
United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Safford Field Office
Safford, AZ



Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2017-0006-EA

ET Ranch Land Acquisition

June 2017

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms iii

Identifying Information 1

Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need 2

1.1 Introduction 2

1.2 Background 2

1.3 Area Setting..... 3

1.4 Purpose and Need and Decision to be Made..... 3

1.5 Conformance with Land Use Plan(s) 3

1.6 Scoping and Issues Identification 5

1.7 Relationship to Other Plans, Statutes, and Regulations 5

Chapter 2 – Proposed Action and Alternatives..... 7

2.1 Proposed Action 7

2.2 Alternative 1: No Action Alternative 10

Chapter 3 – Affected Environment 11

3.1 Resources and Resource Elements 11

3.2 Resources Brought Forward for Analysis 14

 3.2.1 Livestock Management 14

 3.2.2 Recreation 17

 3.2.3 Water Quality 17

 3.2.4 Water Rights and Quantity..... 17

 3.2.5 Wilderness..... 17

 3.2.6 Wildlife 18

Chapter 4 – Environmental Effects 19

4.1 Environmental Effects of the Proposed Action 19

 4.1.1 Livestock Management 19

 4.1.2 Recreation 20

 4.1.3 Water Quality 20

 4.1.4 Water Rights and Quantity..... 20

 4.1.5 Wilderness..... 20

4.1.6 Wildlife 20

4.2 Environmental Effects of Alternative 1: No Action 21

 4.2.1 Livestock Management 21

 4.2.2 Recreation 21

 4.2.3 Water Quality 21

 4.2.4 Water Rights and Quantity..... 21

 4.2.5 Wilderness..... 22

 4.2.6 Wildlife 22

4.3 Cumulative Impacts..... 22

 4.3.1 Past, Present, and Reasonable Foreseeable Future Actions 22

 4.3.2 Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action 22

 4.3.3 Cumulative Impacts of Alternative 1: No Action 24

Chapter 5 – Consultation and Coordination 25

Chapter 6 – List of Preparers 26

References 27

APPENDICES

Appendix A - List of Threatened and Endangered Species with Determinations 28

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Project Location 8

Figure 2 - ET Ranch and Santa Teresa Wilderness Area Access..... 9

Figure 3 - Range Improvements..... 16

List of Tables

Table 1 - Summary Evaluation of Elements/Resources of the Human Environment 11

Table 2 - Current Permitted Use in the Jackson Mountain Allotment..... 15

Table 3 - Permitted Use in the Jackson Mountain Allotment..... 19

List of Acronyms

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ADWR	Arizona Department of Water Resources
AGFD	Arizona Game and Fish Department
APE	area of potential effect
AUM	animal unit month
ARS	Arizona Revised Statute
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act of 1977
EA	environmental assessment
GHG	greenhouse gas
gpm	gallons per minute
HDMS	Habitat Data Management System
IPaC	Information for Planning and Conservation system
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
P.L.	Public Law
RMP	resource management plan
S&G	Arizona Standard for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration
TPL	The Trust for Public Lands
USC	United States Code
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VRM	visual resource management

Identifying Information

Title: ET Ranch Acquisition

EA Number: DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2017-0006-EA

Type of Project: Lands and Realty

Name and Location of Preparing Office:

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Safford Field Office
Safford, Arizona

General Location: ET Ranch is located in Graham County, Arizona approximately 17 miles west of the town of Pima. The Property contains portions of Sections 20 and 29, Township 6 South, Range 22 East, Gila and Salt River Base and Meridian.

Applicant: Bureau of Land Management

Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), Council of Environmental Quality NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), Department of Interior NEPA implementing regulations (43 CFR Part 46), and BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1.

This EA analyzes and discloses the potential environmental effects of the proposal to purchase 600 acres of private land by the Bureau of Land Management. From this point forward, the 600 acres will be referred to as “the Property.”

This EA analyzes in detail the following:

- The Proposed Action. The BLM would acquire the 600-acre Property adjacent to the BLM North Santa Teresa Wilderness.
- No Action Alternative. The BLM would not acquire the Property.

1.2 Background

The Property is adjacent to BLM lands on three sides, including BLM’s North Santa Teresa Wilderness on the west and north sides. Along the southern boundary is public land owned by the Arizona State Land Department. The Property is part of a ranch historically known as the ET Ranch, which includes 640 acres of private land. The ET Ranch has been a working cattle ranch since the late 1940s.

BLM’s North Santa Teresa Wilderness area (the “Wilderness”) was established by Congress in 1990 through The Arizona Desert Wilderness Act, which designated nearly 6,600 acres of public lands in Graham County, Arizona, as wilderness to be managed by BLM in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964. This Wilderness is adjacent to the US Forest Service’s (USFS) 26,000-acre Santa Teresa Wilderness established by the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984. These wilderness areas encompass the Santa Teresa Mountains, an area of spectacular, rugged beauty. Despite the large amounts of federal public lands in Arizona, maintaining public access to many such lands for recreation has been difficult due to historical land use patterns. The closest public access point to the BLM’s 6,600-acre North Santa Teresa Wilderness is indirectly through the Santa Teresa Wilderness managed by the USFS.

The Trust for Public Lands (TPL) has approached the BLM with the opportunity to acquire the Property, with the intent to provide improved access to public lands including the North Santa Teresa Wilderness.

1.3 Area Setting

The Property is located in Graham County, Arizona, with a population of approximately 37,000. Land use in the surrounding area is rural in nature and has a long history of farming, ranching, recreation, and mining.

The Property is located within the middle elevations of the Madrean Basin and Range province and major land resource area 041-Southeastern Arizona Basin and Range. The Property is predominately characterized with rocky hill-slopes and ridge-tops with slopes ranging from 15 to 70 percent (Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2007 and 2013).

1.4 Purpose and Need and Decision to be Made

The purpose of this Proposed Action is for BLM to acquire 600 acres of the private lands (ET Ranch) to provide the public with improved access to public lands including the BLM North Santa Teresa Wilderness.

