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Environmental Assessment

Outfitter and Guide Authorization Project

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests



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**Outfitter and Guide Authorization Project
Environmental Assessment**

Apache, Coconino, Greenlee, and Navajo Counties, Arizona

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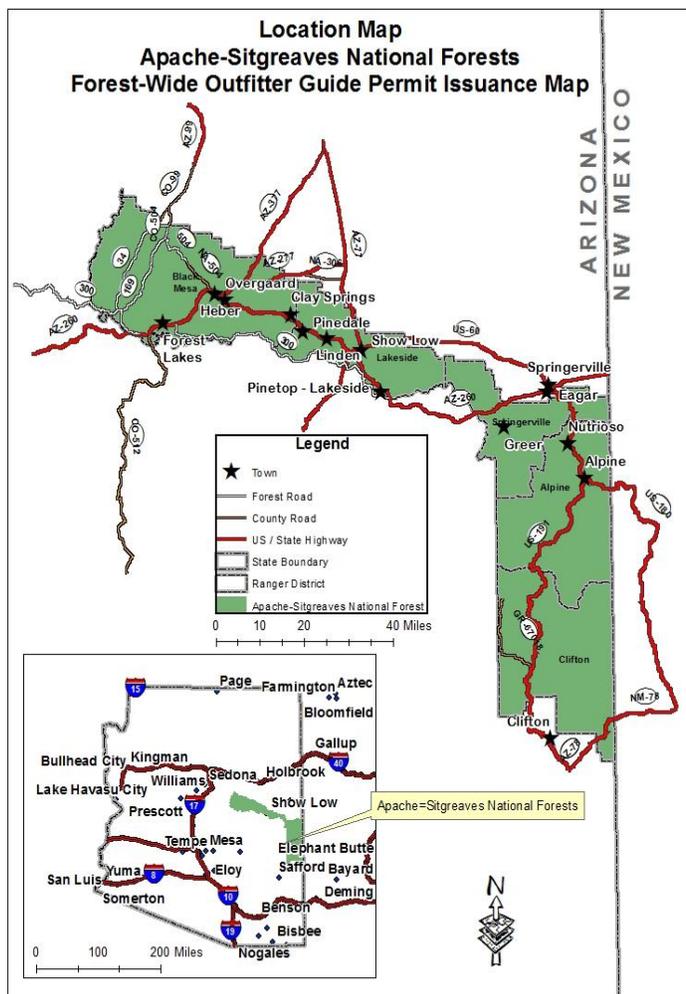
Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need for Action

Background

Outfitting and guiding activities have occurred since the inception of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs) for a number of activities. In this analysis we are considering how best to administratively manage services provided for hunting, fishing, hiking, and horseback riding which account for the majority of outfitter and guide activities on the ASNFs. Of these uses, hunting and horseback riding have provided the highest number of user days, over the last 10 years.

Until the mid-2000s, all National Forests in the state of Arizona were authorized to issue *priority use permits*¹ for outfitted and guided uses. Since the mid-2000s the Apache-Sitgreaves has only been issuing *temporary*² and/or *transitional use permits*³ on an annual basis. The recreation experience across the ASNFs would be enhanced by being able to use priority, temporary, and transitional use permits in conjunction with each other as they would provide the flexibility to better manage the permitted activities for both the short and the long term. In order to be able to utilize all three types of special use permits a more thorough environmental analysis is needed.

The analysis area includes all National Forest System Lands within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in the east central portion of Arizona (see map to the right). This includes the Black Mesa, Lakeside, Springerville, Alpine, and Clifton Ranger Districts and totals 2,110,116 acres. The reason we included the entire Forest is the nature of these activities, such as hunting, could occur anywhere on the Forest. However the actual amount of acres experiencing Outfitter and Guide activities at any given time would occur on a very small percentage of the landscape.



¹ **Priority Use Permits** – Authorization of use for up to 10 years based on permit holder’s past use and performance and applicable programmatic or project decisions to allocate use.

² **Temporary Use Permits** – Short-term, non-renewable outfitting and guiding use that is authorized in increments of 50 service days, up to a maximum of 200 service days in a 180-day period.

