these constant fence issues along the private land boundary. This in turn has removed two good pastures from the overall rest rotation system, thus limiting grazing management options.

This project will provide for increased public safety for the Grand Canyon Airport, the Town of Tusayan, and for the public traveling on Highway 64. This project will improve livestock distribution and management within the Anita Allotment with the two proposed fence modifications by allowing the use of the Upper Anita and Tusayan pastures, thus providing for additional growing season rest or deferment in order to provide for grazed plant recovery and more light to conservative grazing intensity.

With new fences in place at the proposed locations, the permittee can then maintain the fence frequently as it would be on federal lands and thus the responsibility of the permittee. To prevent fences in the area from being damaged in the future, the Forest Service would educate the landowners and post signs, and would be able to enforce any damage done with a law enforcement officer.

II. DECISION

I have decided to authorize construction of 2.6 miles of new fence within the Tusayan and Upper Anita Pastures (see maps 1 & 2). This proposed construction would include the following activities:

- Construct approximately 0.3 miles of fence south of the Town of Tusayan by the Grand Canyon Airport (T29N R2E Sec. 25 & 26), and 2.3 miles of fence east of the Town of Tusayan (T29N R2E Sec. 18, 19, & 24). Both fences total 2.6 miles of barbed wire fence that will be constructed on National Forest System (NFS) lands near private property (see map 2).
- The proposed fences would be constructed to Forest Service standards including: fence posts shall be at minimum of sixteen and a maximum of eighteen feet apart, and include two wooden stays and one metal stay in the center; fence height is 44 inches with 12 inch wire spacing between the top and 2nd wire and 8 inches between 2nd and 3rd wires; and 18 inch spacing from ground to bottom wire.
- Remove several small diameter trees and shrubs, within the alignment of the proposed fence.
- Install up to seven walk through gates along the proposed fences to facilitate public access.
- No new roads would be constructed and minimal impacts are expected.
- No activities are planned on private land.
- Materials for the overall project would be provided by the Forest Service through range betterment funds. The permittee would provide all the labor for this project and would assume the responsibility for maintenance of the 2.6 miles of fence upon completion. The new fence responsibility would be reflected within the Term Grazing Permit.

Project Design Criteria

The Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) has identified an initial list of project design criteria to minimize the environmental impacts of implementing the proposed action. Additionally, the ID Team has identified monitoring requirements to ensure that resource impacts are within acceptable limits during and following implementation. Additional or modified project design criteria, mitigation and/or monitoring measures may be developed as a result of public input and further environmental analysis. At this time, the project design criteria include the following:

Cultural Resource Protection: The project area has been completely surveyed and the proposed fences will avoid cultural resources, thus having no effect.

Soils and Watershed: Project activities may pose risks of compaction, rutting and/or erosion. The following mitigation and monitoring measures would be included in the project design to minimize the risk of soil disturbance:

- No new roads would be constructed and minimal impacts are expected.
- Monitoring of BMP implementation and effectiveness to ensure long-term soil and water quality desired conditions are maintained; and
- Timing restrictions on fence construction will be implemented to prevent or minimize potential adverse impacts to soils and watersheds during wet ground conditions.

Sensitive Plants and Noxious Weeds: The project area would be surveyed for rare plants where suitable habitat for such plants may be impacted by project implementation. Affected areas where rare plants have been documented would be identified and protected during project implementation. Surveys for noxious weeds would occur in the project area, and mitigation measures would be implemented to prevent the

spread of noxious weeds using the BMPs described in Appendix B of the “Final Environmental Impact Statement for Integrated Treatment of Noxious or Invasive Weeds (2004).”

Wildlife Management: The proposed range fence construction would be designed as wildlife friendly including appropriate installation of elk crossings, use of smooth bottom wire, standard spacing to prevent entrapment, maximum height limits, and locations.

There are no Protected Activity Centers (PACs) or known occurrences of the Mexican spotted owl (MSO) on the allotment. There is no designated, restricted, or critical habitat on the allotment. The nearest MSO PAC and designated critical habitat is approximately 40 miles south of the project area.

California condor, a federally listed species, is classified as an experimental, nonessential 10(j) population in Arizona. The project area is within the geographic bounds of the designated 10(j) area in the Southwest. Condors do forage along the south rim of the Grand Canyon, but this species rarely occurs on the Tusayan Ranger District.

There are no other federally listed species or designated critical habitat within the project area. Elk, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope are common in the project area, as are numerous other wildlife species.