The need of the Proposed Action is established by BLM's responsibility pursuant to Title V of Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA; 43 United States Code [U.S.C] 1761) to review non-federal actions in rights-of-way over, upon, under, or through public lands, and in doing so, determine if the Proposed Action is consistent with the requirements and general provisions of this title and other applicable laws.

The decision to be made is whether to acquire the Property for management under BLM authority.

1.5 Conformance with Land Use Plan(s)

This Proposed Action is located within the area of the Safford Field Office managed in accordance with the Safford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement as approved in the Partial Records of Decision dated September 1992 and July 1994, and as amended by the Decision Record for the Land Tenure Amendment to the Safford District RMP approved in September 1994 (the "RMP Land Tenure Amendment").

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the following management objectives set forth by the Safford District RMP, as amended:

- **Lands and Realty (LR) 01** - Designate 24 Long-Term Management Areas in which the Bureau of Land Management will intensively manage public lands for their multiple resource values as defined in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. (See Table 2-1 and Map 27 (amended)). BLM will retain all public lands (surface and subsurface estate) and may seek acquisition of state land within these areas. RMP Land Tenure Amendment page 2.
- **LR02** - Private land acquisition within the 24 Long-Term Management Areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis. An analytical process will be conducted prior to

acquiring private lands within these areas. This process will address the question, "Is it likely the Bureau can achieve its management objectives in the Long-Term Management Area by means other than acquisition of "fee simple title to private land?" The four alternatives that will be considered are (1), land owner education, (2), entering into Cooperative Management Agreements, (3), partial acquisition such as conservation easements, and (4), full "fee simple title" acquisition. Acquisitions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will consider economic impacts as well as natural resource impacts. RMP Land Tenure Amendment page 2 & 3.

- **LR03** - The following areas are identified as Long-Term Management Areas: See Map 27 as amended. RMP Land Tenure Amendment page 3.

GILA RESOURCE AREA TUCSON RESOURCE AREA

Aravaipa Ecosystem
 North Santa Teresa
 Northwest Gila Valley
 Southwest Gila Valley
 Gila Box Ecosystem
 Cactus Flat

SAN SIMON RESOURCE AREA

San Simon Valley
 Dos Cabezas Mountains
 Guadalupe Canyon
 Willcox Playa

- **LR06** - Land Acquisition: The following are objectives for land acquisition within Long Term Management Areas: RMP Land Tenure Amendment page 3 & 4.
 1. Acquire lands with high public values that compliment [sic] existing management programs within Long Term Management Areas.
 2. Consolidate ownership pattern within Long-Term Management Areas to improve management efficiency.
 3. Improve service to the public.

Lands considered for acquisition will possess one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Riparian habitat
2. Watersheds of important riparian areas
3. High value wildlife habitat, including threatened and endangered species habitat and major migration corridors
4. Administrative sites
5. Land for developed recreation sites
6. Land providing access to public lands
7. Significant cultural and paleontological properties
8. Other lands with high public resource values such as inholdings in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and other types of special management areas.

The Property is identified as a proposed acquisition area in the RMP's original Map 27 (titled the Proposed Land Tenure Adjustment Map), noted in the legend as "Proposed Acquisitions Areas: State and private lands in these areas have been identified for acquisition as they become available."

1.6 Scoping and Issues Identification

The Proposed Action was scoped to the BLM Safford Field Office interdisciplinary team on October 4, 2016. Scoping was limited to internal scoping due to the Proposed Action's remoteness, sparse natural resources, and small scale. Under these circumstances, it is the BLM's experience that public scoping efforts would not solicit any responses or provide data that would inform the decision.

A field trip to the Property was conducted on August 17, 2016, with the BLM, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), and TPL. This field trip was to discuss public access on the property and to identify any other possible issues related to the acquisition. There were no issues identified and all parties were in full support of the acquisition.

Issues Identified

For the purposes of an EA, the BLM should analyze issues if the analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or the issue is significant or may have potentially significant effects. Scoping associated with this EA identified the following resources and/or issues relevant to the Proposed Action:

- What are the potential effects to the key values (untrammled, undeveloped, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation) of wilderness?
- What are the potential effect of the purchase of the property to recreational resources?
- Will wildlife or species of economic importance be negatively impacted?
- Will any threatened, endangered, or special status species, or their habitats, be negatively impacted?
- What are the potential impacts to grazing and agricultural productivity?
- What are the potential impacts to water source qualities and existing water rights or well registrations?

1.7 Relationship to Other Plans, Statutes, and Regulations

The Proposed Action would comply with the following laws and/or agency regulations, and are consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, and plans to the maximum extent possible.

- Arizona Groundwater Code [Arizona Revised Statute (ARS) Title 45-Chapter 2, Articles 4 and 5]
- Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990
- Clean Air Act of 1963, as amended
- Clean Water Act of 1977
- Endanger Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.)
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.)
- Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Federal Noxious Weed Control Act (7 U.S.C. 2801 et seq.)
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (Public Law 89-665; 54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.)
- Taylor Grazing Act of 1934
- Toxic Substance Control Act of 1976 as amended (TSCA) (15 U.S.C. 2601, et seq.)
- Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.)

Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) regulates all groundwater wells in Arizona and administers the governing state Groundwater Code. In Arizona, land owners are not required to obtain a water right for their respective groundwater, but ADWR does require all wells be permitted to drill or “registered,” and any change in ownership be documented and well registration transferred to the new owner.

Chapter 2 - Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is for BLM to acquire 600 acres of the private lands (ET Ranch, or the Property) adjacent to the BLM North Santa Teresa Wilderness, (see Figures 1 and 2).

