

Decision Memo
Cumero Allotment East Pasture Water Development
U.S. Forest Service
Santa Catalina Ranger District
Coronado National Forest

Background

Rainfall has been historically inconsistent across the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mountains. After multiple years of drought, the lack of water throughout the Santa Catalina Ranger District has led to a decrease in wildlife dispersal as well as challenges for the permittee with watering livestock. Chronic shortages of safe and reliable water threaten the survival of bat and other wildlife populations, especially in drought years. Water can be a critical factor in determining the abundance and distribution of wildlife in arid western ecosystems. The impact varies by species, habitat and season. These conditions are present in the Cumero Allotment, which is located just south of Happy Valley (see Map 1). For these reasons, the District proposes to construct the Cumero Allotment East Pasture Water Development to supplement natural springs and dirt tanks within the project area. This water development would fill the need for additional water availability east of Ash Creek and would positively benefit many wildlife species and provide for better livestock distribution.

Decision

It is my decision to implement the Cumero Allotment East Pasture Water Development project. This water system would provide a consistent year-round water supply for wildlife and livestock and relieve pressure from the Ash Creek riparian area. The Santa Catalina Ranger District of the Coronado National Forest will install approximately two miles of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) water pipe, two 5,000-gallon water storage tanks, and two water troughs to supply water to the East Pasture within the Cumero Allotment. Pipelines to the storage and troughs would be placed on the ground surface. All materials for the water development will be transported to the project site via helicopter.

After implementation, the water developments will be maintained by the permittee. Water would be supplied to these troughs year-round to support wildlife, regardless of livestock presence within the pasture.

This permanent water source will help promote the expansion of the Gould's turkey within the area. The majority of the Gould's turkey population occurs within a small portion of the suitable habitat, preferring the wetter canyon bottoms. Having a consistent water source may encourage flocks of Gould's turkeys to permanently establish themselves in the drier canyons. Coues whitetail deer and javelina will also benefit from this water source.

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 of Happy Valley.

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 proposed action would have no effect on federally listed or proposed threatened or endangered species. Implementation of the proposed action would have no impact on Management Indicator Species or 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 is completed according 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 area, and is therefore not expected to have any impact on 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. 2019-05-088 and the report was sent to the 12 Native American Tribes with ancestral ties to lands now managed by the Coronado National Forest.

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. 2019-05-088.

Public Involvement

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Coronado National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions in May 2019. Internal consideration of potential issues involved resource specialists in the following disciplines: wildlife, archaeology, range and watershed. The permit holder was contacted in conjunction with the development of this proposal and decision.

A letter and cultural resources report was sent to twelve Native American Tribes on May 31, 2019. Tribal Historic Preservation Officer's for Gila River Indian Community, San Carlos Apache Tribe, and White Mountain Apache Tribe responded and concurred with the report's recommendations.

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 - The project was designed in conformance with the 2018 Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, including forestwide management direction for range management, constructed waters, and animals and rare plants, and specific geographic area direction for the Santa Catalina Ecosystem Management Area.

Endangered Species Act - The District Biologist has determined that the proposed action would have no effect to federally listed or proposed threatened or endangered species nor their designated critical habitat.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) - The Forest Archaeologist has determined that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed action. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer is not required under the *Forest Service Region 3 Programmatic Agreement Regarding Historic Property Protection and Responsibilities*. All responses from Native American Tribes concurred with the determination of no effect.

Administrative Review or Objection Opportunities

This decision is not subject to the pre-decisional administrative review process per 36 CFR 218.23 - Proposed projects and activities not subject to legal notice and opportunity to comment. The legal notice and opportunity to comment procedures of this subpart do not apply to: (a) Any project or activity categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Implementation Date

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

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Christina Pearson, District Range and Invasives Staff, Santa Catalina Ranger District, 5700 N Sabino Canyon Rd., Tucson, AZ 85750; (520) 749-7706.



