



Decision Memo

Inner Basin Waterline Post Fire Repairs Road Reconstruction

USDA Forest Service
Coconino National Forest
Coconino County, AZ

Background

On June 12, 2022, the Pipeline Fire began in the Schultz Pass area north of Flagstaff, Arizona. Due to high winds, the fire moved rapidly to the east and north affecting 26,532 acres including portions of the 2010 Schultz Fire. High rainfall totals were measured in and near the Pipeline Fire scar during the 2022 monsoon, resulting in numerous large flood events.

As result of these flood events, there is a need to repair the Inner Basin Pipeline, and related access roads to rehabilitate the City of Flagstaff (City) drinking water infrastructure. There is also a need to improve conditions around additional utilities infrastructure within the area which has been impacted by erosion of roadways.

Based on aerial surveys and corresponding imagery from late summer 2022/spring 2023, there are approximately 46 locations/points where storm flows have caused significant damage to roads or the water pipeline. Much of the pipeline within the burn area is intact but some sections are broken and unsupported due to the loss of the roadway. There is a need to repair the areas around the water pipeline to provide support as well as to reduce downslope effects from further degradation of these areas.

This is the second time the pipeline has been critically damaged by post-wildfire flooding in the past twelve years. The first was in 2010, after the Schultz Fire when monsoon storms triggered major debris flows in the steep mountain drainages of the San Francisco Peaks, causing substantial damage to FSR 146 and the drinking water pipeline buried in the roadway. These repairs held well until the 2022 Pipeline Fire and subsequent post-wildfire flooding caused severe damage to several parts of the roadway and the water pipeline.

Unfortunately, each one of the areas previously repaired in the first Inner Basin project (see Detailed Project Map) experienced some level of damage/disrepair during the post Pipeline Fire flooding as well as additional locations along forest road 420, where channel incisions from post-fire storm flows cut deeply into the roadway.

Decision

I have decided to approve the Inner Basin Waterline Post Fire Repairs and Road Reconstruction Project on specified lands administered by the Flagstaff Ranger District



on the Coconino National Forest, Coconino County, Arizona. A special use authorization will be issued to the City of Flagstaff to allow reconstruction of the inner basin water pipeline and waterline road. Reconstruction activities will be focused at approximately 46 locations/points (see Detailed Project Map) where storm flows have caused damage to roads and to the water pipeline. Some of the points may require more than one repair. The pipeline would be buried in the road surface, similar to its previous alignment. As construction progresses, crews would continue reconstruction of the waterline and roads towards the middle. Reconstruction efforts would include the following activities:

- Removing deposited debris and sediment on the road surface and immediately above the road.
- Removing dead trees adjacent to reconstruction sites to ensure a safe working environment.
- Use of cut and downed trees to build log retaining walls on the down slope and up slope edges of the 146 road.
- Use of native materials and large boulders within the road right-of-way and disturbance areas for backfill and road surfacing.
- Building rock-based structures (stacked gabions and rock mattresses) below and/or above the road and on the road surface to mitigate erosion that is compromising the slope above or under the road.
- Armoring road surfaces to reduce erosion from future storm flows.

There are also several connected actions related to project implementation. These include reinforcement and protection around a gas line, using forest lands for staging areas and turn-around areas, general road improvements not identified with a point for access needs, and removal of dead or living trees that are determined to be unsafe for workers, or that pose a risk to roads or other infrastructure.

It is estimated that construction activities would occur simultaneously from both the north and south ends of the road. This work would take place on both forest road 146 and forest road 420 where the water pipeline is exposed. As construction progresses, crews would continue reconstruction of the water pipeline and roads towards the middle.

Road Realignments

Based on information collected in summer/fall 2022 and in spring 2023, there are two sections of FR 146 where rerouting will occur: Point I and Point 9 (see Detailed Project Map). Realignment will require excavation in two locations for a new road prism at both locations. Trees will be removed if they are in the path of the new routes as well as those trees damaged by fire that are determined to be unsafe for workers or roads.

Cut trees will be salvaged and used along with materials pulled from the existing wash/drainage, bringing in fill to fill in the wash between the existing crossing location and the new wash location. Stream channel banks would be built up to confine/contain debris flow within the new channel. The water pipeline will be relocated, if necessary, to a new crossing location within the new road prisms.



To maintain the integrity of the newly constructed roads, additional water crossing structures may be needed. These water crossing could include new splash mats/drop structures to return debris/water to the downstream channel. To ensure the new road locations are successful, upstream road protection and channel confinement will also occur.

