



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

**Southwestern  
Region**

May 2012



# **Environmental Assessment**

**APS/Waste Management of  
Arizona, Inc.'s Gray Wolf  
Regional Landfill  
12kV Distribution Line**

**Prescott National Forest**



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# Chapter 1: Purpose and Need

## Document Structure

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This EA discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. The document is organized into the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need: The section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency’s proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.
- Chapter 2 – Alternatives: This section provides a more detailed description of the agency’s Proposed Action as well as the No Action alternative, which provides a baseline for comparison of environmental effects. Possible mitigation measures are also discussed.
- Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences: This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Action and the No Action alternative. This analysis is organized by resource area. Within each section, the affected environment is described first, followed by the effects of the No Action alternative and Proposed Action Alternative.
- Chapter 4 – Consultation and Coordination: This section provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the EA.
- Chapter 5 – References: This chapter lists the references used in the development of the EA.

## Background

The Prescott National Forest (PNF) is proposing to authorize an amendment to the existing APS Master Special Use Permit (SUP) (BRA401924) for distributions lines of 33kV and below, which would allow Arizona Public Service Company (APS) to construct, operate, and maintain a 6.43-mile-long underground 12 kilovolt (kV) distribution line to service Waste Management of Arizona, Inc.’s (Waste Management) Gray Wolf Regional Landfill facility. The line would be located along the southern boundary within the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) State Route (SR) 169 right-of-way (ROW), 11.5 miles east of the Town of Dewey, Yavapai County, Arizona between mile posts (MP) 4.90 through 11.33 (*Figure 1*). The Waste Management Gray Wolf facility is currently powered by diesel-fueled generators and solar panels. The proposed distribution line (requested from APS by Waste Management) would provide a reliable and consistent source of power to the facility and allow for growth of the electrical infrastructure necessary for landfill and hauling operations.

The Gray Wolf landfill facility is currently owned and operated by Waste Management under a 20-year contract agreement with Yavapai County. The 160-acre facility is surrounded by PNF lands.

# APS-WM Gray Wolf 12kV EA

EnviroSystems Project No. 1641-11

Proposed project corridor  
along State Highway 169.



