

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR THE  
GRAZING PERMIT RENEWAL  
for the  
HAZEN-SHEPARD ALLOTMENT # 03043**

**(DOI-BLM-AZ-P020-2013-0027-EA)**

I have reviewed the Revised Hazen-Shepard Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment (EA) *Lower Sonoran Field Office, DOI-BLM-AZ-P020-2013-0027-EA*. After consideration of the environmental effects of the alternatives described in the EA and supporting documentation, I have determined that the alternatives 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 or intensity as described in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required as per section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

**Context:**

The Hazen-Shepard Allotment is located just south of Arlington, Arizona, a small town 40 miles west of Phoenix. The allotment lies directly west of the Gila River between Buckeye and Gila Bend, Arizona. The allotment boundary encompasses 34,178 acres, of which approximately 23,129 acres is administered by BLM. The BLM-administered part of the allotment encompasses most of Township 3 South (T3S), Range 5 West (R5W), and portions of the following: T2S, R5W; T3S, R6W; T3S, R4W; T4S, R5W; and T4S and R4W. The entire portion of the allotment east of the Gila River is privately owned and is used primarily for agricultural crops and wildlife habitat. A Tumbling T Ranches is the current permittee for this ephemeral allotment.

The Hazen-Shepard Allotment Rangeland Health Evaluation was conducted to determine whether the Arizona Standards and Guidelines and BLM Phoenix District site-specific objectives were met. Based on the data compiled and analyzed for the 2013 Rangeland Health Evaluation, the Hazen-Shepard Allotment is meeting all Standards and Guidelines of the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health. All Desired Plant Community (DPC) objectives are being achieved at all three key areas. Detailed analyses are located in the evaluation and the EA.

Special areas of interest exist in the Hazen-Shepard Allotment, including the Woolsey Peak Wilderness Area, the Fred J. Weiler Greenbelt, the Lower Gila Terraces and Historic Trails Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC), and a wildlife habitat area and corridor Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation occurred during the EA process.

**Intensity:**

**1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.***

The EA analyzed both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed management actions for various resources including grazing management, wildlife, soils, vegetation, and special designations. Measures are incorporated to avoid or reduce adverse impacts and conserve habitat for wildlife species.

None of the environmental impacts disclosed above and discussed in detail in the Environmental Consequences section of the EA and associated appendices are considered significant.

**2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.***

The Proposed Action would not affect public health or safety. There would be no adverse impacts to public health or safety as a result of the Proposed Action.

**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.***

There are no prime farmlands, park lands, or wild and scenic rivers in the area of analysis. Although the Gila River runs through the allotment, all areas adjacent to the river are privately owned and/ or already protected. Special areas of interest exist in the Hazen-Shepard Allotment, and in 2012, the BLM Lower Sonoran Resource Management Plan (LS RMP) identified three new areas of interest that are located within the boundaries of the allotment. Each of the following is discussed in detail in the EA:

- **The Lower Gila Terraces and Historic Trails Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC):** The 2012 LS RMP designated the Lower Gila Terraces and Historic Trails Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC), which encompasses eastern portions of the allotment. The ACEC was created to provide additional protection of cultural and wildlife resources in the floodplains and bluffs along the Gila River. On the Hazen-Shepard Allotment, approximately 9,955 acres make up the ACEC, with 5,574 acres on BLM-administered lands. This includes lands within the Fred J. Weiler Greenbelt, which contain Native American habitation sites of “major historic or cultural significance” (43 CFR 2071.2 1971).
- **The Fred J. Weiler Greenbelt Resource Conservation Area (RCA)** was established in the lands along the Gila River in 1970. These lands were allocated for management of wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources. Within the Lower Sonoran Field Office, there are 45,978 acres of land along the river that are designated as part of the RCA. Approximately 1,500 of those acres are located in the southeast portion of the Hazen-Shepard Allotment. Vegetation within the Fred J. Weiler Greenbelt fits the description of a dry wash area. This area provides habitat for wildlife but is closed to livestock grazing and most mineral extraction.
- **Woolsey Peak Wilderness Area:** Established in 1990, approximately 8,485 acres of the 64,456-acre Woolsey Peak Wilderness Area lies within the Hazen-Shepard Allotment. Specific management guidance for this area is provided in the Woolsey Peak Wilderness and Signal Mountain Wilderness Management Plan (BLM 2003). The Wilderness Act allows livestock grazing and necessary facility maintenance to support a livestock operation to continue when established prior to the Wilderness designation.
- **Gila Bend Mountains Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA):** The 255,700-acre WHA was established in the 2012 RMP “to encourage habitat availability and diversity for wildlife resources so habitats are maintained and/or improving within WHAs, where priority species would receive focus when analyzing activities and projects” (USDI BLM 2012b,