Construction of Water Crossings

Repairs to existing water crossings could include cleaning culverts, removing debris blockages, or replacing existing water crossings to facilitate better flow rates and reduce erosion. Water crossings would be constructed using a concrete slab ford where concrete is at or near grade, generally between six and eight inches thick, with upstream and downstream cutoff walls several feet deep for scour protection. In some cases, the concrete slab fords may be anchored / tied to gabion baskets in lieu of cut off walls to act as scour protection. This method was used for the previous work in the area and proved successful.

The water crossing at Point 28 along the FR 146 saw a significant deterioration of the area around the water crossing and will require extensive repairs to the downstream side. To reduce the potential for erosion around the newly installed concrete slab, a new retaining wall will be constructed as well as new concrete splash mats. A new riprap blanket (used to control erosion, filled with various materials usually straw or gravel), and an additional cutoff wall to keep water from going under the structure.

Another location within the project area that will require extensive repairs to the water crossing is at the intersection of a Transwestern gas-line and the water pipeline. The Transwestern gas-line crossing is downstream of Point 28. The erosion seen here is likely a direct result of the water crossing failing at Point 28. Repairs to improve the water crossing's effectiveness, include building retaining walls on both sides of the concrete capped roadway crossings.

Construction of Retaining Walls

Based on site surveys, engineering plans include the construction or repair of retaining walls at numerous sites. Retaining walls are expected to be between 20 – 100 feet in length.

Retaining walls would be constructed of precast concrete panels with guardrail as the structural steel support. Previously, retaining walls had been built onsite using burned trees. During the most recent fire event, the logs used in these walls burned and untimely failed causing the slopes to be exposed and causing damage to the road. Using precast concrete panels, should eliminate this as a concern moving forward. Concrete panels will be stacked behind pipe piles to form the retaining walls. Concrete panels would be treated to have an earth-tone patina to reduce appearance and blend into the background. All repaired or constructed retaining walls would be lined with geotextile fabric and then backfilled with rock and sand.



Installation of Rock-Based Structures

Rock-based structures (stacked gabions and rock mattresses) will be constructed either below and/or above the road and on the road surface to mitigate erosion that is compromising the slope above or under the road. In locations where the roadbed has completely washed out, it would be necessary to re-build the roadbed by digging down to bedrock in the slope directly beneath the road and using this bedrock as an anchor for stacked rock structures. In these areas, reconstruction activities will occur up- and downslope of the road to ensure the structures are substantial enough to withstand future post-fire storm events. More information on the specific engineering plans and designs to be used are available in the project record.

Storm flows on the mountain slopes have caused major erosion but have also provided large amounts of debris within the vicinity of the road including fine/sandy materials, cobbles and mid-sized rocks, and large boulders. Due to the limited access along forest roads 146 and 420, and difficulty accessing the project area, hauling materials from offsite sources would be minimized to the greatest extent possible and on-site rock materials would be used instead.

All rock debris within the road prism and in areas to be disturbed in reconstruction activities may be used for backfilling, rock gabions and mattresses, or road surfacing. This may require the onsite sorting and possibly crushing of rock using heavy machinery. Sorting and crushing would occur at the identified staging areas.

Debris Removal

Where storm flows have resulted in build-up of debris on or adjacent to the road surface, debris removal would occur. Debris removal would involve the use of one or more pieces of heavy equipment to remove aggregate debris and large boulders. In most circumstances this material would be moved for sorting or immediate reuse as backfill or surfacing materials.

Tree Cutting/Tree Removal

Based on several aerial surveys completed in July through September of 2022 there are significant amounts of standing dead trees which need to be cut down to ensure safe working conditions during reconstruction and repair activities. Trees would be cut using a chainsaw or pushed over with large equipment. It is expected that some of the trees that are cut would be re-used to build log retaining walls where erosion has occurred along the road.

Project generated slash (dead and down tree material) that is not needed for retaining walls will be masticated throughout the project area and used as groundcover mulch. Mulch depths will range from two to four inches across the project area with average mulch depth being equal to or less than two inches across most of the project area. After all other project needs have been satisfied, any excess material would be made available for fuelwood with the priority being our tribal partners.



Staging Areas

Several on-site areas would be necessary to stage vehicles, equipment, and materials to complete the project. To ensure there is enough space for the equipment and materials, there are approximately 28 total staging areas (see Detailed Project Map) – which include all the relatively flat areas outside the road surface within or adjacent to the project area.

