

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

---

**Gray Wash Fence  
Environmental Assessment**

**DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2014-0052-EA**

*August 2017*

---





## **Mission Statement**

*It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

### **Compliance for Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act**

The contents of this document are not fully Section 508 Compliant.

Please contact the BLM Kingman Field Office at 928-718-3700.

We will try to assist you as best we can.

This may include providing the information to you in an alternate format.

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Colorado River District Office

Gray Wash Boundary Fence  
Environmental Assessment

<b>CHAPTER 1 - PURPOSE AND NEED</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 The Purpose and Need for Action	5
1.2.1 The Decision to be made	5
1.3 Conformance and Compliance	5
1.3.1 Regulatory Authorities	5
1.3.2 Conformance with BLM Land Use Plan(s)	6
1.4 Scoping, Public Involvement, and Issue Analysis	6
1.4.1 Potential Issues	6
1.5 Methodologies	7
<b>CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 The Proposed Action– 1.14 miles of fencing	8
2.1.1 Design Features and Mitigation Measures Associated with the Proposed Alternative	8
2.2 Alternative 1 - 0.84 miles of fencing	10
2.3 No Action Alternative	10
2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis	10
<b>CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts	12
3.2 Resources Analyzed	12
3.3 Cumulative Effects	13
3.4 Reasonably Foreseeable Activities	14
3.5 Resources Present and Brought Forward for Analysis	15
3.5.1 Range Resources, Including Rangeland Health and Grazing	15
3.5.2 Vegetation Resources	17
3.5.3 Soil	18
3.5.4 Visual Resources	19
3.5.5 Wetland and Riparian Resources	20
3.5.6 Wildlife Resources: Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Candidate, Special Status, and Threatened and Endangered Species	21
Sonoran Desert Tortoise:	21
Wildlife and Migratory birds:	22
Candidate, Special Status, and Threatened and Endangered Species:	24

<b>CHAPTER 4 – CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1 Public Comments and Privacy Rights	27
4.2 Public Involvement	27
4.3 Tribal, Individual, Organizations, or Agencies, Consulted	27
4.4 List of Preparers	27
Appendix A - Guidelines for Handling Desert Tortoise	29

# **Gray Wash Boundary Fence Environmental Assessment**

## **CHAPTER 1 - PURPOSE AND NEED**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Gray Wash Boundary Fence is a fence construction project (DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2014-0052-EA) which would separate two allotments and prevent cattle trespass. The Gray Wash and Groom Peak Allotments are located approximately 1.5 miles south of Wikieup, Arizona and are separated by Highway 93 and fencing along the Big Sandy River. The Big Sandy River is located between the two allotments and borders the entire eastern end of Groom Peak Allotment and a small portion of the western end of Gray Wash Allotment (See Figure 1). The existing fence that separates the two allotments is partially connected and non-functioning in several locations due to age and topography. A portion of the fence line is a natural boundary that is not high and/or rugged enough to prevent cattle from crossing over. The existing fence cannot be repaired because portions of it exist on private uncontrolled land. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Kingman Field Office (KFO) along with permittee, Clay Overson would be involved in the construction and maintenance of this project.

### **1.2 THE PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION**

The purpose of the proposed action is to control livestock and eliminate cattle trespass on the Big Sandy River and between Groom Peak and Gray Wash Allotments.

The need is established by the BLM's responsibility under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 4120 regulations to respond to an application filed by the grazing permittee for a range improvement to resolve a problem with livestock trespassing into another allotment.

#### **1.2.1 The Decision to be made**

The BLM will determine whether to permit construction of a fence (with associated cattleguard or gate) that separates the Groom Peak Allotment from the Gray Wash Allotment.

### **1.3 CONFORMANCE AND COMPLIANCE**

#### **1.3.1 Regulatory Authorities**

The proposal presented within this Environmental Assessment (EA) would be implemented consistent with, but not limited to the following regulatory authorities:

- Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 as amended and supplemented
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
- Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978
- Title 43 of the CFR Subpart 4120

- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
- Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration

### **1.3.2 Conformance with BLM Land Use Plan(s)**

This Proposed action is in conformance with the Kingman Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved March 1995. The following Rangeland Management Decisions that pertain to the Proposed Action are taken verbatim from the RMP Decision number and narrative:

**GM01** Management of rangeland resources will be guided by the Cerbat/Black Mountains (1978) and Hualapai Aquarius (1981) grazing environmental impact statements and range program summaries (RMP, page 24). The objectives for the rangeland management program are listed in the Cerbat/Black Mountain (1978) and Hualapai Aquarius (1981) grazing environmental impact statements. (RMP, page 39)

**GM-34/I** Improve and protect riparian communities on public lands along Burro Creek, the Big Sandy River, the Bill Williams River, and their tributaries. Within 20 years stabilize downward trends and improve overall rangeland condition in these communities (RPS 1982 page 1).

**GM-39/V** Development of range improvements to meet management objectives on individual allotments (RMP page 461).

**WL-52** Protect the important, crucial use, conflict or habitat areas for the threatened, endangered, state-listed or sensitive species (RMP, page 584).

**TE03/VIC** BLM will manage for conservation of candidate and BLM-sensitive species. BLM will ensure that actions authorized will not contribute to the need to list any of these species as threatened or endangered” (RMP, page 29).

## **1.4 SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND ISSUE ANALYSIS**

Internal scoping was conducted by the KFO Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) to identify potential resource concerns or conflicts that could occur with implementation of the proposed action.

### **1.4.1 Potential Issues**

The KFO ID Team identified the following concerns relative to the proposed action:

1. What are the potential effects to Threatened or Endangered Species, Migratory Birds, and specifically the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and/or their potential habitat?
2. What are the effects of fence construction and human presence to Candidate Species, specifically the Sonoran Desert Tortoise?
3. What are the effects on grazing within the Sandy River riparian area?

## 1.5 METHODOLOGIES

Construction of a fence under any alternative requires the following regulations and/or Best Management Practices (BMP's) for all resources to include cultural clearances and wildlife surveys prior to implementation of the project. In the Grey Wash and Groom Peak Allotments, this includes management for the Sonoran Desert Tortoise and it requires following Tortoise Handling Guidelines (Appendix 1) and the BLM's fence and cattleguard specifications.