1:42,000

0 0.5 1 Mile

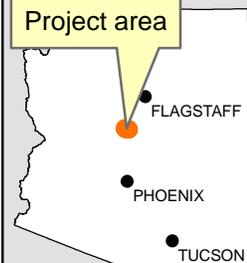


0 0.5 1 Kilometer

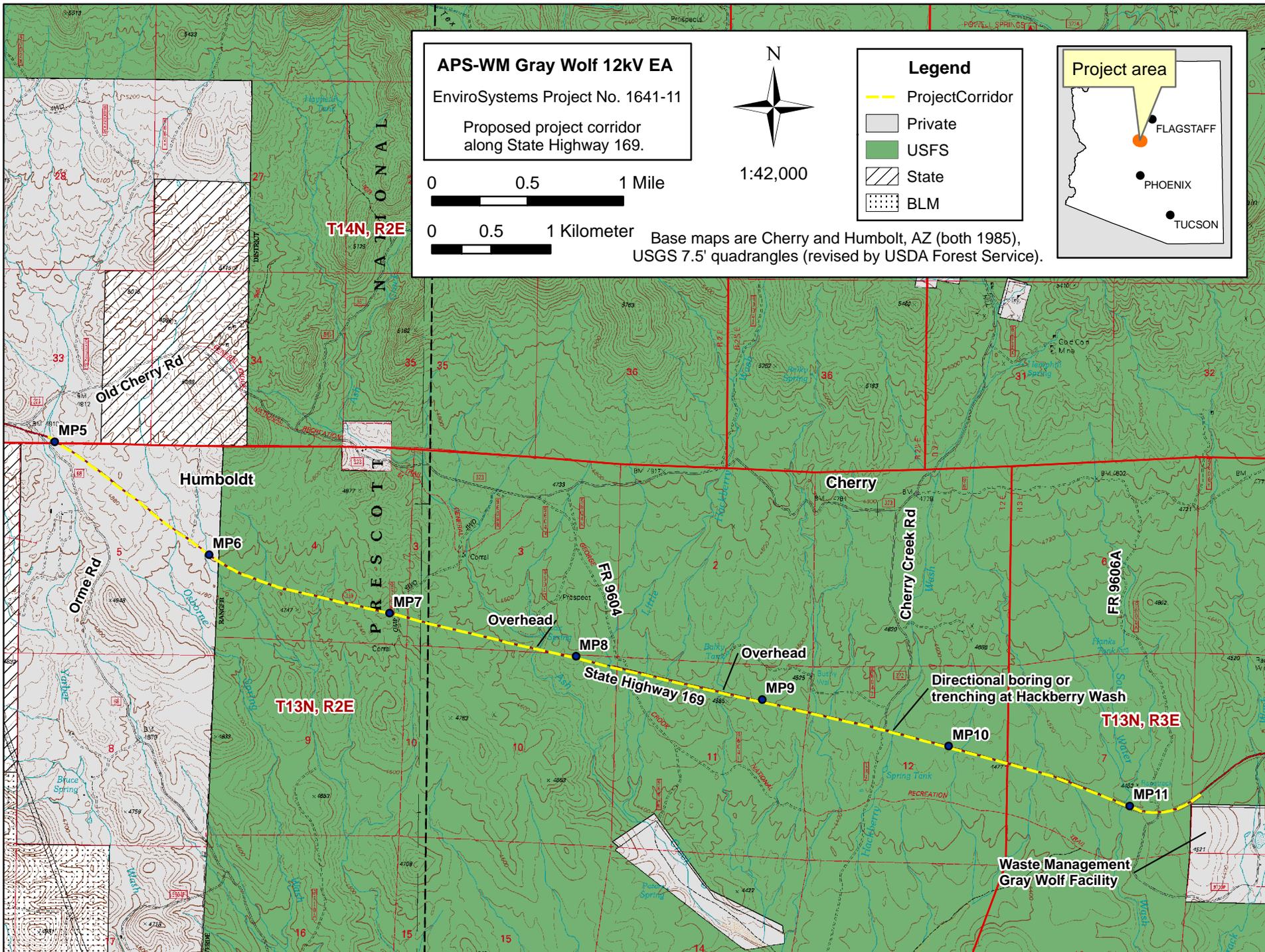


## Legend

- ProjectCorridor
- Private
- USFS
- State
- BLM



Base maps are Cherry and Humbolt, AZ (both 1985),  
USGS 7.5' quadrangles (revised by USDA Forest Service).



## Purpose and Need for Action

Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 251.50 require that all uses of National Forest System lands, improvements, and resources are designated “special uses.” Before conducting a special use, individuals or entities must submit a proposal to the authorized officer and must obtain a special use authorization from the authorized officer.

The Gray Wolf Regional Landfill facility is currently powered by solar panels and diesel-fueled generators. Since the facility is not on the power grid, solar panels and temporary generators do not reliably provide enough power generation to operate the facility adequately or allow for growth of the electrical infrastructure necessary for landfill and hauling operations. Therefore, APS and Waste Management have proposed to build the Gray Wolf 12kV distribution line to provide reliable power to the facility. An application for that use has been submitted to the PNF. The solar system will be kept online, but the proposed 12kV distribution line would provide a sufficient and consistent power source to meet current and future power needs of this facility which serves Yavapai County.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the PNF Land and Resource Management Plan and Forest Service policies for special use authorizations. This project “fulfills a demonstrated special need without unduly infringing on the use by the general public” (USDA 1987, as amended).

## Proposed Action

The PNF proposes to authorize an amendment to the existing APS Master SUP (BRA401924) for distributions lines of 33kV and below, which would allow the construction, operation, and maintenance of the 6.43-mile underground 12kV distribution line to serve Waste Management’s Gray Wolf Landfill located within the southern boundary of the SR169 ROW in Yavapai County, Arizona. The proposed distribution line would be located within a 20-foot corridor between MP 4.9 through MP 11.33. Short sections of the proposed distribution line construction ROW would be wider than 20 feet to accommodate for rock outcroppings and other topographic features. The line would cross the PNF (5.34 miles, 13.9 acres) and private lands (1.09 miles, 2.64 acres). The proposed 12kV distribution line route extends across portions of Section 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, and 12 of Township 13N, Range 2E; Sections 7 and 8 of Township 13N, Range 3E; and Section 33 of Township 14N, Range 2E (refer to *Figure 1*). Specifically, the project involves the following:

- Install one new power pole at the northwest end of the project limits (MP 4.9) to allow connection with the existing line.
- Replace four existing telephone poles with powerline distribution poles that span Ash Creek at MP 7.8 and an unnamed wash at MP 8.7.
- Trench or directional bore under Hackberry Wash located at MP 9.7, and trench through remaining washes along project corridor.
- Dip and extend 3-phase underground primary for 6.43 miles in the southern ADOT ROW of SR169 within a 20-foot-wide project ROW, installing ground level pull boxes approximately every ¼ mile.
- At the landfill facility, set a pad-mounted cap bank, switching cabinet, and transformer and run service to serve a 600A, 277/480 section of line.
- Also at the facility, extend single-phase underground primary, and set a transformer to provide telephone service to the landfill site. High-speed telephone cable would be co-located in the same trench as the powerline.
- Implement a traffic plan during construction and use signage where appropriate to inform the public of construction activities.

## Decision Framework

The Deciding Official for this project is the PNF Supervisor who will be responsible for deciding whether to issue the SUP amendment to APS for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed 12kV distribution line to service the Waste Management Gray Wolf Landfill facility. The Deciding Official may choose the Proposed Action, or elect to not issue the permit.

