Battle Axe Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Plan



(View boking west lowerds The Rincon and White Cenyon Wildemess Area, Photograph by Wade Lueok 2008)

Introduction

The Battle Axe Ranch is located 10 miles south of Superior, Arizona on State Highway 177. The ranch is approximately 85 miles north of Tucson, Arizona and 60 miles east of Phoenix, Arizona. The headquarters is located off State Highway 177 at 48070 East Cliffside Road, Kearny, AZ 85237. The ranch runs on 19,573 acres of land leased from the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Land Department and the ASARCO Mining Company in Townships 2, 3 and 4 South and Ranges 12 and 13 East (Teapot Mountain and Grayback Quads).

It is bounded on the south by the Gila River, on the north by the Tonto National Forest, and on the east by the Granite Mountains. The ranch is part of the Donnelly sub-basin in the Middle Gila River watershed (HUA # 15050100), and the major drainages present on the ranch are Walnut Canyon and White Canyon. The ranch is situated in a 12-16" precipitation zone and occurs within the Lower Mogolion Transition Common Resource Area (CRA 38-1). The nearest climate station is in Superior, AZ, which receives a slightly higher amount of rainfall than the Battle Axe since it is higher in elevation, and averages 18.35" of annual precipitation (~40% summer, ~60% winter).

The Battle Axe Ranch (BLM allotment No. 6059; ASLD Lease No. 05-102690) is currently owned and operated by Dr. Wade C. Lueck. Mr. Lueck bought the ranch from Dutch Ortega and Steve Brophy in 2005. Other previous owners on the ranch include Jess & Shirley Aldridge and Bill Dunn. In the 1990s, the ranch was heavily stocked. The current owners have taken a strategic plan to rest the vegetation by only stocking a small number of cattle while focusing on developing rangeland improvements to increase production and livestock management of the ranch. The Battle Axe Ranch is currently operated as a cow-calf beef cattle operation. Stock cows consist of British based genetics (Angus, Hereford, etc.) and are bred to Black Angus and Brangus bulls. The Battle Axe strives to produce gentle cattle which are well adapted to the region and are desirable in the marketplace. Part of the ranch contains the White Canyon Wilderness Area. The wilderness area includes the southeast portion of the Mineral Mountains. Recreational activities such as hising, rock climbing, hunting, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use and photography draw people to the area. Also, the Arizona Trail passes through the Battle Axe Ranch.

Not only is the Battle Axe Ranch rich with scenic beauty and recreational opportunities, it is also home to a herd of Desart Bighorn sheep introduced in 2003 and additional numbers were added in 2007 and 2010 by the Arizona Game & Fish Department

Coordinated Plan Participants

Wade Lueck: Owner & Operator Natural Resources Conservation Service; Tucson Field Office Anzona State Land Department Winkelman Natural Resources Conservation District Anizona Game & Fish Department; Mesa Office, Region 6

Land Status

Private Controlled	34 acres
Private Leased	1,397 acres
BLM	15,148 acres
State Land	2,994 acres

Total 19,573 acres

Goals

- Maintain or improve species composition, diversity and structure for the desired plant communities needed to
 protect the land and support the planned land use.
- Enhance vegetative cover to improve water quality, prevent accelerated erosion, prevent excess runoff and provide adequate cover for watershed stability and habitat.
- Manage for the long-term health and diversity of wildlife populations.
- Maintain a self sustaining economically feasible ranching operation.

Objectives

- Implement a prescribed grazing plan in 2015 which provides grazing and rest in each pasture that will allow
 grazed plants to re-grow, regain vigor, produce seed and establish new plants when climatic conditions are
 favorable.
- Install and maintain fencing and water developments as needed to control timing and distribution of livestock grazing. See Appendix A for the Planned Schedule of Improvements.
- Implement management of invasive and undesirable species in high priority areas.
- Establish at least one permanent monitoring site in each pasture to monitor plant cover to determine whether
 plant community goals are being achieved.
- Ensure that all improvements are done in a manner that is consistent with the needs of the numerous and diverse wildlife species found within the allotment and that any improvements made using HPC funds maintain water year round.





