



Decision Memo

East Fork Spring to Bladder Pipeline

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

The East Fork Spring to Bladder Pipeline project on Tonto Basin Ranger District is located on the Dagger livestock grazing allotment, near the Forest Service Road 1501, approximately 6 air miles Northeast from Roosevelt Estates. The legal location is T5N, R15E, Sections 10, 11, 15. (See map at the end of this document).

Project Background

The Dagger livestock grazing allotment located on the Tonto Basin Ranger District is permitted for 200 adult cattle yearlong and 150 yearlings. This Allotment had an Environmental Impact Statement completed with a Record of Decision for the continuation of livestock grazing in 1997. That decision provided for the improvement in vegetative cover through better livestock distribution and intensive livestock management that would be managed towards the established Tonto National Forest Plan objectives and goals. These goals are achieved through the rotation of livestock through multiple pastures each year to ensure each pasture is rested enough for vegetative regrowth. Therefore enough water sources in each pasture needs to be available for livestock use to hold them in those pastures. Recently the Bladder well has had a decrease in water availability and does not provide enough adequate water for the livestock in the North Sheep Pasture.



Project Purpose

The project was designed in conformance with the 2023 Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan (land management plan's) desired conditions, standards, and guidelines. Specifically, these desired conditions for rangelands, forage, and grazing apply:

Rangelands, Forage, and Grazing (GRZ)

Desired Conditions (GRZ-DC)

02 Rangelands are resilient to disturbances, fluctuations, and extremes in the natural environment (e.g., fire, flooding, drought, climate variability).

Guidelines (GRZ-G)

03 Drought preparedness should be emphasized in allotment management plans and may include flexible stocking rates/livestock classes, flexible rotation schedules, and other strategies for dealing with climate variability.

The purpose of this project is to provide additional water resources for grazing livestock on the Dagger grazing allotment.

Decision

I have decided to approve the proposed actions listed above.

During development of the proposed action, information was collected about forest resources within the project area. My decision is designed to avoid and/or minimize impacts to these resources, and comply with other laws, regulation, policy, and the land management plan. This project would incorporate best management practices and includes the following for resource protection:

- Intitiate a management method that meets animal husbandry requirements of livestock and provides poper stocking and vegetative management.
- Provide structural improvements for management of livestock and range resources.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Actions

My assessment is that this proposal falls within the actions listed in *36 CFR 220.6 - Categorical exclusions* that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. This category is found in *36 CFR 220.6(e)(9)*. This category of action(s) is applicable because the project will improve the quality of the range and improve the water supply.

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** – If the mitigations and design features are implemented as directed in this decision, there is no impact to species that would preclude the use of a categorical exclusion.

- b. **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – Existing water right for East Fork Spring allocates up to 91,980 gal/year for livestock use for diversion for the 200 cattle and 150 yearlings permitted for that allotment. It is important to note that this is a paper water right amount and does not reflect current water availability for livestock diversion from East Fork spring.
- c. **Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas** – None of these areas are affected.
- d. **Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas** – None of these areas are affected.
- e. **Research natural areas** – None of these areas are affected.
- f. **American Indian religious or cultural sites; and archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – If the mitigations and design features are implemented as directed in this decision, there is no impact to cultural resources that would preclude the use of a categorical exclusion.

Public Involvement

On 08/11/2024, the East Fork Spring to Bladder well pipeline was posted to the PALS website.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

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.

I have determined that this project complies with the 2023 Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan (land management plan). The project was designed in conformance with the land management plan's desired conditions, standards, and guidelines, and other federal and state law, policy, and direction applicable to the resources present in the Tonto National Forest. This determination is based on the absence or the negligible level of adverse effects on the following resource conditions:

- a) Forest Plan identified Species of Conservation Concern. No further discussion of this is necessary..
- b) Forest Plan identified Riparian Management Zones (RMZ). No further discussion of this is necessary.
- c) Forest Plan identified Recommended Wilderness Areas and Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers. No further discussion of this is necessary.
- d) Forest Plan identified recommended research natural areas and recommended botanical areas. No further discussion of this is necessary.

Implementation of this decision will not violate any Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.



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: Eric Hoskins, Rangeland Management Specialist, Tonto Basin Ranger District, 28097 Highway 188, Roosevelt, AZ, 85545, 480-435-5563.