## Public Involvement

The proposal was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) on the PNF website on October, 2011. On December 19, 2011, a scoping packet was sent to six agencies/government organizations, and 24 individuals/private entities. Residents along SR169 from Old Cherry Road to the Gray Wolf Landfill were included on this mailing list. The scoping packet contained a letter detailing the project, a map, and a comment form. The scoping letter and map were also posted on the PNF website. A total of two comments were received by the PNF concerning the project:

- One comment was received from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), Water Quality Division noting that certain permits and certifications may be required.
- One comment was received from Yavapai County stating they had no concerns.

## Issues

Issues serve to highlight effects or consequences that may result from the Proposed Action Alternative, No Action Alternative and any other alternatives that may be considered, giving opportunities during the analysis to disclose effects, develop mitigation measures to reduce potential adverse effects, and compare trade-offs for the Deciding Official and public to understand. The following resources have been identified by the PNF ID Team as having potential issues resulting from the Proposed Action. Effects to these resources are fully discussed and analyzed in Chapters 3 of the EA.

**Land Use:** Effects and potential conflicts to existing land ownership and uses within the project corridor are evaluated for all alternatives considered. Other SUPs that may have been issued by the PNF within the project area are also discussed.

**Soil and Water:** Under the Proposed Action, trenching, boring, and other construction/maintenance related activities could affect soils resources. Effects to water resources are analyzed in the context of erosion potential into nearby waterways. In addition, potential ADEQ and Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) permit requirements are discussed.

**Wildlife:** Potential impacts to wildlife, including Federally listed species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Regional Forester Sensitive species list (TES), Management Indicator Species (MIS), and species listed under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA), are assessed.

**Vegetation:** Presence/absence and potential impacts to TES plant species are evaluated, as well as the potential for the establishment of invasive/noxious weeds resulting from construction.

**Heritage Resources:** Previous surveys and archeological resources are described and analyzed within the EA.

**Visual Resources:** Effects to visual resources in the context of the Forest Service's Visual Management System (USDA 1974) are analyzed.

**Public Health and Safety:** Public health and safety risks are analyzed in the EA.

# Chapter 2: Alternatives

This chapter fully describes the two alternatives considered for this project. Because no issues were identified that would result in another action alternative, no other alternatives than the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternatives were developed for the APS/Waste Management Gray Wolf Regional Landfill facility/12kV distribution line project. This chapter provides a summary of the issues and environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives which allows the public and Deciding Official to easily compare effects of each.

## Alternatives

### Alternative 1

#### No Action

Under the No Action alternative, the 6.43-mile long 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. The Waste Management Gray Wolf Regional Landfill facility would not receive a reliable and consistent source of power. The use of solar panels and diesel-fueled generators to power the facility would continue. The facility would need to purchase and operate additional diesel generators to support regulatory required operations at the site.

### Alternative 2

#### The Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, the PNF would authorize an amendment to the existing APS Master SUP (BRA401924) for distributions lines of 33kV and below, which would allow for construction, operation, and maintenance of a 6.43-mile long 12kV distribution line to service the Waste Management Gray Wolf Landfill facility in Yavapai County, Arizona. The proposed distribution line would be located within the southern boundary of ADOT SR169 ROW. Approximately 5.43 miles of the proposed distribution line would cross PNF lands, and 1.09 miles of the line would cross private lands. The total project work area would be 16.54 acres (13.90 acres on PNF lands, 2.64 acres on private lands).

The proposed distribution line would cross 16 named and unnamed washes (described in detail in Chapter 3). All of these washes would be trenched through with the exception of Ash Creek Wash (MP 7.8), an unnamed wash (MP 8.7), and potentially Hackberry Wash (MP 9.7). Four existing telephone poles are present at Ash Creek Wash and the unnamed wash at MP 8.7. These telephone poles would be replaced with powerline distribution poles, to allow overhead crossing of the washes. At Hackberry Wash (MP 9.7), the proposed distribution line would cross by either directional boring under the wash, or trenching. Along the remainder of the line, trenching would occur to a width of 16 inches and at a depth of 60 inches below grade. The telephone line would be co-located with the powerline overhead and underground.

Under the Proposed Action, APS would not maintain an access road along the distribution line corridor and no new access roads would be constructed. APS proposes to travel overland within the 20-foot wide ROW for the duration of construction. Improved access points will be utilized every  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, and would be reseeded and after construction is complete.

## Mitigation Measures for Proposed Action

The PNF Plan (USDA 1987, as amended) standards and guidelines, Best Management Practices (BMPs), Best Known Practices (BKPs), and applicable Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction would be incorporated in the design and implementation of the Proposed Action.

