



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Phoenix District  
Agua Fria National Monument  
21605 North 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85027  
www.az.blm.gov

## DECISION RECORD

Related No.

### **DOI-BLM-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA**

**Decision:** The proposed construction of two barriers to restrict vehicle access into the Agua Fria River riparian area, on the Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM) shall be authorized as described in the proposed action of the environmental assessment (EA).

**Stipulations:** A Bureau of Land Management archaeologist will monitor all ground disturbing activities. Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered shall be immediately reported to the Bureau of Land Management authorized officer. All operations shall be suspended in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values. Construction activities will not be permitted during yellow-billed cuckoo nesting season, June 1 to August 15, or unless the area has been determined to be clear of yellow-billed cuckoos by a wildlife biologist.

### **Land Use Plan Conformance**

The proposed action and alternatives have been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the following BLM Land Use Plan and the associated decision:

### **Agua Fria National Monument Record of Decision (ROD) & Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (2010)**

-The proposed action would not impose any constraints on other actions or activities otherwise authorized in the AFNM RMP/EIS.

TE-23. Conservation of Federal threatened or endangered, proposed, candidate, and other special status species is promoted by maintaining or restoring their habitats.

WF-1. Maintain, restore, or enhance the diversity, distribution, and viability of populations of native wildlife, and maintain, restore, or enhance overall ecosystem health. Discretionary activities will be managed to ensure connectivity of habitats and maintenance of unrestricted wildlife movement.

WF-7. Emphasize and give priority to managing priority species and priority habitats in the event of conflicts between resource management objectives.

WF-9. Management of habitat for Birds of Conservation Concern will emphasize avoidance or minimizing impacts and restoring and enhancing habitat quality to implement Executive Order 13186. Through the permitting process for all land use authorizations, ensure the maintenance of habitat quantity and quality. Take of migratory birds from authorized activities will be minimized or avoided.

TM-2. Motorized and mechanized uses on all monument lands are limited to designated routes only. Limited to Designated Routes = 70,900 acres

WR-5. Maintain the free-flowing characteristics of the Agua Fria River and the eligible streams by prohibiting new stream impoundments, diversions, channelizing, or rip-rapping to the extent the BLM is authorized under law.

WR-6. Protect the outstandingly remarkable values identified for the Agua Fria River and each eligible stream segment, subject to valid existing rights, until the segment is determined not suitable for designation or Congress makes a decision regarding designation.

WR-7. Protective management actions shall apply to the areas within ¼ mile on either side of the Agua Fria River and each eligible stream segment.

WR-10. Implement route closures, identified in the section on Travel Management, to help protect outstandingly remarkable values along Ash, Sycamore, Silver, Bishop, and Lousy Creeks. Prohibit new vehicle routes in areas managed as wild segments.

RR-57. Fence the Cordes Lakes area (in T. 11 N., R. 3 E., Section 20) near the Agua Fria River to prevent motorized access and provide for safe vehicle parking.

### **Alternatives Considered**

The EA considered two alternatives: the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action.

The No Action Alternative was not selected because it would not conform to the Agua Fria National Monument Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision.

The proposed action was selected because it fulfills the goals of the Agua Fria RMP/ROD. The proposed action will facilitate achieving the desired resource conditions within the Agua Fria National Monument. The installation of barriers will limit off-highway vehicle (OHV) use to designated routes and significantly reduce OHV incursions into the River Bend site which is designated as “closed to motor vehicles.” The elimination of OHV traffic will allow for natural restoration of the area to proceed through a reduction in numerous disturbances as a result of frequent OHV use. The barriers will have a positive effect on wildlife species, including threatened and endangered species, by the elimination of frequent OHV use in and near the Agua Fria River Bend site. Not only will the metal barriers prevent OHV damage but also be relatively inconspicuous and cost effective. Many attempts have been made to eliminate OHV use of the Agua Fria River at the River Bend site but were unsuccessful. Signs have posted and public outreach conducted but OHV use still occurs. Barriers have been identified as the preferred alternative to conform to the AFNM RMP/ROD.

### **Alternatives Considered but eliminated from Detailed Analysis**

Other Alternatives were considered but were not analyzed in detail. These include:

- **Rock Barrier:** Vehicle barriers constructed of large boulders would be placed at key access points along the EZ Ranch road. The Rock Barrier would be very resistant to vandalism and theft. However, a large number of rocks would be needed to be placed very close together to prohibit vehicle incursion. The limited spacing would not allow for handicap access and make equestrian access difficult. Additionally, a wall of large rocks would likely negatively impact visual resources. Lastly, the cost of a boulder barrier has been identified as cost prohibitive.
- **Bridge across Agua Fria River:** Bridges across the Agua Fria River would prevent OHV incursions into the Agua Fria River. However, multiple bridges (3) would be needed to restrict access at all points of entry. Two of the bridges needed would still allow access to a section of road identified in the AFNM RMP/ROD as closed. Barriers would still be needed to limit OHV access to the road identified as closed. The cost to construct multiple bridges would be far greater than the proposed action.
- **Increased law enforcement presence only:** A stronger law enforcement presence in the area would reduce overall OHV incursions in the Agua Fria River. Additionally, law enforcement officers could effectively communicate BLM policies and explain rationale behind land management decisions. Although increased law enforcement presence would reduce OHV incursions, there would be no deterrent while officers are

off duty. Signs have been ineffective to date. Due to the small area that would be impacted, it would not be cost effective to commit an officer to the area.

