



## **Decision Memo**

### **Jose Water Well**

USDA Forest Service  
Tonto National Forest  
Tonto Basin Ranger District  
Gila, Arizona

The Jose Water Well project on Tonto Basin Ranger District is located on the Black Mesa grazing allotment of the Tonto Basin Ranger District, Tonto National Forest. This project is located on both sides of Forest Road 203 locally known as the Cherry Creek Road. The project starts at Jose Well and ends at No Salt Tank. The legal location is T4N, R14E, Sec. 13 and 24.

### **Project Background**

The Black Mesa grazing allotment has an active term grazing permit signed in 2017. The allotment is managed using a rest rotation through multiple pastures that require multiple watering sites in each pasture to distribute livestock so they don't concentrate at a single watering location. Distribution of livestock evenly throughout each pasture provides the best means to evenly graze the pasture within Forest guidelines.

### **Project Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to provide reliable water to livestock in the Baker pasture on the Black Mesa Allotment. There is a need for additional water sources in the Baker pasture in order to use the pasture successfully.

### **Decision**

I have decided to authorize the construction of a new water system that pumps water from Jose Well up to a new storage tank then gravity feeding water from the storage tank down to a new livestock trough that will be located next to No Salt Tank. The HDPE pipe will be laid above ground except where it crosses F.S. road 203 and will be approximately one mile in length. Access is along Forest Road 203 with no additional needs for cross country travel. The ground at the trough location will be hand leveled. With the trough and the pipeline being installed by horseback. No vegetation clearing besides that right at the trough site is anticipated.

This decision includes the following design features for resource protection:

- HDPE pipe will be laid above ground and will be approximately one mile in length.
- Access is along Forest Road 203 with no additional needs for cross country travel.
- The ground at the trough location will be hand leveled.
- The trough and the pipeline will be installed by horseback.
- No vegetation clearing besides that right at the trough site is anticipated.



## Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Actions

My assessment is that this proposal falls within the categories of actions listed in the Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act Handbook (FSH) that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. This category is found in 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. This category of action(s) is applicable because the proposed action is a minor water project to improve animal distribution on the Black Mesa Allotment.

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 or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.** If the mitigations and design features are implemented as directed in this decision, there is no impact to species that would preclude the use of a categorical exclusion.
- b. **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – According to the Tonto National Forest Hydrologist, the Jose Well has a filing under the Forest for 65,180 gallons per year. Given the distance of this well from any perennial or intermittent streams it is unlikely to be adjudicated to be pumping surface water. The well is over three miles from any mapped riparian and therefor no concerns about near or long term potential impacts to riparian habitat due to this distance and size of the well.
- c. **Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas** – This project is not within any of these areas, thus no effects are anticipated.
- d. **Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas** – This project is not within any of these areas, thus no effects are anticipated.
- e. **Research natural areas** – This project is not within any of these areas, thus no effects are anticipated.
- f. **American Indian religious or cultural sites; and archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – Archeological clearance number 2022-12-41 was obtained on January 25th 2022 for this project. If the mitigations and design features are implemented as directed in this decision, there is no impact to cultural resources that would preclude the use of a categorical exclusion.

## Public Involvement

On June 16<sup>th</sup> 2022, a scoping letter was mailed out to 19 individuals and organizations outlining the proposed action. Two letters were received regarding the proposed action.

## Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan. 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 National Forest. *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 provides planning components that this decision complies with, including standards and guidelines.

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

### Implementation Date

This project is not subject to administrative review and can be implemented immediately as detailed in this decision.

### Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Eric Hoskins, Range Management Specialist, eric.hoskins@usda.gov, Tonto Basin Ranger District, 28079 N HWY 188, Roosevelt AZ 85545, 602-225-5332.

