



File Code: 1950
Date: September 16, 2019

Dear Interested Party:

This letter initiates the scoping for the Cartwright Allotment Water Project on the Cave Creek Ranger District. The project is located on the Cartwright grazing allotment of the Tonto National Forest in Maricopa County, Arizona. The project area is approximately six miles north of Cave Creek, Arizona along Forest Service Road 24. The legal location of the project is Township 7N Range 5E (see Figure 1 for project area map).

Background

The current grazing permit for the Cartwright allotment authorizes 350 cow/calf pairs, year-round, with yearling carryover. The Cave Creek Complex fire in 2005 burned a substantial portion of the allotment and numerous miles of rangeland fence. The Cartwright Allotment was put into non-use for cattle grazing through a memorandum of understanding in 2008 between the Forest Service and the permittee. The allotment was not grazed until spring of 2018, when it was only grazed with 60 steers.

During the long period of non-use, vegetation and range conditions were allowed time to recover naturally from the fire without any permitted cattle grazing. However, since there was no active grazing taking place, water developments, springs, and stock tanks were not maintained. As a result, most of the spring developments are no longer functional. Many stock tanks have breached dams and will no longer hold water. Additionally, available water in every pasture is intermittent at best. Scarcity of water on the allotment can reduce the distribution of cattle, thereby forcing cattle to congregate around riparian areas and the few available water sources. Consequently, only portions of the allotment close to water tend to be grazed.

The Cartwright allotment is located in the middle of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's (Department) Game Management Unit 21. This game management unit has been identified in the Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Initiative where there is an effort to restore wildlife habitat and water sources for wildlife. The Tonto National Forest, the Department, Arizona Mule Deer Foundation, Arizona Public Service, volunteers, and ranchers have all partnered to help restore water for wildlife and livestock in this game management unit. The current grazing permittee's private property, the "base property" for the ranch near the center of the allotment, has a water claim from seven springs which could provide water for the project and contribute to the collaborative effort.

In response to historic drought conditions experienced in 2018-2019, the Tonto National Forest worked with grazing permittees to develop and implement water projects to help mitigate the impact of drought. These projects continue to help permittees plan for and respond to drought conditions while also providing the benefit of reliable water sources to local wildlife populations.



The Cartwright allotment, however, did not develop any additional water sources during the 2018 effort and a lack of available waters on the allotment continues to challenge managing the allotment for proper animal distribution and utilization.

Current Management Direction

The Tonto National Forest Land and Resource Plan (Forest Plan) has the following requirements on page 41:

- Provide year-round water in big game key areas, focusing in areas of existing dirt tanks to minimize disturbance.
- Continue close coordination with State and other federal agencies for the benefit of plant and animal species.
- Maximize coordination with the Arizona Game and Fish Department regarding State listed species and their habitats.

The Cartwright Allotment is located in the Tonto National Forest Land and Resource Management Unit 1F. This unit is described as a general management unit on the Cave Creek District with management emphasis on a variety of renewable natural resources with primary emphasis on wildlife habitat improvement, livestock forage production and dispersed camping. Livestock in this management unit are to be managed at Level D (Forest Plan page 68-1), which is described as;

Management seeks to optimize production and utilization of forage allocated for livestock use consistent with maintaining the environment and providing the multiple use of the range. From all existing range and livestock management technology, practices may be selected and used to develop cost effective methods for achieving improved forage supplies and uniform livestock distribution and forage use... Cultural practices may be combined with fencing and water developments to implement complex grazing systems and management methods (Forest Plan page 243).

Additional guidance can be found in Forest Service Handbook 2209.13, Chapter 90 (Grazing Permit Administration; Rangeland Management Decision making).

Need for Proposal

In order to provide dependable water sources for permitted livestock and local wildlife populations and improve livestock distribution, there is a need to authorize additional water developments on the Cartwright Allotment.

Proposed Action

The proposed action was developed to increase the number of dependable water sources on the Cartwright Allotment. The proposal consists of the authorization of structural improvements on the allotment including water lines, troughs and storage tanks. The Proposed Action also includes mitigation measures and design features to minimize or eliminate adverse impacts to natural and cultural resources. Installation of these tanks and troughs will make areas of the

allotment usable by wildlife and livestock that were previously unusable due to a lack of water. This will improve distribution of livestock and decrease grazing pressure currently concentrated near existing water sources. The proposed water pipelines will help distribute cattle in the uplands and out of riparian areas, provide reliable water for wildlife, and create year-round water even during drought years. No new roads are proposed with this project, and vehicle use will be limited to existing roads. These projects also depicted on the attached project map.