Gila and Salt River Meridian, Arizona

T. 6 S., R. 22 E., sec. 19, S1/2NE1/4, and N1/2SE1/4;

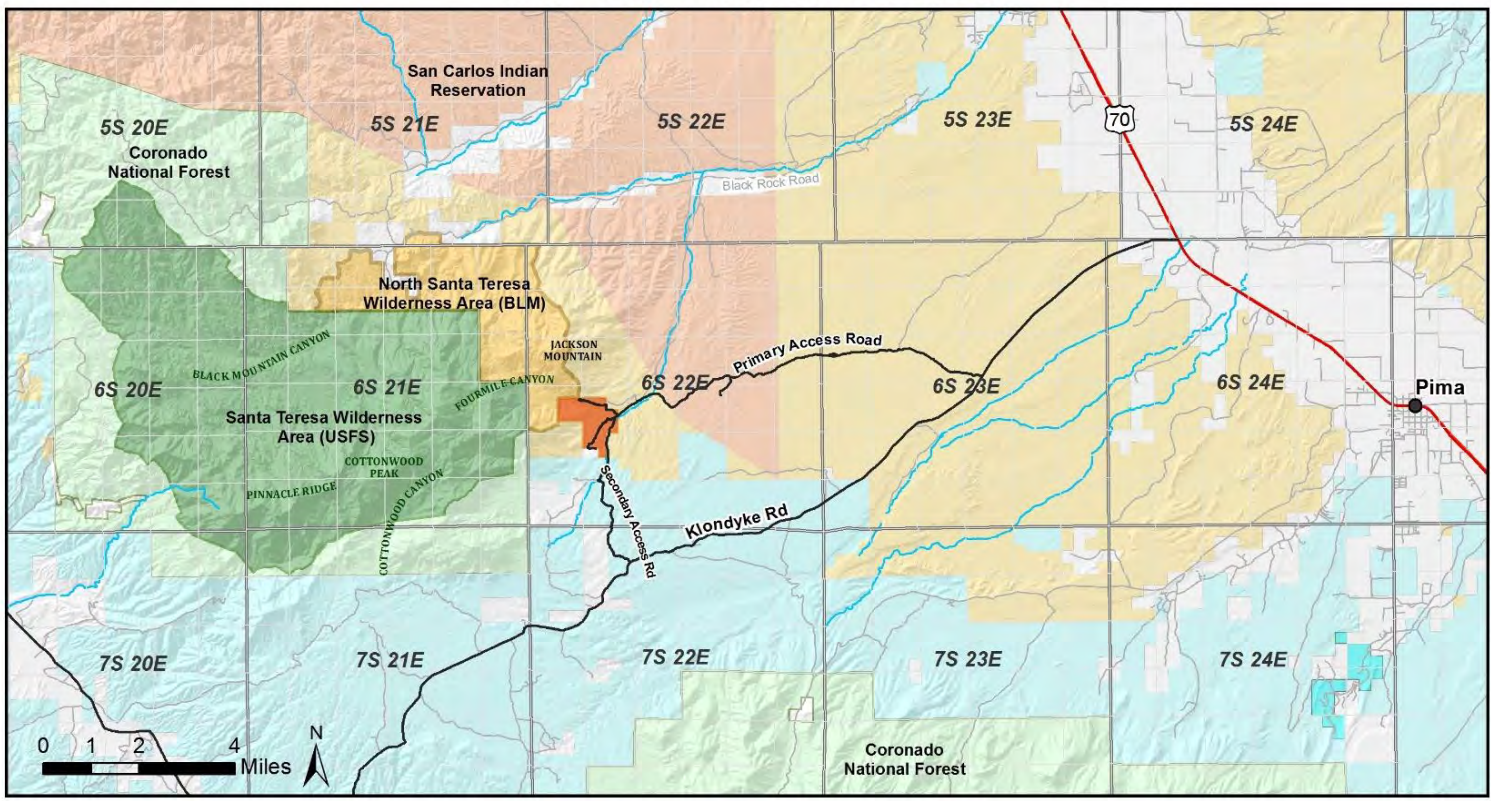
sec. 20, S1/2NW1/4, SW1/4, W1/2SE1/4;

sec. 29, lots 1 and 2, N1/2NW1/4.

The areas described aggregate 600 acres.

The Proposed Action is a property acquisition only. No improvements to the Property or existing features would occur.

Santa Teresa Wilderness Area Access



- ET Ranch (Proposed for Acquisition)
- BLM
- State
- Forest Service Wilderness Area
- Indian Lands
- Private
- State Wildlife Area
- BLM Wilderness Area
- USFS



United States Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management
 Arizona State Office
 Land Status updated as of February 2014
 Map Prepared: 6/1/2017