### Noxious or Invasive Weeds

BKPs as outlined in Appendix B of the “Final Environmental Impact Statement for Integrated Treatment of Noxious or Invasive Weeds: Coconino, Kaibab, and Prescott National Forests and Coconino, Mohave, and Yavapai Counties, Arizona” (USDA 2005) would be followed to incorporate weed prevention and control into the project. The following features would be integrated into project implementation:

- Construction and maintenance equipment would be kept free of invasive species by washing the equipment prior to entering the construction site and prior to departing the site.
- Soil disturbance would be minimized to the extent practicable; no new access roads would be created.
- Any fill, seed, or mulch material brought in from off-site would be free of invasive and non-native species seed except for any sterile, non-native seeds that may be approved for temporary soil stabilization.
- Disturbed soils would be reseeded using species native to the project vicinity.
- If any invasive weeds are encountered during implementation of the Proposed Action, the locations would be documented and reported to PNF.

### Soils and Watershed Protection Measures

Soil and watershed protection measures would follow direction of the PNF Plan (USDA 1987, as amended) and Forest Service Handbook (FSH)-2509.22 (Soil and Water Conservation Handbook; USDA 1988). APS would assist Waste Management in preparing a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the proposed project to satisfy Section 402 of the CWA requirements. Specific mitigation measures relating to soils and water resources also include:

- Soil stabilization techniques will be used where construction activities take place. This includes use of BMPs for erosion control, and employing techniques to reduce soil destabilization.
- To the extent feasible, disturbed areas would be re-contoured to reflect the surrounding conditions. Washes would be restored to their original condition.
- Construction crews will employ erosion, sediment, material, stockpile, and dust control BMPs as specified in the SWPPP on-site in order to minimize any fill or runoff from work areas from entering waterways.
- Disturbed soils will be seeded using PNF-approved species native to the project vicinity.

### Public Health and Safety

The Waste Management construction contractor would implement a traffic plan during construction. Additionally, signage would be used where appropriate to warn nearby residents and the traveling public of construction activities.

# Chapter 3: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

This chapter summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments due to implementation of the alternatives. The following analysis of environmental consequences is organized by resource area and discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action on those resources.

## Land Use

Of the 16.54 acre footprint associated with implementing the Proposed Action, 13.90 acres occurs on PNF lands, and 2.64 acres on private lands. Residential land use occurs near the western limits of the project area on the private lands. The entire project corridor is adjacent to SR169, which serves as a transportation route between Interstate 17 and the Towns of Humboldt/Prescott Valley. The PNF Plan (USDA 1987, as amended) has designated the PNF portion of the project corridor as Management Area (MA) 3 (Chaparral), and MA 5 (Desert Grassland). According to the PNF Plan, management emphasis for MA 3 includes: improved and maintained watershed conditions on the majority of chaparral acres; maximum range management in the chaparral, desert shrub, and grassland areas with remaining range acres managed at the current level or below; wildlife management emphasized in the ponderosa pine, pinyon/juniper, chaparral and juniper areas; fire management emphasized in the chaparral lands adjacent to high value resource areas, private land inholdings and communities such as Prescott and Crown King; improve all riparian areas and maintain in satisfactory condition (USDA 1987, as amended). Management emphasis for MA 5 includes: range and watershed management; improve all riparian areas and maintain in satisfactory condition; maintain environmental quality and reduce user conflicts with regards to recreation activities (USDA 1987, as amended).

Recreational use within the project area is minimal with the exception of the General Crook Trail which bisects the proposed corridor at approximately MP 8.3. The General Crook Trail begins near Dewey and crosses the Prescott, Coconino, and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests eventually ending near the community of Pinedale in eastern Arizona (USDA 2012a). This is a maintained trail which provides recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking, and equestrian use. However, the segment of the General Crook Trail which crosses the project corridor is currently an asphalted portion of in-use Forest Road 9604K and is not used strictly for recreational purposes.

No prime or unique farmland, unique features, or other special designated land use areas occur within the project corridor (NRCS 2012).

### Alternative 1: No Action

#### *Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects*

Under the No Action Alternative, the APS/Waste Management Gray Wolf Regional Landfill 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. As a result, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to land use would occur.

### Alternative 2: Proposed Action

#### *Direct and Indirect Effects*

There are no anticipated impacts to land use under the Proposed Action. The project corridor is located adjacent to an existing State highway, and access to residences and recreational resources (i.e., General Crook Trail) would be maintained throughout construction, operation, and maintenance of the distribution line. The Proposed Action would be consistent with the MA goals outlined in the PNF Plan. Riparian areas will be maintained in satisfactory condition. No prime farmland, unique features, or other special designated land use areas would be impacted by implementing the Proposed Action.

#### *Cumulative Effects*

Because there are no direct or indirect impacts to land use under the Proposed Action, no cumulative effects would result from implementation.