³ **Transitional Use Permits** – Interim re-designation of temporary use as classified under the Forest Service’s June 12, 1995 outfitting and guiding policy (60 FR 30830), for holders that meet all requirements in section 41.53p.

Land Management Plan Consistency

This project was analyzed to be consistent with the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Forest Plan). The project further moves toward following Forest Plan desired conditions, standards, and guidelines (no Forest Plan objectives are pertinent to this project). A detailed list of applicable Forest Plan desired conditions, standards, and guidelines is available in the project record.

Purpose and Need for Action

The ASNFs Forest Plan establishes the management direction for the forest and provides guidance for implementing project level decisions. The activities proposed in environmental assessment tier to the Forest Plan and are a priority for accomplishing management direction. Recreational Special Uses management occurs on the forests to provide recreational opportunities to the public. The desired condition is to provide for a high quality recreation experience.

The purpose of this project is to be able to authorize outfitter and guide activities associated with hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and hiking through long term priority permits on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. These in addition to temporary and transitional permits would be issued for a maximum amount of service days per year. There is a need to provide for a consistent high quality recreation experience that is in compliance with 36 CFR 251.54 (policy for special use permits).

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing the proposed action, as shown in Chapter 2, which meets the purpose and need by allowing the authorization for long-term outfitter and guide uses under special use permits.

Issues

An Interdisciplinary Team and the Responsible Official reviewed all public comments to identify issues for this proposal based on comments received. The following issues or unresolved conflicts were identified through scoping. Two comments was received during public scoping.

Permit Enforcement on Cultural Resources

There was a concern that outfitter and guide permits may not be enforced well, resulting in adverse effects to cultural resources, and further that discoveries of cultural resources would go unreported. The commenter suggested the Forests train outfitters and guides in cultural and archaeological sensitivity including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and Archaeological Resources Protection act, as well as giving tribes the opportunity to participate in the training.

Agency Response:

Based on the importance of cultural issues the Forest Service will provide a training resource for permitted activities. The form of training would be in cooperation with interested tribes and include, but would not be limited to brochures, pre-award meetings with permittees, formal trainings, and amendments to permits.

Mount Baldy Area Recreational Use

A commenter noted concern that the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests restrain from issuing unsupervised outfitting and guiding permits in the Mount Baldy area on the Springerville Ranger District. This area is of cultural and historic importance to Native American tribes.

Agency Response:

Historically the Forests has permitted outfitting and guiding for hunting in this area. Generally, this area sees low use by outfitters and guides due to its steep terrain. Within this area, if and when outfitting and guiding were to occur, it would be supervised by the Forests Service through permit administration by the local special use permit administrator on the Ranger District. Additionally, as part of the proposed action, the Forest Service, with the request of Tribal assistance, will provide a training resource for permitted outfitting and guiding activities. The form of training would be in cooperation with the Tribe and other interested tribes and include, but would not be limited to brochures, pre-award meetings with permittees, formal training, and amendments to permits.

Chapter 2 – Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

Alternative A – Proposed Action

Special Use Permits would be authorized for up to a maximum allowable *service days*⁴ per year across the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. If long term permit service days issued under priority permits are below the maximum allowable service days in a given year, additional service days could be permitted under temporary and transitional permits for shorter periods of time provided the cumulative number of services days do not exceed the *maximum allowable service days*⁵. This approach provides a baseline of activities to be permitted over the long term while providing the flexibility to accommodate special events that may occur on a short term basis.

Table 1 – Proposed Maximum Allowable Service Days per Year by Use for Outfitter and guide Permits on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Outfitted or Guided Use	Maximum Allowable Service Days Per Year
Hunting	2,000
Fishing	100
Horseback Riding	100,000
Hiking	1,000

Cultural Resource Sensitivity Training for Outfitters and Guides

Based on the importance of cultural issues, the Forest Service, in cooperation with interested tribes would provide a training resource for permitted activities on cultural and archaeological sensitivity including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and Archaeological Resources Protection Act. The form of training will be in cooperation with interested tribes and include, but will not be limited to brochures, pre-award meetings with permittees, formal trainings, and amendments to permits.

