United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2013-0018-EA

Date March 05, 2013

Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail Maintenance

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kingman Field Office
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NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS

BLM

KINGMAN FIELD OFFICE SCOPING FORM

Proposal: Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail Maintenance

DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2013-00\8-EA — NEPA Document Number
RR 17 / V — RMP Implementation No.
S:/BLMshare: / wilderness / projects / 2013 / — Document Location

Land Description: Wabayuma Peak Wilderness – T19N R16W S16,21,28.
Applicant: Havasu 4-Wheelers
Authorization:

INVOLVEMENT: Indicate in the left column which disciplines need to provide information into the EA.

Needed Input (X)	Discipline	Signature
	Lands	
	Minerals	
	Range	
	Wild Horse and Burro	
	General Recreation	
X	Cultural and Paleontological Resources	03/05/13
X	Wilderness	3/5/13
	Soils	
	Surface and Groundwater Quality/Water Rights	
	Air Quality	
X	Wildlife	Rebecca L. Peck 3/5/2013
X	No affect to T&E, No Habitat for voles – all in Chaparral Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals	Rebecca L. Peck 3/5/2013
X	Migratory Birds No affect.	Rebecca L. Peck 3/5/2013
	Surface Protection	
	Hazardous Materials	
	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	
	Visual Resources	
	Socio-Economics/Environmental Justice	
	General Botany/Noxious Weeds	
	Energy Policy	

Writer: _____ Date: 3/5/2013

Environmental Coordinator: _____ Date: 3/5/2013

Field Manager: _____ Date: 3/5/2013

Title

DOI-BLM-AZ-CO10-2013-0018-EA

Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail Maintenance

I. Introduction: The Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail Maintenance EA # DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2013-0018 will be for the maintenance and rehabilitation of sections of off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails along the Wabayuma Peak Wilderness. Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail is located in the Hualapai Mountains approximately 17 miles south of Kingman, east of Interstate Highway 40. The OHV trail is located in the Kingman Field Office (KFO) area of jurisdiction, located in T19N R16W sections 16, 21, and 28 of the Gila and Salt River Base Line and Meridian (USGS 7.5' Quadrangle Hualapai Peak, Ariz.).

A. Background: Wabayuma Peak area was designated as Wilderness with the passage of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990. The Wabayuma Peak & Mount Tipton Wilderness Management Plan, Environmental Assessment, and Decision Record (WMP/EIS) was completed August 1995. Whiskey Basin is a natural bowl area providing outstanding views of the wilderness area and Wabayuma Peak and is a popular four-wheel drive destination. This OHV trail provides access to five hiking trails in the Wabayuma Peak Wilderness.

B. Purpose and Need: The purpose of the proposed action is to comply with the policy statement of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Sec. 603. [43 U.S.C. 1782), which directs BLM to preserve and protect certain public lands (wilderness) in their natural condition while providing for use and enjoyment of wilderness by people. BLM H-8320-1 – Recreation and Visitor Services Planning Handbook provides policy for trail maintenance. The proposed action is needed for reducing erosion; lessening trail maintenance frequency; and to protect the soils and waters of Colorado/Grand Canyon Watershed.

C. Decision to be made: The decision that needs to be made is whether the BLM will authorize the maintenance of this off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail.

D. Conformance with BLM Land Use Plans(s): *Kingman Resource Management Plan/EIS* Date Approved: March 1995. The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP – Page 26 "Recreation sites, interpretive sites, trails and roads will be maintained and developed where needed to enhance recreation opportunities and allow public use. RR17/V

E. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or other Plans: The proposed action is in conformance with the objective of 43 CFR, Part 8560, which requires BLM to preserve and protect wilderness character while providing for the use and enjoyment of wilderness by people in a manner that will leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. The proposed action also conforms to the direction given in the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 (PL 101-628) and the Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577) which have the same objective as that given in the BLM Regulations.

