



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Supervisor's Office

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File Code: 1950-1/2720-1

Date: May 2, 2007

I have signed the Decision Notice to create a new communications site near the Interstate 40 – Winona Interchange, approximately 9 miles east of Flagstaff, Arizona. The Coconino Forest Plan is amended to add this site to the list of electronic sites (Amendment # 22). This communication system will increase the safety of people traveling Interstate 40.

Enclosed you will find 3 documents: Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, Digest, and Coconino Forest Plan replacement page. The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact: 1) identifies the alternative from the Environmental Assessment (EA) that I have chosen to implement; 2) provides my rationale for choosing that alternative; 3) shows there is no significant impact on the human environment and explains why an environmental impact statement is not necessary; and 4) explains the administrative appeal rights. The Digest (the page which lists the superseded pages and a brief synopsis of changes) explains the essence of the Amendment. The third document is the replacement page for the Coconino Forest Plan. On the Coconino Electronic Site Chart (Appendix C – Forest Plan) there have been some additional updates made beyond adding the one site described in the Winona Communication Site EA. All changes to Appendix C are in bold type and further explained in the attached Digest.

I would like to thank you for your interest in the Coconino National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joseph P. Stringer
JOSEPH P. STRINGER
Deputy Forest Supervisor

DECISION NOTICE
And
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

WINONA COMMUNICATIONS SITE
COCONINO FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #22
USDA Forest Service

Peaks Ranger District, Coconino National Forest
Coconino County, Arizona

DECISION

Based on the Environmental Assessment (EA) completed for this project, as well as comments received during the 30-day public comment period for the completed EA, it is my decision to select Alternative 2 authorizing construction of a new communications site located near the Interstate 40 Winona Interchange, approximately 9 miles east of Flagstaff Arizona. The facility will be located within the northwest one-quarter of Section 13, Township 21 North, Range 6 East, Gila and Salt River Base and Meridian.

My decision includes the following components:

- A site specific amendment to the Forest Plan to designate a telecommunication site near Winona. See attached Amendment 22
- Approval of a communications site plan (EA appendix C)
- Authorization of the following activities through a communications site lease:
 - Construction of a 180-foot self-supporting tower and construction of buildings and a compound to house communications equipment
 - Maintenance of vegetation within 20 feet of the compound area by clearing vegetation annually between May 1st and September 30th, all live and dead material to a maximum height of 6 inches
 - Construction and operational access on existing Forest Road 775

The communication site is designed to accommodate all of the licensed wireless carriers in the area as well as future technologies that require vertical real estate. The equipment compound and lease area will be shielded by an enclosure. Inside of the compound, three separate buildings will be constructed. These buildings will be of similar concrete block construction and are designed to accommodate all present and future tenants inside of the buildings.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

The 1987 Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan provides for a multiple use management framework in which special uses are administered “to best meet public needs” (CNF 1987). The proposed project complies with standards and guidelines specified in the Forest Plan that are applicable to this type of use. The site is located adjacent to the existing road so no new access roads are required, and no improvement to the existing road will be needed for construction or operation of the proposed facility. In addition, existing overhead electrical power is available to the site.

To minimize the visual impact, the tower will be located near existing Western Area Power Authority’s (WAPA’s) 345 kV high voltage transmission line and will be visually consistent with the power line’s existing vertical structures, therefore not significantly changing the visual character of the area. No buildings or equipment will be visible from I-40.

The tower is proposed to be a 180-foot solid leg self-supporting lattice type that is structurally designed for seven carriers and their incumbent transmission equipment. Specific care was taken to locate a flat location so that minimal cut and fill is required to build the site. There will be minimal soil disturbance.

Background

The Winona site appears to be one of the last ‘holes’ in wireless coverage for the I-40 corridor in the Flagstaff area. The I-40 corridor, Twin Arrows to Ash Fork, currently has several areas where wireless personal communication services are not currently available and/or reliable. DW Tower has proposed to construct a communication tower and support facilities near the I-40 Winona interchange to address a portion of this need. The proposed communication site is designed to accommodate all of the licensed wireless carriers in the area as well as future technologies that require vertical real estate.

The Forest Service has been given direction from Congress and the Executive Branch to facilitate implementation of the Nation’s strategy for wireless communications. On August 10, 1995, President Clinton released a memorandum entitled “Facilitating Access to Federal Property for the Siting of Mobile Services Antennas.” In this memorandum, the following is stated:

Upon request, and to the extent permitted by law and where practicable, executive departments and agencies shall make available, Federal Government buildings and lands for the siting of mobile service antennas.