Project Design Features:

The following project design features are specific to this project. All laws, policies, regulations, and Forest Service manual direction will also be followed along with the following listed below. These features are requirements from the 2015 Forest Plan. Additionally, permit clauses, terms, and conditions that are designed to protect resources will be incorporated to fit on-the-ground conditions (special use permits).

- To to minimize conflicts, commercial outfitters and guides will not be authorized to use developed campgrounds so sites remain available for non-commercial forest users.
- To ensure grazing permits are able to managed by the Forest Service and grazing permittees, commercial outfitters and guides will only be authorized use of range developments when there are no conflicts with allotment management.
- Party size of 12 persons and/or 12 head of stock for hiking and riding groups in Mount Baldy Wilderness shall not be exceeded. A party size of 6 persons for overnight camping shall not be exceeded.

⁴ **Service Day** – An allocation of use constituting a day or any part of a day on the National Forest System lands for which an outfitter or guide provides services to a client. The total number of service days is calculated by multiplying each service day by the number of clients on the trip (Forest Service Handbook 2709.11)

⁵ **Maximum Allowable Service Days** were determined by reviewing actual days and days authorized by annual special use permits across the ASNFs over the last 10 years. These proposed days per year do not exceed the number of days that have been permitted per year on the ASNFs over the last 10 years.

- Party size of 12 persons and/or 15 head of stock for hiking and riding groups in Escudilla and Bear Wallow Wilderness and the Blue Range Primitive Area shall not be exceeded.

No Other Alternatives were Developed for this Proposal

If Alternative A, the Proposed Action is not implemented, the agency would be less able to provide a high quality recreation experience to its users. With permits being issued annually (temporary only), the agency's ability to provide consistent and quality outfitted and guided uses would be diminished.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

No other alternatives were considered

Chapter 3 –Environmental Consequences

Recreation/Special Uses

Affected Environment

Permits for outfitting and guiding are required for any entity conducting commercial operations on a national forest. Commercial use is defined as (36 CFR 251.51) “any use or activity on National Forest System lands (a) where an entry or participation fee is charged or (b) where the primary purpose is the sale of a good or service, and, in either case, regardless of whether the use or activity is intended to produce a profit. There are currently no priority outfitter and guide permits on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. However, there are approximately 100-120 temporary or transitional outfitter and guide permits on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (2015) provides guidance for all resource management activities on the Forests. See the Land and Resource Management Plan Consistency section of this document for specific forest plan compliance for the recreation resource.

The proposed action was brought forward based on use that has occurred over the last ten years across the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs for hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and hiking. All of these uses occur across the national forests as part of the regular recreational experience.

Hunting

Hunting is one of the more popular and sought after recreational activities in the White Mountains of Arizona. It has been utilized from subsistence to now a more of a recreational use. Within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, the Arizona Game and Fish Department manages the hunting numerous big game, small game, waterfowl, predator, and furbearer species. Arizona Game and Fish lists big game species including elk, antelope (pronghorn), black bear, bighorn sheep, javelina, turkey, mountain lion, mule deer, and white-tailed deer (Coues deer). Small game species include band-tailed pigeon, blue grouse, cottontail rabbit, dove, quail, and tree squirrel. Waterfowl species include American widgeon, blue-winged teal, bufflehead, Canada geese, canvasback, cinnamon teal, common merganser, gadwall, mallard, northern pintail, northern shoveler, redhead, ring-necked duck, ruddy duck, and greater/lesser scaup. Predators include bobcat, coyote, fox, and skunk. Furbearers include badger, beaver, muskrat, raccoon, and ringtail.

Fishing

Fishing is dominated by introduced sport fish species stocked into fishable waters, with some native species as well. Fishing is normally done with rod and line, by boat or from shore, and using bait, artificial lures, or artificial flies. Ice fishing is another way to enjoy this activity during the winter months. Sport fish species within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests include apache trout (also a native), arctic grayling, rainbow trout, brown trout, cutthroat trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, crappie, sunfish, channel catfish, northern pike, and walleye. Outfitted and guided fishing on the ASNFs mostly consists of fly-fishing on streams for trout species.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding had been utilized for transportation prior to technological advances. Today it serves as a recreational activity that is also outfitted and guided.