Of the 28 staging areas, there would be two primary, larger, staging areas. One is located on the south side of the intersection of forest roads 420 and 556 (3.5 acres) and one at the old pumice pit mine located north of the FR 553 (15.5 acres). The remaining staging areas are located mainly along FR 146 and will be used for both staging and equipment turnarounds. Most of these remaining staging areas are in areas already identified for some type of treatment. Approximately 21 of these smaller staging areas/turnarounds would be incorporated into the final project design upon completion and remain in place as turnarounds.

A final staging area will be located off National Forest Service lands, at the Flagstaff North Filtration Plant, located on the south side of the “Y” intersection at Elden Lookout Road and Schultz Pass Road in Flagstaff, AZ.

Staging activities are expected to result in temporary impacts at all staging areas and each staging area would be rehabilitated to previous condition at the completion of reconstruction activities. The project is expected to take two consecutive construction seasons. Impacted areas will be reseeded using an approved seed mix and monitored for five growing seasons post-construction.

Post Project Rehab/Maintenance

Reestablishment of native grasses and forbs will be critical for minimizing future erosion and stabilizing slopes. As part of post project rehabilitation efforts, topsoil will be pushed to the side and stored and reapplied to disturbed areas. If it is deemed that the topsoil and resulting seed bank are not enough to stabilize soils, planting of invasive-free native grass and forb seeds would occur in the project area. In addition, project generated slash could be masticated or chipped and used to mulch slopes greater than 40 percent. On bare areas with less than 30 percent slope that are upslope of FR 146 either mulch or weed free straw could be applied to ensure adequate ground cover.

Ongoing maintenance of these constructed features and depositional environments (natural areas for debris and sediment to accumulate) will be required and necessary for success of the project into the future. A special use authorization is currently in place and will be reissued based on this proposal and will allow for the continued maintenance of the water pipeline and access routes. The special use authorization will be issued for a term of 20 years.

Monitoring for invasive species treatment will continue for five growing seasons post implementation. Prevention would include cleaning of equipment before entering onto Forest Service lands, ensuring weed free sources are used, applying chemical control



methods if necessary, and avoiding areas that are known to have occurrences of invasive species.

Resource Protection Measures

To avoid and/or minimize impacts to resources to the greatest extent possible, the following design criteria along with standard Best Management Practices https://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/wfw/watershed/national_bmps/assets/fs_national_core_bmps_april2012.pdf) would be included in project implementation:

Table 1. Design criteria identified for the project to avoid and minimize potential impacts.

Resource Area/Concern	Need for design feature
Vegetation	
In staging areas or in areas near sensitive resources, temporary fencing or flagging would be used to restrict construction activities to the designated limits of the construction zone.	To prevent unnecessary disturbance of areas outside of the construction zone.
Topsoil will be pushed to the side and stored and reapplied to disturbed areas. Re-seeding with native seed would only occur in those areas where vegetation failed to occur over time. The duration of which would be determined by a district specialist.	To restore natural vegetative communities and minimize the spread of invasive species.
Invasive Species	
Construction and maintenance equipment would be kept free of invasive species by washing the equipment with a high-pressure washer prior to entering the project area and between construction sites.	To prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plant species.
To the greatest degree possible, use on-site native materials (recovered from debris flows on roads) for backfill and when building rock structures or rock armoring for roads. Avoid using material from areas with known knapweed populations.	To prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plant species.
Any fill material or seed brought in from off-site would be free of invasive species seed.	To prevent the spread of invasive species seed.
Invasive plant surveys by a qualified botanist or biologist will be required both prior to and after the completion of ground disturbing activities. Post completion surveys would be required for five growing	To reduce and prevent the spread invasive plant species.