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

Figure 1. Project Location

Santa Teresa Wilderness Area Access

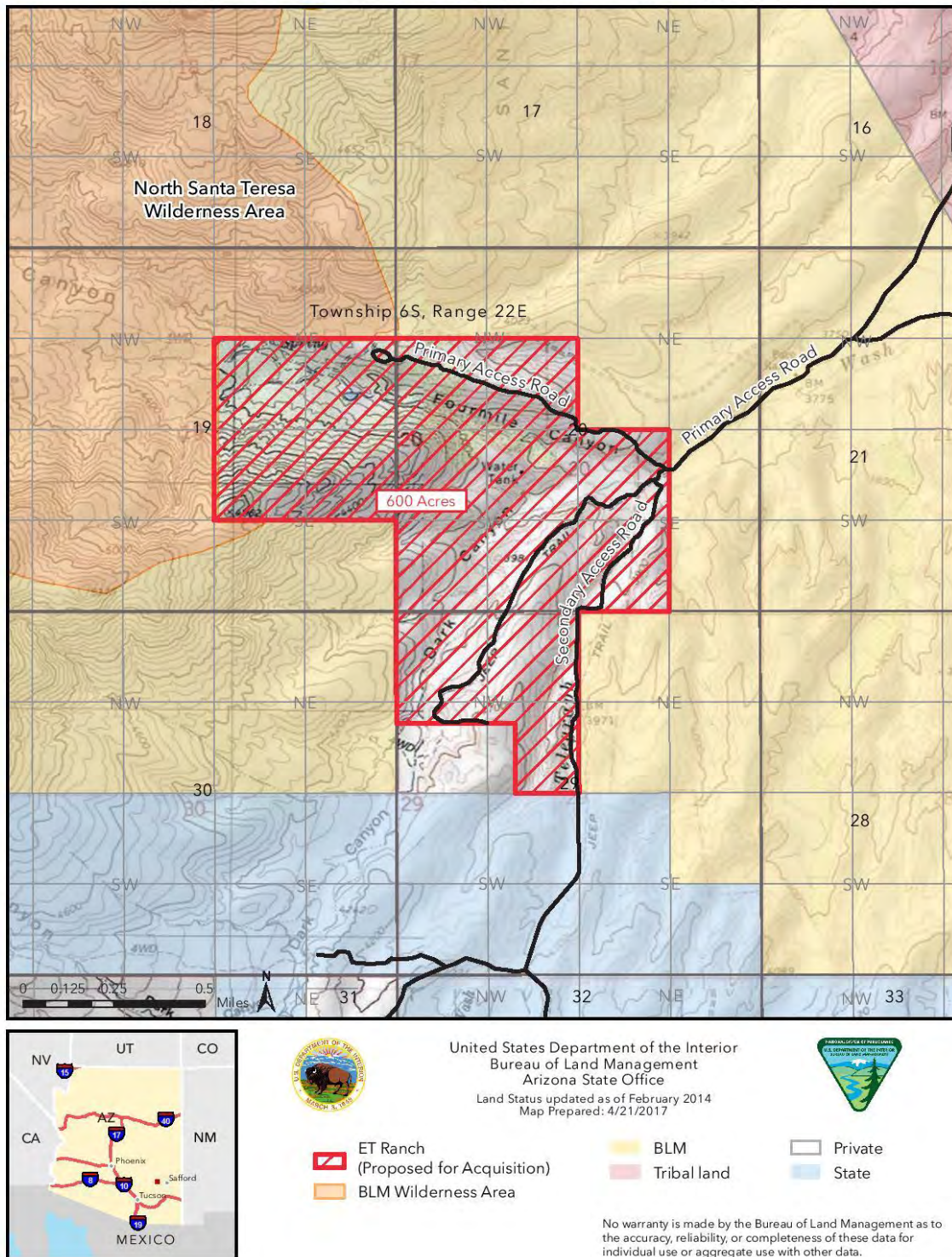


Figure 2. ET Ranch and Santa Teresa Wilderness Area Access

2.2 Alternative 1: No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the BLM would not acquire the Property. The Property would continue in private ownership likely as part of a cattle ranch.

Chapter 3 - Affected Environment

3.1 Resources and Resource Elements

The BLM is required to consider many authorities when evaluating a federal action. Those elements of the human environment that are subject to the requirements specified in statutes, regulations, or executive orders, and must be considered in all EAs, have been considered by BLM resource specialists to determine whether they would be potentially affected by the Proposed Action. These elements are identified in Table 1, along with the rationale for the determination on potential effects. If any element was determined to be potentially impacted, it was carried forward for detailed analysis in this EA; if an element is not present or would not be affected, it was not carried forward for analysis. Table 1 also contains other resources/concerns that have been considered in this EA. As with the elements of the human environment, if these resources were determined to be potentially affected, they were carried forward for detailed analysis in this document.

Table 1. Summary Evaluation of Potentially Impacted Elements/Resources

Resource	Determination	Rationale for Determination
NP = Resource <u>not present</u> in the area that would be impacted by the Proposed Action or other action alternative. NI = Resource <u>present, but not affected</u> to a degree that would require detailed analysis, or impacts disclosed previously in a separate, referenced NEPA document. PI = Resource <u>present with potential for impact</u> and analyzed in detail in this EA.		
Air Quality	NP	There would be no effects to air quality by acquiring the Property.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)	NP	The Proposed Action is not located within or near an ACEC.
Climate Change	NP	The Proposed Action would result in temporary and minor increases in the use of fossil fuels and the associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions due to increased vehicular traffic. There would be a negligible impact on climate change from GHG emissions associated with the acquisition of the 600 acres to provide access to the Santa Teresa Wilderness Area.
Cultural Resources	NI	The Proposed Action involves no ground disturbance. As such, this project would not affect cultural resources within the 600-acre area of potential effect (APE).
Environmental Justice	NP	The Property is located in a rural area approximately 17 miles west of the town of Pima, AZ, in Graham County, AZ. There would be no measurable effects on income and employment and the acquisition is not expected to affect housing or public services. Furthermore, minority and low income populations constitute 28 percent and 20 percent, respectively, of the overall populations within Graham County.

Resource	Determination	Rationale for Determination
		Therefore, the proposed action would not likely result in disproportionate high or adverse effects on minority or low income populations.
Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	NP	There are no prime or unique farmlands within or near the project area; therefore, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to farmlands.
Floodplains	NP	The Proposed Action is not within a floodplain as defined by the Executive Order 11988 (1977).
Livestock Management	PI	<u>Discussed in document.</u> See detailed analysis in the following chapters.
Geology/Mineral Resources	NP	The Proposed Action would not result in a change to minerals management, as minerals are already federal. Records show no mining claims or any other encumbrances on the mineral estate.
Human Health and Safety	NP	The Proposed Action would not affect human health and safety.
Invasive Species and Nonnative Species	NP	No invasive or nonnative species are known to be present on the Property.
Land Use Authorization	NP	There are no lands and realty actions within the area of the Proposed Action of acquiring 600-acres of private land. No impacts to lands and realty actions are anticipated.
Native American Religious Concerns	NP	There are no known places of Native American religious concerns within the 600-acre APE. As such, this Proposed Action would have no impacts to this resource.
Paleontological Resources	NP	There are no known paleontological resources within the Proposed Action. No impacts are anticipated.
Recreation	PI	<u>Discussed in document.</u> Recreation as a result of the Proposed Action would benefit. See detailed analysis in the following chapters.
Socioeconomic Values	NI	The Proposed Action would eliminate collection of associated county property taxes. The property tax assessed for 2015 was approximately \$160. The economic loss to the County associated with the property tax would be insignificant.
Soils	NI	Soils on the Property are similar or the same as adjacent State and Federal lands and this acquisition would continue current management present on Federal lands.
Special Status Species	NI	An AGFD Habitat Data Management System (HDMS) query on April 18, 2017, showed that 14 BLM Sensitive Species have the potential to exist in the vicinity of the project area. A more detailed

