

Decision Notice  
& Finding of No Significant Impact  
**Camp Verde Townsite Act Project**  
USDA Forest Service  
Red Rock Ranger District, Coconino National Forest  
Yavapai County, Arizona

## **Decision and Reasons for the Decision**

### **Background**

The proposal is to sell 223 acres of Coconino National Forest land to the Town of Camp Verde under the authority of the Townsite Act of July 31, 1958 (72 Stat. 438, 7U.S.C. 1012a; 16 U.S.C. 478A), as amended by Sec. 213 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (90 Stat. 2760). This 223-acre parcel is on the east side of Camp Verde south of State Route 260 and west of Verde Park Road. In 1990, the Town of Camp Verde conducted a Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan that projected the population growth at a rate that would result in the need for additional park land. The Town has grown at a rate that exceeded the projection in that plan and has applied to acquire the project site from the United States in order to provide needed park lands and facilities to community residents. The Forest Service accepted the Town of Camp Verde's application for the 223-acre parcel as the sale of this site is consistent with direction in the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as well as the Town's Community Plan. The environmental assessment (EA) documents the analysis of one alternative to meet this need.

### **Decision**

Based upon my review of the alternatives, I have decided to implement Alternative B, which approves sale of approximately 223 acres of the Coconino National Forest to the Town of Camp Verde. The site is referred to as the old airstrip site on the east side of Camp Verde.

The sale of this parcel will allow the Town of Camp Verde to meet the recreational needs of their growing community while minimizing impacts and changes to National Forest uses and activities. Town of Camp Verde processes, ordinances and community plan direction will be followed in the development of park facilities and activities at the site. While selection of this alternative has the potential to change the more natural setting at the site and may displace some recreation uses, it will provide other recreation opportunities for community members. Town ordinances will address water quality, noise and lighting concerns.

Sale of this parcel to the Town is consistent with the Coconino National Forest Plan standards and guidelines related to land adjustment as this site is identified as base in exchange (Coconino National Forest Plan, Preferred Alternative Map) indicating it has the characteristics that would warrant conveyance, especially since this proposal for community needs.

## Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, Alternative B, I considered the No Action alternative. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on pages 10-12.

### Alternative A - *No Action*

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. The 223-acre parcel would remain in federal ownership and managed as currently. No community park facility would be constructed at this site. The community would likely lose State grant funding associated with park construction as there is not an alternative location available for the size of proposed facilities.

### Alternative B

The Forest Service would sell the 223-acre site as requested by the Town of Camp Verde. The park facility would be developed as approved through the Town of Camp Verde's development process, which could include uses such as ball fields, picnic areas and trails.

## Public Involvement

As described in the background, the need for this action was identified in the 1990 as part of the Town of Camp Verde's land use planning process which included public surveys and discussions. The proposal to consider sale of the property has been listed in the Coconino National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions since July 2003. Information on sale of the 223 acre parcel was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping in April 2004. As part of the public involvement process, the agency sent letters to adjacent landowners and interested parties describing the possible sale of the 223-acre site as well as developed a news release asking for comment. This project has also been the subject of many town council meetings and public meetings

Using the comments from the public, adjacent landowners and other agencies, including the Town of Camp Verde, the interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address (see EA page 6). Many comments fall outside the scope of the Forest Service's decision as they relate to actions under the authority of the Town of Camp Verde, such as approved activities and facilities development at the site after conveyance of the property. Development of the site would be managed through the Town's development process and procedures.

A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Camp Verde Townsite Act project and opportunity to comment on the proposal was announced through a legal notice in the Arizona Daily Sun on May 25, 2005 providing for the formal 30-day comment on the proposal. Twenty-eight letters and copies of the Draft EA document were sent to those that had commented in April 2004 or otherwise indicated interest in this project. A news release was sent out to local Verde Valley media on May 19, 2005 announcing the 30-day comment period. Articles were printed in the Red Rock news and Cottonwood Journal. Four comments, received during the 30-day comment period, included concerns about the historic nature of the airstrip, equestrian access, need for the park and water use concerns. Comments are in the project record for both the April 2004 and May 2005 comment periods.

## Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

**Context:** The setting of the selected alternative and proposal is local in regards to long and short-term effects on both human and natural resources. The effects of this action are limited to a very limited area of Yavapai County in the Town of Camp Verde.

