

APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FORESTS PROJECT INITIATION FORM

January 25, 2021

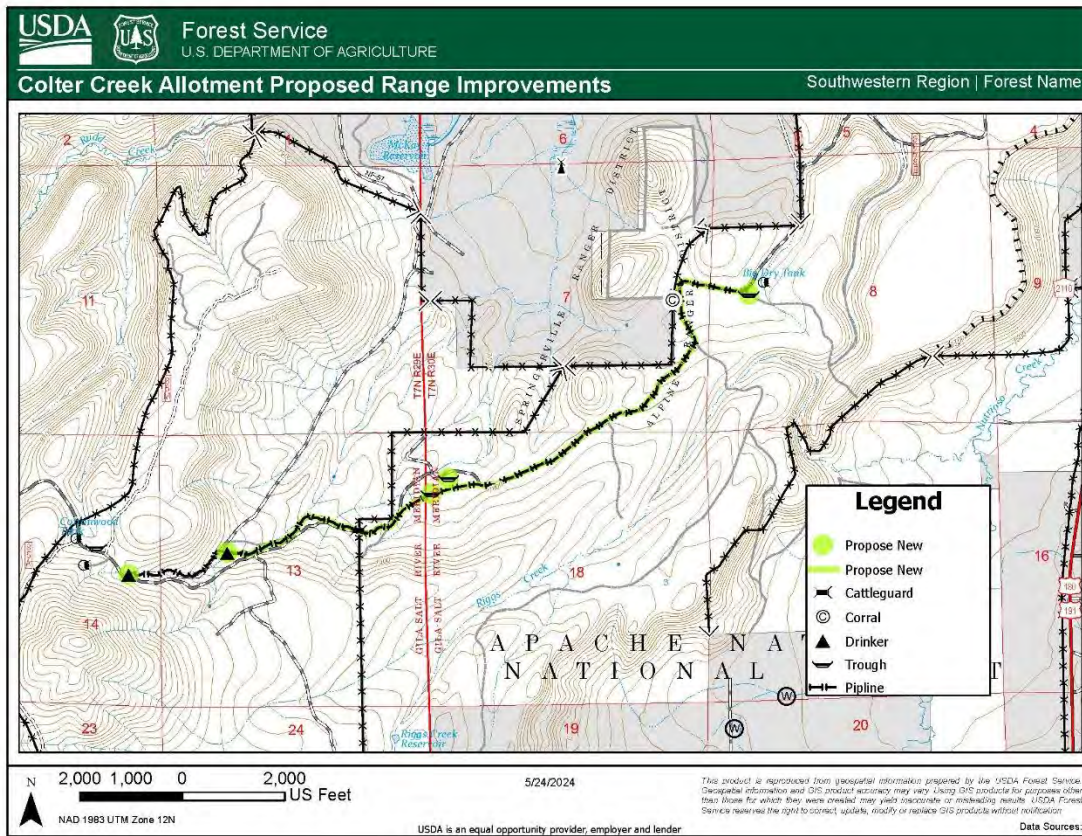
Project Proposal Information	
Project Name ¹ :	Colter Creek Corral Relocation and Water Improvements
Review Due By:	
Project Leader Name:	Ron Mortensen/Tyler McCafferty
Project Proponent/Contact:	Knight Family Ranches (Traegen Knight-permittee)
District Office:	Alpine
Project location: Provide Legal and Map, include acres.	Colter Creek Allotment, T7N, R29E, E ½ & T7N, R30E, NW ¼. Approximately 2 acres affected for a new corral and 10-20 for water system extension.
PALS Tracking Number:	63894
Pinyon project record file path:	https://usfs.box.com/s/6x4owdc0khh142oud9leo15p1gkug24v
T: Drive location, shapefile path:	T:\FS\NFS\ApacheSitgreaves\Program\2200Range\GIS\ALP\ColterCreek\Colter Ck Rg Imp 2023 small NEPA
Forest Plan Management Area:	General Forest
In which CE Category Does This Project Fit and why?	36 CFR 220.6(e)(6) This category fits this project as the project will relocate/reconstruct a corral outside of wet/riparian habitat and extend a water system from existing Cottonwood Spring to the North Pasture for reliable year-round wildlife water & distribute livestock out of wet/riparian habitat along Riggs & Nutrioso creeks.
Proposed Timeframe:	Corral needed by October 2023 & pipeline as funding available but no sooner than August 2023.
NEPA Decision Date:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Implementation Date(s):	6/5/2024

