



Decision Memo

Drought Thumb Pipeline on the Chrysotile Allotment

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

The Drought Thumb pipeline project on Globe Ranger District is located on the Chrysotile allotment, near Forest Service Road 473 and 897, approximately 30 air miles north of Globe, Arizona. (See project map in Appendix A).

Project Background

The Chrysotile allotment is authorized/permited to graze using a rest-rotation system. Each pasture should receive one-year growing season rest out of a four-year cycle. However, water sources are not currently adequate or available where they are needed to fully implement this grazing strategy. With the current dry conditions, earthen stock tanks and seasonal springs have dried up, causing uneven grazing patterns. This does not allow for livestock to disperse across the rest of the pasture, causing high grazing pressure in the area near the tank while available forage across the rest of the pasture to go unutilized.

Project Purpose

Currently, Chrysotile allotment range improvements are not adequate to implement a proper rotational strategy. Cattle are not able to disperse across the pastures, causing uneven use. This project will allow for better livestock distribution which will in turn maintain or improve forest resources in compliance with the current 1985 Tonto National Forest Plan.

Specifically, on the Chrysotile allotment, additional water sources are needed to provide for adequate livestock distribution.

Decision

Management of livestock on the forest is an active and adaptive process using various grazing strategies in which cattle are moved throughout the allotment to use pastures where forage is available and to allow other pastures to rest. To allow for more even use of occupied pastures, the forest can move water to areas of a pasture if water is not already available to livestock within a reasonable distance, particularly during times of drought, when natural water sources may be scarce. The forest uses the current grazing authorization and other administrative tools from law, regulation, and policy for authorizing projects for range management and resource protection during drought. (FSH 2209.13, 19.1)

I have decided to supply additional water for livestock on the Chrysotile allotment, not presently available due to minimal spring water production. This water will better distribute livestock and offset dry springs and earthen tanks. Specifically, I have decided to extend an above ground poly pipeline from both ends of an existing line. The first section comes off an existing trough and extends to an existing corral, where a new trough will be installed. No new temporary route is needed for the first section.

The second section will be off an existing storage tank, where a new above ground line will run to a new storage tank and trough. This storage tank will be moved to location via a temporary access route. The use of heavy machinery is authorized to move the storage tank and trough into place. The trough and storage tank locations may need to have minimal vegetation cleared with hand tools, to place the improvements. This improvement is near and accessible by Forest Regal Mine Road.

Once the water development is installed, it will become a maintenance responsibility of the term grazing permit holder.

Design Features

This project will comply with Best Management Practices and the following design features to minimize or eliminate effects to other resources:

Pipelines

- Diameter of pipe should be large enough to carry the flow of the water development but not less than 1 inch, preferably one and one quarter inch.
- Inlet and outlet pipe are protected by anchoring to trough with a single post next to the vertical pipe and a brace or pole supporting the horizontal pipe. Inlet and outlet pipeline will be buried as much as possible for their protection.
- All above ground pipeline supported structures will be maintained to keep pipe at gradient and prevent sagging.
- Pipelines with air and drain valves will be covered with fine screen to prevent rodents and dirt from entering pipeline. Screens must be replaced as needed.
- Pipeline leaks will be repaired or damaged section will be replaced with materials similar to materials from original construction.
- Pipelines with valve covers boxes will be kept covered and repaired when needed.

Troughs and Storage tanks

- Troughs will be kept at heights that make them useable to livestock and trough bottom kept clear of ground when possible. Troughs which become elevated or uneven from trampling or erosion is periodically backfilled to maintain a useable height, authorization may be needed.
- Excess water in trough will be contained in an overflow pipe at least 50 feet away or nearest drainage. End of overflow pipe must be protected from trampling by livestock.
- New water developments will be constructed in uplands to encourage livestock use out of the bottoms.
- All existing or future water developments that have open tops (i.e., troughs, open top storage tanks) must have escape and access ramps. All escape ramps will be built of expanded metal or similar materials and extend to bottom of trough and sides. Ramp will be firmly secured to trough rim so it will not be knocked loose by animals. Access ramps will 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.
- Water should be available for wildlife year-round in livestock troughs, except in freezing conditions.
- Troughs, storage tanks, and pipelines will be drained and cleaned periodically to prevent moss and debris buildup and damage from freezing.

- Poles, posts, and trough framing materials used in water development construction will be maintained, repaired, or replaced as needed. Materials must not be taller than the trough and wires should not be placed over trough to allow for watering avian species.

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 36.2 (9). This category of the action is applicable because this allotment has been added to the Recissions schedule and an allotment analysis is expected in the future.

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:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species** – A biological evaluation was completed March 16, 2021, which determined none of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- Research natural areas** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- American Indian religious or cultural sites; and archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – The project area was surveyed for these resources in 2021, and the Forest Archaeologist has determined there will be no effects from this project.

Public Involvement

On January 11, 2022, a scoping letter was mailed out to 19 individuals and organizations outlining the proposed action. One responsive comment letter was received from Western Watersheds Project. The commenter is concerned with whether livestock grazing should be authorized on the allotment under current conditions and includes factors that the forest should consider when making that determination. This project does not address authorization of the allotment¹; it only addresses the provision of water to address movement of permitted cattle in compliance with the current authorization.

¹ This allotment is on the Recissions Schedule for future analysis at which time the forest will consider these and other factors to determine if livestock grazing should be reauthorized.



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 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: A. Jamie Wages, Rangeland Management Staff, Globe Ranger District, 7680 South Sixshooter Canyon Globe, Arizona 85501, 480-291-4500.

02/02/2022

Adam Bromley
Globe District Ranger

Date

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Appendix A

