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# Decision Memo

## Gonzales Water Haul Project on the Superior Allotment

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

The Gonzales water haul project on Globe Ranger District is located on the Superior allotment, approximately four air miles west from Superior, Arizona. The legal location of the project is Township 2 South, Range 11 East, Section 9. (See project map in Appendix A).

### Project Background

The Superior allotment is authorized/permited to graze using a rest-rotation system. However, water sources are not currently adequate or available where they are needed to fully implement this grazing strategy. With the current dry conditions, earthen stock tanks and seasonal springs have dried up, causing uneven grazing patterns. Specifically, in 88 pasture, only one well is pumping enough water for livestock to drink. Permittee cannot rely on seasonal earthen tanks. There is no reliable permanent water on the west side or the pasture. This does not allow for livestock to disperse across the rest of the pasture, causing high grazing pressure in the area near the current producing windmill while available forage across the rest of the pasture goes unutilized.

### Project Purpose

Currently, Superior allotment range improvements are not adequate to implement a proper rotational strategy. Cattle are not able to disperse across the pastures, causing uneven grazing use. This project will allow for better livestock distribution which will in turn maintain or improve forest resources in compliance with the current 1985 Tonto National Forest Plan.

Specifically, on the Superior allotment, we need to supply additional water for livestock in the 88 pasture, not presently available due to minimal spring water production and extreme drought. This water will offset dry springs and earthen tanks due to extreme drought and allow for better livestock distribution.

### Decision

The forest uses the current grazing authorization and other administrative tools from law, regulation, and policy for authorizing projects for range management and resource protection during drought (FSH 2209.13, 19.1). On the Superior allotment, I have decided to supply additional water for livestock in the 88 pasture where it is not presently available due to minimal spring water production. This water will better distribute livestock and offset dry springs and earthen tanks. Specifically, I have decided to install a permanent haul water storage tank and trough in two locations off Forest Service Road 1132. These locations will be used when nearby existing earthen stock tanks are dry.

Permittee will repair portions of Forest Service Road 1132 to allow access of a water truck to access the final site. An approved piece of heavy equipment will repair the road and a truck and trailer will be used to haul in the storage tank and trough. The storage tank and trough location may need to have minimal



vegetation cleared with a dozer to place the improvements. This improvement is accessible by Forest Service Road 1132 and no temporary routes will be necessary. This project will not change the maintenance level or designation of any Forest Service system roads.

Once the water development is installed, it will become a maintenance responsibility of the term grazing permit holder. A road maintenance permit will be sought by the permittee to allow routine maintenance.

## Design Features

This project will comply with Best Management Practices and the following design features to minimize or eliminate effects to other resources:

- Pipeline will be at minimum 1 inch in diameter.
- All troughs should be equipped with a wildlife escape and access ramps from which wildlife can escape or drink from the trough. This ramp must be fixed to one side of trough.
- Water troughs will be kept at heights that make them useable to livestock.
- For metal troughs, bottoms of troughs should be kept clear of the ground, when possible, with at least 2" to 4" of clearance under the bottom of the trough to prevent rusting or decomposition.
- Poles, posts, and trough framing materials used in water development construction will be maintained, repaired, or replaced as needed. Materials must not be taller than the trough and wires should not be placed over trough.
- Storage tanks will be close topped.
- Trough will need to be drained at the end of pasture use. Water haul will only be used while cattle are scheduled in pasture.

The project is within the range of Sonoran Desert Tortoise. A Tonto Awareness Program is needed to comply with Arizona Game and Fish and United States Fish and Wildlife guidance for the species. This project will include the following to protect tortoise:

- Be on the lookout for tortoise and their burrows
- Check under vegetation for tortoise and their burrows
- Be careful not to collapse potential tortoise burrows
- Check under vehicles for tortoise before moving the vehicle
- Watch for tortoise crossing roads and only drive in authorized areas
- Report all tortoise sightings to the Forest Service Wildlife Biologist.

## Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Proposed Actions

My assessment is that this proposal falls within the categories of actions listed in the Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act Handbook (FSH) that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. This category is found in 36 CFR 36.2 (9). This category of the action is applicable because this allotment has been added to the Recissions schedule and an allotment analysis is expected in the future.

I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this project that would preclude the use of this category. This determination is based on the absence or the negligible level of adverse effects on the following resource conditions:

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

**species** –A biological evaluation was completed March 25, 2021 which determined there would be no or negligible effects to these species or habitats. Desert Tortoise habitat is located within the project area. However, the protective measures included in this decision will minimize or eliminate any effects to Desert Tortoise.

- b. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- c. Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- d. Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- e. Research natural areas** – None of these resources are located within the project area. No further discussion is warranted.
- f. American Indian religious or cultural sites; and archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – The project area was surveyed for these resources in 2021, and the Forest Archaeologist has determined there will be no effects from this project.