¹ If a decision memo (DM) for the project is required, the last page of this form may be used to do that. If a decision memo is prepared separately, which may be useful for high public interest projects, use the template found at /Box/1900Planning~1950EnvironmentalPolicyAndProcedures/Program/CE Toolbox/A-S Decision Memo. Planning staff and line officer will advise about whether a separate decision memo is useful to prepare.

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Project Map



Describe the proposed Action²- Describe the following: **Explain Who wants to do What, Where, and Why they want to do it, and How it would be accomplished.**

Who and Where: The A-S NF, Alpine RD, Range Program in conjunction with the Colter Creek grazing allotment permittee proposes two much needed range improvements on the Colter Creek allotment.

What: Relocate/reconstruct a handling facility (less than 2 acres in size) within the NE portion of the allotment as well as extend an existing water system (1-2 miles in length), off the developed Cottonwood Spring, to provide a reliable water source into the North pasture.

Why: There is a need to relocate and reconstruct a usable handling facility on the NE portion of the Colter Creek allotment primarily because existing handling facilities are located within T & E Species habitat and/or potentially sensitive archeological sites, making them undesirable locations for corral reconstruction and use. Additionally, the current EA/DN for the Colter Creek allotment prescribes a September to October season of use resulting in a pasture rotation from high elevation to the lower elevation rangelands in the NE portion of the allotment deeming the corrals in the higher elevation rangelands unrealistic for moving cattle off the allotment at the end of the season.

² If this form is used as a decision memo, all project design criteria, mitigation measures and monitoring to be included in the decision must be listed or incorporated by reference in this section of the form.

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There is also a need to provide a more reliable water source in the north portion of the North Pasture. This would serve two purposes; to have a good water source during dry years when Riggs Creek is dry, and to help relieve some grazing pressure on Riggs Creek by better distributing livestock use across the pasture.

How: Upon approval of a handling facility location, the Range Program or the permittee may provide the construction materials and the permittee will construct the facility and be responsible to maintain it thereafter. The facility would likely be constructed with used carbon pipe and sucker rod but could also be constructed of wooden materials.

The water system extension would be constructed by the permittee with FS Range Program or permittee purchased materials as well. Black high density polyethylene pipe would be used, likely laid on top of the ground but would like to consider burying it as well, along with metal or rubber tire troughs for water storage and drinking capability by livestock and wildlife.

Design Features, Best Management Practices, and Monitoring for Implementation: Construction of the handling facility/corral will take place when the ground is dry/frozen, and machinery used for installation of the pipeline will only operate when the ground is dry/frozen. The District Archeologist will be notified when construction is planned to begin so they can monitor activities and ensure avoidance requirements are being followed and sites are not affected.

Environmental Analysis Review

Are the following resource conditions present? If any are marked yes, comments/rationale on whether there are extraordinary circumstances must be provided.

Federally Listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat? Comments/Rationale: see the Wildlife, Fisheries and Range Concerns and Effects sections.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Regional Forester Sensitive Species? Comments/Rationale: see the Wildlife and Botany Concerns/Effects sections.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds? Comments/Rationale:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Congressionally designated areas impacted or included? I.E Wilderness areas or anticipated effects to wilderness Comments/Rationale:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
RACR; Regional approval required? Comments/Rationale:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Forest Plan inventoried roadless area? Comments/Rationale:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Research Natural Areas? Comments/Rationale:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Known Heritage/ Cultural Site? Comments/Rationale: See the Heritage Concerns/Effects section.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Based on this information, the resource review below, and the project record, does the line officer determine there are any extraordinary circumstances?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

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We have included monitoring and design features to address resource concerns, therefore extraordinary circumstances are not present.	
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The following table is to be completed by IDT members. Specify any concerns/effects, mitigations or if you have NO or MINIMAL concerns. Explain your reasoning.