### Project Component Description

The fence would be constructed to the BLM's mule deer fence specifications to prevent potential impacts to mule deer:

- 4 strand wire fence with a total fence height of 42 inches.  
Measurements are *from the ground up*:
  - 16 inch smooth            16 inch above ground level
  - 6 inch barbed            22 inch above ground level
  - 8 inch barbed            30 inch above ground level
  - 12 inch barbed           42 inch above ground level
- 5.5 - 6 foot T-posts, 16 feet apart
- 2 wire or wood stays between posts
- T-posts to be painted or colored green

On public land, hand clipping of vegetation is expected to occur in order to get the fence installed with travel to sites cross-country via utility terrain vehicles. No other heavy equipment use is expected. Maintenance is expected to occur in similar fashion.

At least three gates and/or cattleguards could be installed in either Alternative 1 or 2's fences to allow for cattle movement, for access to private property, or access to Cholla Canyon Ranch Road (County Highway 159).

Cattleguards would be designed to allow tortoise to escape should they fall into the pit under the cattleguard. Escape ramps would have:

- A slope no steeper than 3:1, each at least 3 feet in length, and would be provided at each end of the cattleguard.
- A depth of greater than 1 inch layer of loose soil that is free of rock would be placed in the trench bottom to cover any metal that may cause injury to a tortoise. The soil layer would be maintained to prevent compaction or loss of soil.
- A minimum of 8 inches vertical clearance (12 inches max) would be maintained between the soil and the bottom of the guard and the upper cross supports. This distance is to prevent falling injury to tortoise (Ranching and Sonoran Desert Tortoise Working Group, 2015).

## **CHAPTER 2 - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 THE PROPOSED ACTION– 1.14 MILES OF FENCING**

The permittee proposes the construction and maintenance of approximately 1.14 miles of new permanent fence. The fence would be located on both private and public land (See Figure 1). The proposed fence within private land would be built by the permittee in T 15N, R 13W, Section 1 starting at UTM's NAD 83 (814027E, 3841680N) and would be approximately 0.5 miles in length ending at (814860E, 3841708N). The proposed fence on public land would be built by the BLM in T. 15 N., R. 12 W., Section 6 starting at (814860E, 3841708N) and would be approximately 0.64 miles in length ending at (815349E, 3842616N). Both would be built according to BLM's mule deer specifications to prevent potential impacts to mule deer (refer to methodologies discussion in Section 1.5). Fence construction would likely begin in the early fall when weather is favorable and last approximately 2 weeks. Access to the fence line would be by foot, horseback, or UTV. If the fence line were accessed by cross-country travel using a UTV, any two-track trail caused by this travel would be obliterated by raking of the tracks, vertical mulching, and putting rocks into the trail.

A Cooperative Range Improvement Permit would be issued and the grazing permittee would be assigned maintenance responsibility for the entire fence and cattleguards. This permit would also state that the BLM would construct portions of the fence on public lands and the permittee would construct the fencing on private lands. The original damaged fence and any remnant fencing or unused materials within public lands would be removed during fence construction.

The proposed fence would prevent livestock on the Gray Wash Allotment from entering onto the Big Sandy River and onto the Groom Peak Allotment (See Figure 1).

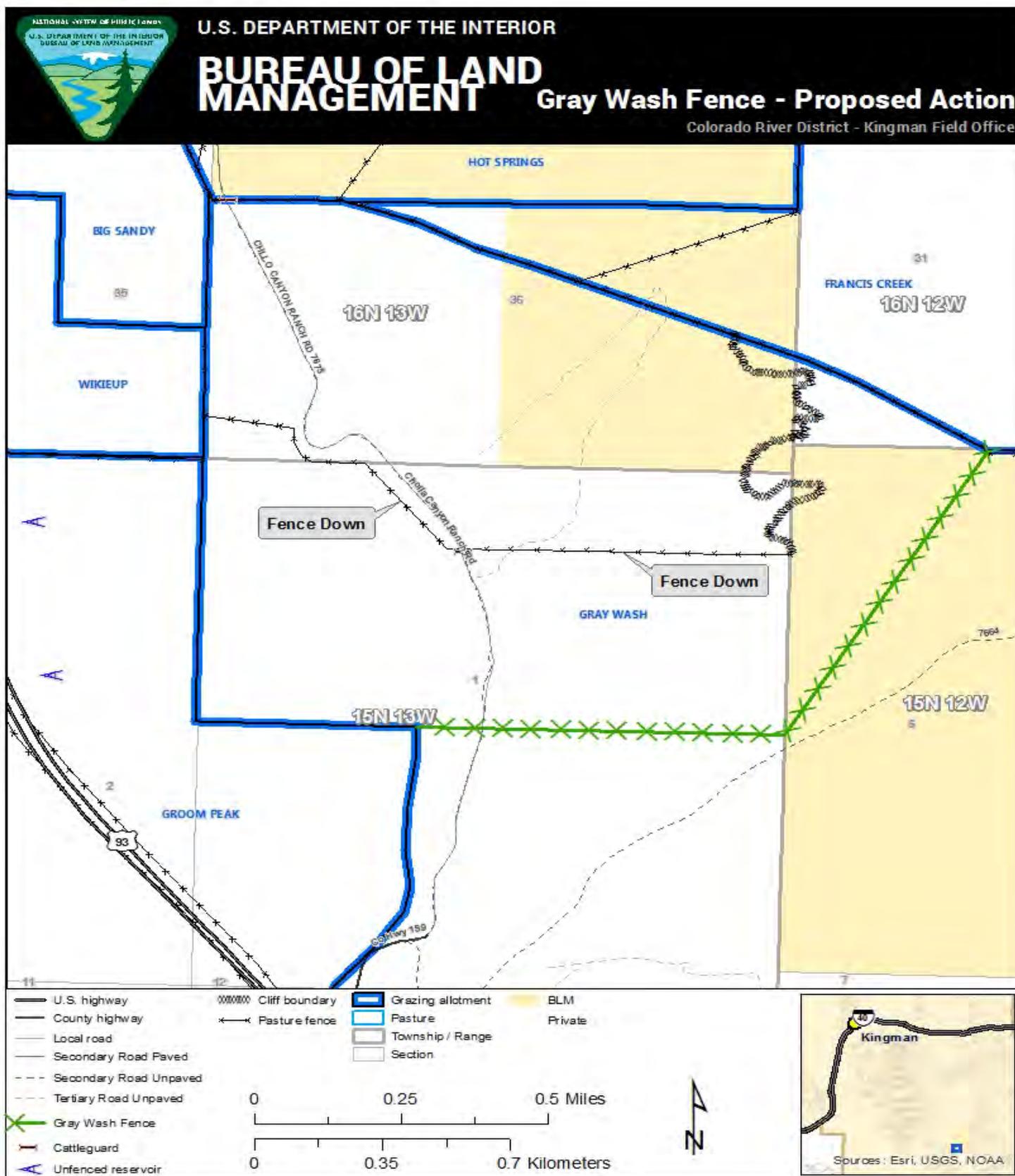
#### **2.1.1 Design Features and Mitigation Measures Associated with the Proposed Alternative**

The interdisciplinary team for this project determined that specific Design Features would be incorporated into the Proposed Action Alternative to reduce or avoid adverse impacts from occurring to the environment.