**Intensity:**

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. Both beneficial and adverse effects were considered in the environmental analysis.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety, since potential development of the property will be done under ordinances and laws that require compliance with health and safety standards. No specific safety or health issues were raised as significant issues.
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the site. This site area is surrounded by highway and private land on three sides and the site does not contain unique features. There are no other sensitive resources or unique characteristics on the site, including farmlands, rangelands or adverse impacts to minority groups, civil rights, women, or consumers relative to environmental justice (see EA pages 30-31).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project and the ultimate development of the park area and change in use of the property will be through a subsequent Town of Camp Verde public process.
5. There is considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. The Forest Service has completed many land exchanges in the Sedona area as well as sales to communities for public purposes, including schools and wastewater facilities. Development on the 223- acre property to be sold will likely be similar to what is seen at Town of Camp Verde park facilities on Apache Trail. Effects of development are typical and not uncertain.
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because sale of this property is a separate action and decision. No other activities or decisions are necessary as a result of this decision. There is the potential for conveyance of an adjacent parcel to the Camp Verde Unified School District that is also being analyzed; however conveyance of this parcel does not require the conveyance to the school district.

7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (see EA pages 14-32).
8. The action will 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. An eligible cultural resource site was identified on the parcel. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) was approved for this site and a testing and mitigation plan has been developed under current law and regulation. Clearance for this site will be completed, after data collection and mitigation as stated in the MOA, prior to the completion of the sale of the property. There are no other effects that would occur as a result of the sale of the property. Cultural resource surveys and reports were completed and the Arizona State Historic Preservation office has concurred with the MOA and the required procedures to mitigate the eligible site. Consultation has also occurred with local tribal entities and concerns were addressed. The airstrip located on the parcel was evaluated and determined ineligible for the National Register. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources, because no other resources were identified on the property. (see EA pages 19-20).
9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973. A Biological Assessment and Evaluation was completed on March 7, 2005 for the sale of the property. This document states that the sale and likely potential park development of the property in the future would not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat. No consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service was required. Federal Species of Concern were evaluated as well as sensitive species. While habitat for these species would be affected by the sale and likely development of the parcel, the project would not result in a trend toward listing them. (see EA pages 24-28 and the Biological Assessment and Evaluation in the project record).
10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. The action is consistent with the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. It is also consistent with the Town of Camp Verde's Community Plan that identifies this site as open space. (See EA page 14).

## **Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

This decision to sell the 223 acres of Coconino National Forest land (Alternative B) is not inconsistent with the intent of the Coconino Forest Plan's long term goals and objectives listed on pages 22-26. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for providing conveyance of federal lands for community purposes and in areas identified as appropriate for conveyance (base for exchange) (Coconino Land and Resource Management Plan: pages 85-86).

A Biological Assessment and Evaluation (BA&E) was completed for Camp Verde Townsite Act Project dated March 7, 2005 to ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

A MOA addressing Cultural Resources was signed and approved for this project by the State Historic Preservation Office on November 11, 2005 to ensure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800). Final clearances will be completed prior to the final sale of the property.

A mineral report was prepared which documents a field examination that found that the subject parcel has low potential for locatable, salable and leasable minerals.

A Hazardous Material Examination of the project area was completed to ensure compliance with Forest Service Manual 2166.

A Water Resources Evaluation was completed for the project area to ensure compliance with Forest Service Manual 2527.03 and Executive Orders 11988 (floodplains) and 11990 (wetlands). No wetlands or floodplain will be lost as a result of the sale of the property.

## **Implementation Date**

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

## **Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215.

The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Appeal Deciding Officer, USDA Forest Service, 333 Broadway Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87103 or FAX (505)842-3110.

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to: [appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us) In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of this notice in the *Arizona Daily Sun*, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45 day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the *Arizona Daily Sun*, newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 215.14.

**Contact**

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Judy Adams, Lands Staff, Red Rock Ranger District, PO Box 20429, 250 Brewer Road, Sedona, AZ 86341, (928) 203-7506.

*Nora B. Rasure*

NORA B. RASURE  
Forest Supervisor  
Coconino National Forest

*2/23/2006*

Date