



DECISION MEMO
LOWER PARKER CANYON RIPARIAN RESTORATION,
HUACHUCA MOUNTAINS
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
SIERRA VISTA RANGER DISTRICT
CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST
COCHISE CO, ARIZONA

BACKGROUND

The Upper Santa Cruz watershed is a crucial location for a variety of wildlife and plant species, including several Threatened and Endangered species. Parker Canyon is an important drainage within this watershed because it contains high-quality riparian habitat and helps connect the Santa Cruz River in the San Rafael Valley to Upper Scotia Canyon. These specific drainages are particularly important to the management of populations of Chiricahua leopard frog, northern Mexican gartersnake, and the Gila topminnow. Other species that will benefit from this project include the Sonoran tiger salamander, western yellow-billed cuckoo, Huachuca water umbel, jaguar, and ocelot.

This project also promotes collaborative conservation and a restoration community by involving numerous partners and local contractors. Borderlands Restoration, Sky Island Alliance, and Tucson Audubon have all expressed a great deal of interest in this project and have committed to have a joint volunteer-day to plant the native vegetation. The State Department of Forestry and the Forest Service grazing permittee will assist with the fence construction and invasive species removal.

DECISION

I have decided to:

- Construct two riparian pastures within the Lone Mountain Allotment.
- Extend a pipeline and install a trough in the Neighbor Springs pasture.
- Treat and remove nonnative vegetation (tree of heaven and Johnson grass) within Parker Canyon.
- Plant native plant material within the two riparian pastures.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road

construction, specified in 36 CFR 220.6(e)(5). This category of action(s) is applicable because it will improve the watershed condition and riparian channel of Parker Canyon.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. The following resource conditions identified in agency procedures that were considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

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

Because there are no federally listed species that currently occur at the site, the District Biologist has determined that the project will have No Effect to listed species or designated critical habitat. No significant negative impacts to Forest Service Sensitive Species, Management Indicator Species, or species included within the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are expected.

- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds

The installation of the fence, pipeline, and trough is not anticipated to have adverse impacts on municipal water supplies, floodplains or wetlands.

- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas, inventoried roadless areas, potential wilderness areas, or research natural areas.

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 action would have no effect on these resources.

- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas

This project involves several interconnected actions to improve the riparian and terrestrial habitat in lower Parker Canyon. It is the first phase of an interdisciplinary effort to improve the native species and diversity of the Upper Santa Cruz watershed. This phase consists of constructing riparian pastures and extending a pipeline and adding a drinker. The proposed fence lines and pipeline were surveyed by two individuals spaced approximately 50 feet apart. The pipeline will follow an existing road. Most of the areas of potential effects were previously surveyed for cultural resources. No cultural resources were encountered, affirming previous negative survey results. Cultural resources clearance is recommended.

- In addition to the above mentioned resources, this proposed action was reviewed and determined that it is consistent with the Forest Plan and Federal, state and local laws and regulations by specialists in the fields of: Lands/Special Uses, Minerals/Geology, Visual Quality, and the Forest NEPA Coordinator.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed on 4/1/2017 as a proposal on the Coronado National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis.

Throughout the development of the proposed action, this project has been shared with a variety of affected agencies, organizations, and the public, including the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Sky Island Alliance, Tucson Audubon, and Borderlands Restoration.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

National Forest Management Act

This decision is consistent with the Coronado National Forest Land Management Plan. As required by the National Forest Management Act, the proposed action was reviewed for consistency with the Coronado's Forest Plan (1986, as amended). Management direction for the project area (Management Area 4) is to maintain and improve current habitat for federally listed plant and animal species and work toward delisting (p. 62; U.S. Forest Service 1986).

Endangered Species Act

The District Biologist has determined that the project will have no effect to any federally listed species and their designated critical habitat.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Forest Archaeologist determined that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed action and that consultation with Native American tribes is not required (Project Record #3).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not appealable per 36 CFR 215.12(f).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this project may take place immediately upon issuance of this decision.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: John Kraft, District Biologist, at the Sierra Vista Ranger District Office, 4070 S. Avendia Saracino, Hereford, AZ 85615; (520)803-2827; and jkraft@fs.fed.us.