Benchmark Conditions

Benchmark conditions for the ranch were evaluated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS inventories and assesses natural resources based on 6 categories; Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals and Human (SWAPA+H). Inventory data were gathered at 8 locations on the ranch in 2006. At each location plant species composition and production in pounds/acre were determined. This information was used to calculate a similarity index comparing present vegetation on the site to reference conditions. Generally a similarity index of <60% is considered to indicate a resource concern for plant productivity and composition. The similarity indices for each of the 8 inventory sites can be found in Appendix D. The soils, vegetation and land type (for example, slope, aspect, upland vs. bottom) information gathered during the inventory was used to make an ecological site map for the ranch. At each location, range health was evaluated using a subjective rating of 17 indicators associated with the soil stability, hydrologic function and biotic integrity of the present situation compared to reference conditions for the site. Each indicator is rated as having none-slight, slight to moderate, moderate, moderate to extreme, or extreme departure from what is expected for the site. Ratings of moderate or more departure are considered to indicate resource concerns for that attribute. The range health ratings for the 8 inventory sites can be found in Appendix D.

The resource assessments made by the NRCS and other observations were used to identify the following resource concerns:

Soll Erosion-Road, Roadsides and Construction Areas – High levels of recreation on motorized vehicles also contributes to erosion in some areas. Range Health ratings of Moderate or higher departures

Soil Condition, Rangeland Site Stability - extended drought has resulted in high emounts of bare ground increasing sheet flow and guily erosion

Water Quality - Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water - erosion is occurring on areas that can contribute runoff to water bodies of concern

Water Quantity, Rangeland Hydrologic Cycle - Range Health ratings of Moderate or higher departures

Plant Condition - All sites have a Similarity Index score of less than 60% (see Appendix D for ratings)

Domestic Animats, Inadequate Stock Water - Inadequate reliable water in each pasture to support sound grazing management for a sustainable number of livestock.

The reasons for observed resource concerns are several. First, this area, as in much of Arizona, was heavily grazed year-round from the late-1800s until the mid-1900s. This overgrazing was largely the result of the absence of defined grazing rights which did not provide any incentive for conservative, controlled grazing. This heavy grazing was not only associated with commercial livestock operations but also to homesteaders, miners, woodcutters and other settlers that had cattle, sheep, goats, horses and donkeys.

A lack of intrastructure and improvements on the ranch has greatly impacted the ability to manage livestock and rangeland resources. Prior to 2009 there was no interior fencing on the ranch. The only fencing was the boundary fence and the fence along Highway 177 which split the ranch disproportionately, with only about 10% of the lands north of the highway and the remaining portion of the ranch south of the highway. In 2009 Wade Lueck built a fence across the large, southern portion of the ranch, splitting the pasture in-two at approximately 9,000 acres each. Also, there were few permanent water developments on the ranch prior to Wade Lueck's ownership. There are 10 dirt tanks on the ranch that used to hold water seasonally, but most of them have silted in. There is an artesian well in Walnut Canyon that has always been a strong source of water on the ranch. There are also 9 springs on the ranch, two in Hell's Canyon, Johnny Longwater Spring, Sheep Spring, Tomell Spring, Martinez Spring, Bluff Spring, Walnut Spring along the highway and the Rock Tank Spring near Sleeping Beauty Mountain north of the highway. There are old drinkers and short pipelines coming off Hell's Canyon, Johnny Longwater and Rock Tank Springs. The southern boundary of the ranch is the Gila River. Historically livestock have used the river for watering and grazing along its banks. In more recent years fencing has been installed along the river to keep cattle from consistently using the river to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species. The few water sources and the seasonally limited availability of the water historically created areas of high use as cattle concentrated around the existing water sources.

Also, long term drought in the region has greatly affected the potential of the rangeland. This has had a major impact on both soil and vegetation resulting in accelerated erosion. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor "ongoing drought conditions are impacting native vegetation across the Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona. (Associated Press, June 17). Many desert-adapted plant species are suffering under the current drought, as are prickly pear, seguero cacti, and other succulent plants."

Other high use areas on the ranch occur at points along the access routes to the ranch where recreationalists are known

to camp and/or park their vehicles. With increasing growth in the Phoenix Metropolitan area over the past couple of decades the influx of public use has greatly increased. Also, with the escalating use of Off Highway Vehicles the impact on the land has changed and spread due to accessibility becoming easier and faster.

Another resource issue occurring on the ranch are several invasive and undesirable species. For example, salt cedar, an invasive species, and choila and prickly pear have become well-established on the ranch. Buffelgrass and yellow star thistie have been found along Highway 177 within a few miles of the ranch. Spot treatments in certain areas would be beneficial to improving the impacted areas. Treatments on areas with undesirable species would be to decrease the over abundance of these species to get the composition percentages closer to those determined in the Historic Climax Plent Community listed in the ecological site description.