Charles Woodard
Santa Catalina District Ranger

09/30/2019

Date

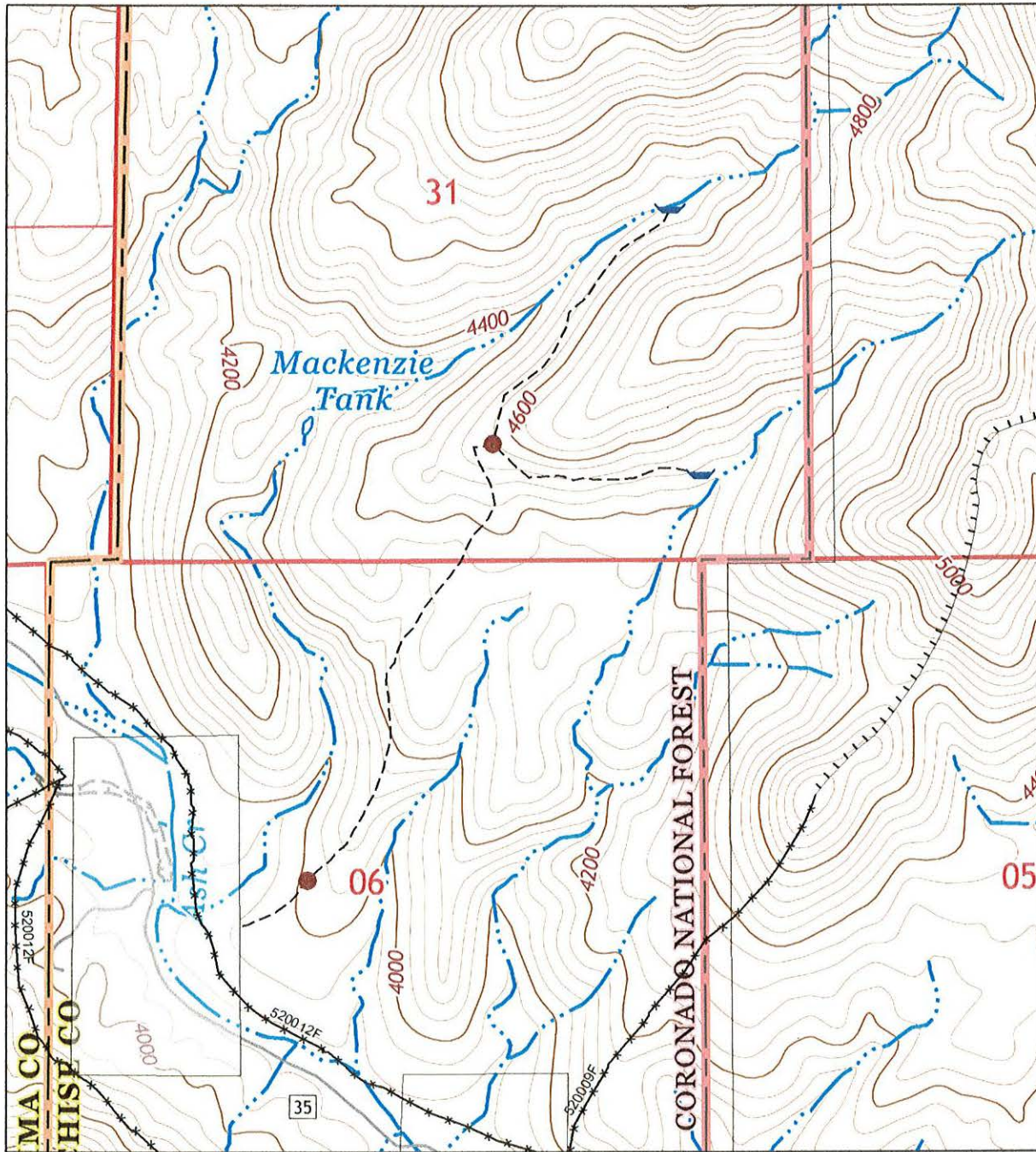
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Map 1. Cumero Allotment East Pasture Water Development Project Location



Legend

- PROPOSED TROUGHS
- PROPOSED STORAGE TANKS
- PROPOSED PIPELINE
- NATURAL BARRIER
- ALLOTMENT INTERIOR FENCE
- PRIVATE LAND

Cumero Allotment
East Pasture Water Development

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