On February 8, 1996, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was enacted, giving further direction to Federal agencies. In response to the memorandum and the Telecommunications Act, the General Services Administration released a bulletin listed in the Federal Register on June 16, 1997, titled “Placement of Commercial Antennas on Federal Property.” This bulletin provides general guidelines and processes for implementation of President Clinton’s memorandum. Regarding granting of siting requests, the bulletin states:

Requests for the use of property, right-of-way, and easements by duly authorized telecommunications service providers should be granted unless there are unavoidable conflicts with the department's or agency's mission, or current or planned use of the property or access to that property.

Communications sites on National Forest lands must be designated in Forest Land Management Plans before development can occur. The EA analyzed the impacts of constructing a wireless telecommunication site near the I-40 Winona interchange east of Flagstaff, Arizona.

According to the Forest Land Management Plan, the proposed action is located within Management Area (MA) 10. MA 10 supports approximately 151,000 acres of grasslands and sparse pinyon-juniper with less than 10% cover above the Mogollon Rim. This MA is largely pinyon-juniper that has been treated and is in the seral grassland stage. Fuel loading and fire danger are low. The area is important wildlife winter range, as well as year long pronghorn antelope range, and is used primarily as grazing land for both livestock and wildlife.

Purpose and Need for Action

Reliable wireless telephone communication services are currently not available east of Flagstaff along the Interstate 40 corridor. The Forest Service needs to facilitate the improvement of wireless services along this corridor through the issuance of a communications site lease to construct, operate, and maintain a telecommunications site to provide reliable wireless telephone communication services. Communications sites are designated in the Forest Land Management Plan and a communications site plan that provides guidance and limitations on development must be approved before the facilities are constructed. There is a need for site designation through a minor Forest Plan amendment (See Appendix D) and for a site plan to guide future development and management of the site.

Decision Rationale

When compared to the no action alternative, the proposed action will meet the purpose and need for the project by improving wireless communications reliability for the Interstate 40 corridor. I considered other locations, including non-Forest Service lands, and determined that this location best minimizes visual impacts. The no action alternative does not meet the project purpose and need. Updating the CNF Plan with an amendment is an administrative action that, itself, has no direct effects on the environment. Implementation of this project — that is, construction and operation of the designated communications site — would likely have minimal impacts to the environment.

The proposed communications site is consistent with the management direction and multiple use management frameworks described in the CNF Plan (1987).

The list of mitigation measures displayed in the Environmental Assessment, Chapter 2-Alternatives will be applied when implementing this project to avoid and/or minimize environmental impact.

Access policy and road maintenance objectives are not changed as a result of this decision.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The proposal was listed in Schedule of Proposed Actions for the Coconino National Forest beginning in July 1, 2005 and appeared on each successive quarterly edition including the most recent version of April 1, 2007. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping August 22, 2006 to September 30, 2006. A total of 622 scoping letters were mailed out and 21 responses received.

Of the 21 responses received, 86% either were in favor or had no comments regarding the communications site. Three responses (14%) were against the proposed wireless site. There were no significant issues identified. All comments and concerns received were determined to be non-significant issues and are summarized in the following section.

The comments received supporting the new communications site are summarized by two categories as follows:

Comment #1. It is to the Advantage of All to Have Better Communication. The improved cellular phone coverage will increase the safety factor of the area. Winter storms bring icy roads and accidents. Improved communications will reduce the response time in emergency situations. One response indicated that the communications tower might make fire fighting more successful.

Comment #2. Visual Impacts Will Be Minimized. Locating the proposed communications site near the 345kV corridor will reduce the visual impacts. The proposed site is not located on a hill or prominent viewpoint.

The topics of concern raised during scoping are categorized as follows:

Comment #3. Construct a Smaller Tower (100-foot): One comment received suggested that a shorter tower should be used. The site location was acceptable, but the tower height was too tall.
Response: The proposal was to construct a single tower to accommodate all the licensed users in the area. A shorter tower would not provide the necessary space for multiple users of the communications site. Multiple towers would be required for shorter towers, either at this location or a various locations in the vicinity. Multiple towers would add to environmental impacts and costs without reducing visual impacts.

Comment #4. Concern about the Wireless Site Being an Environmental Electronic Hazard: One comment received stated that wireless sites are electronic hazards to the environment.

Response: Many studies have been conducted on the effects of radio frequency emissions (RF). In a publication by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), OET Bulletin 56 it was stated:

Measurements made near typical cellular and PCS installations, especially those with tower mounted antennas, have shown that ground-level power densities are well below limits recommended by RF/microwave safety standards...Calculations corresponding to a "worst-case" situation (all transmitters operating simultaneously and continuously at the maximum licensed power) show that in order to be exposed to levels near the FCC's limits for cellular frequencies, an individual would essentially have to remain in the main transmitting beam (at the height of the antenna) and within a few feet from the antenna. Measurements and calculations have verified that the power densities associated with cellular radio cell site antennas to which the public may be exposed are not significantly different from "RF background" levels in urban areas which are produced from radio and television broadcast stations present in every modern community, are well below the limits recommended by national and international safety standards.