- Increased public education only: While public education is an important tool to explain the rationale behind land management actions, it is not always effective. Especially when users of the area have had a long time presence using the area inappropriately. Signs, intended for public education, have been posted for over one year in the area but were largely ignored. AFNM staff and BLM law enforcement officers have patrolled the area and made multiple efforts at public education. Public outreach and education alone will not sufficiently protect the River Bend stretch of the Agua Fria River.
- Fencing alternate locations: Barrier installation is an effective method to prohibit OHV use of areas closed to motor vehicles. The River Bend barrier would do the same. To move the barrier to an alternate location would prevent OHV use of that area. It would do nothing to prevent motor vehicle use of the River Bend site.

### **Rationale for Decision:**

1. The proposed action does not conflict with cultural, botanical, wildlife, riparian, recreational, mineral, range or other resource uses within the areas.
2. The proposed action is consistent with Bureau policies and management goals within the areas.
3. The proposed action will facilitate achieving the desired resource conditions within the Agua Fria National Monument.

### **Appeal Opportunities:**

The decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. Public notification of this decision will be considered to have occurred on December 22, 2010. Within 30 days of this decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at 21605 North 7th Avenue, Phoenix Arizona, 85027. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

If you wish to file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4.21(b), the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
3. The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted,
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

If a petition for stay is submitted with the notice of appeal, a copy of the notice of appeal and petition for stay must be served on each party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken, and with the IBLA at the same time it is filed with the Authorized Officer. A copy of the notice of appeal, any statement of reasons and all pertinent documents must be served on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken to: Field Solicitor, U.S. Department of the Interior, 401 West Washington Street, Suite 404, Phoenix Arizona 85003, not later than 15 days after filing the document with the Authorized Officer and/or IBLA.

Signed by Rem Hawes

December 22, 2010

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Rem Hawes  
Agua Fria National Monument Manager  
Hassayampa Field Office  
Bureau of Land Management- Phoenix District

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Date:



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Phoenix District  
Agua Fria National Monument  
21605 North 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85027  
[www.az.blm.gov](http://www.az.blm.gov)

### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Related No.

#### DOI-BLM-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM) Record of Decision (ROD) and Resource Management Plan (RMP) (2010). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

#### **Context:**

The project is a site-specific action designed to protect unique features of a National Monument, affecting approximately 1.5 linear miles of land within the 70,900 acres of the Agua Fria National Monument. The barriers would limit motorized travel in the River Bend area to designated routes and prevent travel in riparian areas as well as roads identified in the RMP as closed/administrative access only. The installation of vehicle barriers is consistent with the AFNM ROD/RMP.

#### **Intensity:**

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

##### **1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:**

The beneficial effects of the River Bend barriers would be: 1) prevent continuous damage to the river and riparian areas incurred by frequent off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel, 2) habitat for wildlife will likely improve with the exclusion of OHV travel, 3) restricting OHV access, as proposed, would limit and/or negate the possibility of adverse impacts to any nearby cultural resources.

Adverse effects include minor impacts to soils, vegetation, wildlife, and visual resources that will occur temporarily during construction of the proposed action. Long term effects would be limited in scope. Construction activities have the potential to disturb unknown subsurface archaeological resources thus requiring the stipulation for monitoring.

## **2. Degree of effect on public health and safety:**

The BLM has selected the construction of two vehicle barriers as the environmentally preferred alternative. The proposed action achieves the balance of resource protection and beneficial uses of the human environment envisioned by the National Environmental Policy Act.

Without the vehicle barrier project, OHV use would continue to occur in areas already closed to motorized travel. Non-motorized recreation such as equestrian use would be negatively impacted. The No Action Alternative would not satisfy the AFNM ROD/RMP.

The barrier project will limit OHV travel to designated routes. Other recreationist will not be subject to impacts of motorized travel. The Proposed Alternative is in compliance with the AFNM ROD/RMP. Construction workers will minimize any public safety effects during project construction and operation. The project itself is not expected to have any long term negative effects on public health and safety.

