

**Decision Memo**  
**Sunflower Well Pipeline Project**

Tonto National Forest  
Mesa Ranger District  
Maricopa County, Arizona  
(T6N R8E Section 25, T6N R9E Sections 7, 18, 19, 30)

**Decision**

It is my decision to authorize the Sunflower well pipeline project on the Diamond grazing allotment. This project is funded in part by the Natural Resources Conservation Services' (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The purpose of this project will be to improve livestock distribution, protect riparian areas, and increase water availability for wildlife.

The project entails the installation of approximately two miles of 1¼ inch high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe to convey water from an existing private well, to a 10,000 gallon underground storage tank. The storage tank will be buried within the footprint of an existing, non-functioning dirt stock tank. From the storage tank, water will be transported approximately 1.5 miles, via 1 inch HDPE, to two new 500 gallon troughs. The pipeline will be laid above ground, except at road crossings, where it will be buried. All materials will be transported using existing roads and trails. Each trough will be equipped with approved wildlife escape ramps. During periods of average/above average precipitation, when dirt stock tanks are holding water, water to the two new troughs will be shut off.

I find that this action can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA) because there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and the action is within category *36 CFR 220.6(e)(9)*; and FSH 1909.15 Sec. 32.2 (9), "Implementation or modification of minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when an Allotment Management Plan is not yet in place".

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 – A biological evaluation, management indicator species analysis, and migratory bird analysis were completed and found that the project will have no adverse effects on species (listed, proposed, or sensitive) or habitat.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – None are present.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – None are present.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – None are present.
- Research natural areas – None are present.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – None are present.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – An archaeological survey was completed in February 2012. No prehistoric sites were encountered, however, several isolated historic items were observed throughout the survey. Items included old barbed wire, solder dot cans, nails, etc., items associated with old "cowboy camps". The project will have no effect on these historic locations. An Inventory Standards and Accounting form was completed and signed by the Forest Supervisor on March 13, 2012, with no further action recommended by the Forest Archaeologist (#2012-12-04).

## Public Involvement

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Tonto National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions on December 14, 2011, and updated periodically during the analysis. A scoping letter was sent to 16 individuals and organizations and 22 members of various tribes. The legal notice, signifying the 30 day Notice and Comment period, was published in the Arizona Capitol Times on May 11, 2012. The District coordinated with Phillip Jacquez, NRCS District Conservationist, on pipeline design, and Dana Warnecke, Arizona Game and Fish Department Habitat Specialist, Region VI, Mesa, on maintaining water levels in the troughs for wildlife during times of drought. Internally, coordination occurred between the Forest Archaeologist and the District Range/Wildlife Staff. Two comments were received during the Notice and Comment period; one from the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, and one from the Arizona Game and Fish Department. No significant issues were raised as a result of the scoping process.

## Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

- This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan. The project will improve livestock distribution, thereby improving soil, vegetation, and watershed conditions (pp. 20, 40). The project is located within management area 3I; with the primary emphasis on improvement of wildlife habitat, livestock forage production, and dispersed recreation.
- *Clean Water Act – Best Management Practices* will be followed during project implementation to ensure protection of soil and water resources, in compliance with this Act.
- *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* – This Act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The entirety of documentation for this decision supports compliance with this Act.

## Administrative Review (Appeal) Opportunities

This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with improvement of forest area for fish and wildlife. The action was solicited for comments for 30 days and no negative comments were received, therefore no appeal period is necessary.

## Implementation Date

Implementation of this project may begin five days after publication of the legal notice of this Decision Memo is published in the Arizona Capitol Times, on October 26, 2012.

## Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Kelly Kessler, Range/Wildlife Staff, Mesa Ranger District, 5140 E. Ingram St., Mesa, AZ 85205, 480.610.3305

  
Gary Hanna  
District Ranger

10-25-12

Date

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