JEREMY PLAIN

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Jeremy Plain

Date

District Ranger

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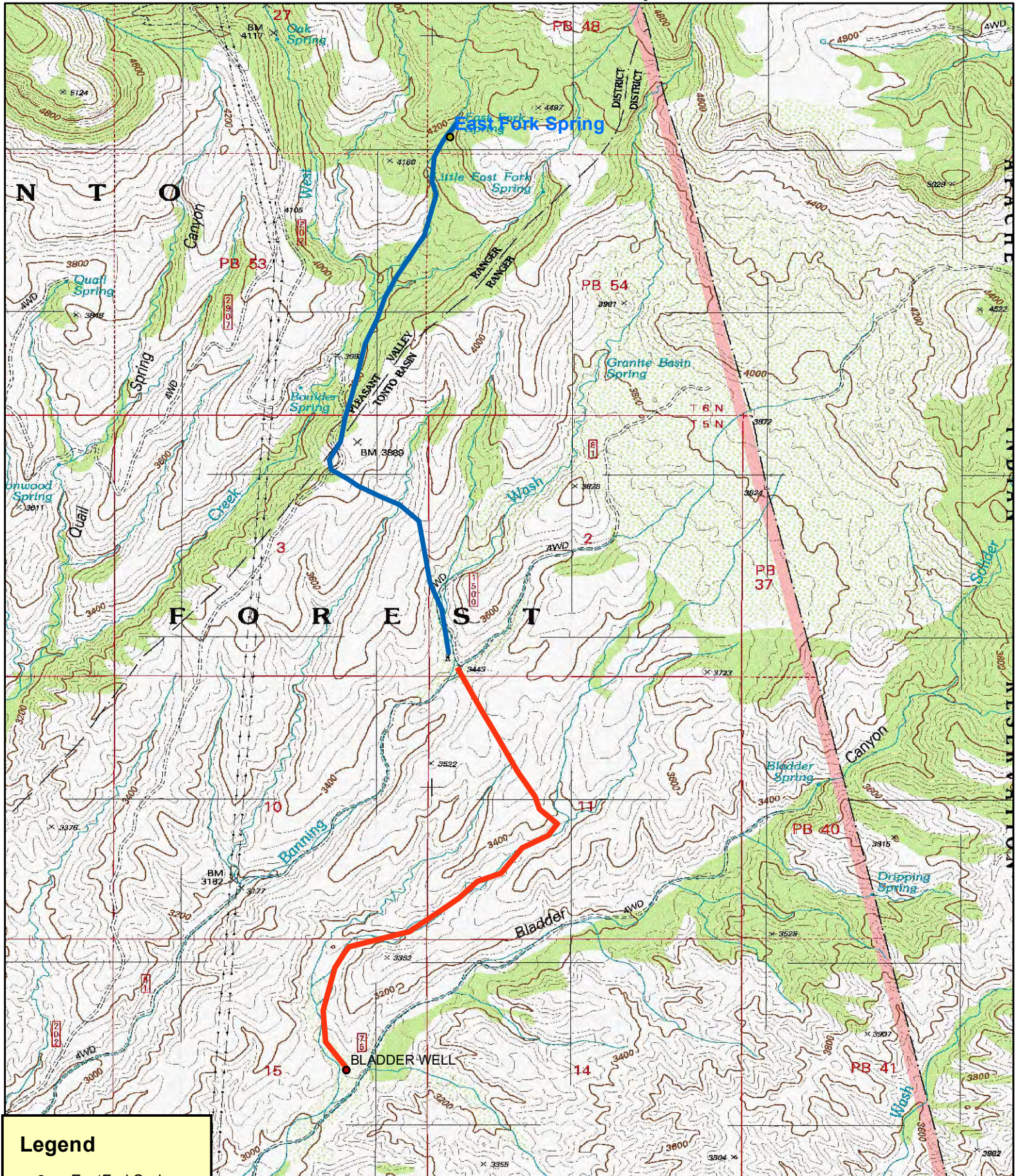
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Appendix A

(See Attached East Fork to Bladder Pipeline Project Map)

East Fork to Bladder Pipeline



Legend

- EastForkSpring
- BladderWell
- ProposedPipeline
- Existing_Pipeline

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