

Decision Notice and
Finding of No Significant Impact

**Miner's Camp Pipeline
Storm Canyon fence line**

USDA Forest Service
Globe Ranger District, Tonto National Forest
Gila County, Arizona

DECISION

Base upon my review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) I chose to implement the proposed action.

Storm Canyon Fence line

Proposed fence line will divide Storm Canyon pasture, roughly 7,500 acres, and create a second pasture, Miner's camp pasture, to better distribute cattle through deferred rotational grazing. Labor and materials will access project location using existing Forest Service roads, horseback, or by foot.

Miners Camp Pipeline

All access to pipeline will be made along FR 1014, unless described below.

Fence will be rebuilt surrounding and excluding nearby old miners camp historic site. A proposed windmill, set above well, will be located outside of excluded area. Drill rig will access windmill on eastern portion of exclusion. Access road will be brushed for less than one eighth of a mile for drill rig and permittee access.

Storage tank will be placed on wood platform above ground, on a 12x12 foot base, rather than leveling soil with a dozer. A steel trough, set on a 5x5 foot base, will be placed in close vicinity to storage tank.

A second steel trough, set on a 5x5 foot base, will be located near an adjacent archeology site, in adjacent Reveg pasture. Access and maintenance will be by horseback or on foot, and no disturbance of site will occur.

A third steel trough, set on a 5x5 foot base, is located north of miners camp well off Forest Road 1014.

Mitigation

Disturbing/damaging saguaro, barrel, and pincushion cacti, as well as ocotillo and agave species, will be avoided. If plants are in area of disturbance, they may be transplanted and used for later reclamation efforts.

Gila monsters, if encountered, will not be handled. Wildlife access and escape ramps will be installed in troughs. Avian nests encountered in trees, shrubs and surface, will be avoided.

Access road will be used to lay piping when channel is dry. A licensed contractor will drill well. Tonto will be named as well owner on registration: United States of America-USDA-Forest Service-Tonto National Forest.

Management Practices

Utilization of key upland herbaceous forage plant species will be managed to achieve conservative use levels. Objectives are to improve plant vigor, provide herbaceous residue for soil protection, and increase herbage producing ability of forage plants. A utilization guideline of up to 40% use of key species in key areas will be used to achieve these objectives.

In riparian areas, allowable use for obligate riparian trees species will be to limit use to < 50% of terminal leaders (top 1/3 of plant) on woody riparian species. Deergrass use will be limited to < 40% of plant species biomass. Emergent species (i.e. rushes, sedges, cat-tails, horse-tails) will be maintained at six-to-eight inches of stubble height during grazing period. Utilization will be measured seasonally when livestock are in pasture. Livestock will be moved from critical area or pasture when recommended guidelines are met.

Salt, mineral blocks, or supplements, will not be placed, in or near riparian areas, springs, drainages, at water troughs, or within heritage site boundaries. All water troughs will be bat friendly (Taylor & Tuttle 2007), have inside and outside stepped wildlife ramps, and a small outside overflow for smaller wildlife. In livestock water troughs, water will be available for wildlife year-around including non-grazing years, except during freezing conditions.

An archaeological survey will be conducted prior to construction of any new range improvement. Locations will be selected where impacts to heritage resource sites are avoided.

Existing range facilities (water troughs, corrals, etc.), where cattle regularly congregate, will be periodically inspected to determine whether livestock are causing damage to heritage resource sites.

Management Objectives

- Maintain or improve conditions to at least 30% of effective ground cover for watershed protection;
- Provide water source to improve livestock distribution.
- Reduce shrubs and increase grass

Monitoring

Objective of monitoring is to determine whether Miner's Camp pipeline and Storm Canyon fence are properly implemented and actions are effective at achieving or moving toward ecosystem desired conditions.

Effectiveness monitoring includes measurements to track condition and trend of upland and riparian vegetation, soil, and watersheds. Monitoring will be done following procedures described in interagency technical reference and Region 3 Rangeland Analysis and Training Guide (1997).

Implementation monitoring will occur at any time during grazing year and will include such things as inspection reports, forage utilization measurements, livestock counts, and facilities inspections. Utilization measurements are made following procedures found in Interagency Technical Reference (BLM et al. 1999) and with consideration of "*Principles of Obtaining and Interpreting Utilization Data on Southwest Rangelands*" (Smith et al. 2005) and other pertinent, peer reviewed, scientific papers.

Trend monitoring will be done using photo points. One hundred percent surveys will be conducted in spring, until vegetation density increases, using guidelines in McBride and Grove (2002).

DECISION RATIONALE

The selected alternative best meets purpose and need and achieves desired conditions in the following ways:

1. Consistent with management objectives and direction for Management Area 2F as identified in Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan, 1985 (as amended).
2. Provides for an addition range improvement to improve livestock distribution.
3. Improves livestock distribution that will help increase vegetative cover to protect soils and watershed health.

The Miner's Camp and Storm Canyon fence line EA documents environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Forest Service is required to gather significant and non-significant issues. Forest performed a content analysis on comments received to determine if any significant issues

were presented. An issue is defined as a point of disagreement, debate, or dispute with a proposed action based on some anticipated undesirable effect caused by action. Comments were about process, requests for clarification or additional information, or otherwise did not disagree with Proposed Action.

Proposal was listed in Schedule of Proposed Actions. Proposal was provided to public and other agencies for a thirty-day comment period during scoping, starting November 16, 2011.

Scoping document was sent to: 40 individuals, 12 private organizations, 23 representatives from local tribes, 14 state/county/town officials and 1 federal agency. From these scoping activities, 3 responses were received. Two from Tribal Governments indicating importance for archeology surveys during project implementations. Proposed Action archeology report was approved by Forest Supervisor. Arizona Department of Environmental Quality requested minimization of dust during implementation. Proposed Action requires minimal ground disturbance, reducing dust.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan, 1985 (as amended). Project was designed in conformance with Management Area 2F.

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and EA were considered. I determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

FINDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of action.
2. No significant effects on public health and safety were identified. This action is not expected to present significant hazards to workers or public.
3. There are no known unique characteristics associated with project. The project will not adversely affect parks, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or other resources considered to have unique characteristics (see EA, Chapter 3).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Environmental analysis has documented expected environmental effects from proposed action and alternatives. These effects were discussed in Chapter 3 of EA. Analysis reflects judgment and expertise of resource management professionals who have applied their knowledge to similar projects and are using best available science to support their conclusions

5. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. All future actions will be analyzed through NEPA process and be independent of specific nature of this action on Sedow Allotment.
6. Cumulative effects of action were analyzed in EA and are described in Chapter 3. They were determined to not be significant.
7. The action will have no significant adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in National Register of Historic Places. Action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
8. Action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under Endangered Species Act of 1973.
9. Action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for protection of environment. All applicable laws and regulations were considered in EA. Action is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan, 1985 (as amended).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

No substantive comments were received during the 30-day official comment period, therefore this decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12. Implementation may begin No earlier than October 1, 2012.

Final Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact can be found on Tonto National Forest page under Quick Links and Forest Projects.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Richard Reitz at 7680 South Sixshooter Canyon Road, Globe, Arizona 85501 or at 928-402-6200.



Richard Reitz

09/21/2012

Date

Globe Ranger District
District Ranger