<p>seasons to ensure that invasive plants do not establish. If any individuals are documented during surveys, manual and/or chemical control will be required.</p>	
<p>Fencing will be required to designate the staging area at the old pumice mine which will house the Lower Lockett Meadow staging area to avoid known knapweed populations. A qualified botanist or biologist will flag areas of avoidance prior to fencing installations and would need to survey the area to ensure fencing is outside of populations.</p>	<p>To reduce and prevent the spread invasive plant species.</p>
<p>Invasive plant surveys by a qualified botanist or biologist will be required both prior to and after the completion of project along the FR 9128D the access road for the old pumice pit.</p>	<p>To reduce and prevent the spread invasive plant species.</p>
<p>Cultural Resources</p>	
<p>If any cultural resource sites are discovered during construction activities, all operations would immediately cease at the site (not throughout the entire project area), and appropriate officials and affiliated tribes would be notified to evaluate the situation.</p>	<p>To protect previously unidentified cultural resources.</p>
<p>Historic and pre-historic cultural resources would be excluded and protected from ground disturbing activities. An archaeologist would flag sites prior to implementation. Sites would be monitored during ground disturbing activities.</p>	<p>To protect previously identified cultural resources.</p>
<p>Wildlife</p>	
<p>No project activities (initial construction or maintenance) will occur within a Mexican spotted owl Protected Activity Center (PAC) or a 0.25 mile of a PAC during the breeding season (March 1 – August 31) unless non-breeding is confirmed through surveys using the USFWS survey protocol. Coordination with USFWS is required regarding determinations of non-nesting status and potential adjustments to the 0.25 mile no-work buffer.</p>	<p>To minimize impacts to breeding Mexican spotted owls.</p>



If equipment or vehicle travel along project roads including, but not limited to, FR 420, 552, 552C and 556 will occur in the 2 hours prior to sunrise or 2 hours after sunset, the speed limit will be 15 miles per hour.	To reduce potential for vehicle to animal collisions.
Minimize removal of key components of Mexican spotted owl habitat during project activities to the extent practicable including oaks, large trees, and large snags.	To minimize impacts to habitat components as described in the 2012 Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan.
No trash or other construction materials would be left onsite following construction activities.	To prevent attraction of wildlife to the construction zone.
Recreation	
Closure and detour signs would be placed at key road junctions as needed to inform Forest users of temporary closures or safety hazards associated with construction.	To inform Forest users and improve safety.
If necessary, guardrail used for lagging that is exposed and visible can be treated or painted to have an earth-tone patina.	To reduce visual impacts to the scenic integrity of the area.
Fire and Fuels	
Mulch depths will range from two to four inches across the project area with average mulch depth being equal to or less than two inches across most of the project area. Mulch depths will not exceed four inches in any location in the project area.	To reduce negative effects to vegetation and soil conditions during prescribed fire operations
In general slash will be lopped and scattered. Excess slash will be either piled and burned or mulched. Slash piles will be mulched or burned within two years of project completion.	To reduce the potential for bark beetle infestations which can contribute to tree mortality and spread through dead and downed material. To reduce the short-term impact to vegetation and soil condition from burning slash piles on the ground within the project area.
Soils and Watershed	
Establish effective groundcover on disturbed sites to avoid or minimize accelerated erosion and soil loss.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality and improve soil productivity.
Project generated slash would be chipped or masticated and used to mulch slopes greater than about 40%. On bare slopes upslope of FR 146 less than 30% either mulch or weed	Protect steep slopes with little vegetation to protect road improvements and minimize erosion and sedimentation.



free straw would be applied.	
Limit the size and extent of staging areas and locate as far from ephemeral, intermittent, and perennial water features as practicable.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Management of Equipment and Fuel	
Ensure vehicles and equipment used during construction are properly maintained and regularly inspected.	To prevent leaking of hazardous materials (e.g., oil, gasoline, and other hydrocarbon fluids) into stream channels or onto permeable soil.
A spill clean-up kit approved by the Forest Service will be onsite during construction activities.	To facilitate the clean-up of and minimize the impacts from an unexpected hazardous material spill.
Construction equipment and vehicles will only be fueled or maintained at established staging areas.	To prevent pollutants from being discharged at the project site.
Road Reconstruction, Relocation, and Decommissioning--	
Implement suitable measures to re-establish stable slope contours and surface hydrologic pathways, including removal of drainage structures, recontour and stabilization of cut and fill slopes, reshaping of channel and streambanks at crossings to pass expected flows without excess scour.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Relocated roads will be located to fit the terrain, follow natural contours, and limit the need for excavation.	Locate and design roads to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to soil, water quality, and riparian resources.
Avoid road locations that require extended steep grades, sharp curves, or switchbacks.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Locate roads on stable geology with well-drained soils and rock formations that dip into the slope.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Avoid hydric soils, inner gorges, overly steep slopes, and unstable landforms to the extent practicable.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Locate roads as far from waterbodies as is practicable to achieve access objectives, with a minimum number of crossings and connections between the road and the waterbody.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Avoid sensitive areas such as riparian areas, wetlands, meadows, bogs, and fens, to the	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.