Specifically, the Tonto National Forest proposes the following:

Ashdale Pipeline

The proposal would authorize the use of the existing well at the Ashdale administrative site. A storage tank would be placed at the well site to supply a new pipeline. The pipeline will be approximately one- and one-half miles long and would connect to two additional storage tanks and a total of six troughs. The pipeline at the Ashdale well will be placed on the gentle slope above the historic site of the former Ashdale Ranger Station.

To mitigate potential impacts to Cave Creek and the riparian area:

- The well would be pumped at a rate no greater than ten gallons per minute.
- The use of this well, regardless of amount, would only be permitted if there are no documented impacts to Cave Creek as indicated by monthly median instream flow.

Quien Sabe Pipeline 1

A pipeline, approximately two miles long, would be fed from the private property at the Cartwright ranch using the permittee's water claim from seven springs. The pipeline will connect to three storage tanks with a trough at each storage tank location, and two additional troughs.

Quien Sabe Pipeline 2

A pipeline, approximately 1.8 miles long, would be fed from the private property at the Cartwright ranch using the permittee's water claim from seven springs. The pipeline would connect to two storage tanks with a trough at the storage tank location, which will feed two additional troughs.

Bronco Pasture Pipeline

A pipeline, approximately 2.6 miles long, would be fed from the private property at the Cartwright ranch using the permittee's water claim from seven springs. The pipeline will connect to four storage tanks with a trough at each storage tank location.

Machakatee Spring Pipeline

A pipeline, approximately 4.1 miles long, would be fed from the Machakatee spring which feeds the Cartwright ranch. The permittee and Forest Service both hold a water claim to this spring. The pipeline will connect to one storage tank with a trough at the storage tank location, which will feed three additional troughs. The storage tank will also feed into Starvation Ridge tank (an existing dirt stock tank). One of the troughs on the pipeline will be placed in the footprint of Buzzard tank (an existing dirt stock tank) to provide reliable water when the tank is dry. A valve and meter would be installed only on the new pipe for livestock and wildlife use. Much like the Maggie May spring, installation of the meter and the valve will ensure the 4,500 gallons per day

cap, or total use of 5.38 acre-feet per year on the portion of the Forest Service water right for Machakatee Canyon that will be used for livestock and wildlife, is not exceeded. The pipeline will be located on the south side of the canyon to avoid heritage resources.

Maggie Mae Spring Pipeline

A pipeline, approximately 0.6 miles long, would be fed from Maggie Mae spring. The pipeline will connect to two storage tanks. One storage tank will include an adjacent trough. Maggie May Spring had an existing concrete trough that is no longer useable. One storage tank will be close to the spring source and the other will be on top of the mountain with a trough. The spring source will be fenced to exclude cattle. This will help to better distribute water to the uplands and keep cattle from lingering in the wash. Troughs and tanks associated with Maggie May not exceed 270,000 gallons of use per year or 1,000 gallons per day. A meter and valve would be installed at the spring source so that the Forest Service can better understand the output of the spring and ensure the Forest Service water right is not exceeded.

Design Features

This proposal includes the following design features for resource protection:

- Pipeline will be laid on the ground and as often as possible, beside a road, trail or fence line.
- All water storage tanks shall have closed tops.
- All waterlines shall be no smaller than 1.25 inch diameter.
- Water troughs shall be kept at a useable height for livestock. A portion of the trough may be buried below grade to achieve this.
- All troughs and storage tanks will have a float valve or an overflow pipe, so they do not overflow at the trough location.
- All water troughs shall have escape ramps built of expanded metal or similar materials and extend to bottom of trough and sides. Ramp should be firmly secured to trough rim so not be knocked loose by animals. Access ramps shall be constructed of durable material such as concrete or metal. Slope will not exceed 45 degrees. Further design specifications may be required from “Water for Wildlife” by Taylor and Tuttle 2007.
- Poles, posts, or trough frames shall not be taller than trough or cross above trough.
- Waterline, air or drain vents shall be covered with fine mesh to prevent rodents or dirt from entering line. All above ground waterline supported structures will be maintained to keep pipe at gradient and prevent sagging.
- Water will be made available for wildlife year-round when possible, not exceeding any Arizona Department of Water Resources water claims.
- All improvement components (e.g., cut sections of pipe, left over metal) used for construction shall be removed from Forest and properly disposed of.
- The storage tanks at Maggie Mae Spring will have a float valve so that excess water will remain at the spring source once the storage tanks are full.
- No new roads will be created, and vehicle use will be limited to existing roads.

