



DECISION NOTICE AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
DRAGOON ALLOTMENT LIVESTOCK WATER PIPELINE
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
DRAGOON ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT AREA
DOUGLAS RANGER DISTRICT, CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST
COCHISE COUNTY, AZ

INTRODUCTION

The Douglas Ranger District of the Coronado National Forest is proposing a new livestock water pipeline to be constructed on the Dragoon allotment, and several existing pipelines on the allotment would be buried. A change in the base property associated with the Dragoon allotment has realized loss of an important source of livestock water. The new pipeline would extend from an existing pipeline north along Forest Road 689 approximately 1 mile to another existing pipeline system. This pipeline will provide water to two existing storage tank and trough systems in both the East and Far East pastures of the Dragoon allotment. Also, approximately 2 ¼ miles of existing pipelines on the Dragoon allotment that are currently on top of the ground would be buried. Burying this series of pipelines will protect and prolong the lifespan of the pipelines while preventing freeze-up during the winter, greatly increasing the functionality of the system as a whole.

An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared to evaluate the proposal. Two alternatives were analyzed in detail by an interdisciplinary team: Alternative 1: No Action, and Alternative 2: the proposed action. Further description of alternatives can be found in Chapter 2 of the EA. A copy of the final EA is available for public review at the Douglas District Office at 1192 W. Saddlevue Road, Douglas, Arizona 85607 or at http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=43268.

DECISION

This Decision Notice documents my decision and reasons for this decision. The Dragoon Allotment Livestock Water Pipeline project purpose and need for action provides the focus and scope for the Proposed Action and alternatives. Given the purpose and need, I have reviewed the alternatives and carefully considered the public comments received during the combined scoping and comment period. Public feedback, the analysis disclosed in the EA, information contained in the Project record and management direction and policy considerations contributed collectively to determining the selected alternative.

Based upon my review of the Dragoon Allotment Livestock Water Pipeline EA, I have decided to implement Alternative 2, as described in the final EA. Project design criteria were modified to mitigate issues that arose during the combined scoping and comment period.

Planned Activities for Selected Alternative

The following activities are summarized descriptions. Complete descriptions can be found in Chapter 2 of the EA.

The Forest Service, in cooperation with the grazing permittee, plan to install and bury approximately 1 mile of new livestock water pipeline as well as bury approximately 2 ¼ miles of existing pipeline that is on top of the ground on the Dragoon Allotment.

Mitigation Measures

This decision includes the following mitigation measures for resource protection:

Air Quality

- Potential dust generated during pipeline construction will be mitigated by installing the pipeline when soil moisture is high enough to prevent excessive dust and/or controlled through standard dust abatement measures

Heritage Resources

- If any cultural resource sites are discovered during construction and/or ground disturbing activities, all operation in the immediate vicinity will immediately cease, and CNF will be contacted immediately.

Soils, Hydrology, and Watershed

- Soils will be managed in accordance with direction from CNF Plan and will include actions to retain the soil during construction, and to stabilize soil post construction.
- During and after completion of the project, Best Management Practices will be maintained as identified in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2509-22, as well as the NRCS Standards for Livestock Water Pipeline Installation.

Wildlife

- The proposed pipeline route will be designed to avoid the destruction of agaves, an important food source for the endangered Lesser Long-Nosed bat

Monitoring of Resources

The USFS will monitor implementation of the selected alternative. Other resource specialists would be involved in monitoring of specific measures relating to their particular resource area. Monitoring items are listed below.

- USFS Range and Watershed staff will designate and mark the specific route before construction begins.
- The USFS Range and Watershed staff will periodically monitor disturbed areas to determine need for additional measures and noxious weed control.
- The USFS Range and Watershed staff will periodically monitor effectiveness of erosion control measures following installation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Coronado National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis.

The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during a combined scoping and comment period in May and June, 2014. 77 letters were sent out and five comment letters were received in response to scoping. Using the comments from the public and other agencies, the interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address. Some comments were not considered because they were identified as being either outside the scope of the proposed action already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision.

Several issues arose, both through public input and internal discussions that led to the separation of the two original proposals described in the scoping and comment document into separate analyses. Due to these issues, it was decided to proceed with the Dragoon allotment proposal analysis by itself.

The issues considered were further categorized as key issues and other issues. All issued identified could be addressed through mitigation or design modifications.

DECISION RATIONALE

I have decided to implement Alternative 2 because it best meets the purpose and need for this action as determined from management direction and conditions on the ground, and because it responds well to key issues and public comments.

Reason(s) for Not Selecting Other Alternatives

I did not select Alternative 1 because it did not sufficiently meet the purpose and need identified.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined through the EA that this is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, and Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. There were no significant, adverse, or controversial impacts to the human environmental identified in this review. This determination is also based on the following findings and criteria listed below.

CONTEXT

The significance of effects of my decision has been analyzed in several contexts. My decision is consistent with the requirements of the Forest Plan and contributes to meeting the goals of the Forest Plan. The analysis considers and discloses cumulative effects on the resources within the project area and associated resource areas. In addition, direct and indirect effects of the project area have been considered in this determination.

INTENSITY

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action. The EA considers and discloses both beneficial and adverse effects.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** There will be no significant effects on public health and safety.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because the design criteria were modified to avoid such areas where they occurred and mitigation measures have been identified and will be implemented to avoid any significant effects.
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Agency has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Future actions will be evaluated through the NEPA process and will stand on their own as to environmental effects and project feasibility.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The cumulative impacts are not significant. The effects of the pipeline installation are localized to the route itself and there are no other effects that would be additive to the effects of the proposed action.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed , or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because the project was designed to avoid all cultural and historical resources.

9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973.
10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The action is consistent with the Coronado National Forest Land Management Plan. Planned activities are consistent with management area direction, comply with Forest Plan standards, and contribute to Forest Plan goals and objectives.

My decision is also based upon consideration of the best available science. I have reviewed the project records, which shows thorough review of relevant scientific information, consideration of responsible opposing views, and acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable scientific information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

This proposed decision is subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with §218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

Objections, including attachments, must be filed via mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays) to: Kevin P. Warner, District Ranger, Douglas Ranger District, Coronado National Forest; Attn: **Dragoon Allotment Livestock Water Pipeline Project**; 1192 W. Saddlevue Road, Douglas, Arizona, 85617. Phone number: (520) 364-6800, fax number: (520) 364-6667, or emailed to objections-southwestern-coronado@fs.fed.us. Electronically filed objections may be submitted by email in word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), and hypertext markup language (.html).

Objections must be submitted within 45 calendar days following the publication of a legal notice in the *Douglas Dispatch*. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the time to file an objection.

At a minimum, an objection must include the following (36 CFR 218.8(d)):

1. The objector's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
2. A signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for email may be filed with the objection);
3. When multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector (verification of the identity of the lead objector shall be provided upon request);
4. The name of the proposed project, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the name(s) of the National Forest(s) and/or Ranger District(s) on which the proposed project will be implemented;
5. A description of those aspects of the proposed project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposed project if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider; and
6. A statement that demonstrates connection between prior specific written comments on the particular proposed project or activity and the content of the objection.


Incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §218.9. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the decision may begin immediately following publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the *Douglas Dispatch*, the newspaper of record. There will be no further review of this response by any other Forest Service or U.S. Department of Agriculture official as per 36 CFR 218.11(b)(2).

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Joseph Harris, Rangeland Management Specialist, Douglas Ranger District, Coronado National Forest 1192 W. Saddleview Road, Douglas, AZ 85607. Phone number (520) 364-6800.



Kevin P. Warner
District Ranger

11/24/14
Date

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