##### Proposed Environmental Protection Measures

Tortoise handling guidelines would be distributed to the project proponent. The cattleguards would be designed to allow tortoise to escape should they fall into the cattleguard pit (refer to methodologies discussion in Section 1.5). Construction, reconstruction, or maintenance of fences in tortoise habitat would be conducted following the Tortoise Handling Guidelines.

Figure 1: Proposed Action



## **2.2 ALTERNATIVE 1 - 0.84 MILES OF FENCING**

Under Alternative 1, the permittee would build approximately 0.84 miles of new permanent fence. The fence would be built on private land parallel and adjacent to the BLM boundary. The proposed fence would be in T. 15 N., R. 12 W., Section 1. The west to east portion would be on private and approximately 0.5 miles in length from the Groom Peak Allotment Boundary to the BLM land status boundary. The other part of the fence would be approximately 0.34 miles in length and located north along the BLM and private land property boundary. Gap fencing would be constructed in areas where necessary along the natural boundary. The permittee would be responsible for the maintenance of the entire fence, gates and/or cattleguards. The proposed fence would prevent livestock from entering onto the Big Sandy River as well as onto the Groom Peak Allotment (See Figure 2).

## **2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

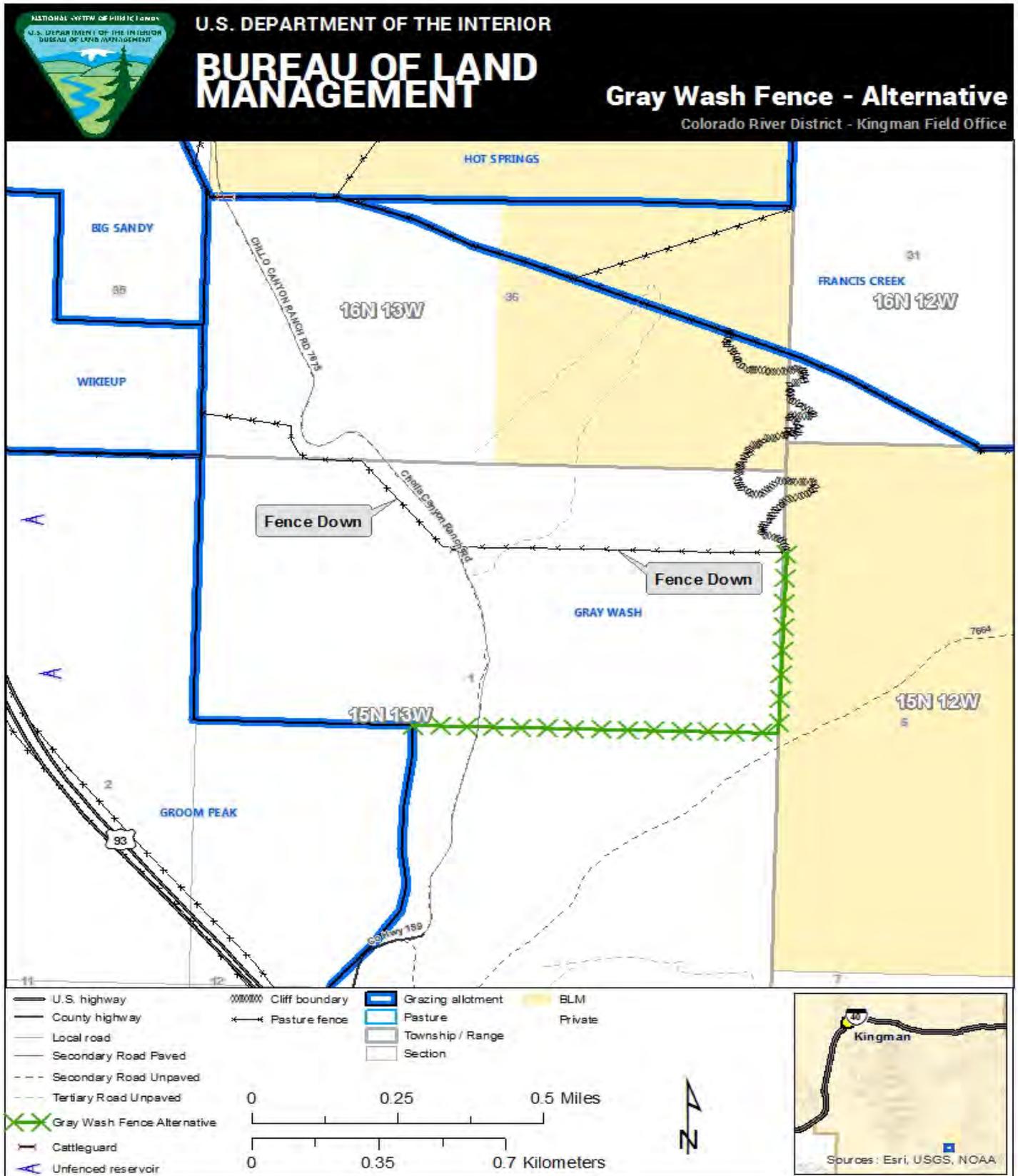
No fence would be constructed to close the gap between the locations in which the current fence is down (UTMs NAD83, 814027E, 3841680N) at either location of the natural boundary (814860E, 3841708N) or existing fence. The existing fence cannot be maintained therefore it would remain in disrepair and cattle would continue to wander through both allotments.

## **2.4 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS**

Reducing livestock numbers was not considered in this EA as it is beyond the scope of analysis for this range improvement. Reducing livestock numbers would not address the purpose and need to eliminate trespass or control livestock

No additional alternatives or unresolved conflicts were identified for analysis in this document.

Figure 2: Alternative 1



## CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### 3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The affected environment and environmental impacts were considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the KFO Project Scoping Form found in the Administrative Record for this project. Those resources determined to be potentially affected by implementation of the proposed action are discussed below.