Resource	Determination	Rationale for Determination
		review shows that these species were included due to the buffering of the project boundary and are most likely not found within the Property boundary. Neither the Proposed Action nor the No Action Alternative would adversely affect the special status species (plant and animal).
Threatened or Endangered Species	NI	A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) database query on April 17, 2017, indicated that six threatened or endangered species may have the potential to exist in the vicinity of the project area. The habitat contained within the project area is not suitable for the species listed. Neither the Proposed Action nor the No Action Alternative would adversely affect threatened or endangered species. Species and determinations are listed in Appendix A.
Travel and Transportation	NI	Vehicular travel is limited to existing roads. The existing roads require high clearance vehicles. The expected small number of vehicles on roads would not have a significant impact to the existing roads. The primary and secondary access roads have perpetual easements recorded with Graham County. There would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts as a result of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.
Vegetation	NI	There are no differences in vegetation or ecological sites between the Property and the adjacent federal lands. This acquisition would not change the vegetation on federal land.
Visual Resources	NI	The visual resource management (VRM) class for the area is Class IV. This provides for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The acquisition of the property would remain within the Class IV designation.
Wastes (hazardous or solid)	NP	A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was completed on November 2016 and signed by the Authorized Officer on March 30, 2017. There are no hazardous or solid wastes within the project area and no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this critical element would occur.
Water Quality (Surface/Groundwater)	PI	<u>Discussed in document.</u> The potential impacts from the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative on water quality are carried forward for additional analysis.
Water Rights and Quantity (Surface/Groundwater)	PI	<u>Discussed in document.</u> The Proposed Action would acquire ownership rights of one groundwater well. Potential impacts from the Proposed Action on water rights are carried forward for additional analysis.
Wetland/Riparian Zones	NP	There are no wetlands/riparian zones within or near

Resource	Determination	Rationale for Determination
		the Proposed Action; therefore, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to this critical element.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	NP	There are no wild and scenic rivers within the vicinity of the Proposed Action area. Therefore, no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this critical element would occur.
Wild Horses and Burros	NP	There are no wild horse and burros within the vicinity of the Proposed Action. Therefore, no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on this critical element would occur.
Wilderness/Wilderness Study Area	PI	<u>Discussed in document.</u> Acquisition of the Property would provide access to the North Santa Teresa Wilderness, an area without direct public access. See detailed analysis in the following chapters.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)	NP	There are no LWCs within the vicinity of the Proposed Action. Roads and facility developments currently exist throughout the Property.
Wildlife	PI	<u>Discussed in document.</u> Wildlife may be impacted both adversely and beneficially by both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. See detailed analysis in the following chapters.

3.2 Resources Brought Forward for Analysis

Potential resources to be brought forward for analysis in this EA are: Livestock Management, Recreation, Water Quality, Water Rights and Quantity, Wilderness, and Wildlife.

3.2.1 Livestock Management

The Property to be acquired lies within the Jackson Mountain Allotment (No. 46330). This allotment is primarily a cow/calf operation and is permitted for 48 cattle yearlong at 89% public land totaling 513 BLM permitted animal unit months (AUM). The allotment is comprised of 4,796 acres of BLM lands and 640 acres (11%) of private lands (Table 2).

Table 2. Current Permitted Use in the Jackson Mountain Allotment

Allotment	Livestock Number	Grazing Period Begin - End	% Public Land	Animal Unit Months (AUM)
Jackson Mountain (No. 46330)	48 Cattle	03/01 - 2/28 Year Long	89	513

Range Improvements

The Property has several existing range improvements: four troughs, three storage tanks, one well, two solar pumps, and approximately three miles of underground water pipeline (see Figure 3). One solar pump is associated with the described well in section 3.2.4 and the other solar pump is a booster pump to move piped water to the storage tank and trough located on remaining deeded (private) land.

