

DECISION MEMO

Windmill West Triangle Trough Relocation

USDA Forest Service
Red Rock Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest
Yavapai County, Arizona

The USDA Forest Service seeks to relocate the Triangle Trough approximately 0.28 miles west of the current location within the Strip Pasture of the Windmill West Allotment on the Coconino National Forest.

Purpose and Need

Installed in the early 1990's, the Triangle Trough is an essential water source for managing livestock under an existing grazing permit. However, the trough's location on a main road and near a popular shooting area has made it a regular target for vandalism. The trough has repeatedly endured gun fire and is no longer repairable (Figure 1). Replacing and relocating the trough to a more discrete location will reduce the potential for vandalism. Further, restoring this trough will enhance grazing distribution, giving livestock and wildlife a reliable water source at the north end of the pasture.

Proposed Action

The permittee will move the trough west 0.28 miles to a more discrete location and connect it into the same pipeline to which it is currently plumbed (Malapais Triangle Pipeline). See Figure 3 for the project map.

The new trough will be an eight-foot tire trough (Figure 2) and not easily damaged by bullets or other vandalism. A backhoe (or similar) will be used to install roughly 65 feet of poly pipe trenched three feet in the ground, between trough and pipeline. The damaged trough will be removed from Forest Service land.

Requirements of this authorization are as follows:

1. All heavy equipment use and ground disturbing activities are limited to the following areas:
 - Within the footprint of the previously disturbed area and/or project authorized area
 - On open system roads

Ground disturbing activities outside of authorized areas are not allowed.

2. Structures, trash and any additional materials removed during these activities must be removed from Forest System lands entirely.
3. To prevent the introduction and/or spread of noxious weeds, heavy equipment used during these installation and maintenance activities will be cleaned (power or high-pressure wash) of all mud, dirt, and plant parts prior to moving to the work site.
4. The trough will meet all wildlife specifications which include an approved ramp (refer to Bat Conservation International's ramp specifications) and will not have supporting cross members that would preclude the use by wildlife that drink on the fly (certain species of birds and all bats).

Upon completion, a Forest Service representative will inspect the trough and document all changes.



Figure 1. Photo of the vandalized Triangle Trough.



Figure 2. Photo of tire tank example. Similar to what is proposed to replace the Triangle Trough.

