

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DECISION NOTICE, FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PERTAINING TO THE

BULL SPRINGS ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN
PAYSON RANGER DISTRICT
GILA COUNTY
ARIZONA

On August 26, 1988 a scoping meeting was held at the Tonto National Forest Supervisor's Office. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issues, concerns and opportunities involved in the development of an Allotment Management Plan for the Bull Springs Grazing Allotment. A copy of the scoping document, including a list of attendees, is included in the appendix material.

Vegetation on the allotment consists of predominantly Pinyon/Juniper woodlands with areas of chaparral, Ponderosa Pine, grasslands, and riparian obligate species.

Four alternatives were discussed during the scoping meeting. Alternative one was the no action alternative. Alternative two was an eight pasture deferred rotation system with two winter pastures. Alternative three was similar to alternative two, however, would provide for nine total pastures with three winter pastures. Alternative four was to eliminate livestock grazing entirely from the allotment.

Since the August 26th meeting, District personnel have conducted intensive reconnaissance to determine Allotment management needs.

Based on extensive and intensive reconnaissance on the allotment the preferred alternative chosen is alternative three. Alternatives two and three were considered because they provided the best management of the East Verde River riparian area without requiring extensive development of new range structural improvements. This would be consistent with the direction found in the Tonto Land Management Plan and the wilderness character of the area. Alternatives one and four were not further considered because they are not consistent with the direction found in the Tonto Land Management Plan. These alternatives are also not consistent with the enabling language found in the legislation designating the Mazatzal Wilderness. Alternative two was not chosen because it would not provide the desired management felt necessary in the winter pastures.

The Bull Springs Allotment is wholly within the Mazatzal Wilderness Area. The majority of projects needed are for reconstruction of existing improvements. The improvements identified for construction are for the purpose of resource protection and more effective management of these resources, not to accommodate increased numbers of livestock.

A benefit cost analysis was completed for the proposed alternative. A numerical rating of 1.28 was determined. The adjective rating for this number is favorable.

The proposed project plan is consistent with the Tonto Land Management Plan and meets Forest Service and Congressional guidelines for management of domestic livestock within designated Wilderness Areas.

Threatened and Endangered Species exist within the allotment boundaries. The planned management system will have no adverse effect on these species (Refer to Biological Evaluation in Appendix).

As determined through the environmental analysis it is my decision that an allotment management plan be developed based on alternative three. This project falls within FSH 1909.15 interim directive category 26.2.

Based on the information developed during the scoping and analysis process it has been determined that the proposed management will have no significant or cumulative effects on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.


Project initiation is subject to the following mitigation requirements:

1. All construction projects and methods must be analyzed through the N.E.P.A. process on an individual basis.
2. Archeological clearances must be conducted prior to project development.
3. Visual quality objectives for the area must be complied with.

This decision is appealable under 36 CFR 217. Appeals must be submitted within 45 days of approval to David F. Jolly, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, 517 Gold Ave. S.W., Albuquerque, NM. 87102 with a copy to the Forest Supervisor Tonto National Forest. This document is available for review at the Tonto National Forest Supervisor's Office, 2324 E. McDowell Rd., Phoenix, AZ. 85010 and at the Payson Ranger District Office, 1009 Hwy. 260 East, Payson, AZ. 85541. Further information can be obtained by contacting Robert S. Ingram at the Payson Ranger District (602) 474-2269.

This decision will be forwarded to those who, in writing, have requested it, and to those who are known to have participated in the decision making process.

This project may be implemented following my approval.



JAMES L. KIMBALL
Forest Supervisor

7-13-89
Date

United States
Department
Agriculture

Tonto
NF

Payson
RD

1009 E. Highway 260
Payson, AZ 85541

Reply To: 2210/1950


Date: June 21, 1989

Subject: Bull Springs AMP EA, DN, and FONSI

To: Forest Supervisor

The Bull Springs Allotment Management Plan Environmental Assessment is attached. Included with the EA is a copy of the scoping letter and biological evaluation. Upon approval of this document, copies need to be sent to all parties who have participated in the decision making process or who have requested one in writing. To facilitate the appeals process please have copies mailed to those potentially affected interests. A mailing list of those interested parties is attached.

The district recommends approval of this document.



STEPHEN L. GUNZEL
District Ranger

RSI:5/24/89

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United States
Department
Agriculture

Tonto
NF

Payson
RD

1009 E. Highway 260
Payson, AZ 85541

Reply To: 2210/1950

Date: September 13, 1988

Subject: Bull Springs Allotment Scoping Meeting

To: Participants

On August 26, 1988 a scoping meeting was held at the Tonto National Forest Supervisor's Office in Phoenix. This meeting was held to discuss the issues, concerns and opportunities involved with developing an Allotment Management Plan for the Bull Springs Allotment. In attendance at the meeting were the following individuals:

