



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Coronado National Forest  
Nogales Ranger District

303 Old Tucson Road  
Nogales, Arizona 85621  
Phone (520) 281-2296  
FAX (520) 281-2396

---

File Code: 1950/2210

Date: August 14, 2013

Subject: Decision Memo: H6 Water System, Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project

To: FILE

## **DECISION MEMORANDUM**

### **H6 Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project: Installation of Water Pipeline, Troughs, and Storage Tanks**

**USDA Forest Service  
Coronado National Forest  
Nogales Ranger District  
Santa Cruz County, Arizona  
Sections 24 and 25, Township 23 South, Range 12 East  
Section 30, Township 23 South, Range 13 East  
Gila and Salt River Meridian**

## **BACKGROUND**

The H6 wildlife habitat improvement project is proposed in a portion of Walker Canyon on the Nogales Ranger District (see attached map) that has been historically without permanent water for wildlife and livestock. In the 1960s, the H6 Well was installed on the Marstellar Allotment (see map) to help resolve this issue; however, the original windmill and storage tank have aged and become unserviceable. A solar pump was installed at the well in 2013. To provide wildlife and livestock with a dependable water source, a pipeline and storage troughs and tanks would be installed to convey and hold water pumped from the H6 well to supply water for wildlife as well as for livestock. It will also enhance management of existing earthen stock tanks for threatened and endangered species as well reduce impacts of grazing on wildlife habitat through improved livestock distribution.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed action would involve installation of a 2-mile long pipeline, which will be buried approximately 18 inches (“) deep in an area 6” wide. The diameter of the high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe is 1.5”. Four 750-gallon water troughs and two HDPE 5000-gallon water storage tanks would receive well water transported by the pipeline. The H6 water system would provide permanent year-round water to wildlife and livestock, which would facilitate better livestock distribution and sustain populations of various species, including those protected under the Endangered Species Act.



## DECISION AND RATIONALE

It is my decision to approve the proposed water system improvements described above. This action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment because it meets the criteria at 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(6): “*Timber stand and or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.*”

## CONSIDERATION OF EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

Using the best available scientific and commercial information, Forest resource specialists confirmed for me that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with the proposed action that would result in individual and/or cumulative adverse effects on resources identified in 36 CFR 220.6 (b)(1). Their findings reported below support the validity of using this CE and my decision to authorize this project in this Decision Memorandum (DM).

*i. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species*

**Determination:** The District Biologist determined that the proposed action would have no effect on Federally listed threatened or endangered species and designated critical habitat and species and habitat proposed for Federal listing. It would have no impact on Forest Service, Region 3, sensitive species; Forest management indicator species; and bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (Project Record, Item 1).

*ii. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds*

**Determination:** The District Watershed Specialist determined that the proposed pipeline and storage facilities would not be located in floodplains, wetlands and municipal watersheds, and there would be no effect on these areas (Project Record, Item 9).

*iii. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas*

*iv. Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas*

*v. Research natural areas*

**Determination:** A Forest GIS Specialist determined that the proposed project area is not located in a wilderness, wilderness study area, national recreation area, research natural area, or inventoried roadless area. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on these resources (Project Record, Item 3).

*vi. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites*

*vii. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas*

**Determination:** A Forest Archaeologist surveyed 33.3 acres along the proposed pipeline route and locations of water storage facilities and documented findings in Heritage Resources Report No. 2013-05-040. The survey revealed that no historic properties are present within the area of

potential effects. Therefore, a determination of “no historic properties affected” was made. There are no extraordinary circumstances that may result in adverse effects on American Indian religious and cultural sites (Project Record, Item 8).

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

This proposed action was listed on the Forest’s schedule of proposed actions (SOPA), which is available on the Forest’s public website. This DM will be posted on the SOPA after it is signed.

A March 19, 2012, court order resulting from a U.S. District Court ruling in *Sequoia ForestKeeper v. Tidwell* invalidated certain sections of the Forest Service’s appeal regulations at 36 CFR 215. In accordance with the order, this pre-decisional DM was made available to the public for a 30-day comment period, which was announced by legal notice in the *Nogales International* during the week of June 24, 2013. No comments were received.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS**

### **National Forest Management Act**

The proposed action was reviewed for consistency with the Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan, 1986, as amended), as required by the National Forest Management Act. The project was designed to Forest-wide standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan that require structural and nonstructural habitat improvement projects to be based on guidelines in the Forest-wide prescription. Such projects are intended to meet the following objectives: 1) Improve quality and availability of forage and availability of water for commonly hunted species, 2) Maintain horizontal and vertical plant diversity at current levels (Forest Plan, page 63). Structural and nonstructural improvements should receive high priority in these areas as needed for the desired level of management (Forest Plan, page 64).

### **Endangered Species Act**

The District Biologist determined that the proposed action would have no adverse effect on threatened or endangered species; designated critical habitat; and species and habitat proposed for Federal listing (Project Record, Item 9).

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

A Forest Archaeologist found that there are no historic properties present in the project area that could be affected by the proposed action and that there are no extraordinary circumstances that may result in adverse effects on American Indian religious and cultural sites (Project Record, Item 8).

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND APPEAL**

This DM was made available to the public for a 30-day review and comment period, beginning on the day after a legal notice was published in the *Nogales International*. No comments were received during this period. Therefore, a public appeal period is not required (36 CFR 215.12).

## **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

Because no comments were received from the public, an appeal period is not required. The proposed action may be implemented on the date of publication of a Legal Notice of Decision in the *Nogales International*.

## **POINT OF CONTACT**

For additional information concerning this proposed action and decision, please contact Mr. Sean Lockwood, District Range Specialist, at the Nogales Ranger District Office, 303 Old Tucson Rd., Nogales AZ, by phone at (520) 281-2296, or via email at seanlockwood@fs.fed.us.

/s/James D. Copeland  
JAMES D. COPELAND  
District Ranger

Attachments: Map of Project Area  
Biologist Determination  
Watershed Determination  
Special Areas Determination  
Heritage Determination

cc: Rachel A. Carroll



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Coronado National Forest  
Nogales Ranger District

303 Old Tucson Road  
Nogales, Arizona 85621  
Phone (520) 281-2296  
FAX (520) 281-2396