Hiking

Hiking is another way to enjoy the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The ASNFs offer nearly 1,000 miles of trails. Outfitters and guides for this activity offer organized informational hikes for groups or individuals that one would not get going on their own.

For each of the four activities, days permitted was greater than days used, these numbers helped determine the proposed action for each of the use areas. Detailed spreadsheets are filed in the project record, however the results are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Outfitting and Guide Activities Permitted on the ASNFs from 2005-2015

Activity	Average number of days permitted	Average number of actual days used	Number of Days Proposed*
Hunting	6,066	1,030	2,000
Fishing	28	20	100
Horseback Riding	137,800	68,869	100,000
Hiking	338	181	1,000

*Days proposed are higher than average actual use per year, but are far lower than the amount number of days permitted from 2005-2015.

Additionally, long-term (greater than 14-day stays) has not been requested for outfitting and guiding activities, nor is anticipated in the future. Outfitters and guides on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests tend to be either local (off forest) or camping is less than 14 days, or no camping occurs as communities are close enough for overnight stays. If outfitters and guides do request stays over 14 days, districts would authorize on a case-by-case basis.

Additional project design applies to Mount Baldy, Escudilla, and Bear Wallow Wilderness Areas.

Environmental Consequences

The overall effect to recreation is an improvement in experience to users by having another means of use available to the public. This opportunity also allows for increased economic benefits to local communities.

Permitting for outfitted and guided activities is essential not only to provide a quality recreational experience for the public but to provide environmental and cultural resource protections. Permitted activities must follow a special use permit that requires permittees and their employees to ensure not only adherence to laws but environmental and cultural resource protections. These protections are included in all special use permits and include:

- Compliance with all present and future federal laws and regulations and all present and future, state, county, and municipal laws, regulations, and other legal requirements that fall under the jurisdiction of other government entities.
- Prohibition of use of mechanized transport or motorized transport in wilderness areas.
- Prohibition on impeding or interfering with other uses.

- Restriction of motor vehicles to designated roads, trails and areas, unless specifically provided in the operating plan.
- Resource protection – holders shall conduct all activities so as to prevent or minimize scarring, erosion, littering, and pollution to National Forest System lands, water pollution, and damage to watershed. In addition, the holder shall take precautions at all times to prevent wildfire.
- Noxious weed/exotic plant prevention and control – The holder shall be responsible for the protection and control of noxious weeds and/or exotic plants arising from authorized uses. This includes weed free hay if livestock is used.
- Damage to United States property – The holder has an affirmative duty to protect from damage the land, property, and other interests of the United States. Damage includes but is not limited to fire suppression costs, damage to government-owned improvements covered by permits, and all costs and damages associated with or resulting from the release or threatened release of a hazardous material occurring during or as a result of activities of the holder or the holder’s designee.
- Cultural Resources Protection – The holder or holder’s designee shall be responsible for the protection from damage of all cultural resources and identified Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) within the area which may be affected by their actions.
- Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act – If any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony are discovered, they will be immediately reported to the nearest Ranger Station and the holder or holder’s designee will make a reasonable effort to protect the remains and objects until the area is secured by the appropriate Forest Archeological staff.

Cultural Heritage

Affected Environment

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is all National Forest System lands located within the administrative boundaries of Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. Based on current GIS data, there are 7,282 cultural resource sites and 14 identified Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) and sacred sites identified within the administrative boundaries of the ASNFs. Of the 7,282 cultural resource sites, 5,587 are prehistoric, 642 are historic, 86 are multi-component (meaning that there are historic and prehistoric components occupying the same geographic space), and 967 of unknown origin or affiliation. The general time period for the prehistoric sites dates back from approximately 14,000 years ago to approximately AD 1860. These sites were occupied by ancestors of the Acoma, Apache, Hopi, Navajo, Yavapai, and Zuni and site types range from light artifact scatters to pit houses, above ground field houses, pueblos, wickiup rings, roasting pits, rock shelters, caves, rock art – just to name a few. Historic sites date from approximately 1860 to 50 years ago and include site types such as Native American artifact scatters, camps, wickiup rings, sweat lodges, breast-works, camps, dance areas, rock art, trails, and so forth. Historic Euroamerican sites include trails, roads, telecommunications lines, camps, livestock driveways, homesteads, Forest Service administrative sites, campgrounds, rock art, and water conveyance systems, among others.