The Proposed Action is limited to livestock management and does not include any type of forest manipulation by mechanical treatment or fire. Prey habitat will be maintained based on utilization guidelines of conservative use (31-40%). This will provide and maintain satisfactory vegetation, watershed (riparian), and soil condition. Therefore, Northern Goshawk populations are expected to remain the same on the Anita Allotment under this proposed action. The proposed action will have no effect on Northern Goshawk populations. As for the California Condors, if a condor arrives and remains in, or very near the project area, the following measures would be taken:

- project work sites would be cleaned up at the end of each day to avoid trash accumulation that may attract condors;
- if a condor shows up near project related activities, a Forest Service wildlife biologist would be contacted immediately and any project activities likely to cause harm to the condor would be halted temporarily until the condor leaves or is driven from the area (by wildlife personnel); and
- project workers would be instructed to avoid any interaction with condors.

The wildlife biologist would be notified if any project related vehicle fluid leaks or spills occur that could result in poisoning.

Recreation: A variety of recreation uses occurs in the Anita Allotment. This use includes but is not limited to dispersed motorized camping, picnicking, hiking, mountain biking, equestrian use, ATV riding, fishing, hunting, sightseeing, recreation events, outfitter guiding, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and snowmobiling. There are no effects anticipated to recreation, and public safety is expected to be improved.

Fire and Fuels Management: During periods of critical fire danger, the forest supervisor may declare a Red Flag Alert or issue other special restrictions. Under these conditions, the building or use of fires, the use of power saws, heavy equipment, vehicles, ATV's, and other motorized equipment may be prohibited on Forest Service Land.

III. REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This project is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of excluded actions is identified in Agency directives as: *Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries* 36 CFR 220.6(d)(4). I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that will 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:

a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.

Based on the biological evaluation completed for the project, the project will have no effect on Federal, State or USDA Forest Service listed species.

b. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds.

There are no floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds within the project area.

c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.

There are no congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas within the project area.

d. Inventoried roadless areas.

There are no inventoried roadless areas within the project area.

e. Research natural areas.

This area is not categorized as a research natural area.

f. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.

The Kaibab National Forest regularly conducts tribal consultation and scoping. For the current project, tribal consultation was conducted at the government-to-government level with area tribes according to established Memoranda of Understanding and existing laws and regulations. This project is not anticipated to impact any religious or cultural sites.

g. Archaeological sites or historic properties or areas.

Cultural resource specialists have completely surveyed and the proposed fences will avoid cultural resources, thus having no effect.

IV. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

An interdisciplinary team (IDT) consisting of heritage, rangeland, wildlife, fuels, timber, silviculture, recreation, and soils specialists reviewed the proposal and identified no issues or concerns. The proposed project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Action (SOPA) on July 1, 2015. The proposed action was posted at the post office in Tusayan, AZ, the Tusayan Ranger District office, and the Williams Ranger District office on June 26, 2015. No comments were received.

V. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Forest Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act or NFMA): NFMA requires the development of long-range land and resource management plans. The Kaibab National Forest Plan was approved in 2014, as required by this Act. The Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project. This decision is responsive to the guiding direction contained in the forest plan. This decision memo is consistent with



standards and guidelines contained in the forest plan for soil, hydrology, lands, archeology, wildlife, range, recreation, and fire.

Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670): This manual direction requires analysis of potential impacts to sensitive species (those species for which the Southwestern Regional Forester has identified population viability as a concern). In 2013, the Southwestern Regional Forester approved the sensitive species list. This project is not anticipated to impact sensitive species.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order (EO) 12898): This EO requires consideration of whether projects would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations. This decision complies with this order. An internal review of the proposed action did not identify any adversely impacted local minority or low-income populations.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): NEPA requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. This document and the project record provide documentation for this decision which supports compliance with this Act.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

As a result of Section 431 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 and the 2014 Farm Bill, the USDA Forest Service will no longer offer notice, comment and appeal opportunities pursuant to 36 CFR 215 for categorically-excluded projects. These legislative changes and new direction do not limit the public's ability to comment on USDA Forest Service projects and activities. The USDA Forest Service will continue to offer public involvement opportunities for categorically-excluded projects as provided for in its NEPA procedures found in 36 CFR 220.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this project may take place immediately upon my issuance of this decision.