Low powered cellular and PCS devices must comply with the safety standards for radio frequency emissions issued by the FCC. The FCC requires an evaluation of all wireless devices by the manufacturers for compliance with the Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) prior to receiving FCC approval. These evaluations ensure that wireless telephones operate within the FCC's safe exposure limits. To this date, there is no evidence of bio-effects danger from the use of wireless telephones.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996, states:

"No State or local government or instrumentality thereof may regulate the placement, constructions, and modification of personal wireless service facilities on the basis of the environmental effects of radio frequency emissions to the extent that such facilities comply with the Commission's regulations concerning such emissions."

Comment #5. Use Private Lands: One comment noted that private land locations should be searched for prior to construction on Forest lands. **Response:** Private lands were researched prior to this proposal. There were no private lands available that would meet the purpose and need of the proposal.

On March 1, 2007 a cover letter and copy of the EA were mailed to the individuals or groups who responded during the scoping period, and a legal notice was published in the Arizona Daily Sun newspaper as to the availability of the EA for review and comment. Only one comment was received in response to the EA and was favorable, stating that the assessment was "excellent in content" and "I see no problems in establishing the Winona Communications Site Project".

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Two alternatives were considered in detail: No Action and the Proposed Action. Because there were no significant issues identified during the scoping process alternatives to the proposed action were not developed or analyzed in detail. During the process to develop the proposed action numerous potential alternatives were studied in concept and eventually dropped from further consideration because they did not meet the purpose and need of the project.

Alternatives Considered and Eliminated From Detailed Study

Private Land

On February 21, 2001, a preliminary meeting was held regarding the I-40 Wireless Corridor. In attendance were representatives from the Coconino National Forest, Coconino County, Kaibab National Forest, and several wireless communication companies (Industry). The County and Forest Service agreed that they both want to avoid tower proliferation, and want to see towers located in area that have the least visual and environmental impacts.

During the preliminary meetings regarding the I-40 Wireless Corridor, the Coconino County Community Development Director noted that there were several proposals submitted to the County for wireless sites on private land along the corridor. The County found six of the seven proposals were not acceptable. The one acceptable site was located within an industrial zone and the towers were projected to be 200 to 250 feet, in view of the San Francisco Peaks. The County suggested that other locations on Forest Service land appear to be more appropriate visually and environmentally.

East of 345 kV High Voltage Line

During the preliminary scoping process, the proposed wireless tower was sited on the eastern side of the Western Area Power Authority's 345 kV high voltage transmission line. As part of the preliminary process, an archaeological study was required to be conducted on the proposed site location. Upon completion of the survey, the location was moved to the west side of the 345kV line in order to avoid archaeological resources in the area.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

Endangered Species Act of 1973

No threatened or endangered species or their habitat will be impacted. No R3 Forest Service sensitive species will experience impacts that would cause or contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.

Clean Air Act

Construction of the facilities, including site preparation and clearing will be in accordance with provisions of the Clean Air Act as administered by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

In support of the EA and the CNF's compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act a cultural resource survey was conducted in May 2006 on the property within a mile radius of the proposed action. Cultural resources clearance was recommended and accepted by the U.S. Forest Service for the proposed construction of this facility.

Floodplain Management (E.O. 11988), Protection of Wetlands (E.O. 11990)

This activity will not impact the functional value of any floodplain as defined by Executive Order 11988 and will not have negative impacts on wetlands as defined by Executive Order 11990.

Environmental Justice (E.O. 12898)

In accordance with Executive Order 12898 this project does not have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended in 1986

This project will have no adverse effects to any existing or eligible wild and scenic river segments.

Clean Water Act of 1977 as amended

This activity will not impact the functional value or compromise the quality of any rivers, streams or riparian areas. Mitigation measures will be in place as discussed in the Environmental Assessment, Chapter 2-*Alternatives*.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Environmental Assessment for this project was reviewed using criteria identified in implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR 1508.27).

Context

This project is a site-specific action that by itself does not have international, national, region-wide or statewide importance. The context of this action is that approximately 0.5 acres of CNF lands will be modified to construct the communications site. Within the CNF, impacts will be limited to the lease area and immediate surrounding forest land.