Range Improvements

Existing Range Improvements

Current range improvements consist of 3 wells, 7 springs, watering facilities, 6 corrals, 10 dirt stock tanks, fencelines, pipelines and trails. All current improvements are listed in Appendix A.

Proposed Range Improvements

Planned improvements consist of fencelines, pipelines with watering facilities, spring developments, wells and solar pumping plants throughout the ranch. Fencing would aid grazing management to more evenly disperse use to improve upland health condition. Also, by developing and spreading out the water sources on the ranch it would improve grazing management and resource management. This improved ranch management would also increase the value of the area to recreationalists through additional wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities. Furthermore, taking the historical grazing pressure off the existing water sources in the drainages and along the river would help in the improvement and recovery of the proper functioning conditions of the npanan areas. The Planned Schedule of Improvements is listed in Appendix A and each improvement is given a priority rating of 1, 2 or 3 for order of implementation.

Alternatives

- Spot treatments of invasive and undesirable species. For example, brush management to treat affected areas of choila, prickly pear and/or sall cedar.
- Install a spring box in Hell's Canyon
- Run pipeline, with storage tanks and troughs to disperse water from Hell's Canyon Spring to the east down canyon.
- Install wildlife troughs with the livestock troughs along the Heil's Canyon pipeline to be fenced off for wildlife use.

Grazing Management

Numbers and Season of Use

STATE	51	AU's	614	AUM'S
BLM	113	AU's	1357	AUM's
Bureau of Reclamation Administered by BLM)	5	AU's	62	AUM's
BIA San Carlos Irrigation District (Administered by BLM)	12	AU's	141	AUM's
Private Land Controlled & Leased	29	AU's	348	AUM's
Total	210	AU's	2522	AUM's

The permitted number of livestock on the Battle Axe Ranch is 210 Animal Units (AUs), or 2522 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). A breakdown by land status is as follows:

Current Grazing System

A year-long continuous grazing system has been employed for many years on the Battle Axe Ranch. In 2009 at cross lence was constructed, running east from the Copper Butte Corrals. This new fence allowed for the main pasture, Pasture #2, to be divided into two pastures. North and South. This has aided in herd management and improved livestock productivity. Distribution of sail/supplement and development of water sources are also vital in more evenly utilizing the ranch.

Since the main feed source for cattle on the ranch is palatable browse (shrubs), grazing management attempts to target the spring growing season (March-May) as the critical season for rest. During the remainder of the year, livestock can be distributed throughout the ranch, but during this spring period, pastures should be alternately rested.

Planned Grazing System

The Coordinated Resource Management team for the Battle Axe Ranch will provide input for a planned grazing schedule. The planned grazing system will take season of use into account. At least one pasture will be rested each year during the spring growing season. Season of use will also be affected by the availability of water and completion of the planned improvements. As with any plan it is necessary to keep track of what the management is doing in order to realize whether or not it is achieving the intended consequences.

Floxibility

Due to the annual variability in forage production, resulting from yearly variability in climate, it may be necessary to move livestock earlier or later than planned. Adaptive management provides the flexibility to adjust livestock numbers and timing of grazing so that use is consistent with current forage productivity and is meeting management objectives. Under the proposed adaptive management strategy, the number of livestock, specific dates for grazing, class of animal and modifications in pacture rotations may be changed as necessary and appropriate, based on the implementation of improvements and the monitoring data. It is intended that pastures will be grazed at varying times during the year to limit repeated growing season use of a pasture as much as possible. All plan participants involved in this plan agree to work together to ensure the best available management strategy. The rancher will keep records, such as "in and out" dates of a pasture and number of livestock and provide actual use information to the participanting agencies each year upon request.

Salting / Supplemental Feeding

Sait blocks and supplement (i.e. protein concentrate tubs) will be dispersed throughout the pastures to encourage cattle to more evenly utilize a pasture. This helps minimize the effects of concentrated livestock use in one particular area, reducing erosion and the potential to promote invasive plant species.

Monitoring Plan

General

Monitoring can be used to evaluate the effects of livestock use on the rangeland resource and to aid in management decisions necessary to maintain or improve rangeland condition.

Vegetative Information

The Battle Axe Ranch lies within the Common Resource Area (CRA) of 38-1 Lower Mogolion Transition. Elevations range from 3,000 to 4,500 feet and precipitation averages 12 to 16 inches per year. The soil temperature regime is thermic and the soil moisture regime is ustic aridic. This unit occurs within the Transition Zone Physiographic Province and is characterized by canyons and structural troughs or valleys. Igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock classes occur on rough mountainous terrain in association with less extensive sediment filled valleys exhibiting little integrated drainage.

