



Decision Memo

Poison Springs 2019 Structural Range Improvement Project

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

Background

The Tonto Basin Ranger District is proposing four projects on the Poison Springs Grazing Allotment. The Summit Well Water Connection Project consists of a new pipeline off of the improvements made through a project completed in 2019, titled the Klondike Water System. The second project, the Poison Springs Extension Project, includes a single pipeline and new trough. The third project proposes to install five new cattle guards at pasture boundaries on Forest Service roads 1481, 1488, 396 and the old SR 188. The fourth project would be the installation of two sections of fence, extending approximately 200 yards total, off of the Summit Corral. The proposed project would be located in Gila County, Arizona, T3N, R14E, Sections 28, 29 and 30, also T3N, R13E Section 14, USGS Salt River Peak Quadrangle.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for this project is to provide additional reliable water sources to more evenly distribute livestock over the allotment and install structural improvements to facilitate management of livestock. The need is also to comply with direction found in the Tonto National Forest, Land and Natural Resource Management Plan, to move the condition of the allotment toward the desired condition.

Proposed Action

As presented in the background section, the proposed action would include four individual activities or projects. The Summit Well Connection Pipeline project includes approximately two miles of black, HDPE pipe laid above ground, connecting an existing pipeline to two new troughs. The second project, the proposed Poison Springs Extension project, would involve the laying of approximately one mile of black, HDPE pipe above ground, along Forest Road 1490, from an existing pipeline to a single new livestock trough. The third project, the Poison Springs Cattle Guard Installation project, involves the installation of five new cattle guards. They would be installed where pasture and allotment boundary fences intersect Forest Roads 1491, 1488, 369 and old SR-188. The guards would be of the permittee's design and installed and maintained by the permittee. The installation of the Summit Well Fences would be the fourth project and includes two fences, approximately 200 yards in total, that would connect the Summit Well Corral with the Klondike and Summit pastures.

Design Features

All pipelines would be laid above ground with an ATV minimizing ground disturbance. Trough sites would be hand leveled prior to setting the troughs and the finished troughs would have a wildlife escape ramp and functioning float. Fences would be constructed of three stands of barbed wire and a smooth wire as the lower strand. T-posts would be placed by hand, at least every 20 feet, and with three stays between posts.

Once installations are complete all debris and construction materials would be removed from the sites. Future maintenance activities will be the responsibility of the permittee and would include regular inspections.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the implementation of The Poison Springs 2019 Structural Range Improvement Project as presented in the Proposed Action section of this document. The proposed action employs standard conservation measures and design features for the maximization of resource protection and minimization of disturbance.

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 categorical exclusion is found in FSH 1909.15, Section 32.2(9) *“Implement or modify minor management practices to improve allotment condition or animal distribution when no Allotment Management Plan is in Place.”*

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** – According to the Tonto National Forest District Biologist, the proposed actions are not anticipated to have negative effects on any of these species. BAE #20-TBRD-002, 02/24/2020.
- b. **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – According to the Tonto National Forest Hydrologist, the project does not affect perennial streams, springs, mapped riparian vegetation, or mapped floodplains. The area of surface disturbance is very small and water resources related permits are not required.
- c. This project will not take place within any congressionally designated areas such as **Research Natural Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, National Recreation Areas, Inventoried Roadless Areas or Potential Wilderness Areas.**
- d. **American Indian religious or cultural sites; and archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – The Forest Archeologist has made a determination of no adverse effect



and clearance for the project was approved by the Forest Supervisor. IS&A 2020 12-39, 03/20/2020.

Public Involvement

This action was scoped through April 23, 2020. Feedback received from internal scoping included no issues or potential extraordinary circumstances. Project details and map can be reviewed on line at; <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55711>.

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 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 discloses forest wide standards and guidelines and management area direction.

Implementation of this decision will not violate any Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Implementation Date

This project is not subject to appeal. I anticipate implementing this project immediately.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Eric Oswald, Tonto Basin Ranger District, 28079 N Hwy 188, Roosevelt, AZ 85545, eric.oswald@usda.gov, 602-225-5359.

KELLY L. JARDINE
Tonto Basin District Ranger

Date

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