If a resource topic is irrelevant to a project, the IDT member or project leader should write Not Applicable in that box.

Special Use Permits: Record under ‘Hours required’ Estimated time needed to review, discuss, and comment on the proposal, field visits, data collection, analysis, or reports generated.

Range Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance		Hours required:
<p>The Colter Creek Allotment Range Improvements project is expected to have no negative impact to rangeland resources and no change to the allotment management plan or term grazing permit. The new corral will eliminate an existing corral located in threatened or endangered species habitat and provide an efficient tool for grazing permittees to remove livestock from the allotment in a timely manner. The pipeline extension will help to provide reliable water to portions of the allotment that are often drier which will help to improve livestock distribution as well as lessening the impact to the Riggs Creek drainage riparian. These additional water points can also provide water to wildlife year around. These improvements do not change the allotment management plan and current prescribed utilization levels, or the term grazing permitted livestock numbers or season of use, so is expected to have no additional effects than what has been disclosed in the current allotment NEPA.</p>		
Signature: /s/ Ron Mortensen		9/6/2023
Water Resources Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance		Hours required:
<p>Impacts to water resources are negligible and short-term in duration. Avoid disruption to riparian areas. Implement best management practices to minimize impacts.</p>		
Signature: /s/ John Rihs		9/6/2023
Fisheries Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance		Hours required:
<p>The proposed project locations exist along Forest Service Road 85. The road and the proposed project locations do not overlap and are not within close proximity to perennial streams or water bodies that hold special status aquatic species. According to the Districts GIS Databases and the available literature, I have found no records of aquatic species within the proposed water source at Cottonwood Springs. However, if further research reveals that there are aquatic species within Cottonwood Springs, then measures should be taken to prevent entrapment of fish and other aquatic organisms while withdrawing water from the spring. Based on this review, there are no concerns in relation to the fish/aquatic resource.</p>		
Formal FWS consultation needed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Signature: /s/ Ken Keichline		3/14/2023
Heritage Concerns/ Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
<p>Those sites within the project area which are considered to be significant, and which may be subject to impacts from project activities have been marked according to U.S. Forest Service, Region 3 standards. The locations and avoidance requirements for all the sites within the project area has been coordinated with the archaeologist on the District, who will be responsible for monitoring their condition during the course of the project. The project is not expected to affect sites located outside its administrative boundaries.</p> <p>Heritage Report No. 2023-01-0027, on file at the Apache-Sitgreaves NF Supervisors Office.</p>		
SHPO consultation needed?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Signature: /s/ Amie Andrews		6/4/2024
Recreation Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
No concerns: This area is not a heavily used recreation area and not utilized by any particular SUP's.		
Signature: /s/ Shannon Miller 9/6/2023		
Wilderness/Roadless Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
No concerns: This area is not in a Wilderness or IRA area.		
Signature: /s/ Shannon Miller 9/6/2023		
Silviculture Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required: 1		
The activities described above are not expected to have adverse effects to forest health, forest ecosystems and stand dynamics, and ongoing silvicultural treatments.		
Signature: /s/ Jessica Alexander		3/13/2023
Soil Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		