The Traditional Cultural Properties, as identified by consulting Native American Tribes were listed in the ASNFs’ Forest Plan Revision (Forest Plan, Chapter 3, p. 434). These TCPs are as follows: Areas around Aspen Lake, Burro Mountain, Chevelon Butte, Escudilla Mountain, Flume Mountain, Gobbler Peak, Greens Peak, Head of Chevelon Canyon, Mt. Baldy, Pole Knoll, Roe Peak, St. Peters Dome, SU Knoll, various springs, caves, and the Little Colorado River. TCPs can also be unnamed places used by Native Amer-

icans for collecting plants, boughs, aspen trees, teepee poles, pigments, soil, feathers, pollen, hunting, religious pilgrimages, accessing springs, and making special offerings. These areas may only be known by the Tribes and access to these areas by Tribal members can happen any time of the year.

Cultural resources have been protected under law since the American Antiquities Act of 1906. Despite this, and the passage of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act in 1979, which identified penalties for damaging cultural resources and for stealing America's Heritage, looting and vandalism is still prevalent on the ASNFs. Currently, sites are monitored by Arizona Site Stewards and Forest Service personnel. Recreationists, hunters, and other members of the public sometimes report sites or evidence of vandalism, but more often than not, the public is not aware of the laws that protect cultural resources and Traditional Cultural Properties, which are non-renewable resources.

Environmental Consequences

Under Exemption II(A) of the First Amended Programmatic Agreement Regarding Historic Property Protection And Responsibilities Among New Mexico Historic Preservation Officer And Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer And Texas State Historic Preservation Officer And Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Officer And The Advisory Council On Historic Preservation And United States Department Of Agriculture Forest Service Region 3 (Region 3 Programmatic Agreement), the proposed action is administrative and would allow the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs to issue ten year priority use permits as well as temporary and transitional use permits that they currently issue without additional cultural resource inventory, as long as surface disturbance is not authorized, and there is very low likelihood of affecting historic properties or Traditional Cultural Properties. All activities authorized under outfitter and guide permits through this project are consistent with the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs. The proposed action will have no effect to cultural resources identified in this analysis. Additionally, the proposed activity coupled with cultural and archaeological sensitivity training will benefit cultural resources because the training will make the holders and holders' designees more aware of cultural and tribal resource concerns and the holders and holders' designees will also be made aware of the importance of these resources to Tribes, and it will give interested Tribes and the Forest Service an opportunity to teach the public about good stewardship and will in the long run help with caring for these non-renewable resources.

Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Resources and Plants

A list of endangered, threatened, candidate, and proposed Species was compiled by the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs with concurrence on September 20, 2013 by the Phoenix Endangered Species Office of the FWS. The USFWS-approved species list of 18 species that occur the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests was used in determining which, if any, listed species or critical habitat may be affected. Additionally, 28 wildlife species and 22 plant species were evaluated as Forest Service sensitive species, and three species were evaluated as Management Indicator Species. Finally eight migratory birds were evaluated. Information on the effects to each species and their habitats is available in the Biological Assessment and Evaluation within the project record.

Environmental Consequences/Determinations

The proposed action is administrative and would allow the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs to issue ten year priority use permits in addition to temporary and transitional use permits that they currently issue. The hunting and fishing activities that are allowed to be outfitted and guided on the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs under permit are authorized and regulated by the AZGFD and not the Forest Service. All other activities authorized under

outfitter and guide permits through this project are consistent with the 2015 Land Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves NFs. The proposed action will have no effect on any species or habitats identified in this analysis. Effects determinations are detailed below for Federally Listed Species and Habitats, Sensitive Species, Management Indicator Species, and Migratory Birds.

Federally Listed Species and Habitats

The determination for the issuance of ten year priority use, temporary use and transitional use permits for the identified maximum allowable service days is “**No Effect**” for all federally listed threatened or endangered species and federally listed critical habitat.

The determination is “**Not Likely to Jeopardize**” the continued existence of all federally list species with proposed status, or federally listed species with experimental, non-essential populations identified.

