

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Arizona State Office

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EMS TRANSMISSION 10/29/2007

Instruction Memorandum No. AZ-2008-007

Expires: When Superseded or Canceled

To: Gila District Manager

From: State Director

Subject: Deferral of Land Use Authorizations Within the Upper San Pedro Groundwater Basin

Purpose: The purpose of this Instruction Memorandum (IM) is to establish additional policy of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding land disposals within the Upper San Pedro Groundwater Basin (USPGB) (See attached map).

Policy/Action: The Draft 2006 Report to Congress describes a 2005 aquifer deficit of about 4,400 acre-feet and the projected aquifer storage deficit will not reach zero by 2011. To meet the purpose of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA), protect the San Pedro River, and to reduce the potential for groundwater pumping within the USPGB, the Tucson Field Office will defer approval of land use authorizations unless the requests demonstrate that the intended uses of those lands will not require groundwater from the USPGB. This includes the following lands actions: Sale under Section 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA); exchange under Section 206 of FLPMA; and lease or conveyance under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

The BLM manages 104,319 surface acres within the USPGB. Of these lands, 73 parcels comprising 21,677 acres are designated for disposal under the Safford District Resource Management Plan, Partial Records of Decision, September 1992 and July 1994, as amended (Land Tenure Amendment July 1994). The policy set forth in this IM applies to these 73 parcels (See attached map).

Timeframe: This IM is effective immediately and deferring approval of land use authorization requests involving groundwater pumping within the USPGB will remain in effect until such time it can be determined that the biological resources are no longer at risk.

Background: The SPRNCA was established under Public Law 100-696 on November 18, 1988. As stated in Section 102 (a) General Authorities – “The Secretary shall manage the conservation area in a manner that conserves, protects, and enhances the riparian area and the aquatic, wildlife, archeological, paleontological, scientific, cultural, educational, and recreational resources of the conservation area;” and (b) Uses – “The Secretary shall only allow such uses of the conservation area as he finds will further the primary purposes for which the conservation area is established.”

The Upper San Pedro Partnership was established under Section 321 (b) of the National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 108-136): “Congress hereby recognizes the Upper San Pedro Partnership, Arizona, a partnership of Fort Huachuca, Arizona, other Federal, State, and local governmental and non-governmental entities, and its efforts to establish a collaborative water use management program in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed, Arizona, to achieve the sustainable yield of the regional aquifer, so as to protect the Upper San Pedro River, Arizona, and the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, Arizona.”

Under Section 321 (c) (1), “The Secretary of Interior shall prepare, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Defense and in cooperation with the other members of the Partnership, a report on the water use management and conservation measures that have been implemented and are needed to restore and maintain the sustainable yield of the regional aquifer by and after September 30, 2011; and (2), “The purpose of the report is to set forth measurable annual goals for the reduction of the overdrafts of the groundwater of the regional aquifer, to identify specific water use management and conservation measures to facilitate the achievement of such goals, and to identify impediments in current Federal, State, and local laws that hinder efforts on the part of the Partnership to mitigate water usage in order to restore and maintain the sustainable yield of the regional aquifer by and after September 30, 2011.”

The Upper San Pedro Partnership (USPP), in cooperation with the agencies, has submitted the 2004, 2005, and 2006 annual reports as instructed. These reports are available through the USPP.

The USPGB is currently in a deficit condition where the amounts of water pumped out of the aquifers in the basin exceed the amount of water entering the aquifers. Current groundwater use in the basin is not sustainable and the water levels are declining in portions of the basin as described in the Draft 2006 Report to Congress (*Water Management of the Regional Aquifer in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed, Arizona**). Any additional pumping in the basin will be at the expense of groundwater storage. The San Pedro River relies, in large part, on groundwater recharge to maintain base flows. Additional groundwater pumping from the basin can be expected to negatively impact groundwater discharge to the San Pedro River, reducing flows.

Declining water levels pose a threat to the biological resources of the SPRNCA and San Pedro River, of which the Secretary of the Interior is mandated from Congress to conserve, protect, and enhance; therefore immediate action is needed.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: None

Contact: For questions or further information, please contact Marlo Draper, Lead Natural Resource Specialist, at 602-417-9343, Angela Mogel, Realty Program Lead, at 602-417-9536 or Michael Werner, Land Tenure Program Lead, at 602-417-9561.

