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Agriculture

Forest  
Service

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Date: January 23, 2012

Route To:

Subject: DECISION MEMORANDUM: Sunset Habitat Improvement Project  
Safford Ranger District, Coronado National Forest

To: File

USDA Forest Service  
Coronado National Forest  
Safford Ranger District  
Sections 29 and 30, Township 10 South, Range 21 East  
Gila and Salt River Meridian  
Graham County, Arizona

## BACKGROUND

This memo provides documentation, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), related to the Sunset Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project. The purpose of this water development is to maintain and improve water distribution and availability for wildlife and livestock. Recent drought conditions as well as predicted continued persistence of drying trends throughout the southwest are realizing less available watering sites for wildlife and livestock within this project area. This project is part of the Coronado National Forest Plan that calls for development of a landscape approach to improve the availability and water distribution for wildlife on the East side of the Galiuro Mountains.

## PROPOSED ACTION

To place approximately 2.5 miles (13,200-feet), 1¼- inch-diameter plastic polyethylene(PE) pipeline, 1.5 miles which would be buried approximately 12-16 inches underground within the existing roadbed of Forest System Roads #693E, 693, 693-3.04L-1, from a well on private land. The remaining mile of pipe would be laid on top of the ground to a new plastic polyethylene (PE) 5,000-gallon storage tank. From the storage two troughs would be placed one in Upper Pasture and one in North Pasture. Construction of the 1.5 miles of pipeline along the existing roadway would require the use of a tracked bulldozer and would take about 1-3 days to complete. The water storage tank and 1 mile of pipeline will be put in by hand.



## DECISION AND RATIONALE

It is my decision to implement the Sunset Habitat Improvement project. This project will maintain and improve water distribution and availability for wildlife and livestock.

This Decision Memorandum (DM) documents National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for the project. This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment as per 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*. All necessary means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts have been adopted. Installing water pipeline a routine Forest activity and the Forest Service has found that projects like this one do not have a significant adverse effect on the environment providing there are no extraordinary circumstances as defined in FSH 1909.15. Preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is not necessary.

## 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 activities that will individually or cumulatively result in adverse effects to those resources identified in 36 CFR 220.6(b)(1)(i through vii). Their findings are reported below.

- 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:** District Wildlife Biologist, this project will have “no effect” on TES plant species and there are no Sensitive or federally listed terrestrial wildlife species within the project area.

- ii. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds

**Determination:** The Forest Watershed and Forestry Program Manager noted proposed action is not located in any Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.

- iii. The proposed action is not in, or would it affect any Congressionally designated area, such as Wilderness, wilderness study area, or national recreation area.

- iv. The proposed project is not within, nor would it detract from, the roadless character of any inventoried Roadless Areas on the Forest.

- v. The proposed project is not part of, nor is it located near any Research Natural Areas.

- vi. The proposed action would not affect any known American Indian and religious or cultural sites.

vii. The proposed action would not adversely affect any known Archeological sites or historic properties or areas. An Archeological Survey was conducted and approved is in the project file that documents no sites were located within the project area. In addition to the above I've considered the potential for cumulative effects and have determined that without notable individual effects from the proposed action, there would be no significant cumulative effects.

Based upon the above determinations, I conclude that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would result in adverse environmental effects and invalidate the applicability of the CE.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

On April 18, 2011, a public scoping letter was mailed to the Coronado National Forest mailing list. The comment period was open from April 18, 2011 to May 20, 2011. The Scoping was for a Habitat Improvement project very similar to Sunset Habitat Improvement project and it was also located on the east side of the Galiuro Mountains. During the comment period, the District received one comment. The comment is summarized as follows: On May 4, 2011 Diane L. Arnst, Manager Air Quality Planning Section, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Ms. Arnst was concerned about temporary increase in ambient particulate matter (dust) levels. In response to her request Management Requirements to Site preparation and Construction will minimize land disturbance to less than one acre and use reasonable precautions to prevent dust movement to ambient air.

## **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 all land occupancy and use authorizations to be evaluated in light of their effect on the management, protection, development, and utilization of the resources and the long-term public interest in full recognition and response to the requirements and intent of the National Environmental Policy Act (Plan, pgs. 37, 62-66).

### **Endangered Species Act**

The Safford District Biologist determined that the proposed action will have "no effect" on TES plant species and there are no Sensitive or federally listed terrestrial wildlife species within the project area. (Project Record, Item 1).

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

The Forest Archaeologist determined that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed action. Based on the Forest Service Programmatic Agreement with the Arizona SHPO, this determination requires no further National Historic Preservation Act review and consultation (Project Record, Item 3).

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND APPEAL**

This decision is not subject to administrative review and appeal [36 CFR 215.12(f)].

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

The proposed action may be implemented immediately upon the date of my signature below.

## **POINT OF CONTACT**

For additional information concerning this proposed action and decision, please contact Chuck Duncan, Safford Ranger District, 711 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite D, Safford AZ 85546, Voice 928-348-1964, Email [cduncan@fs.fed.us](mailto:cduncan@fs.fed.us)

KENT C. ELLET  
District Ranger  
Safford Ranger District  
Coronado National Forest

Date

Attachments: Project Record, Item 1: Biologist Determination  
Project Record, Item 2: Watershed Determination  
Project Record, Item 3: Heritage Determination  
Project Record, Item 4: Special Areas Determination