F. Identification of Issues: Internal scoping occurred on March 05, 2013 (Attachment 1 – NEPA minutes 2/05/13) where potential issues were identified by an interdisciplinary team. Issues identified were:

Cultural Resources – Will the proposed action and alternatives affect any cultural resources?
Wilderness – Will the proposed actions and alternatives affect wilderness character and other criteria?
Threatened and Endangered Species – How will the proposed action and alternatives affect the habitat of T&E species, State listed species and BLM Sensitive species?
Wildlife – How will the proposed action and alternatives affect the habitat of wildlife species?

Migratory Birds – How will the proposed action and alternatives affect the habitat of upland and migratory birds?

II. DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION

Recreation use of the trail would be year-round.

In order to meet the purpose and need, the BLM has developed a range of action alternatives. The alternatives were developed based on whether they would meet the purpose and need and any unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

A. Alternative 1 - Proposed Action: The BLM proposes to authorize the maintenance of portions of the OHV trail by the Havasu 4-Wheelers. The proposed action is to perform maintenance on the Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail along the Wabayuma Peak Wilderness in the Kingman Field Office area. Is it proposed that this project be completed during FY13. However, as the work is being completed by volunteers, it may be necessary to be extended into the following FY.

The maintenance of the trails would consist of clearing of the pathway involving brush trimming and removal by means of dispersal. The brush clearing would be on both sides of the trail and up to eight feet from the center of the trail. Maintenance of the trail drainages include the cleaning and repairing of structures, culverts, under-drains, water bars, grade dips and drainage ditches. Maintenance of the trail tread includes grading tread, removal of slough and slide material, and surface replacement with similar material. Similar maintenance activity would recur on these trails on a periodic basis on a regular enough schedule to minimize environmental damage (estimated to be every three to seven years).

Members of the Havasu 4-Wheelers would conduct the project work. The crews would travel to the project area daily for the construction. The crews would practice "Leave No Trace" ethics at the project sites. The crews would be requested to wash off their vehicles and tires prior to departing their home base of operation to prevent transportation and spread of weeds into the field.

All viable cacti would be transplanted using hand tools. All removed vegetation would be hand carried and dispersed in a mosaic pattern so as to not draw attention. Boulders would be moved using hand tools or winches/come-along/grip hoists. Boulders would not be allowed to roll down the hill. Tree limbs and brush would be removed using chain saws, hand saws, shovels, and loppers.

Tortoise handling guidelines would be handed out to all work crews prior to project maintenance activities to increase crew awareness of proper tortoise handling etiquette and to prevent tortoise injury in case crew members encountered tortoise during trail work. (Attachment 2)

B. Alternative 2 - No Action: (Current Management): If the no action alternative were selected, the proposed repairs and improvements would not occur. Currently, run-off has formed deep cuts in the trail. Brush has encroached into the trail and tree limbs have made travel on the route problematic. These conditions would continue to deteriorate with no maintenance or repair. Brush would encroach on the trail eventually obliterating the trail if no maintenance occurred.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:

Wabayuma Peak Wilderness is located in the Hualapai Mountain range in Mohave County, Arizona. This wilderness is situated in the north end of the range about 10 air miles south of Kingman, Arizona.

Cultural Resources Cultural resources are known to exist in the vicinity of the project. This region as a whole is poorly understood and very little survey information is on file. Ethnographic and historic documentation indicate that the general areas near Whiskey Basin were, in fact, utilized throughout history and prehistory. Common site types include seasonal camps, rockshelters, artifact scatters and historic ranching related sites.

Wilderness Values (including Recreation and Visual Resources) Wabayuma Peak, a prominent feature of the Hualapai Mountains, exhibits a high degree of naturalness, with little evidence of human use and development. Wabayuma Wilderness are classified as Visual Resource Management Class I, which is a classification reserved for highly scenic areas located in special management areas, such as wilderness. The objective for management of Class I areas is to preserve the existing character of the landscape; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.

