

Decision Notice and

Finding of No Significant Impact

Fuente de Agua (Bobtail Spring) Pipeline

**USDA Forest Service
Globe Ranger District, Tonto National Forest
Gila County, Arizona**

DECISION

Base upon my review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) I chose to implement the proposed action.

A pipeline from Bobcat spring will be tapped and another line will transport some water to a location about one-half mile side hill from tap. When possible, pipeline will be buried. A solar pump will be located at spring to pump water into a storage tank. Storage tank and troughs will be painted to blend with landscape. Fabrication of all parts of project will be metal to avoid any possible fire damage. Storage tank will be filled with water from spring, winter rains, and summer monsoons (depending on stream flow).

Two troughs will provide water year-round. Wildlife trough will be located to east of storage tank and will allow access by all types of wildlife at ground level. It will not be fenced off from livestock, but will be physically accessible only by wildlife. Any excess water will be returned to Bobtail Spring drainage to support riparian vegetation.

Livestock trough will have wildlife access and escape ramps, and bat friendly apparatus. It will be located near Forest Service Road 221. Each trough will provide year round water and excess will be returned to spring to maintain riparian habitat.

Mitigation

Utilization of key upland herbaceous forage plant species will be managed to achieve goal of light-to-moderate grazing intensity. Objective is to protect plant vigor, provide herbaceous residue for soil protection, and increase herbage producing ability of forage plants. A utilization guideline of 30-40% use of key species in key areas will be used to achieve this objective.

In riparian areas, allowable use for obligate riparian trees species will be to limit use to < 50% of terminal leaders (top 1/3 of plant) on palatable riparian tree species accessible to livestock (usually \leq 6 feet tall). Deergrass use will be limited to < 40% of plant species biomass. Emergent species (rushes, sedges, cat-tails, horse-tails) will be maintained at six-to-eight inches of stubble height during grazing period. Utilization will be measured seasonally when livestock are in pasture. Livestock will be moved from critical area or pasture when recommended guidelines are met. If riparian conditions continue to show degradation, fencing may be required and applied.

No range development construction or maintenance activities that involve use of mechanized equipment will occur within Mexican Spotted Owl Protected Activity Centers (PAC's) between February through August (breeding season). Mechanized equipment may be used in areas *at least* ¼-mile distance from PAC's during breeding season.

Surveys will be conducted for Arizona hedgehog cactus in planned disturbance areas and in rocky areas around Bobtail Spring. If present, project will avoid disturbing area at or near hedgehog.

Management Objectives

- Maintain or improve conditions to at least 30% of effective ground cover for watershed protection;
- Establish and/or maintain multiple age classes and complex riparian species in Bobtail Spring; and
- Provide water source to improve wildlife habitat.

Monitoring

Effectiveness monitoring includes measurements to track condition and trend of upland and riparian vegetation, soil, and watersheds. Monitoring will be done following procedures described in interagency technical reference and Region 3 Rangeland Analysis and Training Guide.

Implementation monitoring will occur at any time during grazing year and will include such things as inspection reports, forage utilization measurements, livestock counts, and facilities inspections. Utilization measurements are made following procedures found in Interagency Technical Reference (BLM et. al. 1996) and with consideration of "*Principles of Obtaining and Interpreting Utilization Data on Southwest Rangelands*".

Trend monitoring will be done using photo points. One hundred percent surveys will be conducted at spring source, until vegetation density increases, using guidelines in McBride and Grove (2002).

Wildlife monitoring may include trail cameras to identify type, kind, and amount of wildlife use.

DECISION RATIONALE

The selected alternative best meets purpose and need and achieves desired conditions in the following ways:

1. Consistent with management objectives and direction for Management Area 2F as identified in Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan, 1985 (as amended).
2. Provides for an addition range improvement to improve livestock distribution and provide water to wildlife.

3. Improved livestock distribution will help increase vegetative cover to protect soils and watershed health.

The Bobtail EA documents environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Proposal was listed in Schedule of Proposed Actions. Proposal was provided to public and other agencies for a thirty-day comment period during scoping, starting August 12, 2009.

Scoping document was sent to: 5 individuals, 14 private organizations, 21 representatives from local tribes, 9 state/county/town officials and 1 federal agency. From these scoping activities, 3 responses were received. Comments were neutral or positive for proposed action.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan, 1985 (as amended). Project was designed in conformance with Management Area 2F.

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and EA were considered. I determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

FINDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of action.
2. No significant effects on public health and safety were identified. This action is not expected to present significant hazards to workers or public.
3. There are no known unique characteristics associated with project. The project will not adversely affect parks, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or other resources considered to have unique characteristics (see EA, Chapter 3).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Environmental analysis has documented expected environmental effects from proposed action and alternatives. These effects were discussed in Chapter 3 of EA. Analysis reflects judgment and expertise of resource

- management professionals who have applied their knowledge to similar projects and are using best available science to support their conclusions
5. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. All future actions will be analyzed through NEPA process and be independent of specific nature of this action on Lyons Fork Allotment.
 6. Cumulative effects of action were analyzed in EA and are described in Chapter 3. They were determined not to be significant.
 7. The action will have no significant adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in National Register of Historic Places. Action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
 8. Action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under Endangered Species Act of 1973.
 9. Action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for protection of environment. All applicable laws and regulations were considered in EA. Action is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan, 1985 (as amended).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. The appeal must be filed by US mail or hand-delivered to the Appeal Deciding Officer, Gene Blankenbaker, Forest Supervisor, at the following address: 2324 East McDowell Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85006. The appeal may also be faxed to Forest Supervisor's attention at (602) 225-5295. Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45-days from publication date of this notice in the Arizona Silver Belt, newspaper of record. Attachments received after 45-day appeal period will not be considered. Publication date in Arizona Silver Belt, newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

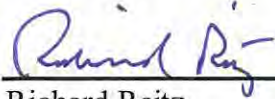
Individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must meet appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 215.14. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of legal notice date of publication in Arizona Silver Belt.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed within 45-day time period following signing of this decision, implementation may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, 15th business day following date of last appeal disposition.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Richard Reitz at 7680 South Sixshooter Canyon Road Globe, Arizona 85501 or at 928-402-6200.



03/18/2011

Richard Reitz

Date

Globe Ranger District

District Ranger