



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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File Code:

1570-1/2400

Date:

July 25, 2002

Sam Hitt
Wild Watershed
P.O. Box 1943
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Certified Mail
Return Receipt Requested
7000 2870 0000 1135 5186

Re: Appeal # 02-03-00-0022-A215, Sheep Basin Restoration Project Decision, Reserve Ranger District, Gila National Forest

Dear Mr. Hitt:

This is my review decision on the appeal you filed regarding the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI), which provide for silvicultural treatments on the Sheep Basin Restoration Project.

BACKGROUND

On April 24, 2002, Gila National Forest Supervisor, Marcia Andre signed a decision for the Sheep Basin Restoration Project, Reserve Ranger District. The Forest Supervisor is identified as the Responsible Official, whose decision is subject to administrative review under 36 CFR 215 appeal regulations.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.16, an attempt was made to seek informal resolution of the appeal. The record reflects that informal resolution was not reached.

My review of this appeal has been conducted in accordance with 36 CFR 215.17. I have thoroughly reviewed the appeal record, including the recommendations of the Appeal Reviewing Officer (ARO). My review decision incorporates the appeal record.

APPEAL REVIEWING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

The ARO recommended that the Responsible Official's decision on the Sheep Basin Restoration Project be reversed because the cumulative environmental effects were not adequately analyzed and disclosed with respect to reasonably foreseeable actions. These findings and recommendations are based upon a procedural deficiency in the NEPA analysis and disclosure. The ARO found that the project would achieve the stated objective, met land and resource management plan consistency requirements and adequately involved the public in the NEPA process.

APPEAL DECISION

After a detailed review of the record, interested party comments, and the ARO's recommendation, I am reversing the Responsible Official's decision on the Sheep Basin Restoration Project, Reserve Ranger District, Gila National Forest with the following instructions:



- 1) Identify which projects or activities discussed in the Environmental Assessment and the Negrito Ecosystem Area Assessment are reasonably foreseeable.
- 2) Conduct a cumulative effects analysis that considers the effects of these reasonably foreseeable projects along with the effects of Sheep Basin.
- 3) Document this effects analysis in the Environmental Assessment and provide a new 30-day notice, comment, and appeal opportunity in accordance with 36 C.F.R. 215.

This decision constitutes the final administrative determination of the Department of Agriculture (36 CFR 215.18g).

Sincerely,

/s/ Abel M. Camarena
ABEL M. CAMARENA
Deputy Regional Forester