The determination is “**Not Likely to Adversely Modify**” all proposed critical habitat identified.

Forest Service Southwest Regional Forester’s Sensitive Species

The determination on the issuance of ten year priority use, temporary use and transitional use permits for the identified maximum allowable service days is “**No Effect**” for all USFS R3 Regional Forester’s sensitive species.

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Management Indicator Species

This project “**Will Not Alter Forest-wide Population or Habitat Trends**” for any MIS species.

Migratory Birds

No significant effects will occur to range-wide populations of migratory bird species because the proposed action will not deteriorate the suitability of migratory bird habitat, “Will not Result in Unintentional Take of Individuals”, and “Will not Cause a Decline in Populations”.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative impacts in the context of this analysis are contained within the boundary of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. Past, present, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable future activities that may affect resources on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests may include but are not limited to fuels reduction treatments, forest thinning including timber sales, watershed improvement, recreation management, re-authorization of livestock grazing allotments, lands special use permits (new issuances and maintenance on existing structures), personal use activities, road maintenance/improvement/reconstruction, power transmission line maintenance, and new road construction. While these activities can directly and indirectly affect resources, including wildlife and fish, plants, noxious weeds, range, cultural resources and TCPs, recreation, and special uses management, these actions are planned to minimize (and where possible, to eliminate) the effects above current conditions and have mitigation measures, design features, and best management practices, to decrease impacts that could occur from project implementation.

The implementation of the proposed action is not expected to result in any addition to current cumulative effects which may have already occurred due to ongoing management of the outfitter and guide program. Total days allocated would not increase from current levels; therefore, no cumulative effects are expected from implementation of the proposed action.

Finding of No Significant Impact

This analysis evaluates the effects of the project relative to the definition of significance established by the CEQ Regulations. A determination based on the EA and documentation included in the Project Record, documents that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. As a result, no Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared. Rationale for this finding is as follows, organized by sub-section of the CEQ definition of significance cited above.

Context

For the proposed action the context of the environmental effects is based on the environmental analysis in this EA.

The significance of the proposed action and alternatives has been analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. This project would contribute to restoration across the landscape. Those affected by this project during implementation activities and in the short term would include local residents and homeowners, recreationists, and tribal members.

The outfitter and guide project area is the entire Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

Intensity

Intensity is a measure of the severity, extent, or quantity of effects, and is based on information from the effects analysis of this EA and the references in the project record. The effects of this project have been appropriately and thoroughly considered with an analysis that is responsive to concerns and issues raised by the public. The agency has taken a hard look at the environmental effects using relevant scientific information and knowledge of site-specific conditions gained from field visits. A finding of no significant impact is based on the context of the project and intensity of effects using the ten factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b).

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

The finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. The effects to all resources of implementing the proposed action are disclosed in the EA and are determined to be local in context and short term in duration. In addition, implementation of project design features and best management practices as described in the EA, further reduce potential project impacts and conflicts.

The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

There would be no significant effects on public health and safety through the issuance of outfitting and guiding permits for the included uses.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, TCPs, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There would be no effect to unique characteristics within the project area that would be significantly affected by the project. Analysis in the EA did not identify the presence of any park lands, or prime farmlands. Cultural resource sites and TCPs are located within the boundaries of the special uses permit area, but will be avoided and likely benefit from cultural and archaeological sensitivity training put on by the ASNFs and interested Tribes. Ecologically critical areas identified were threatened and endangered species habitats (see wildlife section of the EA), but effects derminiations are not significant.

The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Controversy, in this context, refers to opposing scientific opinions, not public opposition to a project. The uses included in this project are important to the recreational experience and economy, all of which are highly supported.

The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The Forest Service has considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The analysis of the expected effects on all affected resources is disclosed in the EA. No unknown or unique risks were identified in the EA.

