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**Decision Memo**  
**Huachuca Well Water Improvement**  
**U.S. Forest Service**  
**Coronado National Forest**  
**Sierra Vista Ranger District**

**Background**

The Huachuca Mountain range lacks dependable water sources and rainfall has been historically inconsistent in this mountain range. The goal of the Huachuca Well Water Improvement project is to provide an alternate water source for wildlife and livestock in the Lower Pasture of the Campini Allotment. This pasture relies solely on stock tanks which have caught very little water in the last years with inconsistent rainfall and drought conditions. The development of this well would allow for a consistent and reliable source of water in this pasture.

The project area is located within the Campini Allotment, which covers over 350 acres on the Sierra Vista Ranger District of the Coronado National Forest (Forest). This allotment sits south of the Huachuca Mountain range at the edge of the San Rafael Valley along the border of the United States and Mexico. The Campini Allotment includes habitat for many threatened and endangered species, and several Species of Economic and Recreational Importance such as Mearns's quail, Gould's turkey, white-tailed deer and mule deer. All of these species would benefit from the additional water source and any habitat improvements that may result from the Huachuca Well project.

Expanding the amount of permanent water on the landscape both improves the distribution of livestock across the landscape and reduces pressure on riparian and aquatic ecosystems, giving the Forest increased flexibility to manage these important habitat types. This project will help the Forest and our partners to address populations of aquatic invasive species and expand populations of native species, thereby improving the resiliency of these ecosystems. This project would also strengthen our relationship with our partners (grazing permittees, Arizona Game and Fish Department, US Fish and Wildlife Service) and the community at large by working collaboratively and coming up with innovative solutions to problems.

This water infrastructure project would help alleviate livestock pressure on riparian communities and aquatic habitat in/near drainages that support populations of Chiricahua leopard frog, northern Mexican gartersnake (and proposed Critical Habitat), western yellow-billed cuckoo, jaguar (and Critical Habitat), ocelot, and the Sonoran tiger salamander. This well would also help reduce the dependency of livestock on stock ponds. This would provide the Forest Service and their partners with greater flexibility when addressing populations of nonnative aquatic species such as bullfrogs, crayfish, and spiny-rayed fishes.

**Decision**

It is my decision to implement the drilling of a well and installation of a water storage tank, along with distribution pipelines and a trough, located off Forest Road 4016. The storage tank would supply multiple troughs with water year-round, even when livestock are not present within the affected pastures.

Once the well has been installed and its productivity has been assessed, an additional water distribution pipeline and trough would be placed in close proximity to an ephemeral stockpond to the west of the newly implemented well. Prior to implementation of the additional water source, biological and archaeological clearances will be conducted.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as **36 CFR 220.6(e)(6): Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction**. This category of action is applicable because the proposed action would improve wildlife habitat by providing additional, year-round water sources in this area.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would 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:

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

The District Wildlife Biologist has determined that the proposed action would have no effect on the western yellow-billed cuckoo, jaguar and its critical habitat, and ocelot. Yellow-billed cuckoos may occur within the project area but because all actions that might disturb breeding cuckoos would occur outside the breeding season, this project would have no effect to breeding cuckoos. The project area does contain habitat that may be used by jaguars and ocelots; however, because the project activities would only occur during daylight hours, these secretive and primarily nocturnal species would not be affected by the noise or ground disturbance.

The proposed action may impact individuals of the Forest Service Sensitive Species; however, these impacts would not result in a trend toward federal listing or loss of species viability. Implementation of the proposed action would have no impact on species covered under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

***Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds –*** The proposed project area does not fall within a municipal watershed. Portions of the project may fall within floodplains and wetlands, however, effects would be negligible so long as implementation adheres to Forest Service standards using best management practices.

***Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, national recreation areas, research natural areas, or inventoried roadless areas –*** The proposed project is not located in a wilderness, wilderness study area, national recreation area, research natural area, or inventoried roadless areas, therefore there will be no impact to these areas.

***American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites –*** There are no known extraordinary circumstances that may result in adverse effects on American Indian religious and cultural sites. Cultural resources clearance is recommended in Heritage Resources Report No. 2021-05-049.

***Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas –*** No historic properties would be affected by the proposed action and cultural resources clearance is recommended in Heritage Resources Report No. 2021-05-049.

In addition to the above-mentioned resources, this proposed action was reviewed by the Forest National Environmental Policy Act Coordinator. These specialists contributed to the determination that the project is



consistent with the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as well as federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

### Public Involvement

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Coronado National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions in February 2021.

This action is not subject to legal notice and opportunity to comment per 36 CFR 218.23(a).

### Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

National Forest Management Act - This decision is consistent with the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with land management plan direction for the Sierra Vista Ranger District, Huachuca Ecosystem Management Area, and forestwide management of Animals and Rare Plants, and Range Management.

Endangered Species Act - The District Wildlife Biologist has determined that the proposed action would have no effect on the western yellow-billed cuckoo, jaguar and its critical habitat, and ocelot. Yellow-billed cuckoos may occur within the project area but because all actions that might disturb breeding cuckoos would occur outside the breeding season, this project would have no effect to breeding cuckoos. The project area does contain habitat that may be used by jaguars and ocelots; however, because the project activities would only occur during daylight hours, these secretive and primarily nocturnal species would not be affected by the noise or ground disturbance. As such, consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is not required.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) - The Forest Archaeologist has determined that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed action and that consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office is not required.

### Administrative Review or Objection Opportunities

This decision is not subject to an administrative review or objections pursuant to 36 CFR 218.20.

### Implementation Date

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

### Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Whitney Schack, District Range Management Specialist, Sierra Vista Ranger District, 4070 S. Avenida Saracino, Hereford, AZ 85615; (520) 803-2830.



CELESTE KINSEY  
District Ranger

5/4/2021  
Date

Attachments:

- 1 – Map of project area.
- 2 – Archaeological inventory and clearance.

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Map of Proposed Huachuca Well Project

### Huachuca Well Water Development

