

Lands Update
For the Arizona Game and Fish Commission
April 4, 2014
Phoenix, Arizona

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

General Planning Status – Please see attached worksheet.

Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI)

- No change.

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest

- No Change

Coconino National Forest

- The Department submitted extensive comments on the proposed Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). Regional staff expects to meet with the Coconino NF Plan Revision Team in April to discuss these comments.

Coronado National Forest

- The draft Travel Management Plans (TMP) are being developed for each District and will be released successively for public comment beginning with the Nogales District in June 2014.
- The Department met with the Nogales and Santa Catalina districts regarding TMPs and is setting up meetings with the Douglas, Safford, and Sierra Vista Districts. In addition, a coordination meeting between the Department, the Forest, and BLM is set for 4/8 – 4/9 to discuss travel management planning.
- The Department submitted comments on the draft proposed Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) and programmatic draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on March 6th. The final LRMP is expected in late 2014 with a final decision in 2015.
- Rosemont Copper Project - The Department filed objections on the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the draft Record of Decision on February 14, and has requested a meeting with the Regional Forester to discuss the issues raised in those objections. The Department is also preparing comments on ADEQ's draft Clean Water Act certification for the Rosemont Copper Project.

Kaibab National Forest

- A Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) was issued. Department staff is reviewing the final plan compared to comments submitted on the draft plan and EIS. Deadline for filing an appeal is June 5, 2014.

Tonto National Forest

- The Tonto National Forest (TNF) has initiated the design phase of the public participation process for the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) revision process. The Department continues to be invited and attends the public meetings focused on public participation opportunities.
- The Department continues to participate as part of an ID Team for the Travel Management Plan (TMP) and maintains an agenda item to discuss the TMP draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) during bi-monthly leadership meetings. The anticipated date for release of the DEIS is this summer.
- The annual coordination meeting with the TNF has been scheduled for late May. The Department anticipates a work session on the LRMP revision.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)

Arizona Strip Field Office

- The Department has been working closely with BLM to coordinate a rotenone treatment in a section of the Virgin River through the Virgin River Gorge. BLM is preparing a Categorical Exclusion to provide NEPA compliance for temporary closure of the area during treatment.

Kingman Field Office

- On April 24th through the 30th, the BLM Kingman Field Office will be conducting burro surveys through the Black Mountain range. They have made available a seat on each flight for an AGFD representative to assist with the surveys.
- Spring utilization monitoring will be conducted through the month of March on the Hackberry, Yellowpine, and Hibernia Peak allotments.
- The BLM Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Grazing sub-committee met on March 17th to begin design/modification of the new grazing system.

Tucson Field Office

- The Tucson Field Office has completed the scoping report for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA), documenting the scoping process, impacts, and potential alternatives to address in the draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and EIS. BLM is hosting public meetings in Sierra Vista February 22nd and March 22nd to collect input on the range of alternative.

Phoenix District Office

- The Department, Phoenix District Office, and Hassayampa Field Office will be holding the annual coordination meeting on April 10th.

WILDLIFE AREAS

Horseshoe Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP)

- The anticipated draft plan document is scheduled for this summer.
- The interagency planning team has been invited to participate in a pilot adaptive management course.

Lower San Pedro River Wildlife Area

- The Department participated in a tour of the new wildlife area with the Arizona Land and Water Trust for their members.
- The Department has re-initiated the wildlife area planning process and expects the Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) inventory to get underway in May.

Alamo Lake Wildlife Area

- Department personnel recently established permanent transects within Alamo Lake Wildlife Area. The transects were established for performing annual surveys to determine if wild burros are impacting riparian vegetation.

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

PIPELINES

Kinder Morgan CO2 Pipeline Project

- The Department accepted BLM's invitation to participate in the project as a cooperating agency. The Department just received a draft Memorandum of Understanding from BLM and is currently reviewing.

Red Horse Wind and Solar

- On February 21st, the Department received an ASLD application submitted by Red Horse for a PV solar development on 526 acres in Allen Flat. The Department has concerns about loss of habitat for an already struggling pronghorn herd in Allen Flat.
- The Department was notified on March 12th that the Red Horse Wind project has revised the *Pre-Construction Avian and Bat Studies for the Proposed Red Horse Wind Energy Facility: 2012-2014*, to include additional data. The project has been greatly reduced from 34 turbines to 15 turbines. The Department is still waiting to see drafts of these reports.

Sierrita Natural Gas Pipeline Project

- The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has issued a Notice of Revised Schedule for Environmental Review of the project. The Notice of Availability of the Final EIS is scheduled for March 28, 2014.

TRANSMISSION LINES

SunZia Transmission Line

- The Department met with SunZia, their consultant, BLM, and the USFWS on March 6th for a presentation of the initial Habitat Equivalency Analysis (HEA) underway for mitigation of impacts to migratory birds. The Department will review the HEA and provide comments and recommendations.

TRANSPORTATION

I-11 Phoenix to Las Vegas Project

- Department staff attended a Stakeholders/Partners meeting on March 19th. ADOT presented a review of the results of the Alternatives Level 2 Analysis and a preliminary review of public comments and next steps.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE

Tucson, Douglas, Wilcox and Safford Field Offices

- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has allocated funding for improvement and/or maintenance of habitat in Arizona for the southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) to be distributed through their Working Lands for Wildlife Program.
- Four landowners in Cochise County with Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts have requested AGFD funding through the Landowner Relations Program to assist with the completion of brush removal projects.