p. 2-40). A WHA is an area that offers feeding, roosting, breeding, nesting, and refuge areas for a variety of wildlife species native to an area. The WHA encompasses 21,923 acres of the Hazen-Shepard Allotment.

- **Gila Bend-Sierra Estrella Wildlife Corridor:** Recognized in the 2012 LS RMP, approximately 3,893 acres of the Gila Bend-Sierra Estrella Wildlife Corridor is present within the Hazen-Shepard Allotment. It provides a corridor between the Gila Bend Mountains, eastward across the Gila River, to the North Maricopa Mountains. Although not within allotment boundaries, other wildlife corridors link the Gila Bend Mountains to other neighboring mountain ranges, as well.

The Proposed Action was designed to minimize or eliminate potential impacts to all of the above sensitive areas. Additionally, due to the infrequency and short duration of ephemeral grazing, there would be no significant impacts to the Wilderness Area, the ACEC, the Greenbelt, or the wildlife corridor and habitat areas as a result of the alternatives.

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

Public input was requested during scoping and review of the Rangeland Health Evaluation (RHE). Any substantive comments to the RHE were addressed in the EA. The proposed action is not expected to be controversial and is intended to meet resource objectives and the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health.

The BLM has coordinated with the permittee, interested publics, the Arizona State Land Department, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Arizona Cattlemen's Association, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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

There are no known effects of the Proposed Action identified in the EA that are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The analysis is based on monitoring information, and all livestock 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 proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision about future consideration. Completion of the EA does not establish a precedent for other rangeland health evaluations and decisions. Any future projects within the area or in surrounding areas will be analyzed on their own merits and implemented or not, independent of the actions currently selected.

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

The past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions have been considered in the cumulative impacts analysis within the EA. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future

actions ongoing in the cumulative impact assessment area would not result in cumulatively significant impacts.

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

Implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives would have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to the infrequency and short duration of ephemeral grazing use. The action complies with the National Historic Preservation Act. The action would also not cause loss or destruction of significant cultural, or historical resources.

**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 Endangered Species Act (ESA), as amended, of 1973.***

Wildlife species that are listed, proposed, or candidates for listing, as threatened or endangered (T&E) by the USFWS under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and that occur or potentially occur within the Hazen-Shepard Allotment include the southwestern willow flycatcher and the Yuma clapper rail. The yellow-billed cuckoo is proposed for listing and the Sonoran Desert tortoise is a candidate species that also occurs or potentially occurs within the allotment. The EA analyzes possible impacts to T&E, proposed, and candidate species. No adverse impacts to T&E, proposed, or candidate species are expected from the Proposed Action. The EA did not identify any significant impacts to any other unique species or their habitats that occur on the allotment.

**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 would not violate or threaten to violate any federal, state, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA.

Continued monitoring of the resources will be ongoing and scheduled on a regular basis to ensure conformance with the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and BLM Phoenix District land use plans and policies. Future adjustment in the management of the resources will be considered should monitoring determine that the standards and objectives are not be achieved.

  
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Edward J. Kender  
Field Manager  
Lower Sonoran Field Office,  
Phoenix District Office

11/20/14  
Date