### 3.2 RESOURCES ANALYZED

The table below contains all resources that may be of concern and will be marked as not present, present but not affected, or present and affected. Resources that are present but not affected will include a rationale for non-analysis. Present and affected resources will be analyzed below the table.

**Table 1:** Resources Analyzed

Element/Resource	Not Present	Present, NOT Affected	Rationale for Non-Analysis	Present and Affected	Analyzed in Section
A C E C	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Access	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Air Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Aquatic Species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Climate Change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A cultural survey was conducted along proposed fencing areas; no cultural resources were found.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy (Oil/Gas)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental Justice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Farm Lands – Prime/Unique	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fire Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Floodplains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Forestry and Woodland Products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Grazing/Rangelands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.1

**Table 1:** Resources Analyzed  
(Continued)

Element/Resource	Not Present	Present, NOT Affected	Rationale for Non-Analysis	Present and Affected	Analyzed in Section
Human Health and Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lands/Realty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
LUP Conformance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Migratory Birds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.6
Mining/Minerals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Native American Traditional Values	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Non-Native, Invasive and Noxious Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	All vehicles used are from the local area and would not be promoting bringing in new weed species.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rangeland Health (HFRA)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The fence would not affect designated recreational opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sensitive/Candidate Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.6
Socio-Economics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.3
Threatened or Endangered Species and Critical Habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.6
Vegetation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.2
Visual Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.4
Waste – Hazardous or Solid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wetlands/Riparian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.5
Wild & Scenic Rivers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wild Horses and Burros	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wilderness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wildlife	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3.4.6

### 3.3 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects are those that occur from the incremental impacts of the Proposed Action or Alternatives that are added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can also result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place

over a period of time (40 CFR § 1508.7). In addition to grazing, cumulative effects that can occur within this allotment include:

- BLM activities (monitoring; vegetative and wildlife habitat improvement projects; invasive, non-native species control efforts; fire management activities to reduce the threat and impact of wildfire (e.g., fuels reduction projects), etc.);
- Recreational activities: wildlife viewing, hunting, camping, etc.;
- Public forms of multiple-use (gaining access to/from private or public lands) across the allotments;
- Maintenance forms of multiple-use (utility companies maintaining power lines on right-of-ways, lands/realty surveys, etc.);
- Mineral exploration, extraction, and/or development; and
- State/county services (weed eradication; invasive, non-native species control efforts; highway maintenance, etc.).

### **3.4 REASONABLY FORESEEABLE ACTIVITIES**

The interdisciplinary team for this project identified the following events as potential Reasonably Foreseeable Activities (RFAs) within the Project Area:

Events likely to occur within the next ten years include:

*The Arizona Department of Administration Employment and Population Statistics Division*, using a medium growth modeling exercise, estimated in their December 7, 2012 report that Mohave County would increase in population 13% over 212,805 by 2020 (to 240,998) and by 24% in 2025 (to 264,143). The projected increases are expected to equate to more users on public lands for many different forms of multiple-use. The increase in users could cause and increase the potential for conflict concerning crossing private and public lands through gates used to control livestock grazing.

Projects that are developed with regard to population growth (e.g., lands/realty right-of-way requests; transportation corridor applications, etc.) would be analyzed as information becomes available under their own site-specific environmental analysis.

#### Kingman Field Office Allotment Range Improvements

A Project Team has been formed to analyze and authorize new range improvements within the BLM Kingman Field Office. This is for projects other than those included in this EA. Range

improvement requests are for permittees throughout the Kingman Field Office and would be analyzed at the time they are proposed under their own site-specific environmental analysis.

New developments could occur within the Kingman Field Office. Should any new developments require federal funding from BLM and/or require ground-disturbing activities, site-specific environmental analysis would be required. As such, impacts for them are expected to be analyzed when they are proposed and therefore, as they are now “unknown,” they are not included in this analysis.

### **3.5 RESOURCES PRESENT AND BROUGHT FORWARD FOR ANALYSIS**

The potential impacts to the resources listed in Table 1 above were evaluated by the KFO ID team to determine if detailed analysis would be necessary. Those resources are analyzed below.

#### **3.5.1 Range Resources, Including Rangeland Health and Grazing**

##### **Affected Environment**

The proposed project area is located between the Gray Wash Allotment and the Groom Peak Allotment and near the Big Sandy River. The fence that separates the allotments is in disrepair and non-functional, allowing cattle to cross between and enter the Big Sandy River putting the cattle that cross the allotment boundary in trespass. There are four range improvements within a two-mile radius of the project all of which supply water. The Big Sandy River may also supply water in wet conditions and has sensitive riparian vegetation. Both allotment permits are held by the same permittee. The Gray Wash Allotment holds a 45 Animal Unit (AU), is mostly checkerboard with 10,456 acres of public lands, and is a Category I, which is allotment in need of Improvement. The Groom Peak Allotment is also a Category I and holds a 26 AU permit with 6,455 acres of public land.

##### **Environmental Impacts**

###### Proposed Action – 1.14 Miles of Fence

The Proposed Action would allow construction of a new fence that would prevent the cattle from unauthorized grazing on adjacent allotments as well as keeping them out of the Big Sandy River.

Direct impacts of installing the fence would be the separation of the Groom Peak Allotment and Gray Wash Allotment that would also separate the cattle into appropriate pastures. This action would also promote keeping cattle from trespassing onto the Big Sandy River.

Indirect impacts of installing the fence include the possibility of livestock trailing along the new fence line. If gates are used, the public could leave them open allowing cattle to continue their trespass in the adjacent allotment. Although this fence is longer than the fence in Alternative 1, construction and maintenance of this fence would be easier compared to the fence in Alternative 1. Alternative 1 fence would be constructed in very rugged terrain making access and repairs difficult and maintenance more common due to cattle crossing over disrepair areas.

Under this alternative, there would be an opportunity for the permittee to implement rest during appropriate time periods when executing rotation. Cattle would not be in trespass, as they would remain on their assigned allotments during their allotted time. Management could be controlled on all allotments including the Big Sandy Allotment where cattle can access from the Big Sandy River. Management of cattle and opportunities of rest would then contribute to healthier rangelands.

#### Alternative 1 - 0.84 Miles of Fence

Construction of the Alternative 1 fence would connect to the natural boundary and could still allow cattle to cross areas that are not high or rugged enough to prevent trespass. Short cross fences could be established along the natural boundary where these crossings exist. Construction and maintenance would require accessing locations in which the terrain is rugged and access is difficult.