Ecological sites within this CRA are Granitic Hills, Granitic Uplands, Volcanic Hills, Limestone Hills, Tuff Hills and Loamy Bottom An Ecological Site Legend is attached in Appendix C and an Ecological Site map is included

Key browse apecies include jojoba (Simmandsia chinensis), faise mesquite (Calliandra enophylla), range ratary (Krameria parvifiora), Flat-top buckwheat (Enogonum parvifiora), shrubby buckwheat (Enogonum sp.), twinberry (Menodora scabra), and stender janusia (Janusia gracilis). These species were chosen because they are fairly abundant throughout the ranch and are nutritious and well-liked by cattle and wildlife.

Perennial grass species were not chosen as key species since they occur sparsely throughout the ranch, with the exception of the Limestone Hills ecological site north of the highway that has not been used by livestock for years due to inaccessibility and/or lack of water. Grass species that do occur include purple three-awn (Arist/da purpurea var. purpurea), sideoats grama (Boutelous curtipendula), and bush muhly (Muhlenbergia porten), while on the Limestone Hills blue three-awn (Aristida purpurea var. nealleyi), slim tridens (Tridens mulicus) and black grama (Boutelous eriopode) also occur.

Inventory

Eight inventory transects were run to collect baseline vegetation composition and production data. Data collected on each transect include production, composition, similarity indices and rangeland health. Inventory points are distinct from Key Areas and are typically not used for permanent monitoring. The Double Sampling method was used to collect data for each transect and production was clipped and weighed. At least one site was located within each ecological site. A. description of the current state of each ecological site is listed in Appendix D. Locations for the inventory sites are as follows:

Inventory Points	Ecological Site	Section	Township & Range	(NAD 83, Zone 12)	
T-1	Granitic Hills	NE%, NW%, Sec 17	T35, R13E	0495793, 3670601	
T-2	Granitic Uplands	5%, SWV4, Sec. 17	T3S, R13E	0495710, 3669321	
T-3	Granitic Uplands	NW%, NE%, Sec. 19	T35, R13E	0494896, 3669283	
T-4	Volcanic Hills	SW% SW% Sec. 20	T35, R13E	0495416, 3668051	
T-5	Granitic Hills	SE%, SW%, Sec. 5	T3S, R13E	0495921, 3672638	
T-8	Limestone Hills	NE%, NE%, Sec. 8	T35, R13E	0494957, 3673793	
T-7	Tuff Hills	NW%, NE%, Sec. 30	T3S, R13E	0494549, 3867716	
T-8	Loamy Bottom	NW%, SW%, Sec. 29	T35, R13E	0495698, 3666598	

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Key Areas

Permanent transacts will be established on State Trust and BLM lands. Two transacts, KA-1 and KA-2, have been established. At least two more Key Areas need to be identified and established: one in the Burnt Forest Pasture, one further south in the South Pasture on State Trust land. Another transact may be established to monitor the Critical Area in the bottom of Walnut Canyon. There will be at least one transact per pasture. Transacts shall be placed to reflect livestock management and should be placed on major ecological sites. Monitoring data will be used in part to guide the management of the ranch. New Key Areas can be established or abandoned as deemed necessary. Key Area locations will be decided in coordination with the rancher/lessee and the land management agencies. Participants in this coordinated resource management plan agree to participate in annual monitoring on the ranch. An Ecological Site Map with site specific descriptions can be found in the Appendix C.

Key Areas:

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KA 1	North Pasture	0496105 3670645	Elev 3025	Granitic Upland
KA 2	South Pasture	0494559. 3668371	Elev 2550'	Granitic Hills

Methods and Responsibilities

Actual Use

The lessee will record actual use data throughout the year showing when, where, and how many livestock used the ranch during the grazing year.

2, Climate

Rainfall gauges should be installed on the ranch, and rainfall records should be kept by the producer.

1. Utilization

Techniques to measure utilization, designed primarily to measure residual biomass of perennial grasses, are not particularly useful on this ranch because of the tack of perennial grasses and dominance of shrubs. Belt utilization transects for measuring utilization can be run when the line-intercept method is used.

4. Cover

The Line-Intercept Method of estimating canopy cover is a measure of shrub vigor, productivity and utilization by livestock. This method has not yet been run on the established transects, but is proposed for key areas throughout the ranch.