7/5/2022

Jeremy Plain  
Tonto Basin District Ranger

Date

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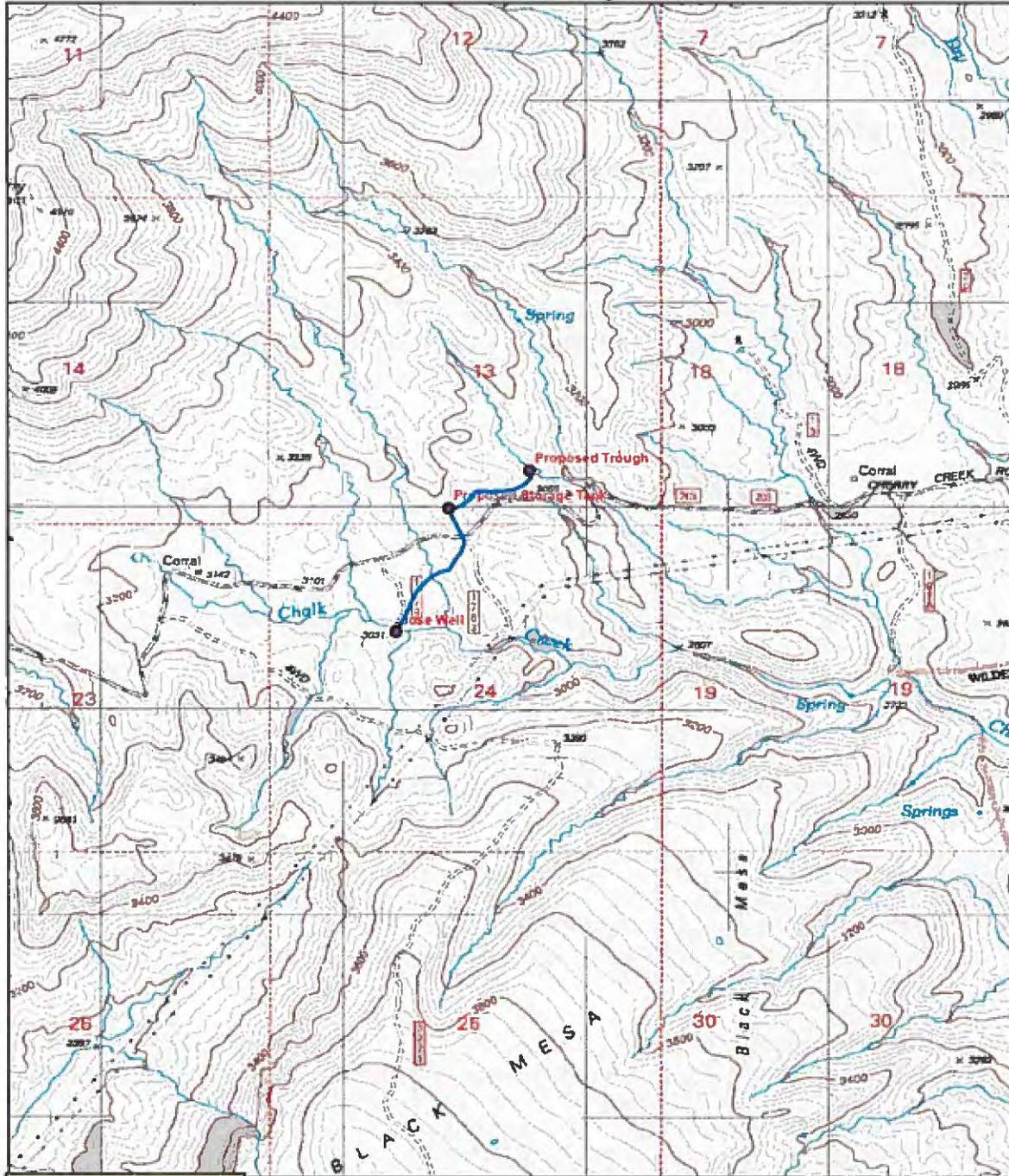
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# Appendix A

## Jose Well Water System



**Legend**

- ProjectWaterFeatures
- ProposedPipeline