VIII. CONTACT

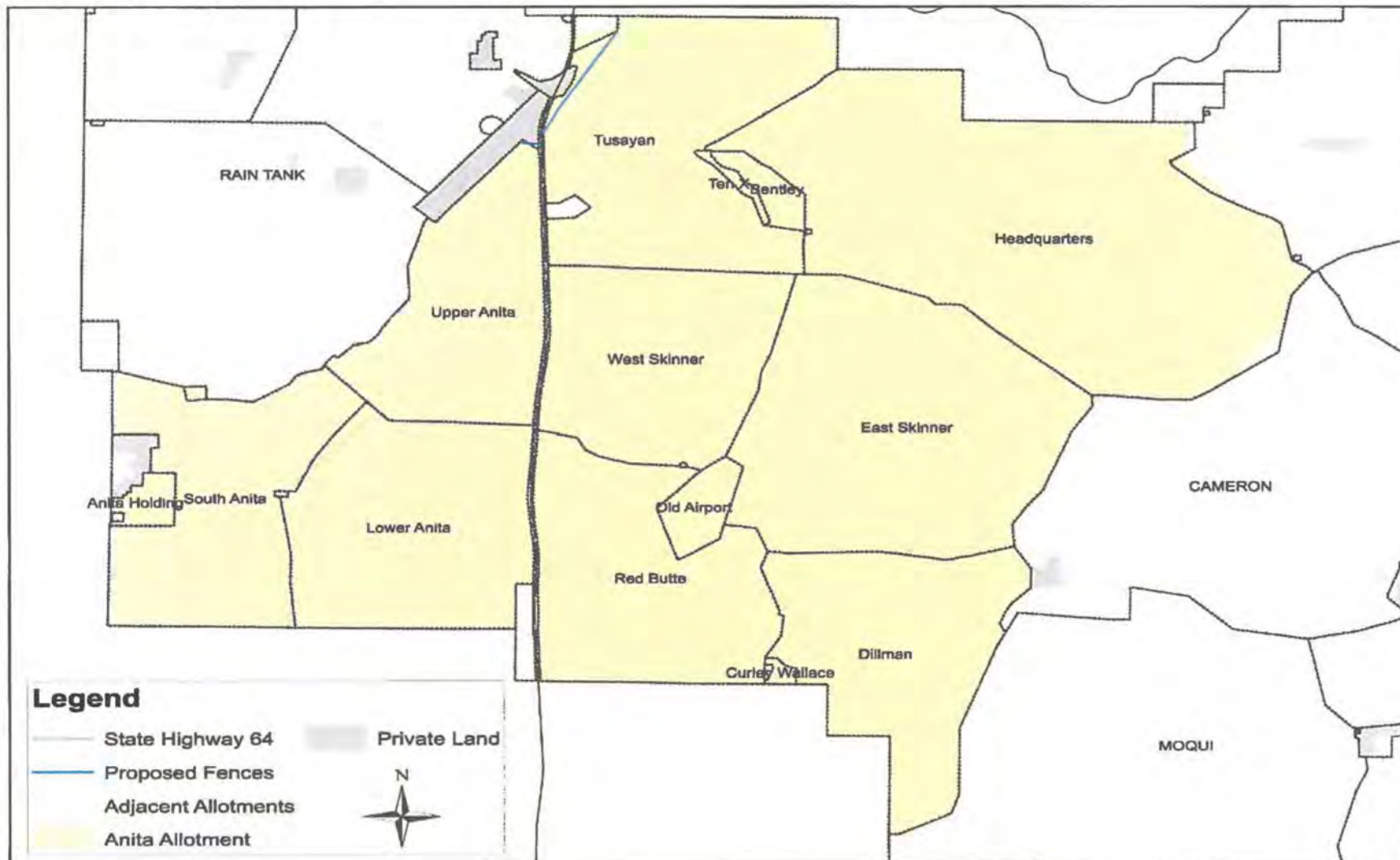
Further information about this decision can be obtained from the Tusayan Ranger District at 176 Lincoln Log Loop, Grand Canyon Village, Arizona 86023, (928) 638-2443 or the Williams Ranger District at 742 S. Clover in Williams, Arizona 86046, (928) 635-5600 during normal office hours (weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30. For additional project information, please contact Jesarey Barela at (928) 635-5600.


JAMES E. SIMINO
District Ranger

6/17/15
Date

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Map 1: Map of the Anita Allotment



Map 2: Map showing location of proposed fence