## Public Involvement

On January 11, 2022, a scoping letter was mailed out to 19 individuals and organizations outlining the proposed action. One responsive comment letter was received from Western Watersheds Project. The commenter is concerned with whether livestock grazing should be authorized on the allotment under current conditions and includes factors that the forest should consider when making that determination. This project does not address authorization of the allotment<sup>1</sup>; it only addresses the provision of water to address movement of permitted cattle in compliance with the current authorization.

## Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the Tonto National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with the Forest Plan and other federal and state law, policy, and direction applicable to the resources present in the Tonto National Forest. *The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 104-33, as amended)* requires the U.S. Forest Service to provide for biological diversity on National Forest Service lands consistent with overall multiple-use objectives and to maintain viable wildlife populations in the planning area. The Forest Plan provides planning components that this decision complies with, including standards and guidelines.

## Implementation Date

This project is not subject to administrative review and can be implemented immediately as detailed in this decision.

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<sup>1</sup> This allotment is on the Recissions Schedule for future analysis at which time the forest will consider these and other factors to determine if livestock grazing should be reauthorized.



## Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: A. Jamie Wages, Rangeland Management Staff, Globe Ranger District, 7680 South Sixshooter Canyon Globe, Arizona 85501, 480-291-4500.

02/02/2022

Adam Bromley  
Globe District Ranger

Date

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# Appendix A

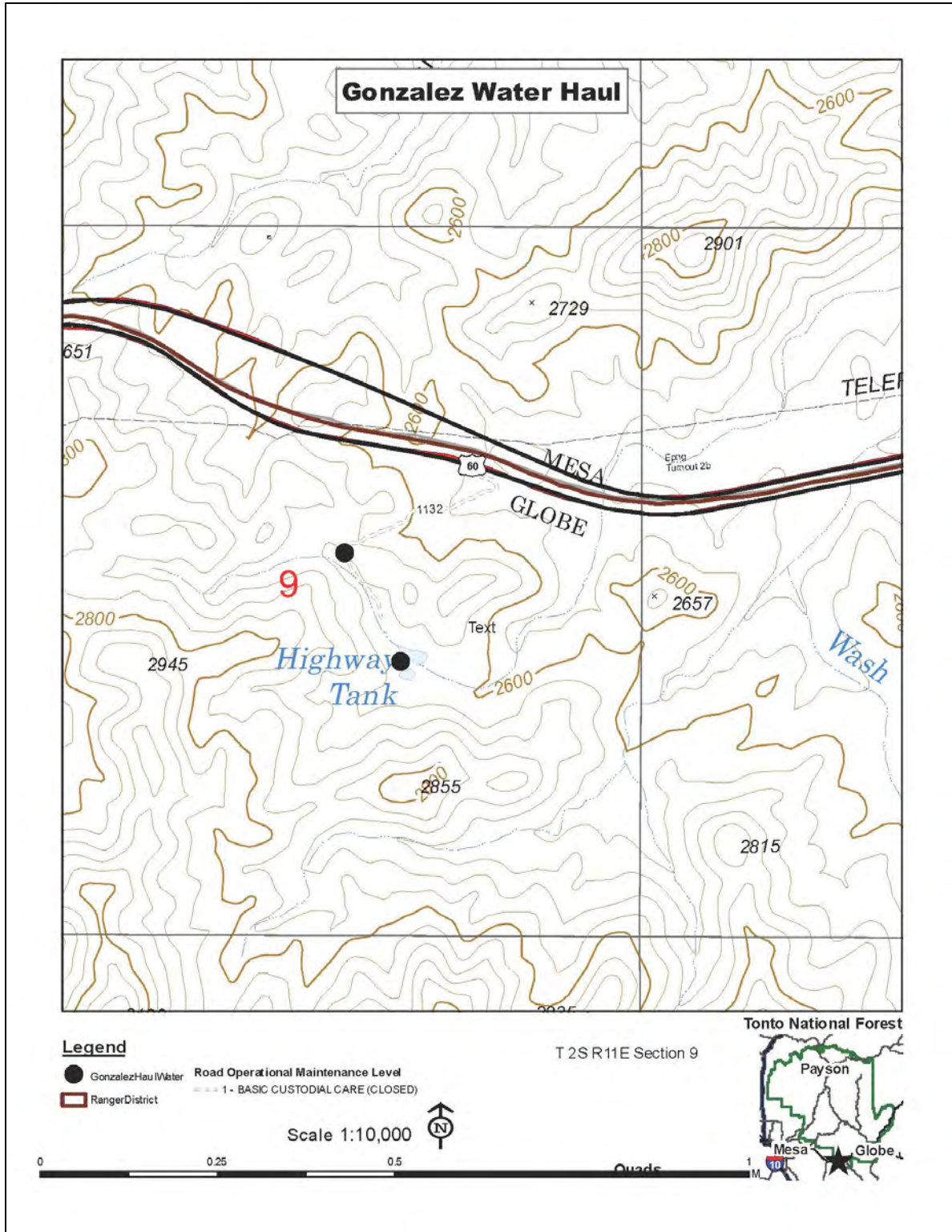


Figure 1: Map Showing Two Locations of the Gonzalez Water Haul.