C. Kinsey

Celeste Kinsey

Sierra Vista District Ranger

12/19/17

Date

Attachments:

1 – Map of project area.

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Attachments

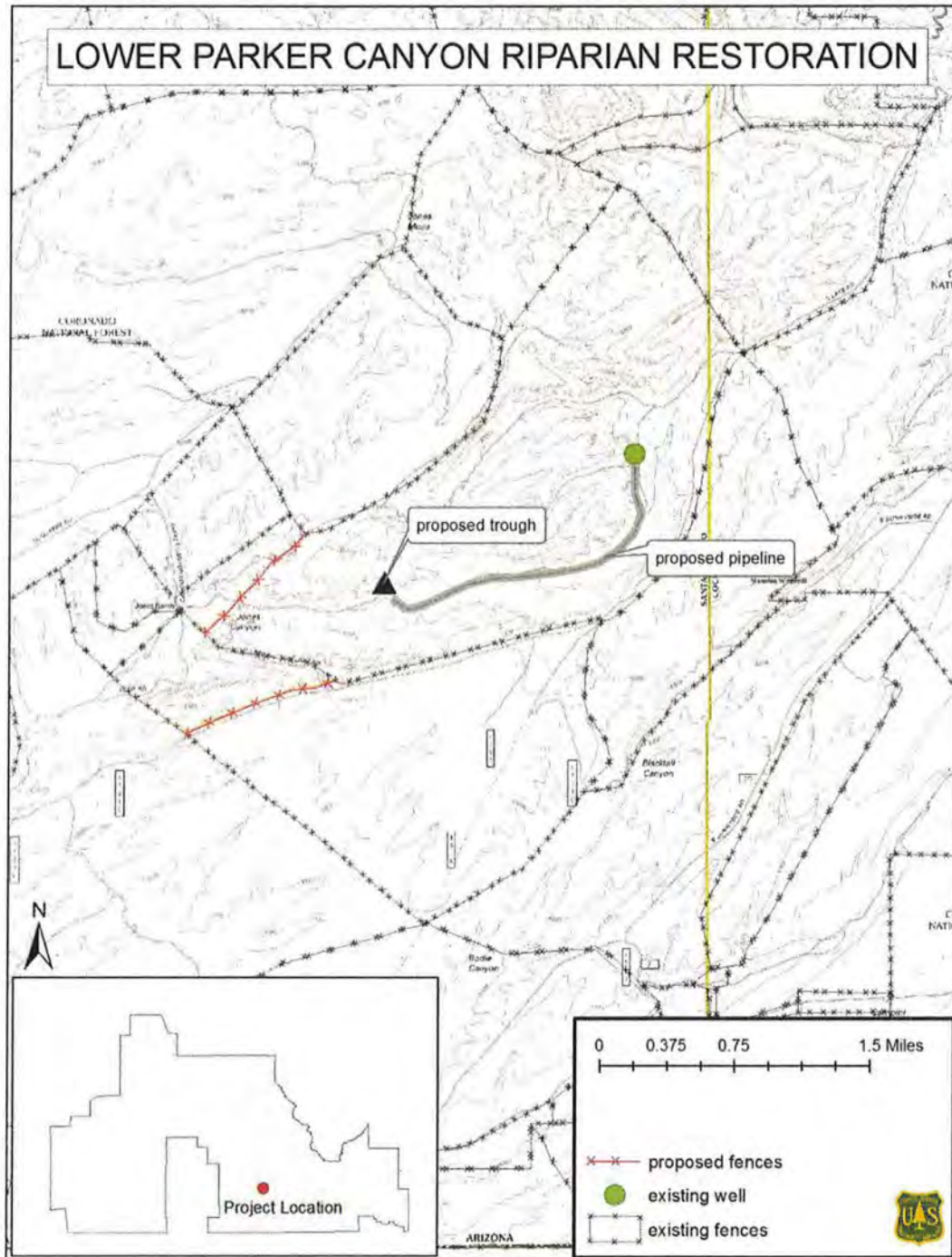


Figure 1. Location of the proposed fence lines, pipeline, trough, and existing well.