## **Soil and Water**

### **Soils**

The APS/Gray Wolf Regional Landfill 12 kV distribution line project occurs at elevations ranging from approximately 4,450 to 4,900 feet above mean sea level (amsl). Soils within the project area are classified as MH2 – Mesic Subhumid Lithic Haplustolls-Lithic Argiustolls-Rock Outcrop Association (Hendricks 1985). MH2 soils are shallow, gravely and cobbly, moderately coarse to moderately fine-textured, and occur on gently sloping to very steep hills, mountains, and rock outcrops. These are well-drained and shallow soils formed in the residuum igneous and sedimentary hills and mountains (Hendricks 1985).

### **Water**

The project area occurs within the Agua Fria watershed (NRCS 2007). The Agua Fria watershed covers approximately 2,784 square miles and is bounded by the Black Hills to the north and northeast, the Humboldt and Maverick Butte Mountains to the east, and the Bradshaw, Hieroglyphic, and White Tank Mountains to the west (NRCS 2007). The most significant water resource within this watershed is the Agua Fria River with an annual mean stream flow of 3.89 cubic feet per second, near Humboldt (NRCS 2007). Sixteen named and unnamed ephemeral washes intersect the project area corridor, and these washes eventually feed into the Agua Fria River (*Table 1*).

Table 1. Washes Crossed by the Proposed 12kV Distribution Line

Wash Name	Location (MP)	Method of Crossing
Osborne Spring Wash	5.8	Trenching
Unnamed wash	6.0	Trenching
Unnamed wash	6.3	Trenching
Unnamed wash	6.6	Trenching
Ash Creek Wash	7.8	Overhead via replacement of existing telephone poles
Little Hackberry Wash	8.2	Trenching
Unnamed wash	8.4	Trenching
Unnamed wash	8.5	Trenching
Unnamed wash	8.7	Overhead via replacement of existing telephone poles
Unnamed wash	9.3	Trenching
Unnamed wash	9.4	Trenching
Hackberry Wash	9.7	Directional boring under wash or trenching
Unnamed wash	10.1	Trenching
Unnamed wash	10.5	Trenching
Unnamed wash	10.7	Trenching

Wash Name	Location (MP)	Method of Crossing
Sour Water Wash	11.0	Trenching

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate map panels for the project area were reviewed. Two floodplain crossings are present along the proposed project corridor at Ash Creek Wash (MP 7.8) and Little Hackberry Wash (MP 8.2). These areas have been designated as special flood hazard areas, subject to the inundation by the 1 percent annual chance flood (FEMA 2010).

No wetlands occur within the project area; however wetlands are present within a ¼ mile of the project corridor. Bally Tank (0.14 acres) is located approximately 0.2 miles north of SR169 at approximately MP 8.7. Another freshwater pond (0.14 acres) associated with unnamed wash at MP 10.5 is located approximately 0.22 miles south of SR169 (USFWS 2012). These designated wetland areas are classified as Palustrine, intermittently flooded, diked/impounded, freshwater ponds with unconsolidated shores (USFWS 2012).

### **Alternative 1: No Action**

#### *Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects*

Under the No Action Alternative, the APS/Gray Wolf Regional Landfill 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. As a result, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to soil or water resources would occur.

### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

#### *Direct and Indirect Effects*

The Proposed Action would directly and temporarily disturb soils within the 6.43-mile, 20-foot wide corridor. The total area of soil disturbance under the Proposed Action has been estimated at 16.54 acres (13.90 acres on PNF lands, 2.64 acres on private lands) by means of vegetation clearing, trenching to a width of 16 inches and to a depth of 60 inches below grade, and soil compaction from heavy equipment use.

An indirect effect of soil disturbance (as well as vegetation removal) would be an increased risk of surface runoff during rainfall events. Surface runoff would increase the potential for erosion, which would lead to increased sedimentation into washes downstream. However, Waste Management's construction contractor would compact trench soils to reduce sedimentation release during storm events. With implementation of soil compaction measures, sedimentation into washes crossings would not be substantial.

The distribution line would cross Hackberry Wash (MP 9.7) by means of either trenching or directional boring under the wash. If directional boring under the wash is the chosen method, effects to soil and water resources at Hackberry Wash would be very low, as no surface disturbance within the channel would occur. If trenching is the chosen method of crossing the wash, soil surface disturbance would occur, and there would be a higher risk for erosion and sedimentation during rainfall events. However, with implementation of the mitigation measures described in Chapter 2, such effects at Hackberry Wash would not be substantial.

To minimize surface runoff and erosion outside of washes, APS will assist Waste Management in preparing the SWPPP. Waste Management will implement and adhere to the SWPPP until which APS assumes responsibility during the pulling of wire and restoration. APS Environmental Field

operations will assist Waste Management in preparing and submitting the SWPPP to ADEQ. Once vegetation reestablishment along the corridor has been implemented soils will be stabilized and sedimentation into washes would be minimal and wash crossings would be restored to their original condition.