5. Repeat Photography

Photographs will be taken at each trend location to qualitatively assess changes in rangeland trend.

Monitoring data will be collected by NRCS, BLM, ASLD personnel and the producer.

Timetable for Data Collection

Data collection is planned to occur every fall for the 1st three years after a transect is established and then every 2 to 5 years thereafter or more regularly as deemed necessary. The first three years of data collected on a site will serve as a base line for future trend analysis.

Evaluation and Ravision

A review of the plan will be conducted each year in cooperation with the producer. Data collected from the monitoring sites will be used to aid in management decisions.

Plan Approval

We, the undersigned, have participated in the development of the Coordinated Resource Management plan, concur with the plan, and will act to implement it to the best of our ability.

Accepted by:

Wade Luger; Owner & Oppator

Arizona State Land Department

Natural Resources Conservation Service; Tucson Area Office

Winkelman Natural Resources Conservation District

Arizona Game & Fish Department; Mesa Office, Region 6

Date

Date

Date

Date /

Date

(Appendixes and maps attached)

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APPENDIX A

Existing Range Improvements

Walls			
Wells	14 August	TOO	DASE Day to MAINAN
1	Well		R13E Sec 19 NWNW
2	Well		R13E Sec 20 NENW
3	Well	135	R13E, Sec. 8 SWSW
Storage	Tanks		
1	Tank	T3S.	R13E, Sec 7 SENW
2	Storage tank		R13E Sec 8 SWSW
Troughs	and the second		
1	Troughs	T35.	R13E, Sec 7
2	Trough		R13E, Sec 5 SESW
354	Troughs		R13E Sec 17
5	Trough		R13E, Sec. 20 NW
687	Troughs		R13E, Sec. 19 SENE (@ Steel Corrals)
Dirt Tani	65		
1	Dirt stock tank	T35.	R13E, Sec 6 SWNE
2	Dirt stock tank		R13E Sec 17 SESW
3	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 19 NENW
4	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 6 NESE
5	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 18 NWSE
6	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 16
7	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 32
8	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 33
9	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 6 SENW
30	Dirt stock tank		R13E, Sec 8
Springs			
Springea	Sheep Spring P/L		T3S, R12E, Sec 11 NENE
2	Johnny Longwater	Sering	
3	Tomeli Spring	oping	T3S, R12E, Sec 11 SENESE
4	Martinez Spring		T3S, R13S, Sec 33
5	Walnut Spring w/b	-	T3S, R13E, Sec 5 SWSW
6	Bluff Spring		T3S R13E, Sec 30 NESE
7	Artesian spring		T3S, R12E, Sec 24 SWNW
8	Helis Canyon		T3S, R12E, Sec 15 NENW
9	Rock Tank Spring		T3S, R13E, Sec 5 NENE
9	NOCK Tank Spring		133, RISE, SECS HERE
Pipelines		-	and the second second
1	Pipeline		R13E, Sec 5 SWSW
2	Pipeline		R13E, Sec 7 SENW
3	Pipeline		R13E, Sec. 5, 8
4	Pipeline		R13E, Sec. 8, 17, 19, 20
5	Pipeline	T3S.	R12E, Sec 15-16
Fencelin	05		Car to See that !
1	Fence		R12E, N of Gila River
2	Fence	T45	R12E, N of Gila River
3	Fence	T3S	R13E, Sec 7
4	Fence		R13E, Sec 19, 20, 21
5	Fence (1.75 mi)	T3S	R13E, Sec 9
6	Fence (0.25 mi)	T35	R12E, Sec 36

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Existing Range Improvements (Continued)

Corral			
1	Copper Butte Conals	(Steel Corrais)	T3S, R13E, Sec 19 SENE
2	HQ Corrals	and the second	T3S, R13E, Sec 8 SWSW
3	Highway (Burnt Fores	1) Corrals	T3S, R13E, Sec 5 SESW
4	Hells Canyon	A. 1991	T3S, R12E, Sec 15
5	Johnny Longwater		T3S, R13E, Sec 12
6	Corral		T3S, R13E, Sec 11
Trails			
1	Hells Canyon Trail	T3S, R12E, S	ec 12 & 23
2	Arizona Trail		c 1, 2; T4S R13E Sec 3, 4, 5, 6
3	Hell's Canyon P/L**	T35, R12E, S	

(" Listed in BLM lease, but legal description extends beyond lease boundaries)

