



Decision Memo

Flying V & H – Goat Canyon Catchment Project

USDA Forest Service
Tonto National Forest
Pleasant Valley Ranger District
Gila County, Arizona

Background

The proposed project is located on the Pleasant Valley Ranger District, Flying V & H grazing allotment, southwest of Young, Arizona. (*see map*) The legal location for the proposed project is Township 7N, Range 15E, Sections 32 and 33 of the Gila and Salt River Base Meridian. The Flying V & H grazing allotment is a year-long active allotment using a deferred, rest-rotation grazing system. The Forest Service, in conjunction with the permittee, have identified that there is a water shortage that is a limitation to livestock management and wildlife habitat quality. Providing additional water sources would enhance the ability of livestock managers to plan grazing distribution and allow for improved annual livestock rotations across the allotment. The implementation and maintenance of range improvements are needed to manage range resources on National Forest Lands as authorized under 36 CFR 222.9 and described in Forest Service Manual Chapter 2240.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to install a water catchment, storage tanks and pipelines to watering troughs on the Flying V & H allotment at the indicated location. By installing the catchment, the permittee may have more options for managing livestock distribution during times of limited water availability.

There is a need to collaborate with the permittee through an adaptive approach to improve livestock distribution. There is a need to limit grazing impacts near water sources, promote fewer overall disturbances to watershed and soil resources and contribute to improved wildlife habitat.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to place a plastic or galvanized catchment apron either directly on the ground surface or on a low, above-ground metal frame. The water intercepted on the apron would drain to and be stored in two 5000 gallon polyethylene tanks located adjacent to the apron. High density polyethylene pipe would connect the apron to the tanks and would be placed on the ground surface connecting the tanks to the troughs.

This proposed action would impact less than one acre and ground disturbance would include clearing, including vegetation and standing dead removal, construction of the apron and leveling and placement of the storage tanks. Holes may be dug for corner posts if an apron frame is to be installed. Construction and transport of materials would be accomplished using a D6 class bulldozer or smaller. The proposed action would accomplish the purpose and meet the need for



the action and follow direction found in the Tonto National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Resource Protection

This proposed action includes the following conservation measures for resource protection:

Design Features:

- All equipment is cleaned before use to avoid the transportation of noxious weed species.
- Disturbed areas are remediated and revegetated where necessary.
- Certified weed-free, native vegetative seed is used to revegetate the site.
- Cultural resource surveys are conducted to identify if cultural resources are present, and cultural resource sites are avoided.
- Timing restrictions limit impacts to migratory and threatened or endangered species by conducting construction activities outside of breeding seasons or other sensitive periods.
- A biological monitor is present during all construction activities.
- Equipment used in this project must be in good working order, with no fluid leaks, and be weed-free before being staged or used in the project area.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the implementation of the Flying V & H – Goat Canyon Catchment Project as presented in the Proposed Action section of this document. The proposed action includes numerous resource protection/conservation measures for resource protection.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Actions

I have concluded that this proposed action falls within the categories of actions listed in the Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act Handbook (FSH) that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. This categorical exclusion is found in FSH 1909.15, section 32.2 (9) *“Implement or modify minor management practices for a range allotment when an allotment management plan is not yet in place.”*

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***
An Assessment (BAE) was prepared by the TNF to determine potential project related impacts to federally listed threatened or endangered species and associated designated or proposed critical habitat. BAE #18 PVRD-0002 (Completed 2/23/18). There are no known historical or extant populations of federally listed species or sensitive species within two miles of the action area. There is no proposed or designated critical habitat within the action area. It was determined the proposed action would have no effect on federally listed species and would not cause a trend in any sensitive species toward Federal listing as Threatened or Endangered.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds –***

- There are no flood plains, wetlands or municipal watersheds within or adjacent to the project area.
- c. ***Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas –***
There are no Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas within or adjacent to the project area.
- d. ***Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas –***
There are no inventoried roadless areas within or adjacent to the project area.
- e. ***Research natural areas –***
There are no research natural areas within or adjacent to the project area.
- f. ***American Indian religious or cultural sites; and archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas –***
The Tonto National Forest archeologists conducted a survey of the project location and identified no sites in or adjacent to the project area. (ASR & IA, 7/20/2017 ; ISA 17 63A Forest Archaeologist and Forest Supervisor concurrence 7/27 2017).

Public Involvement

On November 16, 2018, a scoping letter was mailed out to 24 individuals and organizations outlining the proposed action. Two letters were received in response to the solicitation for scoping comments. There were few individual comments on the proposed action, itself and none of the comments required a revision of the proposed action. There were comments on the applicability of the CE level of NEPA analysis and disclosure for the project and value to wildlife of additional livestock waterers.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with the Forest Plan and other federal and state law, policy, and direction applicable to the resources present in the Tonto National Forest. *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. The Forest Plan discloses forest-wide standards and guidelines and management area direction.

