

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

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BLM Office: Safford Field Office

The types of impacts to the human environment expected from implementation of the Proposed Action (now referred to as the Selected Alternative) of the Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2013-0021-EA) were anticipated and declared within the analysis of the Safford Resource Management Plan (RMP 9/91) (ROD 1992, 1994) and the Upper Gila San Simon Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (9/1978). The site specific impacts described in the EA are no greater than those anticipated in the RMP and EIS. The EA specifically tiers to and incorporates by reference the analysis in the Safford RMP and grazing EIS, in accordance with CEQ regulations, Sec. 1502.20 and 1502.21. To the extent there are impacts beyond those described in the RMP, they are not significant.

The Selected Alternative allows BLM to manage livestock grazing on federal land through applicable laws and regulations. Specific resource objectives are identified in the RMP and where appropriate, these RMP objectives are repeated through the impact analysis section of the EA along with indications of how these objectives would be met. For the Selected Alternative, these objectives, as well as specific objectives identified in the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public lands in AZ would be achieved without creating any significant impacts.

The EA thoroughly analyzes the impacts of a range of alternatives developed through scoping and it clearly indicates that the Selected Alternative, with specific mitigation measures, would not significantly affect the human environment. Specific mitigation measures ensure that resource values are protected through avoidance, reducing impact to a level so that it is not significant, or rectifying disturbance through rehabilitation actions. Mitigation is applied to Selected Alternatives to minimize or avoid impacts, as noted in the EA, even though the action(s), without mitigation, may not rise to the level of “significant” as defined in 40 CFR 1508.

The Lone Star allotment administered by the BLM does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The Selected Alternative, as described, would have little if any effect on the human environment at the national level or beyond.

The “intensity” of impacts, beneficial and adverse, is thoroughly described in the Environmental Impacts section of the EA. Intensity is a component of “significance” and is determined by applying ten criteria (CEQ regulations, Sec 1508.27). In review of these criteria, relative to the Preferred Alternative, I have found:

- Beneficial and adverse effects (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(I)): The EA has analyzed and disclosed both beneficial and adverse impacts of the Selected Alternative and subsequent connected actions. Implementing the Selected Alternative is expected

- to continue to meet and/or progress towards meeting rangeland health standards on the allotment. Grazing operations would remain sustainable into the foreseeable future.
- Public Health or Safety (40 CFR 1508.2(b)(2)): There will be no significant effects on public health or safety. Any public health or safety threats would be localized and limited to those involved with maintenance activities, and are within accepted parameters for such work.
 - Unique geographic characteristics (cultural or historic resources, park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness or wilderness study areas or ecologically critical areas (ACECs, RNAs)) (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)): The historic and cultural resources of the area have been reviewed by an archaeologist and no potential impacts were identified. The proposed action area is not located within prime and unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, wilderness study areas, or ecologically critical areas. As disclosed in the EA, there are no effects to unique geographic characteristics.
 - Highly Controversial Effects (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(4)): The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there are no known controversies over the impacts of the proposed project.
 - Unique or Unknown Risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)): There are no unique or unknown risks associated with implementation of the proposed action. The Safford District RMP, Upper Gila-San Simon Grazing EIS, and EA cover the anticipated impacts thoroughly and all documents rely on applicable scientific findings, monitoring, rangeland health assessments, published studies, professional contacts, stated mitigation measures, and project design criteria to address and/or preclude impacts.
 - Precedent for future actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)). The Selected Alternative does not represent a new, precedent-setting range management technique, nor does it establish a precedent for future similar actions with potentially significant effects. The specific actions involved in the preferred alternative have been implemented before, separately, and collectively, to manage public lands.
 - Cumulative Effects (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(7)). The impacts of the Selected Action has been analyzed and considered, separately, cumulatively, and at multiple scales of analysis in the Safford Resource Management Plan, the Upper Gila San Simon Grazing Environmental Impact Statement, and the Lone Star Permit Renewal EA. Impacts would not have significant cumulative effects within the project area, even when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.
 - Impacts to significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(8)). Cultural, historical, and/or scientific resources in the area are protected by design features and monitoring, and will not be adversely affected by the Selected Alternative. The management actions under the Selected Alternative will facilitate dispersed distribution of livestock and reduce grazing effects on soils and upland vegetation, which would be beneficial for protection of cultural resources.
 - Federally listed endangered or threatened species (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list for Graham County was reviewed and determinations made for each species. The Bureau determined that

- implementation of grazing practices on the Lone Star allotment is consistent with the Biological Opinion for the Gila District Livestock Grazing Program (22410-2006-F-0414). This BO was reviewed to insure that administration of the allotments is within the scope of the consultation, and all mitigation measures stated in the BO are being followed. The Bureau has determined that there is no effect on listed species from the Selected Alternative, as no federally listed species or critical habitat occurs within the project area.
- Compliance with Federal, State or Local Law (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(10)). The Selected Alternative is in compliance with federal, state, local laws and requirements relative to environmental protection. Further, it is in conformance with the Safford Resource Management Plan and the Upper Gila San Simon Grazing Environmental Impact Statement and would contribute to the attainment of state water quality standards.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the Environmental Assessment and all other available information, I have determined that the Selected Alternative does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary and will not be prepared.

/s/ Scott C. Cooke

9/5/2013

Scott C. Cooke
Field Manager

Date