Activities with the potential to affect floodplains would occur at the two identified floodplains associated with Little Hackberry Wash and Ash Creek Wash as a result of implementing the Proposed Action. Trenching at Little Hackberry Wash and replacing existing poles to allow overhead crossing at Ash Creek Wash are not expected to alter the floodplain, and no change to existing grade or fill is expected to occur. In accordance with the statutory exemptions of the Yavapai County Flood Control District Ordinance 2010-1, Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (Yavapai County Flood Control District 2010) “written authorization shall not be required, nor shall the Floodplain Board prohibit: ...the construction and erection of poles, towers, foundations, support structures, guy wires, and other facilities related to power transmission as constructed by any utility whether a public service corporation or a political subdivision.” However, APS will provide the floodplain manager the opportunity to review and comment on the design plans.

APS anticipates CWA Section 404 compliance under Nationwide Permit 12 and associated conditions, as trenching activities will be confined to less than one-half acre of Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. (JWUS).

An ADOT Encroachment Permit would be obtained to record all utilities in the ROW and oversee compliance to ADOT’s Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Widening of SR169 by ADOT is planned as a future project and could result in cumulative effects to soil and water resources. Additional asphalt and vegetation removal could increase erosion and surface runoff potential. However, as described above, implementation of a SWPPP and all associated BMPs would minimize impacts to soil and water resources resulting from the Proposed Action. Additionally, ADOT would be required to prepare a SWPPP and adhere to BMPs, thereby limiting the potential for substantial cumulative impacts to soils and water quality. It is unknown if the effects to soils and water from the APS/Waste Management Gray Wolf 12kV distribution line project would overlap in time with the widening of SR169. However, because the widening of SRR169 is not listed on the Central Yavapai Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Program for fiscal year 2013-2017, it is unlikely the project would occur in the next five years.

## **Wildlife**

The following analysis summarizes information contained in the Wildlife, Fisheries, and Rare Plants (WFRP) Specialist Report/Biological Evaluation (EnviroSystems 2012a). The WFRP assesses 1) federally listed as Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Candidate species and habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA); 2) Regional Forester Forest Service Sensitive species; 3) Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA); 4) Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and Important Bird Areas (IBAs); and 5) Forest Plan Management Indicator Species (MIS).

### **Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species**

TES includes species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Candidate species and/ or designated Critical Habitat and species listed by the Regional Forester as Sensitive.

On January 11, 2012, biological surveys of the project area were conducted and a WFRP Report was subsequently prepared for the proposed project (EnviroSystems 2012a). While no TES species were observed during the field survey, potential habitat was identified for the USFWS Candidate species: Morafka's desert tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*; Sonoran population). Although Morafka's desert tortoise has been known to occur in interior chaparral, no individuals, scat, burrows, shell, bone, or other sign of this species were observed. In addition, the project area occurs at the northern extent of its range ([www.reptilesandamphibians.org/Turtle-Amphibians-Subpages/h-g-morafkai.html](http://www.reptilesandamphibians.org/Turtle-Amphibians-Subpages/h-g-morafkai.html)). No individuals or habitat for species listed on the Regional Forester Forest Service Sensitive species list was identified.

### **Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Important Bird Areas**

Executive Order 13186 (January 19, 2001), the MBTA, and the BGEPA, require Federal agencies to consider management impacts to eagles and other migratory birds. Federal agencies are required to identify whether unintentional take would occur, and if so, whether such take would have a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations. Take is defined as "to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect (50 CFR 10.12).

No nesting habitat for bald or golden eagles occurs in the project area. Bald or golden eagles may be seen incidentally on occasion while foraging.

Based on vegetation communities within the project area, migratory bird species such as the black-chinned sparrow, canyon towhee, Virginia's warbler, Brewer's sparrow, Bell's vireo, olive-sided flycatcher, and sage sparrow may be expected to occur within the project area.

IBAs are listed on the National Audubon Society's (NAS) website (NAS 2010). The Watson and Willow Lake Ecosystem IBA is the nearest IBA located approximately 15 miles north-northwest of the project area.

### **Management Indicator Species**

MIS are those plants, animals, and communities which are considered characteristic of various habitat types. Forest level population trends for MIS were discussed in Forest Level Analysis of MIS for the PNF (USDA 2010). The affected environment does not provide any habitat for PNF MIS except for the spotted (rufous-sided) towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*). Suitable habitat is not present for all other PNF MIS (EnviroSystems 2012a).

### **Alternative 1: No Action**

#### *Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects*

Under the No Action Alternative, the APS/Gray Wolf 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. As a result, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to TES, MIS, bald or golden eagles, migratory birds, or IBAs would occur.

### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

#### *Direct and Indirect Effects*

No designated Critical Habitat occurs in the project area for any species listed under the ESA. Suitable habitat may exist for Morafka's desert tortoise, an USFWS Candidate species. No individuals appear to inhabit the project area. Any potential loss of habitat for Morafka's desert tortoise is minor considering the abundantly available similar habitat immediately adjacent to the

project area. The existing vegetation community does not provide any suitable habitat for Regional Forester Forest Service Sensitive species; therefore, this project is not likely to affect such species.