Comments

If you have information you feel the Forest Service may not be aware of, especially any extraordinary circumstances, regarding the Proposed Action, **please send these in writing on or before October 2, 2019** to:

Keenan Bender, 40202N. Cave Creek Road, Scottsdale, AZ. 85262, (480) 595-3331 or email to comments-southwestern-tonto-cave-creek@usda.gov.

When submitting comments, please keep them specific to this proposal only. Comments which are not specific to the project and project area will be deemed outside the scope of the analysis and will not be considered. If you are including references, citations, or additional information to be considered for this project, please specify exactly how the material relates to the project. Also indicate exactly what part of the material you would like us to consider (such as page or figure number).

Comments received in response to this scoping notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this project and will be available for public inspection. Electronic comments must show name and address of submitter.

Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, any persons may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality (7 CFR 1.27(d)).

Sincerely,



MICAH GRONDIN
District Ranger

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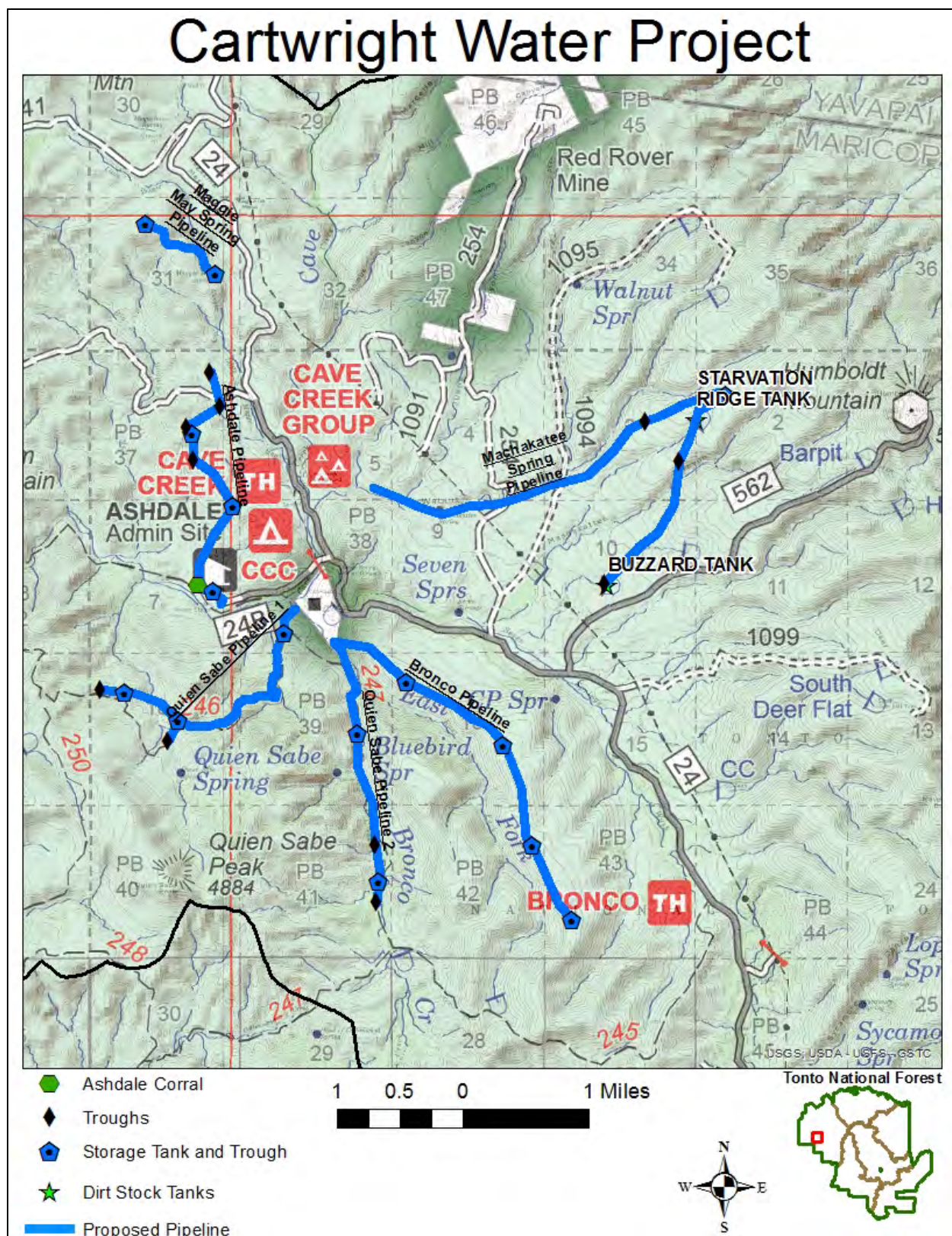


Figure 1. Map Showing Project Area and Proposed Improvement Locations.