

DECISION MEMO
WHITE ROCK SPRING, DOG SPRING, PICNIC SPRING AND LX
SPRING AND RIPARIAN AREA
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
CAVE CREEK RANGER DISTRICT
YAVAPAI COUNTY, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

BACKGROUND

Cave Creek Ranger District, Tonto National Forest plans to build five exclosures to improve wildlife habitat for 4 sensitive species – the long fin dace, lowland leopard frogs, Abert's Towhees and the common black hawk. The exclosures will protect riparian vegetation and Sonoran desert spring resources from unnecessary trampling and soil compaction while continuing to provide water for livestock operations. This Decision Memo authorizes restoration activities at these springs and riparian areas. These sites are within active grazing allotments and have been coordinated with the permittee(s).

DECISION

I have decided to install a 4-wire fence around Dog Spring (NAD83 12S 0424450 3784524), LX Springs and riparian area (NAD83 12S 0422400 3781769 to 12S 0423131 3780876), and the west tributary at White Rock Spring (NAD 83 12S 0427101 3777092). In addition, I have decided to replace and enlarge the exclosure fence around White Rock Spring (NAD83 12S 0427249, 3777073) and Picnic Spring (NAD83 12S 0423219, 3780431). See attached map for spring and riparian locations.

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 [FSH 1909.15 Sec. 31.2]. This category of action(s) is applicable because the fences will improve wildlife habitat for the long fin dace, lowland leopard frogs, Abert's Towhees and the common black hawk.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

Federally listed threatened or endangered species habitats, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species - This project will benefit 4 sensitive species – the long fin dace; lowland leopard frogs, Abert's Towhees and the common black hawk. The lowland leopard frog benefits from all five exclosures as do the bird species. Exclosure of portions of the perennial waters at White Rock and LX Spring and riparian areas benefit the long fin dace.

Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – This project will not affect flood plains or municipal watersheds.

Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – None are present.

Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – none are present.

Research natural areas – None are present.

- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – None are present.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – None are present.

White Rock Spring has two troughs connected with pipeline to the spring, but outside the proposed fence area, Dog Spring and Picnic Spring have one trough outside the proposed enclosure area. The grazing permittees expressed concern regarding access to water at LX Spring site. The possibility of installing a trough off LX Spring will be discussed and covered in other decision notices. Currently the spring is located close to the southwest boundary fence of the pasture with water locations in other areas of the pasture.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was listed as a proposal on the Tonto National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions. We informed persons holding the term grazing permit for Red Creek Allotment. The permittee was involved in the location and layout of the proposed fences. We also informed wildlife managers with Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) and with representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan (Tonto LMP). The project was designed in conformance with the following standards and guidelines in Chapter 4: Identify, survey, map and analyze habitat for all Federally-listed species; Identify management conflicts and enhancement opportunities; Correct any management conflicts or problems, Identify, survey, map and analyze habitat for all state species as listed in Threatened Native Wildlife in Arizona. Correct any management conflicts or problems; Maximize coordination with the Arizona Game and Fish Department regarding State listed species and their habitats. We completed a Heritage Inventory Standards and Accounting Report at all the springs which found no heritage resources were present.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

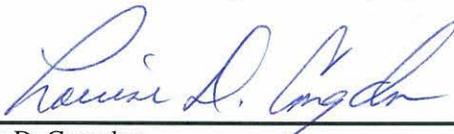
This decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The expected implementation date is the calendar year of 2011 or when funding becomes available.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Carol Engle, Range Management Specialist, Cave Creek Ranger District, (480) 595-3320.

 Louise D. Congdon Date
 Cave Creek District Ranger

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