Visitation to the area has been estimated by BLM to be moderate (1500 visitor days/year) for Wabayuma Peak Wilderness. Some visitors are hunters, pursuing mule deer, mourning doves or Gambel quail. Other visitor activities may include hiking, camping, sightseeing, wildlife observation or photography (Wabayuma Peak & Mount Tipton Wilderness Management Plan, Environmental Assessment, and Decision Record, 1995 – BLM/AZ/PL-95/018). Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail provides access to five hiking trails into the wilderness and provides photographers with unique views of Wabayuma Peak.

The area's remoteness and rugged topography provide visitors with excellent opportunities for solitude and natural quiet. Natural quiet is only occasionally broken by the overhead passing of aircraft or by hunter's guns. Primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities are readily available to the public in Wabayuma Wilderness.

Vegetation Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail area is characterized by two vegetation communities. The lower portion of the trail is dominated by chaparral consisting of scrub oak and manzanita. The higher elevations have pocket of ponderosa pines.

Wildlife Common wildlife species found within chaparral and Mohave desert shrub are likely to be found within the project area. These may include, but are not limited to, black-tailed jackrabbit, cottontail rabbit, few mule deer, black-throated sparrow, Gambel's quail, mourning dove, western whip-tailed lizard, side-blotched lizard, gophersnake and western diamondback rattlesnake.

There is habitat for a Threatened and Endangered Species potentially affected by the project: the Hualapai Mexican vole *Microtus mexicanus hualapaiensis*. The vole is known to inhabit the ponderosa pine habitat of the Hualapai Mountains in the vicinity of the Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail. The Sonoran Desert Tortoise *Gopherus agassizii* is designated as a Candidate species and habitat might be found in the washes in the lower elevations of the areas. Both areas are home to many wildlife species and migratory birds. Arizona Game and Fish Department conduct annual census surveys for elk, deer, and javelina.

Economics Outdoor recreation opportunities in Mohave County contribute to the overall economic health of local communities. Recreation visitation to local wilderness areas is a part of those outdoor recreation opportunities. No data has been collected by BLM as to annual numbers of persons seeking wilderness recreation. It is assumed that visitation is light, based on field observations by BLM staff, and by the number of public inquiries received at the BLM office. It could therefore be assumed that the overall contribution to the local economy from wilderness recreation visitors would be small.

The affected environment was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the KFO Project Scoping Form found in the Administrative Record for this proposal. Resources of concern that are either not present in the project area or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis will not be discussed here. Resources which could be impacted by the proposed action or alternatives are discussed below.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

Cultural

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action Trail Maintenance

No impacts to known cultural resources are anticipated as a result of proposed maintenance activities.

Alternative 2 – No action

This alternative would have no effect on cultural resources in the area.

Wilderness Values (including Recreation and Visual Resources)

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action Trail Maintenance

Recreation and Visual Resources: The trails would remain clear and well identified for the public to follow. Any current erosion problems would be repaired and maintenance would be performed to prevent or minimize any future problems. The frequency of maintenance would be reduced to potentially every 5-7 years. Restoration work would repair the damage to the portions of the trail degraded by erosion caused by run-off.

Wilderness Values: Maintenance of the OHV trail would provide access to the hiking trails in the wilderness.

Alternative 2 – No action

Recreation and Visual Resources: The proposed repairs and improvements would not occur; areas of the trails might brush in and become hard to find resulting in visitor frustration. Erosion and trail degradation problems will persist and may even accelerate.

Wilderness Values: No impacts to wilderness.

Wildlife (Including T&E Species and Migratory Birds)

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action Trail Maintenance

Threatened and Endangered Species: All potential vole habitats would be avoided therefore there would be no impact to this species. Sensitive wildlife species such as desert bighorn sheep and desert tortoises, which are generally considered to be negatively impacted by roads, are not present in this area.

