United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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Indian Creek Riparian Management
DOI-BLM-AZ-P030-2013-0001-EA
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

I, the undersigned authorized officer, considering the criteria provided by 40 CFR 1508.27 and the information contained in the Indian Creek Riparian Livestock Management Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-AZ-P030-2015-0001-EA, and as explained further below, find that the proposed action and alternatives will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement does not need to be prepared.

Context

Indian Creek located in the Box Bar Allotment is considered to be critical habitat for several wildlife species including the federally endangered Gila chub (*Gila intermedia*) and threatened yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). Livestock management under the current Biological Opinion (02-21-05-F-0409) for the Indian Creek riparian area of has not worked as anticipated. This EA analyzes several alternatives to help mitigate the effects of livestock in the Indian Creek riparian area including the Proposed Action, which includes building a 1.3 mile exclosure fence to exclude livestock from the riparian area except for pre-identified hardened crossings and water gaps. A second alternative includes the proposed fence found in the Proposed Action, but also includes building a water development near the bottom of the riparian area to deviate ungulate use to a trough located outside of the riparian area. A third alternative that would eliminate grazing from the Indian Creek riparian area all together by constructing a fence that would not allow for any use of the creek. A fourth alternative would administratively close the Bald Hill and Cross S pastures of the Box Bar Allotment and would remove all grazing from those Pastures. The fifth and final alternative is the no action alternative, which implies that no action would be taken and that management of the Indian Creek riparian area would remain the same as it currently is today.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse

The analysis identifies both beneficial and adverse impacts to riparian zones and wildlife species of concern that may arise as a result of the proposed fence and/or pipeline installation. Measures

are incorporated to avoid or reduce adverse impacts from the range improvement installation and to conserve habitat for sensitive species through livestock exclusion.

2) Degree of effect on public health and safety

The proposed action will have no effect on public health or safety.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:

The Proposed Action and alternatives incorporate procedures for the protection and management of ecological resources as well as historic and cultural resources and other unique areas found within the Indian Creek riparian area. No park lands, special recreation management areas, prime or unique farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers exist within the project area. Wildlife habitat and wetlands, including springs, have been monitored and analyzed for effects of grazing against established management objectives. The analysis concluded that implementing the proposed action is expected to provide for progress towards and/or attainment of the riparian and upland standards and objectives throughout the allotment as defined by 43 CFR §4180.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

This project was publicly scoped by posting a scoping letter on the BLM website for 30 days and sending letters or emails to all individuals and organizations on our interested publics list. Comments were received from Western Watersheds Project and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

BLM has addressed the received comments in the analysis contained within the EA and does not consider the effects to be highly controversial.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Possible effects are neither highly uncertain nor do they include unique or unknown risks. The analysis is based on monitoring information, and all livestock grazing authorizations are subject to applicable procedures to prevent undue environmental harm and risk.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The ten-year grazing permit includes terms and conditions to protect resources from significant adverse effects. This action does not make any commitments for BLM approval for any future actions beyond those outlined in the proposed action. All future proposed livestock management actions not described in the proposed action would continue to be subject to further consideration in accordance with BLM grazing and NEPA regulations and policies.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

All resources are evaluated for cumulative impacts in the EA, and no significant impacts are identified. As a standard procedure, cumulative impacts would continue to be subject to further review as new projects are proposed, and on a site-specific basis.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

Indian Creek falls within close proximity (roughly four miles) to the Perry Mesa National Registered Archaeological District, but is not within the District. All impacts to cultural resources (and cultural monument objects) shall be avoided thus preventing potential adverse effects from occurring. The project area was surveyed by a qualified BLM archaeologist to a class III level for cultural resources prior to the EA being finalized. No cultural resources were encountered during the class III surveys that would be impacted by the proposed action or alternatives.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.

Formal consultation was initiated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) over the proposed action and alternatives. A letter of concurrence was received by the BLM that the USFWS agreed the proposed action would not likely affect any proposed or listed species. As discussed for special status species in the EA, the allotment does provide habitat for several Arizona, USFWS, and BLM-sensitive species or species of concern. The proposed action includes measures to prevent adverse impacts to these species and to conserve their habitats and is not expected to result in the listing of any species of concern.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action has been developed and reviewed in coordination with applicable agencies to ensure its consistency with plans and requirements of other Federal, State, and local agencies.

D. Remington Hawes

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Field Manager
Hassayampa Field Office

11/24/2015
Date