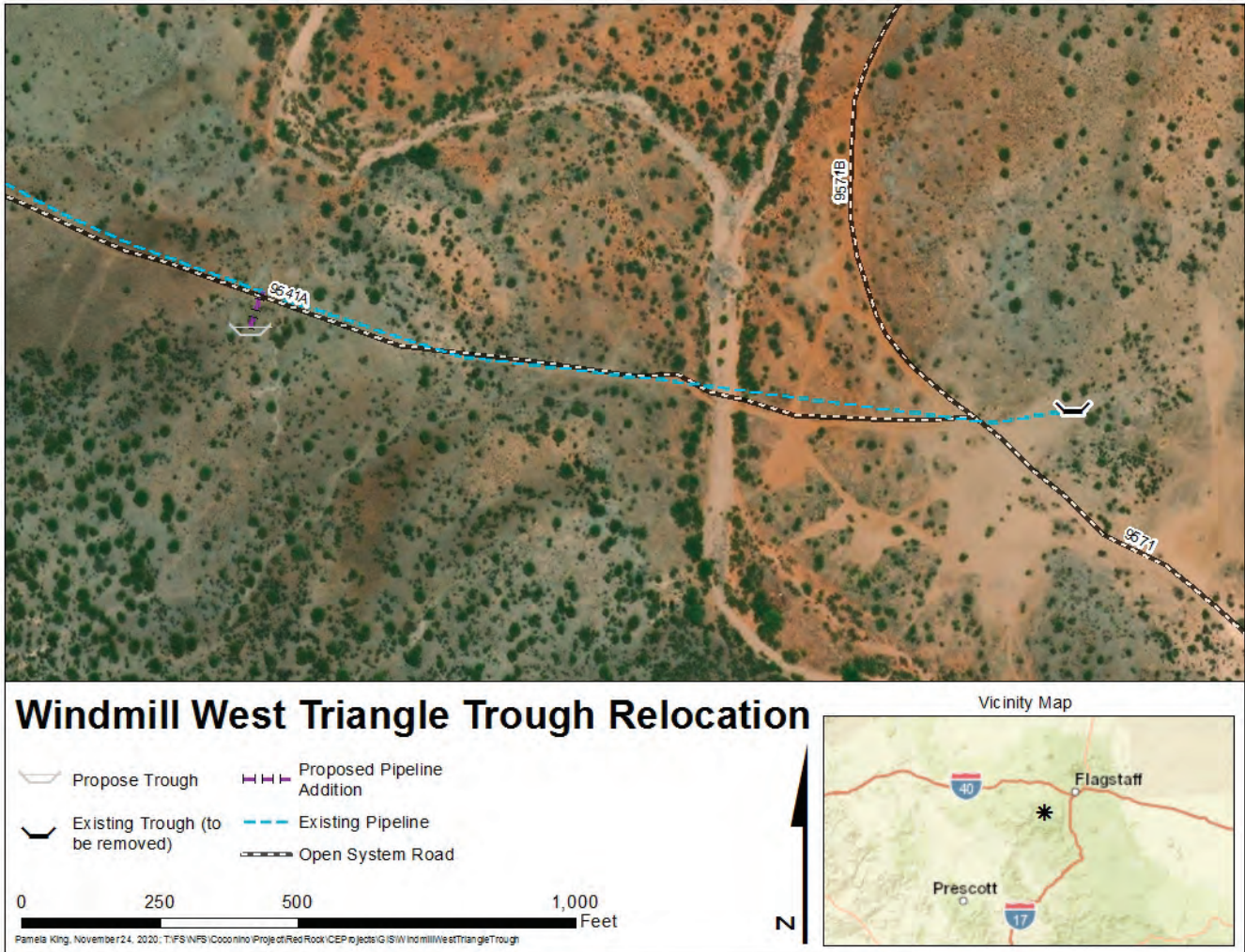


Figure 3. Map of Triangle Trough Relocation

Decision and Rationale

In response to the purpose and need, I have decided to authorize the permittee to relocate and replace the Triangle Trough to the designated location as described above.

Scoping and Public Involvement

The project was developed in coordination with the permittee and listed on the Coconino National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions. Internal scoping was done amongst Forest Service personnel to identify any potential concern.

Exclusion from Further National Environmental Policy Act Analysis

The Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act regulations (36 CFR 220) provide that a proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) only if no extraordinary circumstances exist. This project is categorically excluded under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3): *Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.*

This category is applicable because the decision will modify elements of an existing grazing permit. Grazing permits are administered with terms and conditions as are special use permits. The approved activities would affect less than five acres of land.

Evaluation of the following resource conditions indicates that no extraordinary circumstances are present in the project areas. As a result, further analysis and documentation as an EA or EIS is not necessary.

1. *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 Specialist Review was conducted, and the project would have no effect on federally listed threatened or endangered species or critical habitat and no impact on Forest Service sensitive species.
2. *Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds.* This project is not located in a flood plain, wetland, or municipal watershed on NFS land.
3. *Congressionally Designated Areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.* This project area is not in a designated wilderness are or in an area proposed for wilderness designation, under the Coconino National Forest Plan.
4. *Inventoried Roadless Areas or potential wilderness areas.* This project is not within an inventoried roadless area nor does it lie in an area suitable for wilderness.
5. *Research Natural Areas.* There is no research natural area, existing or nominated, that lies in the vicinity of this proposal.
6. *American Indians and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites.* No American Indian religious or cultural sites have been identified. The Forest Service archeologist has cleared the project to proceed. A heritage resource report is in the project file. Further, outreach to the tribes occurred in October 2020 with an ask for feed by within 45 days. No concerns were conveyed to the Forest Service.
7. *Archeological sites, or historic properties or areas.* No archeological sites, or historic properties or areas have been identified within the project area. The Forest Service archeologist has cleared the project to proceed. A heritage resource report is in the project file.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

Coconino National Forest Plan: This project is consistent with the goals, objectives, and management standards of the Coconino National Forest Plan (Forest Plan), as amended. The Forest Plan includes a management approach to work with permittees to facilitate ecologically and economically sustainable rangeland management, livestock grazing practices, and ecosystem goods and services (p. 87). The minor adjustment of a key water source for allotment management to reduce unproductive and expensive recurring conflict would help us meet this Forest Plan direction.

National Historic Preservation Act: Cultural resource surveys have been completed and reviewed by the Forest Service archeologist. Results indicated there will be no adverse effects to the historical cultural resources of the area.

Endangered Species Act: The Forest Service biologist has developed a biological specialist review for the proposed project area, which considered potential impacts on threatened, endangered or proposed species and their habitats. Based on this analysis, there will be no effects to federally listed species.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act: Upon review of the information regarding neotropical migratory birds and the scope of the project, the Forest Service wildlife biologist determined the project would not result in a change in population trend for any migratory bird species.

Executive Order 12898 - Environmental Justice: No environmental justice concerns are anticipated to arise from this action.

Implementation Date

The decision may be implemented immediately upon signature of this decision.



Contact Information

For information concerning this decision, contact Kevin Triplett, Rangeland Management Specialist, at kevin.triplett@usda.gov or (928) 527-8263. See the project webpage at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58462>.

AMY TINDERHOLT Digitally signed by AMY TINDERHOLT
Date: 2020.12.15 15:53:16 -07'00'

AMY TINDERHOLT
District Ranger

DATE

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