The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended action analyzed within the Environmental Assessment.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around criteria described in the National Policy Act (NEPA) regulations (40 CFE 1508.27).

Beneficial and Adverse Impacts

This action will avoid any impacts of significant intensity. Implementation of mitigation measures will minimize impacts (EA-Chapter 2).

The long-term effects are considered to be beneficial in terms of improved wireless communications and reliability for the traveling public on Interstate 40 and the surrounding community.

Public Health and Safety

There are no known adverse impacts to public safety. The project will benefit the safety of the public traveling on I-40 by providing wireless service for those travelers dealing with vehicle disablement due to accident or mechanical problems.

Unique Characteristics

There are no unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas that would be adversely affected.

Controversy

The public generally supports the project and understands the project need. The effects of this action are widely understood and are not considered controversial among resource specialists. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

Uncertainly and Risk

The degree of possible effects on the human environment is not highly uncertain, nor are there unique risks involved. Effects are discussed in the EA-Chapter 3. The Forest has experience with numerous communication sites.

Precedent

These site-specific actions do not establish a precedent for future actions, which may have significant effects; nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The proposal is consistent with standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan. Future actions will be evaluated through the NEPA process and will stand on their own as to the environmental effects and project feasibility.

Cumulative Effects

Past and present actions have been analyzed and considered and found to be not significant. Cumulative effects have been discussed and disclosed in the EA-Chapter 3.

Significant Scientific, Cultural or Historic Resources

The cultural resource survey determined that no previously known or unknown archaeological sites or other cultural properties occur within the study area. Forest records also indicate that no known archaeological sites or other cultural resources occur at this specific location. Proper management practices will be maintained during construction should any archaeological or cultural material be found.

Threatened and Endangered Species

This decision will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species of plants or animals or habitat critical for the management of these species. This action does not violate Federal, State, or local laws imposed for the protection of the environment.

Forest Plan Amendment

This decision includes a non-significant Forest Plan Amendment prepared in accordance with the 2004 Interpretative Rule for 36CFR 219.35(a) and (b) as published in the Federal Register on September 29, 2004. This rule clarifies that the provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule may be used to prepare plan amendments until a new final planning rule is promulgated. In reviewing the project record, I have determined the analysis used the best available science and the amendment will not result in a significant change in the Coconino Forest Plan.

Conclusion

Implementing Alternative 2 does not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment in either context or intensity. I have made this determination after considering both positive and negative effects, as well as direct, indirect and cumulative effects of this action and foreseeable future actions and, therefore, the action does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

Compliance with Other Laws

The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered as described above. The action is consistent with the Coconino Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This project will not be implemented sooner than five business days following the close of the appeal filing period established in the Decision Notice in the *Arizona Daily Sun*.

If an appeal is filed, implementation may begin on, but not before, 15 business days following a final decision on the appeal.

RIGHT TO APPEAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to regulations at 36 CFR 215. Individuals or organizations who provided comment or otherwise expressed interest in the proposed action by the close of the comment period may appeal. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer. Submit appeals to: Regional Forester, Appeal Deciding Officer, 333 Broadway SE, Albuquerque, NM 87102 or fax to (505)842-3173. If hand delivered, the appeal must be received at the above address during business hours (Monday - Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm), excluding holidays. Electronic appeals may be submitted to: *appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us* (.doc, .rtf, or .txt formats only). The appeal must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals.

Appeals, including attachments, must be in writing, fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, and filed (postmarked) within 45 days following the date this notice is published in the Arizona Daily Sun. This publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source.

CONTACT PERSON

For more information concerning this decision, please contact Ken Jacobs, Peaks and Mormon Lake Ranger District Lands Staff, 928-214-2464.

/s/ Joseph P. Stringer
JOSEPH P. STRINGER
Deputy Forest Supervisor
Coconino National Forest

May 2, 2007

COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST PLAN
DIGEST
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #22

May 2007

Forest Plan amendments are numbered consecutively. Check the last transmittal to see if this amendment is in sequence. If it is not please contact the Supervisor's Office, Land management Planning to obtain the missing amendment.

Page Number	Superseded	New (Number of Sheets)
Replacement Page 235	1	1
Replacement Page 236	1	1

Digest:

Replacement Page 235

Adds the Winona Communications Site. This site is designated for low power wireless communications along Interstate 40 near Winona, east of Flagstaff, AZ. The A-1 Mountain Site is no longer in use as the previous microwave system has been removed (replaced by fiber optics system) and the site rehabilitated. Updates Ranger District names due to past Ranger District consolidations.

