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DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Coordinated Resource Management
for
Yavapai Project Area

USDA Forest Service
Prescott National Forest
Chino Valley Ranger District
Chino Valley, Arizona

The Proposed Coordinated Resource Management for Yavapai Project Area Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the environmental analysis of a proposal for coordinated resource management including vegetation treatments, structural improvements, validation of road and trail use and maintenance designations, dispersed recreational use, fire suppression activities, grazing treatments, and demonstration of grazing best management practices on the project area. I have reviewed the EA and related materials and my decision is based on that review.

This EA is tiered to the Prescott National Forest Plan (Forest Plan) and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement. It is available for review at the Office of the Chino Valley District Ranger, Prescott National Forest, Chino Valley, Arizona.

Decision

It is my decision to implement Alternative L. This alternative intensifies management and investment in structural and nonstructural improvements on the project area and demonstrates grazing best management practices on the Big Chino watershed. Site specific decisions include:

- Fuelwood cutting on 1197 acres and pinyon/juniper mechanical retreatment on 4232 acres to improve vegetative diversity for wildlife, provide for wildlife diversity, and to meet other project objectives.
- Seeding on 144 acres for erosion control and on 5886 acres for wildlife habitat improvement will be scheduled if trial seeding practices are successful.
- Ignited prescribed fire will be scheduled on 5150 acres if needed to meet multi-resource project objectives.
- Meadow improvement on ten acres to enhance wildlife and livestock forage production.
- Existing structural improvements will be upgraded to meet current wildlife coordination standards.
- Additional structures will be scheduled for construction or reconstructions as follows:

31.5 miles of electric fence (Additional electric fences may be used to further subdivide grazing units to meet vegetation management objectives.)

Sent to attached list on 12/5/90
[Signature]

18.5 miles of pipeline with drinkers and storage facilities

10 wells with storage facilities

5 water spreaders

4 erosion control structures

- Wildlife inventories and studies will be conducted as programmed and funded.
- The landownership pattern will remain the same. Project landline location will precede any vegetation treatments.
- Current use and maintenance level designations for roads and trails will remain unchanged in order to best meet private and public access needs. Current maintenance, construction, reconstruction, and closure schedules will be followed. Implementation and funding of road closures will be coordinated with the landowner.
- The whole project area will be open to dispersed recreational use except for the private holdings around the ranch headquarters, Cienega ranch facilities, and New Water ranch facilities.
- A coordinated fire suppression agreement will be developed between the landowner and Arizona State Land Department to allow for a consistent fire suppression policy to be implemented on both private and National Forest lands.
- Livestock will graze in the Cienega, New Water, Deep Well, Sullivan, and Summer/Winter herd units. Each herd unit will be scheduled using a HRM biological plan and control chart. The term grazing permit will be modified with the time control clauses and a backup plan. Initial stocking will not exceed 1397 cattle yearlong for the Yavapai Allotment which is 51% private land and 49% National Forest land. Annual stocking will be adjusted as determined necessary by the Yavapai Strategic Team after reviewing monitoring results.
- A Demonstration Area for grazing best management practices will be developed in the Big Chino Watershed and will include the following improvements:

17.0 miles of pipeline with drinkers

10 Acre meadow improvement

927 Acres of Pinyon/Juniper treatment

25.5 miles of electric fence

8 wells with water storage capability

(NOTE: These represent a portion of the total structural and nonstructural allocations for the project area previously described.)

Public Involvement/Specialist Input

Internal scoping consisted of consultation with Soil Conservation Service and Forest Service staff specialists in the following fields: geology, recreation, wildlife, range, forestry, engineering, air quality, soils, hydrology, environmental policy compliance and Forest planning. External scoping consisted of a mailing to approxi-

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State GAP
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mately 50 individuals and groups, a series of open scoping meetings, and numerous telephone and personal contacts.

Alternatives

Twelve alternatives were analyzed. The selected Alternative L is described above.

Alternative A the no action alternative, considered continuing current activities with no change.

Alternative B was considered which excluded grazing from the National Forest sections.

Alternative C was considered which involved only those items specifically scheduled in the Prescott National Forest Plan.

Alternative D same as Alternative C with the Big Chino Watershed Demonstration Area for grazing best management practices.

Alternative E was considered which provided for more intensive management and investment in structural and nonstructural improvements to accomplish project objectives on the Big Chino Watershed Demonstration Area for grazing best management practices and other project objectives on sites capable of high herbaceous production.

Alternative F was considered which provided more intensive management and investment in structural and nonstructural improvements on the Big Chino Demonstration Area for grazing best management practices and all other areas where project objectives can be met.

Alternative G - Same as Alternative F, except ownership is consolidated through land exchange.

Alternative H - Same as Alternative A, except stocking is adjusted to 1979-1989 average.