The degree to which the action may establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The implementation of this project would not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The proposed action would not be a major departure from the types of activities common to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. Additionally, decisions made in regards to activities within this project area would not commit the Forest Service to actions on lands outside this project area.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

From analysis completed by all resource specialists, the effects of implementing the proposed action does not individually, nor when considered with other past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions near the project area, reach a level of significance. Permitting of uses would only occur where appropriate, and their impacts would be reduced by project design and best management practices. For these reasons, cumulative impacts of the project would not have a significant effect.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The activities described in proposed action are not likely to affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Cultural resource sites and TCPs located within the boundaries of the special uses permit area will likely benefit from cultural and archaeological sensitivity training put on by the ASNFs and interested Tribes.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

As required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), analysis of the project area was completed to determine that the proposed action and alternative is "...not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitats".

The activities described in the proposed action are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act. The list of endangered and threatened, and sensitive species analyzed for this project can be found in this EA in the wildlife section). Biological Evaluations for threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants, wildlife, and fish were conducted and concluded that implementation of the proposed action would have little or no effect/impact to these species.

Interagency cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was conducted (Wildlife Biologist's Report). The Biological Evaluations have been summarized in the EA and are located in the project file. Design criteria and best management practices for the protection of wildlife habitats are presented in the proposed action section of this document.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The activities of this project would not violate applicable federal, state, or local laws enacted for the protection of the environment. The decision to implement the Selected Alternative is consistent with the goals and objectives as stated in the 2015 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (Forest Plan). In addition, the proposed action and alternative meets the requirements of the Clean Air Act (1990), the Clean Water Act (1972), the National Forest Management Act (1976), the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960, the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

Irreversible Resource Commitments and Irretrievable Losses (General)

The physical and biological effects are limited to the project area and/or immediate adjacent areas. There are no known significantly irreversible resource commitments or any significant irretrievable losses of vegetation resources, wildlife habitats, soil productivity, water quality, or other resources.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice effects were considered in compliance with Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations. The Apache-Sitgreaves NFs Outfitter and Guide Authorization project was analyzed to determine if minority and/or low-income populations would experience disproportionately high adverse effects due to project implementation. The alternative considered in detail provides equal access to National Forest System lands to all persons and would not disproportionately affect minority and/or low-income populations.

Effects on Floodplains and Wetlands

There are floodplains and wetlands within the project area. These areas would not experience any significant adverse effects from management activities. The floodplains within the project area would not receive measurable impact by upstream influences. Management activities designed to protect these resources conform to the federal regulations for floodplains (Executive Order 11988) and wetlands (Executive Order 11990).

Invasive Species Executive Order 13112 of February 3, 1999

Land actions that disturb the ground have the potential to contribute to the spread of noxious weeds and other non-native plants. The project will incorporate integrated weed management measures. The analysis conducted in the Environmental Assessment for the Noxious Weed Management Plan determined noxious weed control actions are consistent with laws and regulations applicable to the management of National Forest System lands and resources. Compared with this potential, the benefits of the project outweigh the potential harm of invasive species.

Chapter 4 - Consultation and Coordination

Preparers and Contributors

Table 3 - Forest Service Team Members and Contributors

Name	Area of Expertise
Stephen Best	Forest Supervisor, Deciding Official
Cody Hutchinson	Forest Environmental Coordinator, Team Leader
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Tina Sorenson	Lakeside Ranger District Special Uses Administrator, Lakeside RD Recreation Special Uses
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Phillip Dobesh	Springerville Ranger District Wildlife Biologist, Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife
Esther Morgan	Forest Archaeologist, Tribal and Cultural Resources

The Forest Service consulted the following Federal, State, and local agencies, and tribes during the development of this environmental assessment:

Cooperating Agencies:

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Represented by Dan Dymond, Law Enforcement Specialist

Federal, State, and Local Agencies:

United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Apache County
Coconino County
Greenlee County
Navajo County

Tribes:

Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation
Hopi Tribe
Hualapai Tribe
Navajo Nation
Pueblo of Acoma
Pueblo of Zuni
Ramah Chapter of the Navaho Nation
San Carlos Apache Tribe
Tonto Apache Tribe
White Mountain Apache Tribe
Yavapai-Apache Nation
Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe

Literature Cited

The following literature has been cited throughout this analysis.

U.S. Forest Service. (2015). Land and Resource Management Plan, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

U.S. Forest Service. (2008) Forest Service Handbook 2709.11, Chapter 40 – Special Uses Administration.