Direct impacts of installing the fence would be the separation of the Groom Peak Allotment and Gray Wash Allotment that would also separate the cattle into appropriate pastures. This action would also promote keeping cattle from trespassing onto the Big Sandy River and promote pasture rotation and rest for periods of time that cattle are not scheduled

Indirect impacts of installing the fence include the possibility of livestock trailing along new fence line, which removes vegetation, disturbs, and compacts soil. If gates are to be used public may leave them open allowing cattle to trespass.

Under this alternative there would be an opportunity for rest during appropriate time periods, cattle may not be in trespass, and management may be controlled on all allotments including the Big Sandy River. This would then contribute to healthier rangelands.

#### No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative no fences would be built and the current fence would remain in disrepair. Cattle would continue crossing over the boundary and trespassing on adjacent allotments and the Big Sandy River allowing unauthorized use, which can lead to fines to the permittee. There would be no opportunity for rest or appropriate rotation and cattle would continue to graze on the Big Sandy River until assessments of impacts were made. Later assessments would then identify grazing in a sensitive riparian area.

### **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Cumulative impacts under the Proposed Action and Alternative 1 would lead to better management of the permitted cattle by keeping them in the respective pastures and promoting rest and rotation allowing rangeland health to improve and make progress towards meeting standards. Allotments would be given the opportunity for rest due to the newly created pastures which would then lead to better production of forage. There would be potential for trailing along the fence by livestock.

## No Action Alternative

Cumulative impacts under the No Action Alternative would lead to continued trespass and unauthorized grazing within Groom Peak, Grey Wash, and the Big Sandy River. This would continue damaging impacts to the vegetation within allotments and the Big Sandy River and could lead to a decrease in key forage species, changes in a riparian community, and potentially reduce wildlife and habitat.

### **3.5.2 Vegetation Resources**

#### **Affected Environment**

The project area is located in a transition zone between the Mohave and Sonoran Deserts and has components of each desert. The plant community is Mohave-Sonoran Desert Scrub Mix. The primary vegetation within the Gray Wash Allotment consists of creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), crucifixion thorn (*Canotia holacantha*), hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus engelmannii*), flattop buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), shrubby buckwheat (*Eriogonum wrightii*), big galleta (*Pleuraphis rigida*), range ratany (*Krameria parvifolia*), buckhorn cholla (*Opuntia acanthocarpa*) and Mexican bladdersage (*Salazaria Mexicana*). Some of this vegetation is considered key forage species for cattle and wildlife. The soil is protected by the vegetation and gravelly components. The Big Sandy River vegetation consists of tamarisk, Fremont cottonwood, and Gooding's willow, which are important components of southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, and northern Mexican garter snake habitat. Currently the riparian area is being grazed by livestock from the Gray Wash Allotment because the boundary fence is permeable and in disrepair.

#### **Environmental Impacts**

##### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Direct impacts on vegetation from installation of the fence would be from vegetation being clipped or taken to the ground for fence construction and maintenance such as fence post placement and clearance for the wire. The vegetation would not be grubbed, cleared, or removed and would only be taken to the ground if clipping was not efficient. Vegetation would be clipped along the fence line to make room for stringing wire and pounding posts. Cross-country travel by UTVs to transport people and materials to the project site would crush vegetation along the fence line access route. Clipped vegetation should recover to pre-disturbed conditions in less than five years and therefore no forage or wildlife habitat would be permanently lost. Any sign of two-track roads along fence line or leading to the fence line caused by the construction activities would be mitigated by raking, vertical mulching, and putting rocks into the tracts to deter future use by off-road vehicle users.

Riparian vegetation in the Big Sandy River would indirectly be protected from livestock grazing by the fence construction. The fence would keep livestock on the Gray Wash Allotment from gaining access to the river. This would indirectly benefit the potential habitat of the SWWFL, yellow-billed cuckoo, and northern Mexican gartersnake and other riparian obligate species.

Trampling and/or removal of vegetation by livestock along new fence line may be an indirect impact caused by the new fence.

#### No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, there would be no direct impacts to vegetation caused by the construction of a new allotment boundary fence. Vegetation along the banks of the Big Sandy River would continue to be used by grazing livestock. Access to the river by cattle from the Gray Wash Allotment would still occur due to lack of a fence boundary to keep from cattle crossing over the allotment boundary into the river.

Indirect impacts would be unauthorized use of vegetation in the Big Sandy River and Groom Peak allotments thereby reducing the available forage for those allotments.

### **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Over the long-term trailing by livestock along the fence line may cause soil compaction and loss of soil cover if trailing causes vegetation to be removed. Additionally, trespass livestock from the Gray Wash Allotment would not graze riparian and upland vegetation on adjacent allotments. This would allow for the area to rest during appropriate time periods as established by the grazing permits for these areas. This would contribute to healthier rangelands and riparian habitat.

#### No Action Alternative

Cumulative impacts would be the continued unauthorized use by Gray Wash Allotment livestock on adjacent allotments as well as on the Big Sandy River. Over time, continuous removal of vegetation will reduce cover and production, which will put the health of the rangeland at risk.

### **3.5.3 Soil**

#### **Affected Environment**

Soils along the Gray Wash Boundary Fence include Cacique family soils with extremely gravelly loam identified by soil map units by the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey. These soils occur at elevations between 1,800 and 2,400 feet with annual average precipitation between 7 and 10 inches.

### **Environmental Impacts**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Direct impacts from the construction of the fence would be slight and temporary compaction due to workers extended time along fence line.

Indirect impacts from possible trailing by livestock could lead to compaction or increase in dust dependent upon soil type. Most of the fence would be located within the gravelly soils and therefore would be heavily protected from disturbance of cattle and other resources that can create erosion or compaction through excessive use.

More disturbance would be created accessing the areas along the natural boundary under Alternative 1.

#### No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, cattle would continue to move unrestricted between allotments and the Big Sandy River and would continue soil compaction and loss of soil cover.

### **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

#### Proposed Action – 1.14 Miles of Fence

Possible soil compaction and loss of soil cover due to livestock movement and other multiple uses along the fence line.

#### Alternative 1 -0 .84 Miles of Fence

Possible soil compaction and loss of soil cover due to livestock movement and other multiple uses along the fence line. Disturbance would be reduced along the solid fence line, but could be increased from cattle attempting to cross over the natural boundary.

#### No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no compaction along a fence line. Compaction from cattle and other sources could occur in sensitive areas such as riparian zones that are not designated for grazing.