Alternative I - same as Alternative F except for excluding grazing in the Turkey Creek and West pastures. Selection of the pastures for grazing exclusion would be revised each year as determined by monitoring.

Alternative J - same as Alternative F except that all wildlife needs would be met before livestock grazing would be considered.

Alternative K - same as Alternative E except for the management of the livestock operation under a Time Control Permit.

Decision Rationale

I selected Alternative L because it best addresses issues identified for the project area, specifically improvement of wildlife habitat and watershed condition and comes closest to meeting the goals and objectives of the cooperating landowner. Full support for the alternative to be implemented by the private landowner is essential, due to the checkerboard landownership pattern. Alternative L provides the most intensive level of grazing management which is necessary to best utilize livestock as a vegetation management tool to improve wildlife habitat and watershed conditions. I, also, selected L because it contains the Big Chino Demonstration Area for grazing best management practices. The demonstration area is an important cooperative opportunity between Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection Agency, Soil Conservation Service, Chino Winds Natural Resource Conservation District, the private landowner, and Prescott National Forest to demonstrate grazing best management practices to control nonpoint pollution in Arizona. I selected the Big Chino watershed because this demonstration area meets the goals and objectives of the cooperating

landowner, it includes a large variety of grazing practices, there is a source of permanent water for the initial development phase, it allows for expansion in future years, and it is readily accessible for educational visits.

The other alternatives were not selected for the following reasons.

Alternative A - Because it was not responsive to direction in the Forest Plan, did not provide a demonstration area for best management practices for grazing, and did not meet the goals and objectives of the cooperating landowner.

Alternative B - Because of its high cost, not meeting the goals and objectives of the cooperating landowner, and not providing a demonstration area for best management practices for grazing.

Alternatives C and H - They do not adequately meet wildlife habitat issues, watershed issues, the goals and objectives of the cooperating landowner, or provide a demonstration area for best management practices for grazing.

Alternatives D and E - They do not adequately meet wildlife habitat issues, watershed issues, or the goals and objectives of the cooperating landowner.

Alternatives F, I, J, and K - They do not meet the goals and objectives of the cooperating landowner.

Alternative G - It does not provide a demonstration area for best management practices for grazing and because an acceptable land exchange offer has not been offered to date.

Forest Plan Consistency

Alternative L is consistent with the Forest Plan in that:

1. The project area will be managed with an emphasis on healthy, robust environments with productive soils, clean air and water, and diverse populations of flora and fauna.
2. The project will provide forage to grazing and browsing animals without impairing land productivity.
3. The project shows cooperation with other agencies and private range landowners.
4. The project provides for a diverse, well-distributed pattern of habitats for wildlife populations.
5. The project supports Arizona Game & Fish Department in meeting the objectives of the Arizona Comprehensive Wildlife Plan and Arizona Strategic Plans.
6. The project integrates wildlife habitat management activities into resource practices.

All issues within the scope of the Coordinated Resource Management proposal have been addressed in the EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on review of the Proposed Coordinated Resource Management for the Yavapai Project EA, I have determined that this action is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context of intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.

I base this determination on the following:

1. There are no known significant irreversible resource commitments or irretrievable loss of resources.
2. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions;
3. There are no wetlands or floodplains identified within the project area;
4. The effects of the exploration project on the quality of human environment are not likely to be highly controversial;
5. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks;
6. This action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects;
7. There are no known significant cumulative effects between this project and other projects implemented or planned. The physical and biological effects are limited to the project area;
8. There are no known cultural resources affected by the project;
9. No threatened or endangered species of plant or animal or their habitat are known to occur within the project area. One sensitive species, a Ferruginous Hawk, was found on the project area but will be benefitted by the Proposed Action;
10. This action does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

Implementation Date

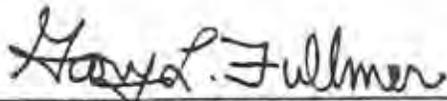
This decision will not be implemented sooner than seven calendar days following publication of the legal notice of Decision in the Prescott Courier, a daily newspaper published at Prescott, Arizona, and after the necessary reclamation bond has been posted.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 217. A Notice of Appeal must be in writing and clearly state that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Appeals must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 "Content of Notice of Appeal" and must be filed with Reviewing Officer Coy G. Jemmett, Forest Supervisor, Prescott National Forest, 344 South Cortez, Prescott, Arizona, 86303, and simultaneously sent to the Deciding Officer Gary L. Fullmer, Chino Valley Ranger District, POB 485, Chino Valley, Arizona, 86323 within 45 days from the date of publication of the legal notice of decision in the Prescott Courier.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact C.D.Warrick, 344 South Cortez, Prescott, Arizona, 86303; telephone 602-445-1762.

Approved By: 
GARY L. FULLMER, District Ranger

12/4/90
Date