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

- Clean Water Act, as amended
- Clean Air Act, as amended
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended
- American Antiquities Act of 1906 and Historic Preservation Act of 1966
- Executive Order 13186 of 2001, Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Executive Order 12898 of 1994, Environmental Justice
- Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management
- Executive Order 11990 Protection of Wetlands




Implementation Date

This project is not subject to appeal. I anticipate implementing the Flying V & H Goat Canyon Catchment Project in February 2019.

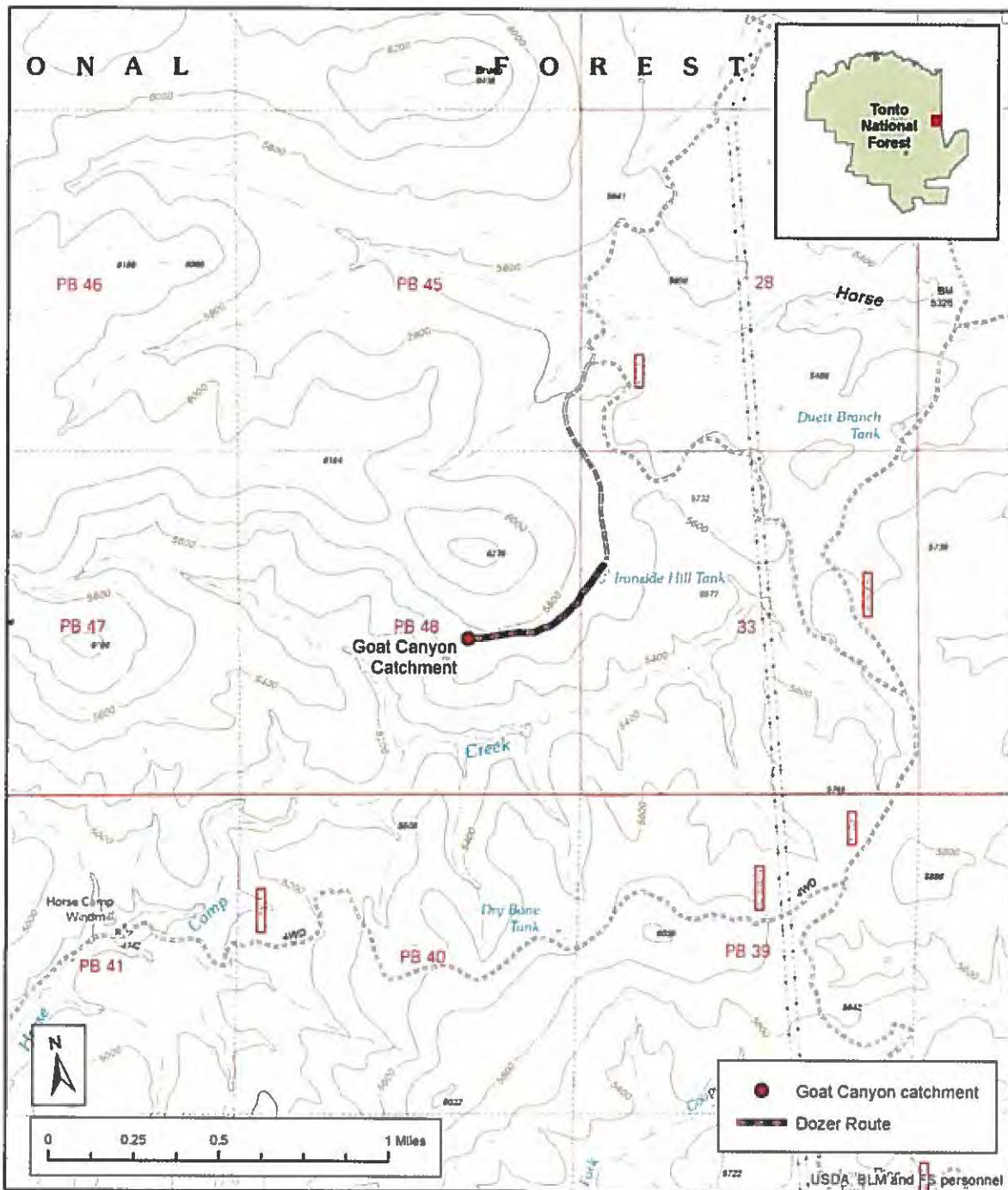
Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Kelly Bedson or Jeff Sturla, Range Management Specialists, Tonto National Forest, 1009 E Hwy 260 Payson, AZ 85541 (928) 474-7900.

FOR: 
Debbie Cress
District Ranger,
Payson & Pleasant Valley Ranger Districts

2/14/19
Date

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender



Project Name: Flying V&H: Goat Canyon Catchment
 Scale: 1:24,000 Elevation: 5700 ft.
 USGS Quad: Rock House
 Township(s): 7N Range(s): 15E Section(s): 32, 33
 Map Created By: Kelly Bedson, 11/21/16



