

Decision Notice & Finding of No Significant Impact
Highlands Fire District Townsite Act Sale

USDA Forest Service
Mormon Lake Ranger District, Coconino National Forest
Coconino County, Arizona

GILA & SALT RIVER MERIDIAN, T. 20 N., R. 7 E.
sec. 20 –S1/2SW1/4SE1/4SW1/4 and W1/2SW1/4SE1/4SE1/4SW1/4

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Background

The purpose of the proposed land sale is to provide a new fire station (#25) needed to serve the Mountaineer area. The proposed station will be in a key location to provide improved access and response time in three directions. This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, USDA 1987, (Forest Plan), and helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in that plan.

The environmental assessment (EA) documents the analysis of two alternatives.

Decision

Based upon my review of the alternatives, I have decided to implement Alternative 2 which is to sell approximately 6.25 acres of land within the Mormon Lake Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest to the Highlands Fire District.

The proposed land sale is consistent with Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines by offering lands for exchange (or sale) to achieve ownership patterns to meet management objectives consistent with an area's designation, and meeting the following applicable standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan: Lands needed to meet the needs of expanding communities; Isolated tracts or scattered parcels that cannot be efficiently managed; Lands that will improve management, benefit specific resources, or increase management efficiency; and Lands that are necessary to meet overriding public needs. (Forest Plan, page 86).

A Designation Order was signed for this case on July 12, 2006. A copy of the Designation Order was sent to the BLM for segregation on September 22, 2006. This proposed sale will be processed under, and meets requirements of , the authorities 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).

The Federal land is displayed on the attached exhibit map.

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered one other alternative. A comparison of these two alternatives can be found in the EA on pages 6 & 7.

Alternative 1 *No Action*

Under the No Action alternative, the land would continue to be part of the Coconino National Forest and current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area.

Alternative 2

Sell approximately 6.25 acres of land within the Peaks Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest to the Highlands Fire District. The land would no longer be part of the National Forest. This sale will provide land at a preferred location to the Highlands Fire District for a new fire station which will also be used as a community center.

Public Involvement

The proposal was listed in the Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) in July, 2005 and subsequent SOPA's through June 2007. This schedule was mailed to approximately 60 individuals who have requested to receive each quarterly edition of the SOPA in hard copy form. The SOPA is also available on the Coconino Forest website.

Contacts were made with local residents, governmental agencies, county offices and interested and effected parties including special use and grazing permit holders.

On October 19, 2006, notification letters with maps and a description of the proposal were sent to adjacent landowners and other known interested persons and organizations.

On October 30, 2006, notification letters with maps and a description of the proposal were sent to the Coconino County Board of Supervisors, Senator Jon Kyle, Senator John McCain and Representative Rick Renzi.

On December 11, 2006 four special use permit holders (Qwest Corp., NPG Cable, Arizona Public Service and American Telephone & Telegraph) were notified with a request to prepare replacement easements for their permitted uses.

A legal notice of the sale was published in the Arizona Daily Sun on July 19, July 26, and August 2 and August 9, 2006. A legal notice of a comment period and availability of an Environmental Assessment was published in the Arizona Daily Sun on April 10, 2007.

All responses from governmental entities, adjacent landowners and the general public have been in favor of the proposal.

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:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety. (EA pages 8 -14).
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because the sale area does not contain unique characteristics or ecologically critical areas such as historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers. (EA pages 10, 12 -14).
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 (EA page 6).
5. We have 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 (EA pages 9 -15).
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. (see EA page 5).
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (EA pages 9 -15).
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. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. (EA page13).
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. (see EA pages 10 & 11).
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 and the action is consistent with the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (EA page 4).