The affected environment does not provide any habitat for MIS except for the spotted (rufous-sided) towhee. The spotted (rufous-sided) towhee will have a marginal loss of roadside habitat within the project area; however, this habitat is also widely abundant in the areas direct adjacent to the project area. No discernible change in habitat quantity or quality is expected from this project, and no changes in MIS trends are expected as a result of the Proposed Action.

Based on vegetation communities within the project area, the black-chinned sparrow, canyon towhee, Virginia's warbler, Brewer's sparrow, Bell's vireo, olive-sided flycatcher, and sage sparrow may be expected to occur within the project area. Impacts to migratory bird habitat include minimal loss of potential nesting habitat and foraging habitat, and marginal loss of cover. No snags occur within the project area. Removal and/or destruction of vegetation used by migratory birds is not considered "take" under the MBTA. Some individuals may avoid the project area during construction; however, there would not be any discernible impacts to any species or populations of migratory birds from this project. There are no IBAs near the project area; therefore, none would be affected.

#### *Cumulative Effects*

Because there are no direct or indirect effects to TES, there are no anticipated cumulative effects to such species or their habitats. Potential cumulative impacts to migratory birds and MIS may result from loss of habitat through the foreseeable development and widening of SR169. However, considering the vast amount of suitable habitat for MIS and migratory birds surrounding the project area, cumulative effects are not considered substantial.

## **Vegetation**

The project area occurs in the Interior Chaparral biotic community (Brown 1994), with shrub live oak (*Quercus turbinella*) as the dominant species. This species occurs in dense stands throughout the project area except for drainage crossings. Other common species include skunk bush (*Rhus trilobata*) and three awn grass (*Aristida* sp.). Drainage crossings are vegetated with scattered trees and shrubs often associated with riparian areas such as Netleaf hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*), and *Baccharis* spp.

### **Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species**

During the field survey by EnviroSystems biologists on January 11, 2012, no Federally listed plants or their habitats were identified. Additionally, no Forest Service Sensitive plants or their habitats were identified within the project area (EnviroSystems 2012a).

### **Noxious or Invasive Weeds**

No noxious weeds species identified in the "Final Environmental Impact Statement for Integrated Treatment of Noxious or Invasive Weeds: Coconino, Kaibab, and Prescott National Forests and Coconino, Mojave, and Yavapai Counties, Arizona" (USDA 2005) as weeds of concern were observed during the field surveys. Some scattered non-native herbaceous species were identified within the project area including horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), and Johnson grass (*Sorghum halapense*).

### **Alternative 1: No Action**

#### *Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects*

Under the No Action Alternative, the APS/Gray Wolf Regional Landfill 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. As a result, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to vegetation would occur.

## **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

### *Direct and Indirect Effects*

During construction of the 12kV distribution line, vegetation clearing would occur along the entire project corridor using heavy equipment. In total, approximately 16.54 acres of land (including both PNF and private lands) would be cleared of vegetation. However, APS would reseed the disturbed soils using species native to the project vicinity. Maintenance along the distribution line would be minimal, and APS would not construct or maintain an access route. As such, vegetation communities are expected to become reestablished along the project corridor.

No Federally listed or plants listed by the Regional Forester as Sensitive or habitat for such species occurs in the project area; therefore none would be affected.

In order to minimize risk of introduction and spread of noxious or invasive weeds, APS would implement BKPs (specific BKPs are identified in Chapter 2) during construction, operation, and maintenance of the 12kV distribution line. With adherence to these measures, the risk of introduction of noxious and invasive weed species into the project corridor as a result of the proposed action will be greatly reduced. No adverse effects regarding noxious and invasive weeds are anticipated.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Vegetation near the adjacent to the project corridor has previously been impacted by the construction and maintenance of SR169. Additional vegetation removal would occur when the highway is widened. SR169 and the proposed project corridor occur in a rural setting with large amounts of undeveloped land. These two projects are not anticipated to result in substantial impacts to the local or regional vegetation communities.

## **Heritage Resources**

EnviroSystems conducted an archival records search via AZSITE and consulted Jim McKie (PNF Archaeologist) regarding previous cultural resource evaluations conducted on or adjacent to the project corridor. In total, five inventories have been conducted within or adjacent to the SR169 ROW, and six other projects were done in support of a land exchange involving the Gray Wolf Landfill property. These projects did not identify any cultural resources in or near the project corridor (EnviroSystems 2012b).

As recommend by Forest Archaeologist, Jim McKie, spot checks for cultural resources were conducted in four areas totaling 0.40 acre within the proposed project corridor on January 11, 2012. No cultural resources were identified. The segment of the General Crook Trail which crosses the project corridor at approximately MP 8.3 is currently an asphalted portion of in-use Forest Road 9604K (EnviroSystems 2012b).