extent practicable.	
Roads will be designed so that the surface drainage system is able to intercept, collect, and remove water from the road surface and surrounding slopes in a manner that minimizes concentrated flow in ditches, culverts, and over fill slopes and road surfaces.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Design the road subsurface drainage system to intercept, collect, and remove groundwater that may flow into the base course and subgrade, lower high-water tables, and drain water pockets.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Stabilize disturbed streambed and banks.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
<p>Use suitable construction techniques to create stable fills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use full bench construction techniques or retaining walls where stable fill construction is not possible. • Avoid incorporating woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. • Leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill. • Avoid use of road fills for water impoundment dams unless specifically designed for that purpose. 	<p>During road construction and reconstruction activities, vegetation and ground cover is removed exposing soil to erosion. Temporary and long-term erosion control and stormwater management measures are necessary to reduce erosion and maintain overall slope stability. These erosion control measures may include vegetative and structural practices to ensure long-term stability of the area.</p>
<p>Identify and locate waste areas before the start of operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deposit and stabilize excess and unsuitable materials only in designated sites. • Do not place such materials on slopes with a risk of excessive erosion, sediment delivery to waterbodies, mass failure, or within the AMZ. • Provide adequate surface drainage and erosion protection at disposal sites. 	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.
Do not permit side casting within the AMZ.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid or minimize excavated materials from entering waterbodies or AMZs, 	<p>quality.</p>
<p>Reconstruct existing roads to the degree necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. • Use suitable measures to avoid, to the extent practicable, or minimize direct discharges from road drainage structures to nearby waterbodies. 	<p>Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.</p>
<p>Facility Construction and Stormwater Control</p>	
<p>Sediment and stormwater controls will be installed prior to initiating surface-disturbing activities to the extent practicable.</p>	<p>During construction and operation of facility sites, land may be cleared of existing vegetation and ground cover, exposing mineral soil that may be more easily eroded by water, wind, and gravity. Changes in land use and impervious surfaces can temporarily or permanently alter stormwater runoff that, if left uncontrolled, can affect morphology, stability, and quality of nearby streams and other waterbodies. Erosion and stormwater runoff control measures are implemented to retain soil in place and to control delivery of suspended sediment and other pollutants to nearby surface water.</p>
<p>Schedule, to the extent practicable, construction activities to avoid direct soil and water disturbance during periods of the year when heavy precipitation and runoff are likely to occur.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the amount of exposed or disturbed soil at any one time to the minimum necessary to complete construction operations. • Limit operation of equipment when ground conditions could result in excessive rutting, soil puddling, or runoff of sediments directly into waterbodies. 	<p>Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality.</p>
<p>Potable Water Systems</p>	



<p>Develop groundwater wells and facilities in a manner that reduces the potential of groundwater aquifer contamination in accordance with BMP WatUses-2 (Water Wells for Production and Monitoring).</p>	<p>Many facilities provide potable water from a surface water or groundwater source. Water systems should supply an adequate volume of acceptably clean water as needed by the facility. A water system is comprised of collection, treatment, storage, and distribution facilities. Water systems are classified into categories (e.g., public versus nonpublic, community versus noncommunity, and transient versus non transient) based on ownership, size, and permanence of the population served. Regulations are based on these different categories. Management requirements and controls to protect drinking water quality and provide potable water are incorporated into each facility’s operation and maintenance plan (FSM 7410).</p>
<p>Use applicable practices of BMP WatUses-3 (Administrative Water Developments) and BMP WatUses-4 (Water Diversions and Conveyances) to manage surface diversions.</p>	
<p>Vehicle and Equipment Wash Water</p>	
<p>Use commercial washing facilities that have proper wastewater treatment systems whenever possible.</p>	<p>Avoid or minimize contamination of surface water and groundwater by vehicle or equipment wash water that may contain oil, grease, phosphates, soaps, road salts, other chemicals, suspended solids, and invasive species.</p>
<p>Install temporary wash sites only in areas where the water and residue can be adequately collected and either filtered on site or conveyed to an appropriate wastewater treatment facility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the use of a portable vehicle washer system, to contain and filter the wash water. • Locate temporary wash sites out of AMZs, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, floodplains, and other environmentally sensitive areas. • Use suitable measures to treat and infiltrate wash water to comply with 	<p>Avoid or minimize contamination of surface water and groundwater by vehicle or equipment wash water that may contain oil, grease, phosphates, soaps, road salts, other chemicals, suspended solids, and invasive species.</p>



applicable surface water and groundwater protection regulations.	
Post-Project Reclamation	
Re-establish original slope contours, surface drainage and de-compact soil on disturbed areas to the extent possible.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality and improve soil productivity.
Establish effective groundcover on disturbed sites to avoid or minimize accelerated erosion and soil loss.	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality and improve soil productivity.
Use suitable measures to limit human, vehicle, and potentially livestock access to disturbed areas to allow for vegetation recovery	Minimize adverse effects to soil and water quality and improve soil productivity.