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<p>Water line: Soil erosion hazard is slight, but the compaction rating is severe for most of the area where the pipe improvement is planned. If the pipe is buried and machinery is involved in that process, ensure that the ground is dry or frozen to minimize compaction if machinery is taken off the developed road. A-S rutting guidelines are a good guideline for when the ground is too wet for heavy machinery.</p> <p>Proposed handling facility: Greenwood Homestead/SIPE Boundary/Nelson: all three of these options are acceptable. They are all within Map Unit 518. The limiting factor for that soil type is the high clay content leading to severe compaction rating. The mitigation is to use the area when dry or frozen. Because the season of use is the Fall, a normally dry time of year these three sites are suitable and are close to an existing road so off-road travel would be minimized.</p> <p>Warm Spring: this is proposed in Map Unit 516, however it appears to be in a slope inclusion. It is also located close to some ephemeral drainages. To assess the suitability from a soils perspective I would need to visit the proposed location to determine site specific characteristics.</p>		
Signature: /s/Kristen Meier		3/13/2023
Special Uses Lands Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required: 2		
No anticipated concerns, improvements will be located on an established grazing permittee.		
Signature: Eric Campbell 03/15/2023		
Special Uses-Rec Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
N/A		
Signature:		
Timber Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
No adverse effects on timber projects, or forest product removal.		
Signature: /s/ Trace Douglas 02/22/2024		
Transportation Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required: 0		
There will be no effects to transportation because this project does not involve travel on FS roads. Assuming all traffic will be coming from county road 2108. If traffic does come from FS it will be on NFSR 88 which is level 3 and designed for passenger vehicles traffic for which the work will have no problem using the road.		
Signature: /s/ Elal Segev 09/5/2023		
Wildlife Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
No listed species or critical habitats exist in the proposed project locations. Sensitive species may exist in these areas, but proposed activities would not cause a trend toward federal listing as they are of short duration and minimal impact.		
Formal FWS consultation needed?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Signature: /s/ Loren LeSueur		3/10/2023
Public Involvement Concerns/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
Scoping was conducted to the Apache Zone scoping list found in the project record and was also listed on the SOPA.		
Signature: Amber Swinney		10/31/2023
Boundary Management Concerns/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
N/A		
Signature:		
Fuels Concerns/Effects/Legal Compliance Hours required:		
The activities described above are not expected to have adverse effects to any ongoing fuels treatments.		
Signature: /s/ Christina Brannon		3/15/2023
Tribal Resource Concerns/ Effects/Legal Compliance		
Describe engagement: No concerns. Tribes were provided the project description within the April 2024 quarterly SOPA report and no responses were received.		
Signature: /s/ Rusty Williams		5/24/2024
State and County Government Coordination (for example, with cross boundary trail projects)		
State and/or County Government Engagement needed	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes describe engagement:		
Signature: /s/ Rusty Williams		5/24/2024
Forest Plan Consistency/Legal Compliance		
Is the activity consistent with Forest Plan Management Area Direction?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the activity consistent with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has the Forest Plan Consistency Checklist been completed?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If it is unclear whether the project is consistent with Forest Plan direction, explain here:		
Signature: Amber Swinney		10/31/2023

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Reviewed by:

Who	Name	Signature	Date
NEPA Planner	Amber Swinney	/s/ Amber Swinney	10/31/2023

Approved by:

Who	Name	Signature	Date
Line Officer ³	Jeffrey Rivera	/s/Jeffrey Adam Rivera	6/12/2024



COLTER CREEK ALLOTMENT RANGE IMPROVEMENT

U.S. Forest Service

Alpine Ranger District, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
Apache County, Arizona

This decision incorporates all information in this document and included in the project file.

DECISION & RATIONALE

I have decided to authorize the activities listed above on pages 2 – 3 in the section describing the proposed action. This includes modifications identified during environmental analysis and review for regulatory compliance.

APPLICABLE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION & FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

The Project Proposal Information section provides rationale for categorically excluding this action from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and for using the identified category/categories. The Environmental Analysis Review section documents rationale to support my finding that no extraordinary circumstances exist, along with findings required by other applicable laws and regulations to demonstrate compliance with the regulatory framework for the activities authorized by this decision.

AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS & PERSONS CONTACTED

A list of agencies, organizations and/or persons contacted regarding this proposal is provided, along with a brief overview of comments/feedback received and how they were considered.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

I intend to implement this decision beginning in grazing year 2024 (March-February) until completed.

³ Edit for which line officer is signing.

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ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (Agriculture Act of 2014 [Pub. L. No. 113-79], Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

Jeffrey Rivera, Alpine District Ranger

PO Box 469

Alpine, AZ 85920

928-339-5000

/s/Jeffrey Adam Rivera

6/12/2024

Jeffrey Rivera

District Ranger, Alpine Ranger District

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