### **3.5.4 Visual Resources**

#### **Affected Environment**

The proposed action is located in areas designated as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II and III. VRM Class II exists within the project area that is located on private and public lands. Class II VRM areas are managed to retain the existing character of the landscape and manage the area so that any change to the characteristic landscape is low. A majority of the fence construction located on public lands would take place in Class III VRM, which allows for a moderate level of change to the characteristic landscape. Routes in this area are primarily used for ingress and egress to private property with the occasional motorized tourist or hunter.

#### **Environmental Impacts**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Under the Proposed Action, the fence would be constructed using t-posts that are colored to match the local environment. There would be limited vegetation removed to construct the fence

thus minimizing the potential for adverse effects to visual resources for the casual observer. The addition of the fence may detract from the overall characteristics of the landscape in the area, but any impact to visual resources would be minimal due to the implementation of aforementioned mitigation strategies, density of vegetation in the area, and the natural topography of the landscape.

#### No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no constructed fence and no changes to the current landscape.

### **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Moderate level of change to the characteristic landscape would be present.

#### No Action Alternative

There would be no changes to the current landscape.

### **3.5.5 Wetland and Riparian Resources**

#### **Affected Environment**

Where water is at or near the surface, the Big Sandy River supports a lush Fremont cottonwood, Gooding's willow, tamarisk plant community. In drier areas of the river, extensive stands of velvet mesquite dominate the landscape. Where water is more seasonal and too deep for riparian trees, desert broom, cheeseweed and open sand dominates the area.

#### **Environmental Impacts**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Currently livestock from the Gray Wash Allotment are able to graze within the Big Sandy River riparian zones as the allotment boundary fence separating this allotment from the Groom Peak Allotment is old and in disrepair. Portions of the boundary were left unfenced as it was thought that the natural topography would prevent livestock from crossing the boundary. However, cattle have been able to cross this natural unfenced area and gain access to the river.

The proposed fence would keep livestock grazing within permitted areas of the Gray Wash Allotment and out of the Big Sandy River where wetland/cottonwood willow plant communities are located. Putting this fence in the proposed location makes it more likely that the fence would be successfully maintained as access to the fence and location is within a more easily traversed terrain. The fence is more likely to be successful at keeping cattle out of the river due to easy access for maintenance and thus prevent unauthorized grazing in the riparian corridor.

Once cattle are confined to the uplands, the riparian and wetland plant communities are expected to become fully functional. Reproduction and establishment of riparian plants are expected to increase in the absence of livestock grazing from the Gray Wash Allotment. The riparian

community where water is present at or near the surface is expected to become multi-layered with more vegetative cover and riparian trees established.

#### No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, cattle from the Gray Wash Allotment would continue to trespass onto the Big Sandy River and utilize the riparian vegetation, which provides potential SWWFL, yellow-billed cuckoo and northern Mexican gartersnake habitat and habitat for other riparian obligate species.

### **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Improved riparian management of the Big Sandy River would allow for recruitment and establishment of woody riparian species. This could potentially allow for the development of habitat for the SWWFL, yellow-billed cuckoo, northern Mexican gartersnake, and other riparian obligate species.

#### No Action Alternative

Under this alternative riparian vegetation would continue to be grazed yearlong by livestock from the Gray Wash Allotment potentially inhibiting the development of the riparian plant communities that provide habitat for the SWWFL, yellow-billed cuckoo, northern Mexican gartersnake, and other riparian obligate species.

### **3.5.6 Wildlife Resources: Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Candidate, Special Status, and Threatened and Endangered Species**

#### **Sonoran Desert Tortoise:**

##### **Affected Environment**

The proposed fence relocation is in Category III Sonoran Desert tortoise habitat. This species is a BLM Sensitive Species.

The following is a description of Category III tortoise habitat:

- (1) Habitat areas not essential to maintenance of viable populations,
- (2) Most conflicts not resolvable,
- (3) Low to medium density populations.

Aquarius Mountains Category III tortoise habitat: Wikieup and several miles of the Big Sandy River are included. Transect and habitat information indicates general lack of tortoises throughout this area. In general, the habitat does not appear suitable for tortoises due to unsuitable topographic features and the general lack of shelter sites (boulders). This area was designated as Category III because of the habitat quality is poor and there are low tortoise population densities.

## **Environmental Impacts**

### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Tortoise may be encountered during the construction of the fence and there is potential they could be run over by a UTV or picked up by workers. The tortoise handling guidelines would mitigate encounter impacts with fence builders. Tracks from the UTV could tempt other users to drive the tracks to the fence indirectly causing more potential encounters between tortoise and people. Potentially a new road could develop because of off-road travel by the fence builders. The rehabilitation of any two-track road would be done to reduce the potential of development of a new road along the fence line.

### No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the fence would not be constructed and tortoise would not be potentially affected by project-related cross-country vehicle travel or have increased encounters with people. Continued unauthorized grazing would have an impact on tortoise and habitat due to prohibited use and taking of vegetation. Extended use by cattle and other multiple uses could lead to compaction and erosion.

## **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

The Wikieup area is a low-density developed rural community. Developments and uses in the Big Sandy River include US 93 Highway, highway bridges and culverts, paved and dirt roads, trails, homes, agricultural fields, irrigation, power lines, waterlines/pipelines, wells, recreational UTV use, and livestock grazing. The uses of this area and the maintenance of the developments are expected to continue into the future.

The uses of the upland project area consist of one road, fences, and livestock grazing. Livestock grazing and the maintenance of the road and fences are expected to continue into the future.

When combined with these past, present, and future activities, implementing the proposed action would not have any significant cumulative effects to the Sonoran desert tortoise.

### No Action Alternative

Cumulative impacts to the Sonoran desert tortoise from the No Action Alternative would be similar to the Proposed Action.

## **Wildlife and Migratory birds:**

### **Affected Environment**

The project area provides habitat for various wildlife species common to the Mohave-Sonoran Desert Scrub Mix plant communities. Big game species include desert mule deer, javelina, and

mountain lion. Small game and fur-bearing species include the desert cottontail, striped skunk, and bobcat. Upland game bird species include the Gambel's quail, white-winged dove, and mourning dove. Typical non-game species that occur on the allotment are the western diamondback rattlesnake, collared lizard, coyote, black-tailed jackrabbit, cactus mouse, and the white-throated woodrat.