Wildlife: The amount of habitat disturbed would occur in the areas directly adjacent to the OHV trail.

Migratory Birds: Foraging and nesting habitat for migratory birds would be disturbed along the trail from cutting and clearing of overgrown brush along the trail. The amount of habitat would occur in the areas directly adjacent to the OHV trail. Active nests would be avoided so the project should not result in any death or loss of eggs for migratory bird species.

Alternative 2 – No action

Threatened and Endangered Species: The Hualapai Mexican vole might be continued to be disturbed by OHV trail users and campers as they traverse the Ponderosa Pine habitat of the current trail. Sensitive wildlife species such as desert bighorn sheep and desert tortoises, which are generally considered to be negatively impacted by roads, are not present in this area.

Wildlife: The habitat would not be disturbed.

Migratory Birds: The habitat for migratory birds would not be disturbed.

V. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS FROM THE PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE:
No significant cumulative impacts are anticipated.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF MITIGATION MEASURES and RESIDUAL IMPACTS:
None identified

VII. PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: This proposal was presented at the BLM/ bi-monthly project coordination meetings held (Date: 2/05/2013 – Attachment 1). Persons expressing an interest in reviewing the proposal are listed on the KFO Scoping Form, and below.

- Rebecca Peck, Lead Wildlife Biologist, Kingman Field Office
- Len Marceau, Outdoor Recreation Planner/Visual Resource Management, Kingman Field Office
- Tim Watkins, Archaeologist, Kingman Field Office
- Matt Driscoll, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Kingman Field Office
- Ramone McCoy, Wilderness Specialist, Kingman Field Office

Preparer(s): Ramone McCoy, Kingman Field Office
Environmental Coordinator: Ramone McCoy, Kingman Field Office

1. References

Kingman Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement 1993 BLM/AZ/PL-93/009-4410

Mount Tipton and Wabayuma Peak Wilderness Management Plan, Environmental Assessment, and Decision Record, 1996 (EA# AZ-025-94-044)

Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 (PL 101-628)

Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577)

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
KINGMAN FIELD OFFICE

Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail Maintenance
NEPA# DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2013-0018-EA

I have reviewed this Environmental Assessment including the discussion of environmental impacts. I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The potential impacts that have been identified are localized and are of relatively short duration. No off-site, indirect or cumulative impacts were identified. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan.

Authorized Official: _____ Date: 3/6/2013
Ruben Sanchez, Field Office Manager
Kingman Field Office, Kingman Arizona

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DECISION RECORD:

I have determined that the proposed Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail Maintenance is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to implement the project as described in the Proposed Action of Environmental Assessment Number DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2013-0018.

Appeals: This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Kingman Field Office, 2755 Mission Blvd., Kingman, AZ 86401 within 30 days from the date of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition (request) for a stay (suspension) of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal (43 CFR 4.21). A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with the Kingman Field Office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Authorized Official: _____ Date: 3/6/2013
Ruben Sanchez, Field Office Manager
Kingman Field Office, Kingman Arizona

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Attachment 1

PROJECT COORDINATION
Agenda
10:30 a.m.
3-5-2013

Facilitator: John Reid Recorder: Tim Watkins Timekeeper: Len Marceau

Agenda Items: Brief description, legal description, general location, name of presenter, time needed.

Rules: 90 minute meetings
No side conversations
Stick to time limits
Additional agenda items added at end of meeting if time permits

PAST DUE CLEARANCES:

Ramone McCoy- Palmerita OHV Trail (Sharedrive/NEPA/ea_eia/Recreation/ PalmeritaOHVTrailMaintenance). Cultural, and Wildlife, need to provide comments if necessary

Matt Driscoll-Walapai 4 Wheelers (Sharedrive/NEPA/EA_EIS/Special Recreation Permits/Walapai 4 Wheelers Ghost Town Jamboree EA). Cultural, Wildlife, and Range need to provide comments if necessary