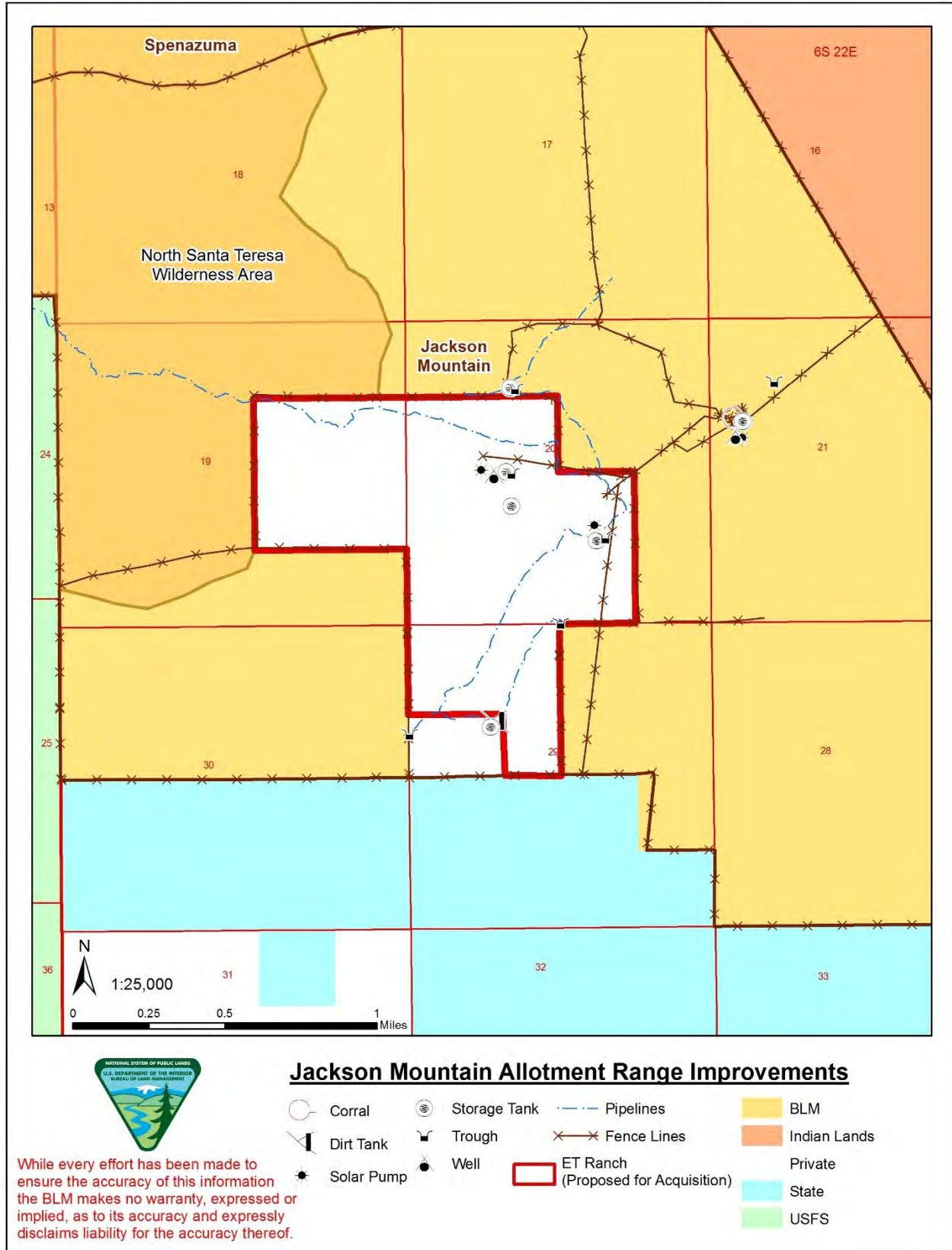


Figure 3. Range Improvements

3.2.2 Recreation

The Property is available to dispersed recreation opportunities including hunting, backpacking, primitive camping, and equestrian use, as is the adjacent Wilderness. The Property is located in AGFD Game Management Unit 31, an important unit for mule deer, white-tailed deer, javelina, turkey, black bear, and a wide variety of small game and upland birds. Recreation access to the Property is via a dirt road and terminates south of the Wilderness boundary.

3.2.3 Water Quality

The Property lies within the Black Rock Wash-Upper Gila River Watershed (HUC-10 1504000508), which is encompassed in the Upper Gila River Basin (HUC-6 150400). The Upper Gila River Basin has a drainage area 9.7 million acres with roughly half of the area located in New Mexico and half in Arizona. The basin is drained by the portion of the Gila River east of Coolidge Dam, which impounds the San Carlos Reservoir. The Gila River is a perennial river that flows westward through Arizona from its headwaters in New Mexico and is one of two tributaries to the Colorado River in Arizona. The nearest surface streams to the Property include Black Rock Wash and Telegraph Wash, which is a tributary to Black Rock Wash that drains into the Gila River. These washes are ephemeral, with seasonal peak flow sources from snow melt and precipitation. The Property lies entirely within the “Safford” ADWR Groundwater Basin, and is characterized by shallow, unconsolidated Holocene alluvial fill along the Gila River, bedrock, and Lower Basin Fill that is confined from the alluvium by a low permeability layer of clay.

There are no impaired waters listed by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act 305(b) and 303(d) on this allotment or immediately downstream of the tributaries into the Gila River.

3.2.4 Water Rights and Quantity

The Property contains one groundwater well in private ownership. The groundwater well, ADWR registration number 55-226023, is located at SWSESW 6S, 22E, Section 20. The well consists of a five-inch diameter casing of plastic or polyvinyl chloride with an intended pump capacity of four gallons per minute (gpm) at a depth of 480 feet. ADWR received the Notice of Intent to drill form May 11, 2016, and the well is currently permitted to private ownership for water production: stock use.

3.2.5 Wilderness

The 6,600-acre North Santa Teresa Wilderness is administered by BLM. It is adjacent to the 26,000-acre Santa Teresa Wilderness administered by the USFS Coronado National Forest. There is currently no public road access to the BLM Wilderness due to the location of private ranches blocking all physical access points into the Wilderness. This Wilderness is immediately adjacent to the Property (on the Property’s north and west boundaries). The BLM Wilderness is managed for its untrammeled, natural, undeveloped, and solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation qualities.

3.2.6 Wildlife

Lying in the foothills of the Santa Teresa Mountains and with several major canyons (Fourmile and Dark Canyons), the Property provides important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. An AGFD HDMS query indicated that 10 species of economic and recreation importance may occur within the project area. Gambel's Quail, Wild Turkey, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, Band-tailed Pigeon, Javelina, Mountain Lion, American Black Bear, White-winged Dove, and Mourning Dove all exist within the project area. These species, along with other “watchable wildlife” species, can be found with varying abundance throughout the Property.

Chapter 4 - Environmental Effects

This section provides a discussion of the environmental effects (or impacts) as a result of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.

The impact analyses in the following sections were based on knowledge of the resources and the site, review of existing literature information provided by experts and other agencies, and professional judgment.

4.1 Environmental Effects of the Proposed Action

4.1.1 Livestock Management

Under the Proposed Action, the Property would be incorporated into BLM-administered lands and continue to be available for livestock grazing. Land ownership apportionment of the Jackson Mountain Allotment would result in a 10% increase in public land from 4,796 to 5,396 acres, with a corresponding 10% decrease in private land. The 600-acre Property supports 57 AUMs, which would be transferred from private to public lands under the Proposed Action. The number and kind of livestock (48 cattle) authorized on the Jackson Mountain Allotment would not change (see Table 3). A revised permit for the balance of the current 10-year term would be issued.

Table 3. Permitted Use in the Jackson Mountain Allotment

Status	Allotment	Livestock Number	Grazing Period Begin - End	% Public Land	Animal Unit Months (AUMs)
Current	Jackson Mountain (No. 46330)	48 Cattle	03/01 - 2/28 Year Long	89	513
Proposed Action	Jackson Mountain (No. 46330)	48 Cattle	03/01 - 2/28 Year Long	99	570

Range improvements

With the acquisition of the Property, the range improvements as described in Section 3.2.1 would be acquired. These improvements would continue to be used for grazing management on the allotment. Acquisition of these range improvements would have no environmental effect on current livestock operations since they are currently used within the Jackson Mountain Allotment. Cooperative improvement agreements between the BLM and current permittee would authorize the continued use and maintenance of these improvements, as well as assign project numbers.

The Proposed Action would result in negligible increases in ranges inspections, fee collection, and monitoring activity, but would have little to no effect on livestock grazing across the allotment. Therefore, impacts to livestock management due to the Proposed Action would be less than significant.