## **Environmental Impacts**

### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

These animals would be disturbed by noise, human presence, and clipping and crushing of vegetation during construction and maintenance of the fence. Disturbance would be in the form of noise from fence building, vegetation cutting, human presence, vehicle noise, and the crushing and altering of habitat through vegetation cutting. Because the vegetation is being clipped not cleared or grubbed, the vegetation is expected to recover through root sprouting, in less than five years. Therefore, no wildlife habitat would be permanently lost. The presence of construction workers and the activities associated with fence construction and maintenance would disturb wildlife and migratory birds causing temporary displacement of these species. Animals would temporarily leave the area or hide. This is expected to last less than two hours in any one location. The take of migratory birds is not anticipated because the project would occur outside of the bird-nesting season. Wildlife and migratory birds would be indirectly affected by the restriction of cattle access to the river as livestock would not be grazing, and potentially altering the habitat associated with the river. The reduction or lack of livestock grazing in the river would indirectly facilitate riparian development by allowing rest and growth, which would benefit those species dependent on riparian habitats.

### No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no constructed fence and no disturbance of the wildlife or migratory birds or their habitats from the construction and maintenance of the fence. Livestock access to the Big Sandy River would not be restricted. Indirectly this would inhibit the development of riparian habitat in the river.

## **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

In the future livestock would be restricted from grazing in the Big Sandy River. This would indirectly allow development of the riparian plant communities that provide habitat for wildlife, migratory birds and other riparian obligate species.

### No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the fence would not be constructed and riparian habitat in the Big Sandy River would continue to be grazed yearlong by livestock from the Gray Wash Allotment inhibiting the development of the riparian plant communities that provide habitat for wildlife,

migratory birds and other riparian obligate species.

## **Candidate, Special Status, and Threatened and Endangered Species:**

### **Affected Environment**

**Southwestern Willow Flycatcher:** This species has not been found in the project area however it has the potential to occur adjacent (within 0.3 miles) to the project area (See Figure 3) in the riparian corridors along the Big Sandy River (AGFD 2015). Critical habitat on the Big Sandy River occurs within 0.3 miles of the project area. This species was listed as Endangered with designated Critical Habitat, on March 29, 1995. Critical Habitat was designated on February 14, 2014.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** This species has not been found within or adjacent to the project area however there is potential habitat adjacent to the project area in the Big Sandy River. This species has been listed as Threatened (Federal Register Notice Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, 50 CFR Part 17, October 3, 2014).

**Northern Mexican Gartersnake:** This species has not been found within or adjacent to the project area however there is potential habitat adjacent to the project area in the Big Sandy River. This species has been listed as Threatened (Federal Register Notice Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, 50 CFR Part 17, July 8, 2014).

### **Environmental Impacts**

#### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

**Southwestern Willow Flycatcher:** Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in a “May Affect, but Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determination (Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 Effect Determination) for the SWWFL (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) and for SWWFL critical habitat. The Proposed Action would be wholly beneficial to the SWWFL and to SWWFL critical habitat by improving control of livestock on the Gray Wash Allotment, and preclude livestock that graze on the Gray Wash Allotment from grazing in the Big Sandy River riparian corridor in potential SWWFL habitat and in critical habitat (BLM, 2015 and FWS, 2015).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Northern Mexican Gartersnake:** Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in a “May Affect, but Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determination for the Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) and for the Northern Mexican Gartersnake (*Thamnophis eques megalops*). The Proposed Action would be wholly beneficial to the cuckoo and the gartersnake by improving control of livestock on the Gray Wash Allotment, and preclude livestock that graze on the Gray Wash Allotment from grazing in the Big Sandy River riparian corridor in potential yellow-billed cuckoo and northern Mexican gartersnake habitat.

#### No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, it would be more difficult to control livestock and keep livestock out of

the Big Sandy River. Livestock are more likely to be able to graze within the riparian area of the Big Sandy River, which is potential SWWFL, yellow-billed cuckoo, and northern Mexican gartersnake habitat. Livestock would continue to enter onto the Big Sandy River due to the current fence being down and the natural boundary not being sufficient to prevent the crossover of the cattle. This in turn may destroy potential habitat reducing the presence and possible reproduction of these species.

## **Cumulative Impacts of Alternatives**

### Proposed Action and Alternative 1

For the purposes of this Biological Evaluation, cumulative effects includes temporary or permanent changes to biological resources such as habitat removal or disturbance to sensitive species from the Proposed Action in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the project area and in the Big Sandy River. The BLM previously consulted with the USFWS on the Kingman RMP (BLM 1995, pg. 19) and Amendments, which encompass the proposed project area. The BLM continues to consult with the USFWS Service on a project-by-project basis.

The Wikieup area is a low-density developed rural community. Developments and uses in the Big Sandy River include US 93 Highway, highway bridges and culverts, paved and dirt roads, trails, homes, agricultural fields, irrigation, power lines, waterlines/pipelines, wells, recreational UTV use, and livestock grazing. The uses of this area and the maintenance of the developments are expected to continue into the future.