DECISION RECORDS TO BE DISCUSSED: None

PROJECT:

1. ePlanning update – SO direction on use of 3 resource related lists (Topical Issues and Special Interests and Programs); finalizing projects for web publication w/decision records, w/FONSI, w/signatures; 2010 – 2012 NEPA logs. In the administrative record, 7 files are missing for 2010, 17 files are missing for 2011, and 12 files are missing for 2012. In the BLM share drive, under NEPA logs (BLM share/NEPA/NEPA Project Logs/Project Logs_2008-2012), you will find sheet no.2, this sheet captures which documents are missing. (R. McCoy – 10 min.)
2. Meteorite Collection and Sale CX (Maria Troche – 15 min.) Proponent wishes to collect 1 lb. of meteorites to sell. He would be working 4 sections in the Franconia area with a metal detector. 3 of the 4 sections are within LHFO. Maria will be forwarding the CX on to Amanda Dodson in Lake Havasu.
3. Mesquite Root and Arrow weed collection for Hualapai Cradle boards (CX) Ammon Wilhelm 10 minutes. Ron and his lady from Peach Springs would like to collect mesquite roots and arrow weed stems from public land to make Traditional Hualapai Cradleboards. She sells approximately 7-8 each year. They plan to only take one root per mesquite tree. And they need about 40 arrow weed stems for each cradle board. In the past they have collected the materials on the reservation but they are getting scarce. Discussions include the fact that traditional gathering of plant materials is covered under the existing Hualapai-CRD MOU. Quantities are not specified in the MOU. A CX will be completed to clarify areas where arrow weed collection and mesquite root collection will not be permissible due to T

& E species habitat. Ammon will prepare the CX, cultural will require standard stipulations for inclusion into the document.

4. Havasu 4-Wheelers request to perform trail maintenance on the Whiskey Basin boundary trail. Work would consist of brushing and tree limb removal, moving rocks and filling in holes and repairing damage caused by water erosion. No issues from wildlife or cultural, provided that standard stipulations are included for tortoise and archaeological sites. – EA (R. McCoy – 10 min.)
5. Heads up-Buzz requests that the ID Team for Chloride Copper Project be prepared to review the EA within next 2-3 weeks. Also, we will be transitioning into the proposed Mineral Park expansion. Approximately 3-6 months from now, BLM KFO will need to select a contractor for developing an EIS for the proposed expansion project.

Attendees: Ramone McCoy, Matt Driscoll, Clay Stevens, Bryant McGee, Chad Benson, Tim Watkins, Ruben Sanchez, Don McClure, Paul Misiaszek, Becky Peck, Andy Whitefield, Maria Troche, Christina Combs, Buzz Todd, Len Marceau, John Reid

Next Meeting: March 18, 2013 at 1:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Len Marceau
Recorder: Ammon Wilhelm
Timekeeper: Tim Watkins

Attachment 2

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Kingman Field Office
2755 Mission Boulevard
Kingman, Arizona 86401
www.az.blm.gov

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING DESERT TORTOISE ENCOUNTERED ON ROADS, VEHICLE WAYS AND PROJECT AREAS

1. Stop your vehicle and allow the tortoise to move off the road.

2. If the tortoise is not moving, gently** pick up the tortoise and move it approximately 200 feet off the road to a shaded location.

   a. **Do not** turn the tortoise over.

   b. Move the tortoise in the direction it was traveling. If it was crossing the road, move it in the direction it was crossing.

   c. Keep the tortoise within 12-18 inches of the ground, move slowly so as not to cause it to become alarmed.

   d. Release the tortoise under the shade of a bush or rock.

   ** Tortoise store water in their bladder. If a tortoise becomes alarmed its defense is to void its bladder onto the captor. This could lead to dehydration of the tortoise and potentially to death.