Compliance with Laws, Regulations, and Policy

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as **6 CFR 220.6(e)(2) Additional construction or reconstruction of existing telephone or utility lines in a designated corridor**. This category of action(s) is applicable because this project is focused on repairing broken segments of a 13-mile pipe that delivers water from springs and a wellfield in the San Francisco Peaks to the City of Flagstaff, Arizona. This water source is a critical piece of the city's water supply portfolio, providing approximately 20 percent of the city's potable water supply during the summer. All road work that is being planned will facilitate access to these areas and improve overall road conditions impacted by post-fire flooding in 2022.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I considered resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- ♦ **Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species** – It has been determined that the project “may affect but is not likely to adversely affect” Mexican spotted owls. While the entire project footprint is within designated critical habitat, approximately 62 percent of the critical habitat burned at moderate to high intensity in the Schultz Fire, the Pipeline Fire, or both; therefore, much of the burned area does not currently contain the forest cover owls use for nesting, roosting, and dispersing. For a more in-depth review see the Inner Basin Waterline Post-Fire Repair and Reconstruction Project letter of concurrence (AESO/SE 2023-0089099-S7-001) dated June 9, 2023, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- ◆ **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – The proposed project is not located in a floodplain, wetland, or municipal watershed (the waterline collects water from springs that contribute to the inner basin watershed, but the waterline and road are not in the inner basin watershed). Reconstruction activities would not occur in any location with perennial water. The project is expected to result in beneficial effects to water quality at the scale of the project area but is not expected to result in a measurable effect at the watershed scale.
- ◆ **Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas** – The Kachina Peaks Wilderness is adjacent to the project area. All reconstruction activities are expected to occur outside of the Wilderness. It is possible that reconstruction activities may be heard or seen from within the Wilderness, yet the effects of this noise or visual annoyance would not be within proximity of any trail or recreational destination within Wilderness and this effect would be of limited duration. The project area does not contain any wilderness study areas or national recreation areas.
- ◆ **Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas** – The project does not contain any inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.
- ◆ **Research natural areas** – The project does not contain any research natural areas.
- ◆ **American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites** – The project does lie within the designated San Francisco Peaks Traditional Cultural Property boundary. The Traditional Cultural Property cannot be avoided by the project; however, project work will avoid all heritage sites. In a letter dated December 5, 2022, the Coconino National Forest notified thirteen consulting Tribal Nations with traditional and cultural ties to the forest about the project and invited Tribes to consult. Those Tribal Nations include Pueblo of Acoma, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Havasupai Tribe, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Navajo Nation, San Carlos Apache Tribe, San Juan Southern Paiute, Tonto Apache Tribe, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe, and Pueblo of Zuni. To date, we have not heard any concerns from Tribal Nations. Since the project is mostly occurring in the existing footprint of the water pipeline, the Waterline Road and FS 420 road corridors, with limited disturbance outside of the right-of-way, the Forest determined that this undertaking would result in no effect.
- ◆ **Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – the project area has some existing surveys. More surveys will be conducted in portions of the project area where existing surveys are old or inaccurate, and in areas where surveys have not been performed. Waterline Road was determined ineligible for protection as a historic property, but seven intact segments of abandoned pipeline in the same area have been identified and should be avoided by this project. Any additional activities not included in this decision will comply with



the existing Region 3 Programmatic Agreement with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer, dated April 24, 2023, and shall constitute an additional undertaking for Section 106 compliance outside of this decision.

Public Involvement

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Coconino National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions on January 1, 2023, and updated periodically during the analysis.

On March 10, 2023, we mailed out approximately 44 hard copy scoping notices and sent an additional 76 emails to request input from individuals, organizations, and state and local agencies. We received a total of six responses. All responses fully supported the proposal.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the Coconino National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with desired conditions and plan guidance identified for the Inner Basin, Mt. Elden, and San Francisco Peaks management areas.

Implementation Date

Implementation of the proposed action may occur immediately upon signing of this document.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Jessica Richardson, NEPA Coordinator, Flagstaff Ranger District, 5075 N. Highway 89 Flagstaff, AZ 86004, or jessica.richardson@usda.gov

Aaron Mayville
Forest Supervisor

Date



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