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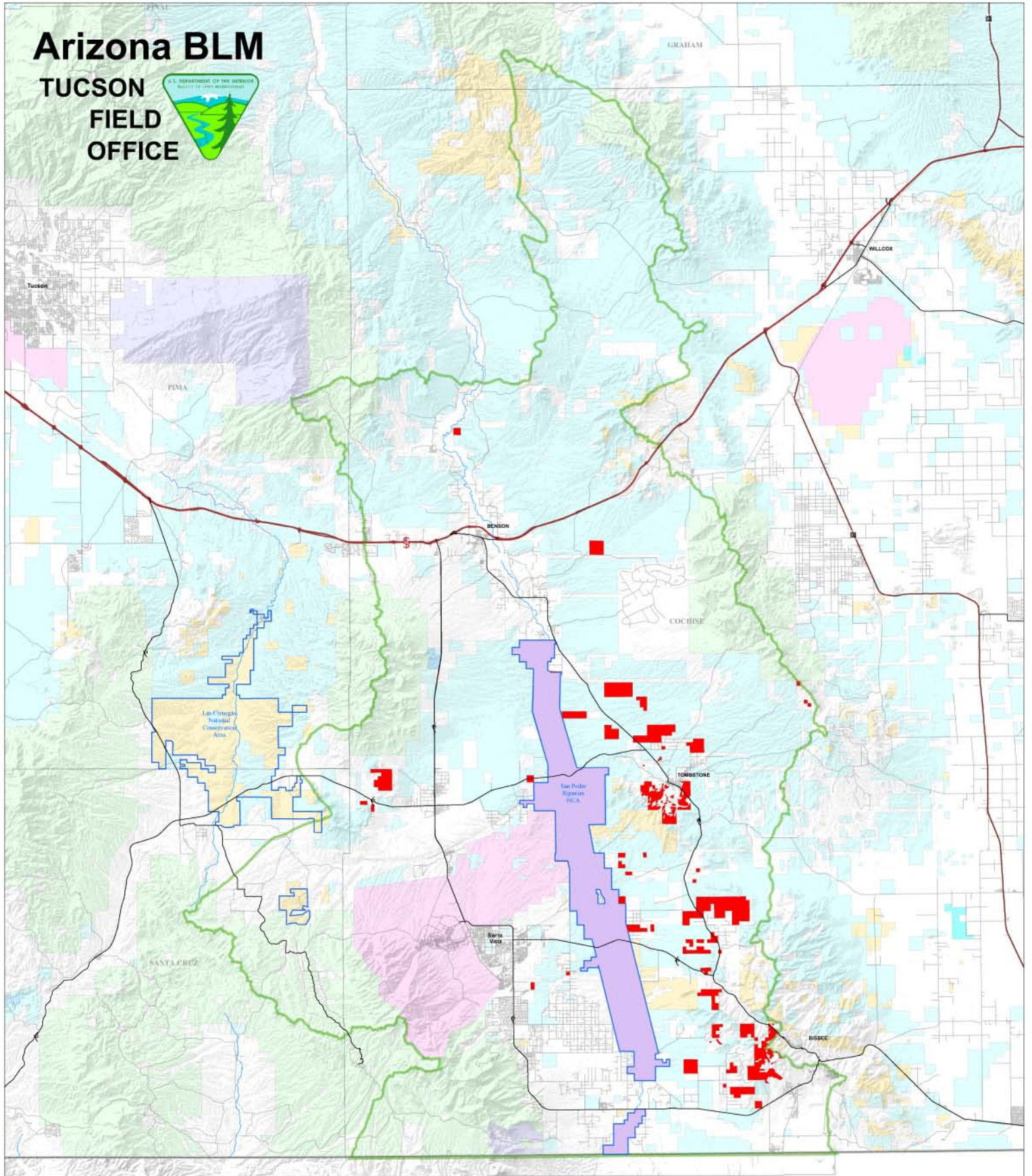
Attachment
[Map](#) (1 p)

Distribution
Arizona Strip District Manager (AZ-100)
Phoenix District Manager (AZ-200)
Colorado River District Manager (AZ-300)

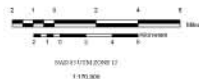
*The Water Management of the Regional Aquifer in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed, Arizona – 2006 Report to Congress was prepared in consultation with the Secretaries of Agriculture and Defense and in cooperation with the Upper San Pedro Partnership in response to Public Law 108-136, Section. This report is a draft report; therefore it will not receive a formal citation.

Arizona BLM

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No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management
for the use of the data for purposes not intended by the BLM.
1: Tucson Topographic Sheet 2587
Map created August 2007



- Private Lands
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Military Reservations/Corps of Engineers
- State Lands
- National Forest Lands (USFS)
- Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
- State Wildlife Area
- National Park Service (NPS)
- Upper San Pedro Groundwater Basin
- City, State, County Parks
- USFS Service, National Wildlife Refuges
- Affected Disposal Lands
- County Lands
- Indian Lands or Reservations
- National Conservation Area