3. Prior to moving any parked vehicle or equipment at project sites, check for tortoise under the vehicle.
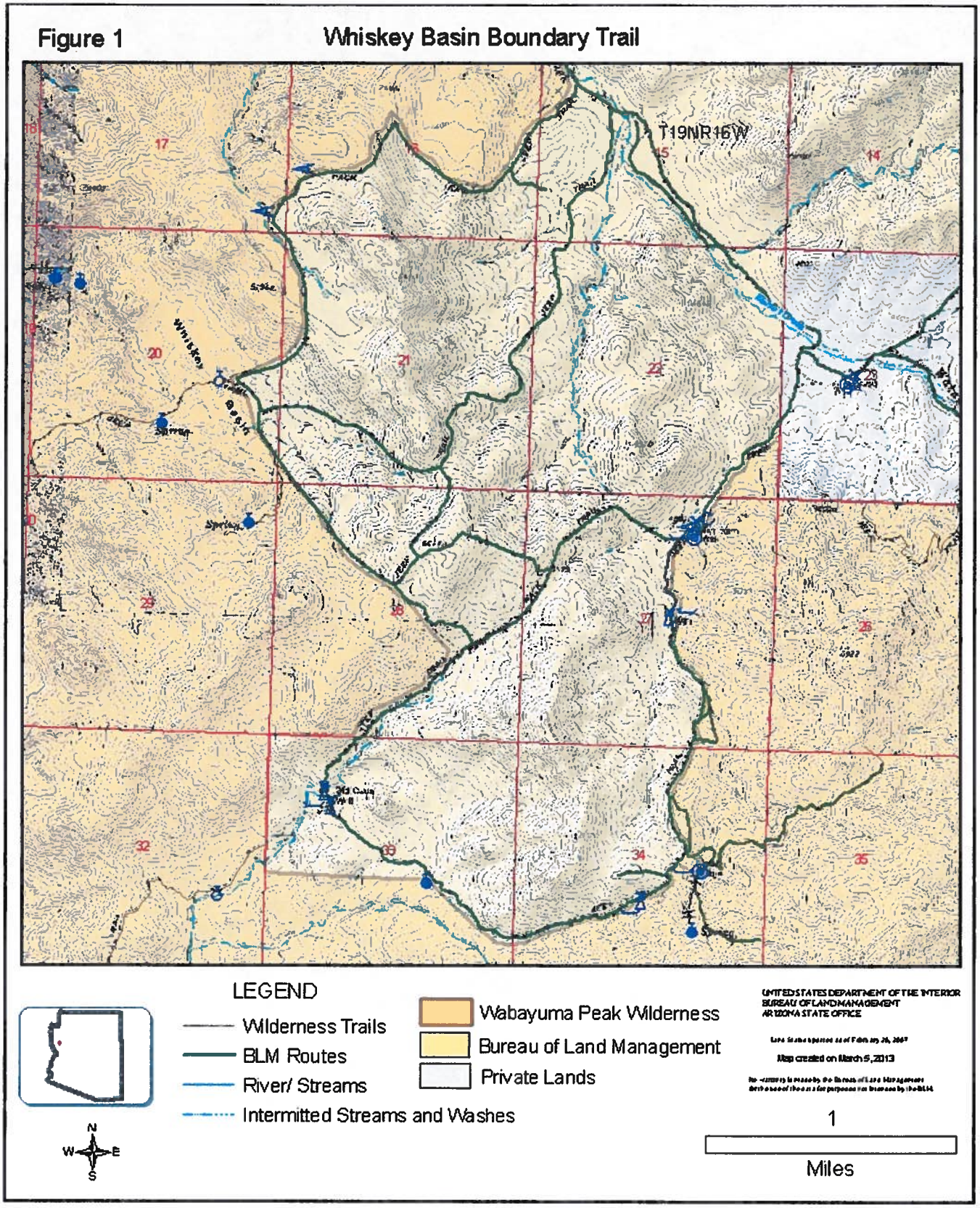
Figure 1 Whiskey Basin Boundary Trail