Planned Schedule of Improvements

				GPS Coordinates		1 220
Priority	Location	Improvement	Elevation	(NAD 83)	Comments	Ownership
1	Walnut	Artesian	2048	0492485, 3668720		Private
1	Canyon	Water Storage	2023	0492459, 3668671	20,000 gal. Storage	Private
1		Walnut Trough #1	2023	0492459, 3668671	1.500 GL Trough	Private
1		Pipeline Artesian to end of Private		End at: 0492673, 3667797	3,400 feet	Private
3		Pipeline from start of BLM to trough #4			13.000 feet	BLM & State
3		"Walnut Trough #4*"	1707	0491760, 3664505	1.500 GL Trough	State
t	Bluff	Solar Well	2200	0494901, 3667151	800 ft. deep well	Private
1	Spring	Water Storage	2220	0494901, 3667151	20,000 gal.	Private
1		*Trough #1	2200	0494901, 3667151	1,500 gal	Private
1		*Trough #2	1983	0494133, 3666695	1,500 gal	Private
1		Pipeline from well to Trough #2		1.	3,500 feet	Private
3		Pipeline from trough #2 to #4			8,500 feet	Private, BLA & State
3		*Trough #3**	1877	0493666, 3665543	1,500 gal.	State
3		"Trough #4"	1785	0493684, 3664609	1,500 gal.	State

*Each location with a planned livestock trough will have a paired drinker for wildlife use. Fencing around each wildlife drinker is an option



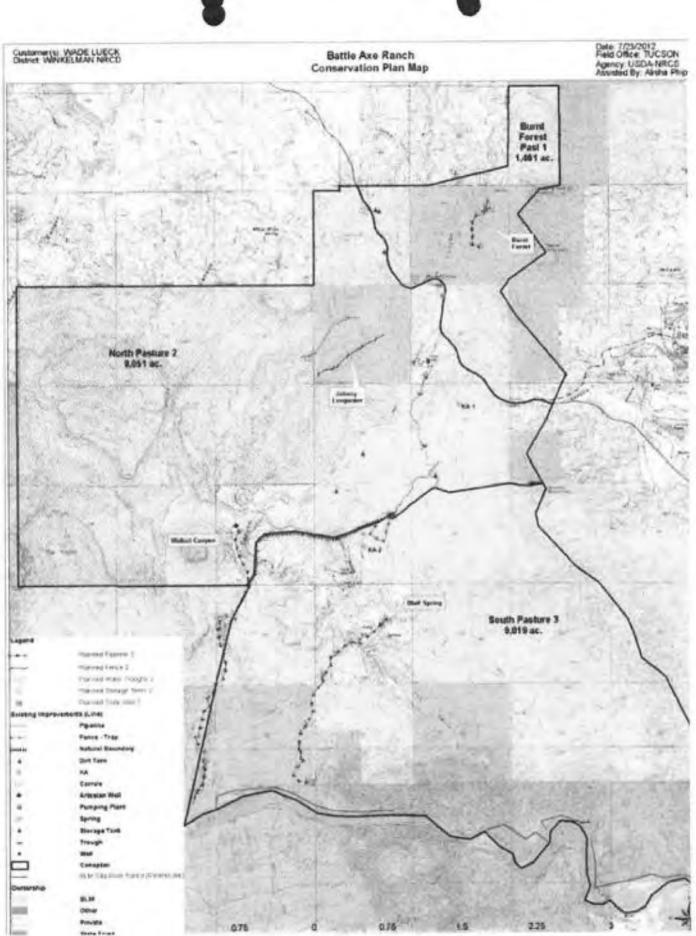


Planned Schedule of Improvements (Continued)

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Priority	Location	Improvement	Elevation	GPS Coordinates (NAD 83)	Comments	Ownership
2	Johnny	JL Canyon Fence				State
2	Longwater	East End	3046	0494887, 3571797		State
2		West End	3020	0493853, 3671187		State
2	Burnt	Upper Spring	3500	0496577, 3673874	A second as formed as	State
2	Forest	Storage Tank	3490	0496577, 3673874	1,000 gal. Storage Tank	State
2		"Trough #1	3485	0496577, 3673874	1,500 gal. Trough	State
2		Water Storage	3314	0496489, 3673216	10,000 gal. Storage	State
2		"Trough #2	3314	0496489, 3573216	1,500 gal. Trough	State
2		Pipeline from spring to trough #2			3,500 feet	State
1		Solar Well	2995	0495889, 3672404	800 ft. deep well	Private

*Each location with a planned livestock trough will have a paired drinker for wildlife use. Fencing around each wildlife drinker is an option



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