GENERAL UPDATES

Central Arizona Grasslands Conservation Strategy (CAGCS) Implementation Team

Bar Triangle Antelope Habitat Work Project

- On March 22nd, the Department coordinated a wildlife friendly fence improvement project in the Chino Valley area to improve pronghorn movements in various pastures.

Wagontire Grassland Enhancement Project

- Contactors will begin cutting trees on March 19th as part of the 2,607 acre enhancement project- Phase I. Another 192 acres are being cut by the rancher as part of the Phase II treatments, which should be completed by the end of April.

Cinega Watershed Improvement Project

- Prescott National Forest fire crews will soon begin cutting roughly 200 acres of invading juniper on the 1,049 acres originally defined within the Cinega Watershed Improvement project area.

7-Up Grassland Improvement Project

- The 7-Up Ranch Grassland Enhancement Project- Phase II is currently in stasis and is awaiting Arizona State Land Department approval and compliance processing. It is hoped that this project will be able to proceed later this summer.

Fort Rock Grassland Enhancement Project

- The Fort Rock Ranch has started cutting trees on a project area that will exceed 200 acres and will create a movement corridor for pronghorn, allowing unimpeded access to recently added waters on the ranch.

Ray Mine Tailings Facility in GMU 37B

- The Department attended an interested agency status update meeting on March 6th. The Department was presented with site alternatives and has expressed extreme concern that all feasible sites were not being adequately analyzed.
- ASARCO is moving forward with an application to purchase 12 sections of State Trust Land for the facility. The auction for the State Land is anticipated to occur in the next few months.

Picacho Peak Water Catchment

- During the weekend of February 22nd, volunteers with the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society assisted the Department to redevelop a water catchment in the Picacho Mountains in GMU 37A on BLM Land.

Arizona Prescribed Fire Council

- On February 27th, Department personnel attended the Arizona Prescribed Fire Council spring statewide meeting.

Forest	Status	Next Step	Projected Next Step Completion
Apache Sitgreaves	LRMP ROD expected Oct 2014	Review public comments and produce final LRMP and EIS	Final EIS (LRMP) ~6/2014. TMP for each district start after LRMP complete, draft out ~late 2014).
Issues:	7100 new acres of Wilderness (mostly expanding boundaries Motorized Big Game Retrieval (MBGR) in previous TMP draft allows 1 mile from road for elk, mule deer & bear. 658 miles of corridors for dispersed camping 300 ft off established roads. MVUM's delayed due to Wallow Fire.		
Coconino	TMP Final 9/2011 (forest wide), AGFD MBGR Appeal - denied; TMP evaluated annually with opportunity for revision; Draft EIS (LRMP) comments period ended. MVUM's available	Draft LRMP/EIS out 12/2013; comments due 3/20/14. Department submitted comments	Final decision anticipated ~6/2015
Issues:	Dispersed camping 300ft from specifically identified roads, 30ft from all other roads. MBGR for elk only, 1 mile from roads except GMUs 5A & 5B.	Meet with revision team in April	
Coronado	Proposed Plan & DEIS released 12/19/13	AGFD comments submitted 3/4/14	Final EIS ~7/2014
	TMP in Process by district.	Final TMP	Final TMP end of 2014: Decisions by district: Douglas 7/2014; Nogales 3/2014; Safford 3/2014; Santa Catalina 3/2014; Sierra Vista 9/2014
Issues:	NO MBGR. MVUM's show access through roads that have locked gates		

Forest	Status	Next Step	Projected Next Step Completion
Kaibab	AGFD appeal on North Kaibab TMP declined.	Final LRMP issued 2/14	
	TMP completed by district. MVUM's available.	Department reviewing plan and EIS	Appeal deadline June 5, 2015
Issues:	Tusayan & Williams TMP: MBGR 1 mile from road for elk in designated areas. Dispersed camping in camping corridors, or 30 feet from road. North Kaibab MBGR 1 mile off designated roads for elk and bison, dispersed camping 300 feet off 99 miles of designated roads and 100 feet off 104 miles of additional designated roads		
Prescott	Final EIS in Federal Register imminent. AGFD personnel were invited to participate in Strategic planning.	Expected FEIS in Federal Register 4/2014	Will rely on 2009 updated/amended TMP
Issues:	Current draft advocates MBGR: Elk within 1 mile of designated open road. May be changed by amendment. Dispersed camping 300' from centerline of designated roads. Wilderness under consideration reduced from 44,000 acres to 23,000. MVUM's available.		
Tonto	LRMP began 2006. Negotiating to reinstate due to rule change. TMP elevated to EIS from EA. Notice of intent to prepare TMP EIS released. Department comments submitted 3/4/2013. AGFD has Cooperating Agency status. ID Team meetings held in individual Ranger Districts.	LRMP Assessment beginning; public scoping in 2014. TMP final EIS anticipated late 2017	Final LRMP & EIS Fall 2017

Forest	Status	Next Step	Projected Next Step Completion
<i>Issues:</i>	Consistency across forests, enforceability, MBGR 1 mile off road for elk and bear. Road closures, and dispersed camping all addressed in response to NOI. MVUM's are inaccurate.		