Bob Ohmart - Sierra Club/ASU Center for Environmental Studies
Rod Byers - Payson Ranger District
Rich Martin - Tonto National Forest
Don Pollock - Payson Ranger District
Rob Ingram - Payson Ranger District
Berwin Brown - Tonto National Forest
Gary Holder - Tonto National Forest
Steve Gunzel - Payson Ranger District
Tim Flood - Sierra Club/Wilderness Coalition
Dave Walker - Arizona Department of Game and Fish
(b) (6) Permittee
Pete Weinel - Tonto National Forest

A brief history of the Allotment, including past management, was discussed. (b) (6) has been permittee on the allotment since 1977. Prior to 1985, permitted cattle numbers on the allotment were 150 cattle yearlong with natural increase. In 1985 the natural increase (yearling carryover) was voluntarily removed from the permit and an additional 10 head of adult cattle was added to the permit. The total AUM's on the Allotment were reduced by 20%. The permittee is interested in improving range vegetation on the allotment and is committed to working with the Forest Service to develop a new management plan.

A discussion of the Tonto Land Management Plan direction for the area involved followed. The allotment lies wholly within management area 4A (Mazatzal Wilderness). Level B management is called for within area 4A. Level B controls livestock numbers so that livestock use is within present grazing capacity. Improvements are minimal and constructed only to the extent needed to protect and maintain the range resource in presence of grazing. Also discussed were the congressional guidelines identified in FSM 2323.22 concerning the grazing of domestic livestock within wilderness areas and the inherent management challenges.

The following issues, concerns and opportunities were identified by the group:

Low percentage of rangeland in satisfactory condition
Lack of dependable waters in summer range
Need to develop permanent waters

Possibility of piping water from White Rock Spring to Polles Mesa
Protect Polk Spring Area
Protect East Verde Riparian Areas
Trails - nonsystem trail maintenance may confuse public in relation to system trails
Trails need better signing
Existing improvements need major maintenance
Protect and enhance bald eagle habitat
Water rights needed on new water developments
Adjust fence locations on Polles Mesa to split existing water developments
Investigate using electric fence for new fence locations on Polles Mesa
Protect and enhance water quality on East Verde River
Improve range vegetation in summer pastures
Develop Bull Pasture to improve calf crop
Road access to LF through Doll Baby may be a conflict
Define objectives and prescribe efficient monitoring system
Is the natural fire policy adequate for this area
Should prescribed burning be utilized
Mineral claims may be conflict
Remove unneeded range improvements

To develop general management goals and objectives from this list of concerns and opportunities, the District consolidated the list into more concise statements. These are as follows:

1. Develop an allotment management plan that emphasizes maintenance of existing improvements, with minimal new improvements that do not detract from the wilderness emphasis, yet do provide for improvement of unsatisfactory rangelands.
2. Improve rangeland and riparian vegetative conditions and diversity by providing improved management of domestic livestock.
3. Develop a management system that promotes even aged calving.
4. Develop a specific monitoring plan (with schedule) that provides the permittee and Forest Service with an efficient and reliable method of determining trend data to show change in rangeland vegetative conditions.
5. Provide a management plan that, following the initial capital outlay, proves cost effective to the permittee.

Should you feel there should be additional objectives or changes to those above, please forward them to Rob Ingram at the District.

In conclusion, several management alternatives were discussed.


The first alternative noted was the no-action alternative. This alternative was unacceptable to the group as it did not meet the objectives identified.

The second alternative discussed was an 8 pasture deferred rotation system, with two pastures in the winter country, three along the East Verde River and three on Polles Mesa. Several smaller traps would be utilized as horse or bull pastures. New fence improvements were identified along the East Verde River in order to develop grazing units and realignment of the two existing fences on Polles Mesa was necessary to more effectively utilize the existing stock tanks. The use of mechanized equipment to clean tanks was discussed as well as the possibility of utilizing solar powered electric fences on Polles Mesa.

The third alternative discussed was the same as alternative two, with the addition of a drift fence east of Bull Springs Canyon. This drift fence would be approximately 1/4 mile in length and would allow for added deferment in the winter pasture.

Specific improvement locations will be identified in the Allotment Management Plan. As it was discussed in the meeting, any request for use of motorized equipment to maintain structural improvements will need separate NEPA documentation and approval by the Regional Forester.

Please respond with any additional comments by October 1st. At that time the district will proceed with any additional N.E.P.A. documentation and the development of an allotment management plan. Draft copies of this plan will be sent to all participants for further comment.



STEPHEN L. GENZEL
District Ranger

R.Ingram/bb:9/7/88

MAILING LIST

Sierra Club C/O Rob Smith, 3201 N. 16th St. Suite 6A, Phoenix, AZ 85257

Wilderness Society C/O Jim Norton 234 N. Central Ave. Suite 430 Phoenix, AZ 85004

Arizona Wildlife Federation C/O Mike Johns 4330 N.62nd. St. #102, Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Arizona Game and Fish Department Region VI, 7200 E. University, Mesa, AZ 85207-6502

(b) (6)

Tim Flood

(b) (6)

Robert D. Ohmart, Center for Environmental Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287

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