## **Alternative 1: No Action**

### *Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects*

Under the No Action Alternative, the APS/Gray Wolf Regional Landfill 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. As a result, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to heritage resources would occur.

### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

#### *Direct and Indirect*

Because no cultural resources occur within the project area, there would be no direct or indirect effects to heritage resources.

#### *Cumulative Effects*

Because there are no direct or indirect effects to heritage resources, there would be no cumulative effects to heritage resources.

## **Visual Resources**

Scenery resources of the PNF are currently managed through the application of the Visual Management System (VMS) as described in the National Forest Landscape Management, (Agriculture Handbook No. 462; USDA 1974). The culmination of the VMS is Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) prescribed for all lands within the PNF. Existing VQOs along the project corridor are Retention and Partial Retention. Retention refers to areas in which management activities are not visually evident. Partial Retention refers to areas in which management activities remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

Other key components of VQOs include: Distance Zones, Sensitivity Levels, and Variety Classes. Distance Zones are divisions of a particular landscape being viewed. Distance Zone classification for the entire project area is Foreground (areas within ¼ to ½ mile from observer) due to the project's close proximity to SR169. Sensitivity Levels refer to the public's concern for scenic quality of the areas when viewed, and range from Level 1 (Highest Sensitivity) to Level 3 (Lowest Sensitivity). The entire project corridor is classified as Level 1 (Highest Sensitivity) due to the close proximity to a primary travel route – SR169. Variety Classes represent the physical features of the landscape such as landforms, vegetation patterns, and unique features. Variety Classes include Class A (Distinctive), Class B (Common), and Class C (Minimal). The project area is defined as Class B and Class C, as the form, line, color, and texture of features tend to be common and not outstanding in visual quality.

### **Alternative 1: No Action**

#### *Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects*

Under the No Action Alternative, the APS/Gray Wolf Regional Landfill 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. As a result, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to visual resources would occur.

### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

#### *Direct and Indirect Effects*

Although short-term visual impacts would occur as a result of the Proposed Action (primarily the presence of heavy construction equipment and exposed soils, contrasting with the natural landscape), long-term impacts would be minimal and would be consistent with the existing VQOs. After construction, the buried distribution line would not be visible except for the two overhead wash crossings as MP 7.8 (Ash Creek), and MP 8.7 (unnamed wash). The 12 kV

distribution line poles would be 50-foot-tall and made of wood just as the current telephone poles. Therefore, the existing visual quality from the occurrence of the poles would remain unchanged.

Vegetation would be cleared along the approximate 20-foot wide corridor during construction of the 12kV distribution line. Natural openings are present along much of the proposed distribution line corridor. Although the project corridor would be re-seeded with species native to the project vicinity following construction, vegetation clearing would be apparent in the short-term and would reduce the visual quality. However, once vegetation has been reestablished, approximately 3 to 5 years, the project corridor would be expected to repeat form, line, and texture of the surrounding vegetative patterns. No changes to VQOs are expected to occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

#### *Cumulative Effects*

Visual impacts would be short-term and minor. By implementing reseeded mitigation measures, it is anticipated vegetation would be restored in disturbed areas. Once the widening of SR169 occurs, the 12kV project corridor will likely be integrated into the disturbance related to the highway widening and additional revegetation would be required as mitigation. Therefore, the Proposed Action by itself or in combination with the SR169 widening effort would not cumulatively impact the existing visual setting.

## **Public Health and Safety**

The project corridor occurs in a generally rural area adjacent to a primary transportation route (SR169), and near private residences on the west end of project area. Usage of the General Crook Trail at MP 8.3 is light (USDA 2012b).

### **Alternative 1: No Action**

#### *Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects*

Under the No Action Alternative, the APS/Gray Wolf regional Landfill 12kV distribution line would not be constructed. As a result, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to public health and safety would occur.

### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

#### *Direct and Indirect*

No direct impacts to public health and safety from construction of the Proposed Action are anticipated. Construction, operation, and maintenance activities would comply with all safety standards and practices. Use of signage would be implemented where appropriate to warn nearby residents and users the General Crook Trail of construction activities. As necessary, a traffic plan warning the traveling public will be implemented. No lane closures are currently planned.

#### *Cumulative Effects*

The primary risk to public health and safety is during construction of the proposed 12kV distribution line. No other activities in the project corridor will be occurring during construction except the day-to-day usage of SR169 and the General Crook Trail. With the appropriate safety measures implemented, no cumulative effects to public health and safety are anticipated.

## Chapter 4: Consultation and Coordination

The following is a list of preparers of this EA, as well as a list of Federal, State, and local agencies consulted and coordinated with during the development of this EA.

### List of Preparers and ID Team Members

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### Federal and State Officials and Agencies

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality  
Arizona Department of Transportation  
Arizona Game and Fish Department  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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