4.1.2 Recreation

The Proposed Action would open up an additional 600 acres to recreational use on public lands as well as provide direct public access to the adjacent Wilderness. Recreationists accessing the Property would be anticipated due to the Property's proximity to small population centers and close proximity to many other outdoor recreation opportunities. However, the Property's remoteness would be expected to limit the number of recreationists. The Proposed Action would result in a beneficial impact to recreation on public lands.

4.1.3 Water Quality

Under the Proposed Action, human impacts to the watershed, such as soil erosion and non-point source pollution from recreating, would be minimal due to the Property's remoteness and the likelihood of only a small increase in recreational use. This would not result in an impaired water listing pursuant to the federal CWA 303(d) and 305(b) on this allotment or immediately downstream of the tributaries into the Gila River. Therefore, the effect of the Proposed Action on water quality would be less than significant.

4.1.4 Water Rights and Quantity

In the Proposed Action, well registration #55-226023, would be transferred to the BLM Safford Field Office pursuant to ARS 45-593. The well's pump capacity and usage would remain at four gpm for water production: stock watering. Since the number and kind of livestock would remain the same, there would be no anticipated impacts to water quantity.

4.1.5 Wilderness

The Proposed Action would provide direct public access to the Wilderness boundary thereby providing visitors with opportunities to experience solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. An increase in visitation to the North Santa Teresa Wilderness would be expected due to the Wilderness' proximity to small population centers and many other outdoor recreation opportunities. However, the Property's remoteness would be expected to generally limit the number of visitors. The Proposed Action would not result in the construction of temporary or permanent roads, campsite amenities, structures, or installations within or in the vicinity of the Wilderness boundary that could degrade the four basic qualities of wilderness character. The Proposed Action would result in a beneficial impact to wilderness for presenting increased opportunities for the public to experience solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

4.1.6 Wildlife

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would purchase the Property, which would include its associated wildlife habitat. The newly acquired habitat on the Property would be managed according to the same applicable laws, regulations, and policies governing the management of

wildlife and wildlife habitat on adjacent public land. Hunting on the Property and adjacent Wilderness may result in some reduction of game species, and additional recreational visitors may cause a potential increase in recreational wildlife viewing activities. Hunting would be subject to the laws of the State of Arizona administered by AGFD with limits set to allow for sustainable wildlife populations. Recreational wildlife viewing would be anticipated to occur but would not affect wildlife beyond occasional, temporary displacement caused by disturbance created by the observers. Additional traffic on public rights of way may increase the potential for an increase in road-killed wildlife. An increase in public use during nesting and breeding seasons may also have the effect of diminishing reproductive success in smaller animals due to noise and physical disturbance. Effects on wildlife due to the anticipated small increase in recreational visitors to the Property and adjacent Wilderness as discussed in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.5 would be less than significant.

4.2 Environmental Effects of Alternative 1: No Action

4.2.1 Livestock Management

The 600-acre Property and associated range improvements would not be acquired by the BLM and would remain in private ownership. There would be no changes to the existing Jackson Mountain Allotment livestock number and kind, grazing period, land ownership apportionment, or AUMs. Therefore, there would be no impact to livestock management due to the No Action Alternative.

4.2.2 Recreation

Under the No Action Alternative, there would continue to be limited public access to the Wilderness and adjacent BLM lands by recreationists. The general public would continue to have to indirect access the North Santa Teresa Wilderness and adjacent BLM lands via the Santa Teresa Wilderness managed by the USFS. Therefore, the No Alternative Action would not result in a beneficial impact to recreation.

4.2.3 Water Quality

Under the No Action Alternative, groundwater resources would remain the responsibility of the private owners under all applicable local, state, and federal laws. Effects to water quality would remain unchanged; therefore, there would be no expected impacts resulting from the No Action Alternative.

4.2.4 Water Rights and Quantity

Under the No Action Alternative, the Property would not be acquired, and the groundwater well would remain in private ownership and the responsibility of the private land owner. No changes in use of the well would be anticipated. Therefore, there would be no impact to water rights or quantity due to the No Action Alternative.

4.2.5 Wilderness

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not purchase the Property and there would continue to be limited public access to the BLM Wilderness. The general public would continue to have to access the North Santa Teresa Wilderness and adjacent BLM lands via the Santa Teresa Wilderness managed by the USFS.; thus, there would be less access provided to the public to have a wilderness experience. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would result in no beneficial impact to wilderness by presenting increased opportunities for the public to experience solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

4.2.6 Wildlife

Under the No Action Alternative, the Property would remain in private ownership and would continue to limit public access; thus, effects to wildlife, if any, would remain unchanged from current conditions. Wildlife in the project area may experience slightly less disturbance as compared to wildlife outside of the project area due to the potential for protection from recreational activities that may increase under BLM ownership.

4.3 Cumulative Impacts

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations that implement NEPA defines a cumulative impact as: “The impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.” Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

The temporal scope for this impacts analysis is 20 years into the future to generally coincide with typical land use planning documents. This time frame is considered to be most appropriate for considering the incremental effect of actions in the foreseeable future. Many of the past and present actions are expected to persist through this time frame, though the relative intensity of these actions could vary.

4.3.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Activities

The Property has been and would still be used for ranching. In the foreseeable future, there would be uses including recreation, hunting, farming, and North Santa Teresa Wilderness experience.

4.3.2 Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action

Livestock Management

Livestock grazing would continue to be the primary use of the Jackson Mountain Allotment within the Property. The acquisition of the Property would allow the BLM to manage livestock grazing in a more uniform way and would also negligibly increase the annual grazing fee. Cumulative impacts to livestock grazing would therefore be less than significant.

Recreation

Hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and other dispersed outdoor recreational activities would likely increase as people become aware of the Property's accessibility and the direct connectivity to the BLM Wilderness. This may have an additive beneficial effect on recreation in the area. The Property's remoteness and small anticipated increase in visitation would result in a less than significant cumulative effect.