Replacement Page 236

Updates information for other existing electronic sites to reflect current types of use for the Rarick Canyon, Rocky Park, Woods Canyon, Douglas Mountain, Ritter Mountain, and James Canyon sites. These sites were designated under Forest Plan Amendment # 16 and have now been constructed. Updates Ranger District names due to past Ranger District consolidations.

/s/ Joseph P. Stringer
JOSEPH P. STRINGER
Deputy Forest Supervisor

APPENDIX C ELECTRONIC SITES

Site Name	Acres	Ranger District (previous name)	Current Types of Use	Authorized Uses	New Permits Accepted	Expansion Permitted
Apache Maid Lookout	2	(Beaver Creek) Red Rock	2-Way	Gov't. Agencies	No	No
O'Leary Lookout	2	(Elden) Peaks	2-Way, radio	FS, Gov't. Agencies	Yes	No
Devil's Head	10	(Elden) Peaks	2-Way, Microwave, CMRS	Open – Low Power	Yes	Yes
Mt. Elden	3	(Elden) Peaks	2-Way, TV, Microwave, CMRS	Open – Low Power	Yes	No
TV Ridge	10	(Elden) Peaks	2-Way, Microwave, CMRS	Open – Low Power	Yes	Yes
Woody Mtn. Lookout	0.5	(Flagstaff) Peaks	2-Way	FS	No	No
East Pocket	0.5	(Flagstaff) Peaks	2-Way	FS	No	No
Saddle Mountain	0.5	(Flagstaff) Peaks	2-Way, CMRS	Gov't Agencies, CMRS	Yes	Yes
Turkey Butte	0.5	(Flagstaff) Peaks	2-Way	FS	No	No
A-1 Mountain	1	(Flagstaff) Peaks	None	None	Yes	Yes
Agassiz (top of ski lift)	0.25	(Flagstaff) Peaks	2-Way	Ski Area use only	No	No
Winona	.5	Peaks	None (new 2007)	CMRS, Microwave	Yes	No
Baker Butte	3	(Long Valley) Mogollon Rim	2-Way	FS	No	No
Buck Mountain	3	(Long Valley) Mogollon Rim	2-Way	FS	No	No
Hutch Mountain	10	(Long Valley) Mogollon Rim	2-Way, Microwave	FS	No	No
Five Mile	10	(Long Valley) Mogollon Rim	2-Way, Microwave, Radio	Open	Yes	Yes
Mormon Mountain	10	Mormon Lake	Commercial Broadcast, 2-Way, TV, Microwave, CMRS	Open	Yes	Yes
Mormon Lookout	0.5	Mormon Lake	2-Way	FS	No	No
Lee Butte	0.5	Mormon Lake	2-Way	FS	No	No

Site Name	Acres	Ranger District	Current Types of Use	Authorized Uses	New Permits Accepted	Expansion Permitted
Schneibly Hill	5	Mormon Lake	Commercial Broadcast, 2-Way, Microwave, CMRS	2-Way, CMRS, Low Power	Yes	Yes
Sedona Airport Beacon	0.01	(Sedona) Red Rock	Radar- Avigational Aid Station	Federal Agencies	No	No
Moqui Lookout	5	(Blue Ridge) Mogollon Rim	2-Way	FS	No	No
Snow Bowl Wireless Low Power Site	0.1	Peaks	CMRS	CMRS, Gov't. Agencies, 2-way	Yes	No
House Mountain	1.0	(Sedona) Red Rock	2 way	Gov't. agencies, fire dept.	No	No
Ike's Backbone	1.0	(Beaver Creek) Red Rock	2 way	Gov't. agencies, APS	No	No
Oak Creek Vista	0.5	(Sedona) Red Rock	2 way	Gov't. Agencies, fire dept.	No	No
Rarick Canyon Wireless	0.5	(Beaver Creek) Red Rock	CMRS	CMRS, Gov't. Agencies	Yes	No
Rocky Park Wireless	0.5	Mormon Lake	CMRS	CMRS, Gov't. Agencies	Yes	No
Woods Canyon Wireless	0.5	Mormon Lake	CMRS	CMRS, Gov't. Agencies	Yes	No
Douglas Mountain Wireless	0.5	Mormon Lake	CMRS	CMRS, Gov't. Agencies	Yes	No
Ritter Mountain Wireless	0.5	Mormon Lake	CMRS	CMRS, Gov't. Agencies	Yes	No
James Canyon Wireless	0.5	Mormon Lake	CMRS	CMRS, Gov't. Agencies	Yes	No

- CMRS – FCC definition of Commercial Mobile Radio Service.
- This list includes electronic sites that are part of the Forest Service communications network, such as fire lookouts. Refer to the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines under the Special Uses component for potential restrictions concerning the non-Forest Service use of the sites.