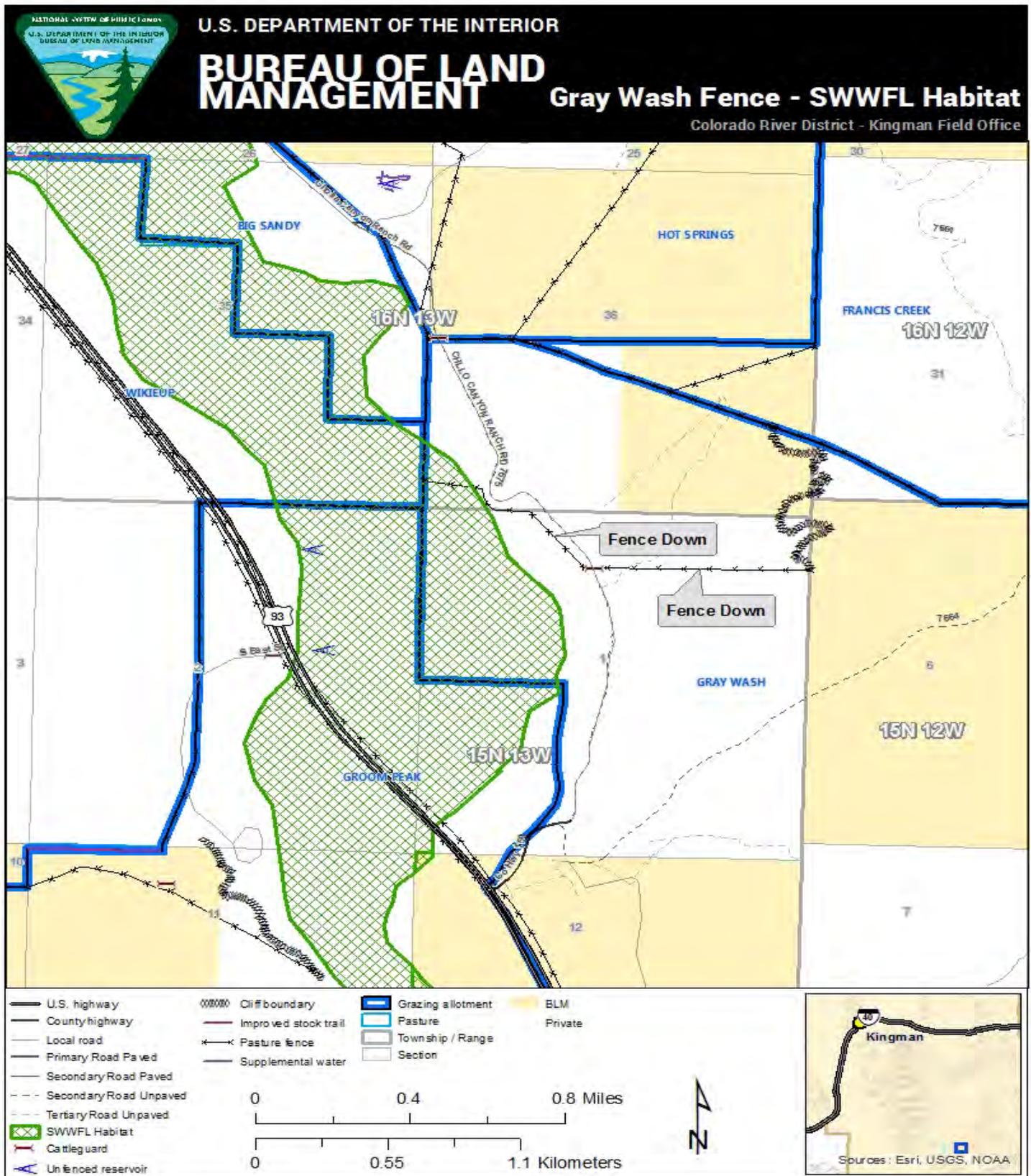
The uses of the upland project area consist of one road, fences, and livestock grazing. Livestock grazing and the maintenance of the road and fences are expected to continue into the future.

When combined with these past, present, and future activities, implementing the proposed action would not have any significant cumulative effects to the SWWFL, yellow-billed cuckoo, and northern Mexican gartersnake, or to critical habitat found in the Big Sandy River riparian corridor.

### No Action Alternative

When combined with these past, present, and future activities, implementing the No Action Alternative would not add any significant cumulative effects to the SWWFL, yellow-billed cuckoo, and northern Mexican gartersnake, or to critical habitat found in the Big Sandy River riparian corridor. Livestock access to the Big Sandy River from the Gray Wash Allotment would continue.

Figure 3: Southwest Willow Flycatcher Critical Habitat



## **CHAPTER 4 – CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

Internal meetings with an interdisciplinary team were held with the following disciplines were represented: management, environmental planning, wildlife biology, cultural resources, recreation, wilderness, soil water and air, range management, minerals, and realty. The meetings are an open forum type setting with the following representatives typically attends in attendance: Arizona Department of Game and Fish and Mohave County Public Works.

### **4.1 PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PRIVACY RIGHTS**

In the event that you want to provide comments on this document, please note the following regarding your privacy rights

“Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment –including your personal identifying information –may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.”

Contact: Joelle Acton  
Bureau of Land Management  
jacton@blm.gov

### **4.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

There was no public scoping, but the document will be sent out for public review.

### **4.3 TRIBAL, INDIVIDUAL, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES, CONSULTED**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Request for Concurrence for Construction and Maintenance of the Gray Wash Boundary Fence in Mohave County, Arizona.

### **4.4 LIST OF PREPARERS**

This proposal was presented at the BLM/ bi-monthly project coordination meetings. Persons expressing an interest in reviewing the proposal are listed on the KFO Scoping Form, and below.

#### **Environmental Coordinators:**

- Joelle Acton, Project Lead, Range Management Specialist, Kingman Field Office
- Rebecca Peck, Wildlife Biologist, Kingman Field Office
- Matt Driscoll, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Kingman Field Office
- Tim Watkins, Archaeologist, Kingman Field Office
- Chris Bryan, Assistant Field Manager, Kingman Field Office
- Angelica Rose, NEPA and Planning and Environmental Coordinator

## References Cited

- AGFD. 2015. Arizona's Natural Heritage Program: Heritage Data Management System (HDMS). Website: [http://www.azgfd.gov/w\\_c/edits/species\\_concern.shtml](http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/edits/species_concern.shtml). Accessed: October, 2015.
- Bureau of Land Management 2015. Biological Evaluation for southwestern willow flycatcher critical habitat, yellow-billed cuckoo, and northern Mexican gartersnake, Gray Wash Boundary Fence. Colorado River District, Kingman Field Office, Kingman, Arizona.
- Fish and Wildlife Service 2015. Concurrence for Construction and Maintenance of Gray Wash Boundary Fence, Mohave County, Arizona. Arizona Ecological Services, Phoenix, Arizona.
- Ranching and Sonoran Desert Tortoise Working Group. 2015. Best Management Practices for Ranching in Sonoran Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus morafki*) Habitat in Arizona. 66 pp.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX A - GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING DESERT TORTOISE



### APPENDIX 1 United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Kingman Field Office  
2755 Mission Boulevard  
Kingman, Arizona 86401  
www.az.blm.gov



### GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING DESERT TORTOISE ENCOUNTERED ON ROADS AND VEHICLE WAYS

1. Stop your vehicle and allow the tortoise to move off the road.
2. If the tortoise is not moving, gently\*\* pick up the tortoise and move it approximately 200 feet off the road to a shaded location.
  - a. Do not turn the tortoise over.
  - b. Move the tortoise in the direction it was traveling. If it was crossing the road, move it in the direction it was crossing.
  - c. Keep the tortoise within 12-18 inches of the ground, move slowly so as not to cause it to become alarmed.
  - d. Release the tortoise under the shade of a bush or rock.

\*\* Tortoise store water in their bladder. If a tortoise becomes alarmed its defense is to void its bladder onto the captor. This could lead to dehydration of the tortoise and potentially to death.

3. Prior to moving any parked vehicles or equipment at the project site, check for tortoise under the vehicles.