Water Quality

The Property is bounded by reservation, designated wilderness, and private land, which is rural and remote in nature. Future utilization of land use within the area over the next 20 years is expected to remain unchanged. Thus, future conditions in combination with existing water quality effects under the Propose Action would not affect water quality to the area's Gila River tributaries. Therefore, cumulative effects to water quality would not likely occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

Water Rights and Quantity

In Arizona, the majority of surface waters have already been appropriated, so as water demands increase groundwater pumping would increase. By acquiring land ownership of groundwater wells, BLM is better able to manage water resources and conserve groundwater for prudent resource management purposes. The cumulative effect to water rights and quantity would be less than significant.

Wilderness

Hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and other dispersed outdoor recreational activities within the Wilderness would likely increase resulting from the improved access provided by the Property's acquisition. This may have an additive beneficial effect on recreation in the area. The Property's remoteness and anticipated small increase in visitation would result in a less than significant cumulative effect.

Wildlife

Hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and other dispersed outdoor recreational activities would likely increase as people become aware of the Property's accessibility and the direct connectivity to the Wilderness. This may slightly increase disturbance of wildlife in the area, but the impacts would be less than significant. Any potential increase in the harvest of wildlife species would be subject to the laws of the State of Arizona administered by AGFD with limits set to allow for sustainable wildlife populations. BLM's management of the property would be subject to all applicable laws, regulations, and policies governing the management of public land and may improve wildlife habitat over time, which would have a cumulative beneficial effect to wildlife.

4.3.3 Cumulative Impacts of Alternative 1: No Action

Livestock Management

Livestock grazing would continue to be the primary use on the Jackson Mountain Allotment within the Property. However, management of the allotment would continue as described in the No Action Alternative and cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

Recreation

The Property proposed for acquisition would remain private and continue to limit access to recreation.

Water Quality

The Property is surrounded by reservation, designated Wilderness, and private land, which is rural and remote in nature. Future utilization of land use within the area over the next 20 years is expected to remain unchanged. Thus, future conditions in combination with existing water quality effects under the No Action Alternative would not affect water quality to the area's Gila River tributaries. Therefore, cumulative effects to water quality would not likely occur as a result of the No Action Alternative.

Water Rights and Quantity

Under the No Action Alternative, the Property would be remain in private ownership. Due to the Property's high slopes and rocky surface, it would be improbable that water usage would be converted to support non-livestock agricultural irrigation or another high-yield water usage. Existing and future water use would be expected to continue unchanged. Therefore, cumulative effects to water rights and quantity would not be expected to occur as a result of the No Action Alternative.

Wilderness

The Property proposed for acquisition would remain private and continue to limit direct access to the BLM Wilderness. As the BLM Wilderness would still be publicly accessible, albeit indirectly through USFS Wilderness, cumulative effects as a result of the No Acton Alternative would be less than significant.

Wildlife

The Property would continue to be restricted from public access and no cumulative negative effects are anticipated.

Chapter 5 – Consultation and Coordination

Arizona Game and Fish Department

Graham County

The Trust for Public Land

US Fish and Wildlife Service (IPaC)

Chapter 6 – List of Preparers

BLM Safford Field Office

Ron Peru - Realty Specialist

Tom Schnell - Assistant Field Manager, Non-renewable Resources

Laura Opall - Hydrologist

Jason Martin - Rangeland Management Specialist

RJ Estes - Rangeland Management Specialist

Mark McCabe - Wildlife Biologist

Larry Thrasher - Geologist

Amy Corathers - Planning and Environmental Specialist

Amelia Taylor – Assistant Field Manager, Renewable Resources

Dan McGrew - Archaeologist

Evan Darrah - GIS Intern

References

- Arizona Department of Water Resources. Well Registry. Available online at <https://gisweb.azwater.gov/WellRegistry>. Accessed 03/22/2017.
- Arizona Game and Fish Department Arizona Environmental Online Review Tool Report. Available online at <https://azhgis2.esri.com/>. Accessed 04/18/2017.
- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2007. Ecological Site Description, Site name: Loamy Slopes 12-16" p.z. R041XC314AZ. Dave Womack, Dan Robinett, Emilio Carrillo. Available online at <https://esis.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Accessed 06/27/2017.
- _____. 2013. Ecological Site Description, Site name: Shallow Hills 12-16" p.z. R041XC306AZ. Dave Womack, et. al. Available online at <https://esis.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Accessed 06/27/2017.
- United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management. 1991. Safford District Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. Safford Field Office. Safford, Arizona.
- _____. 1992. Partial Record of Decision I for the Approval of the Safford District Resource Management Plan. Arizona State Office, Phoenix.
- _____. 1994. Partial Record of Decision II for the Approval of the Safford District Resource Management Plan. Arizona State Office, Phoenix.
- _____. 1994. Record of Decision for the Land Tenure Amendment to the Safford District Resource Management Plan, Safford Field Office, Safford, AZ.
- _____. 2008. BLM National Environmental Policy Act Handbook. H-1790-1. Washington, DC.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC). Available online at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac>. Accessed 04/17/2017.

Appendix A: List of Threatened and Endangered Species with Determinations

Federally-Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Species and Proposed or Designated Critical Habitat		
Species	Federal Status	Comments
Headwater chub, <i>Gila nigra</i>	Proposed Threatened	No perennial waters exist within the project area. No effect.
Lesser long-nosed bat, <i>Leptonycteris curasoae yerbabuena</i>	Endangered	There are no known lesser long-nosed bat roosts in the project area; it is also outside of the known foraging range of the bat. No effect.
Mexican Spotted Owl, <i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	Threatened	Mexican spotted owls require steep-sided canyons with dense canopy vegetation for breeding, feeding and shelter. This habitat does not exist in the project area. No effect.
Northern Mexican garter snake, <i>Thamnophis eques megalops</i>	Threatened	The northern Mexican garter snake is considered extirpated from the upper Gila River watershed. There would be no effect to the species.
Northern Mexican garter snake, critical habitat	Proposed	There is no Designated Critical Habitat within the project area. No effect.
Roundtail chub, <i>Gila robusta</i>	Proposed Threatened	No perennial waters exist within the project area. No effect.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo, western population <i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Threatened	There is no suitable habitat for this species within the project area. No effect.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo critical habitat	Proposed	There is no Proposed Critical Habitat within the project area. No effect.