## **3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:**

The River Bend site is in close proximity to multiple cultural sites and parallels a riparian area. The river and riparian area has been designated as suitable for wild river classification and is home to multiple special status species. Continued OHV travel in the River Bend area will continue to negatively impact these objects. The barrier project is needed to limit OHV travel to designated routes which will serve to protect these objects.

## **4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:**

Public input regarding the proposed action has been solicited during a public scoping meeting held at the Cordes Lakes community. Representatives of BLM worked with the Cordes Lakes community, which will be most impacted by the project, as well as with the Friends of the AFNM, Arizona Game and Fish, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The comment period for the EA ended September 23, 2010, during which 11 written comments were received, all from the general public. The comments generally recognized the need to protect the ecological, biological, and cultural resources in the project area. However, multiple comments were not in favor of fencing the area but instead favored an increased law enforcement presence. Additional comments clearly were opposed to any travel restrictions which are not in conformance with the AFNM ROD/RMP.

Concerns were raised about the effects of the barrier project on OHV recreation in the area. OHV travel will continue to be allowed on the 94 miles of designated routes within the AFNM but 1.5 miles of OHV access would be prevented following the installation of the barriers. The degree to which the quality of human environment is affected is negligible.

## **5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.**

No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the preferred alternative.

**6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration:**

The preferred alternative neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Multiple vehicle barriers have already been analyzed and installed along other sections of the Agua Fria River and its tributaries within the AFNM.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts:**

No individually or cumulatively significant impacts were identified for the preferred alternative. Any adverse impacts identified for the preferred alternative, in conjunction with any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions will result in negligible impacts to natural resources. Construction activities have the potential to disturb unknown subsurface archaeological resources thus requiring the stipulation for monitoring.

**8. Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:**

An intensive archeological inventory to identify districts, sites, or other properties eligible for listing to or included on the National Register of Historic Places was completed for this preferred alternative. The investigations satisfied the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the identification of historic properties. No historic properties were identified within the area of potential direct effects. On-site monitoring of construction activities by qualified archeologists provided by the BLM will minimize the potential for adverse effects to heritage resources.

**9. Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat:**

No threatened or endangered species occur within the project area. No critical habitat will be affected by the proposed alternative. However, the Agua Fria River has documented occurrences of the following Bureau-sensitive species; lowland leopard frogs (*Rana yavapaiensis*), longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*), desert suckers (*Catostomus clarki*), and western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*). The proposed alternative may temporally displace some wildlife due to noise associated with construction activities. Brush will be cleared 3' on each side of the barrier during installation but will be allowed to re-grow following project completion. No riparian habitat will be affected with the proposed alternative.

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law:**

The preferred alternative violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Signed by Rem Hawes

December 22, 2010

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Rem Hawes  
Agua Fria National Monument Manager  
Hassayampa Field Office  
Bureau of Land Management- Phoenix District

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Date:

**Environmental Assessment**

**DOI-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA**

**Vehicle Barrier Construction  
To  
Protect Agua Fria River Riparian Areas  
Within the Agua Fria National Monument  
Yavapai County, Arizona**

Prepared by Paul Sitzmann  
Agua Fria National Monument  
Hassayampa Field Office  
Phoenix District Office  
Bureau of Land Management

December 22, 2010

## **1.0. Introduction**

The Agua Fria National Monument is located approximately 40 miles north of the Phoenix Metropolitan area, bordered on the south by Black Canyon City and the north by Cordes Lakes. Consequently, the Agua Fria National monument is host to a wide variety of recreational uses which include motorized recreation, hiking, biking, equestrian use, camping, hunting, and sightseeing. Additionally, the Agua Fria National Monument encompasses one of the most significant systems of prehistoric sites in the American Southwest.

The Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM) was established by presidential proclamation on January 11, 2000 to preserve and protect its significant archaeological and biological resources. These “objects of scientific and historic interests,” for which the monument was created, are defined in the proclamation as the area’s prehistoric and historical archaeological sites; its expansive semi-desert grassland and riparian forests; its vegetative diversity and availability of water; and the productive habitats for diverse and abundant wildlife species. The proclamation also states that for the purpose of protecting these objects, mechanized vehicle use off road will be prohibited.

This document is the product of public and agency input and consists of background information, proposals received and considered from members of the public and governmental agencies, a proposed plan, plan alternatives, and an environmental assessment.

See Appendix A.1 for an overview map of the Agua Fria National Monument.

## **1.1. Background**

Following the issuance of the presidential proclamation, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) established the *Interim Policy for Newly Designated BLM National Monuments*. Additionally, the BLM, Phoenix District Office reviewed existing planning documents and decisions and prepared interim management guidance specific to the Agua Fria National Monument. In order to comply with the Monument Proclamation to protect monument objects, the AFNM Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) (2010) and Travel Management Plan, vehicle use is limited to designated roads. Efforts to discourage unauthorized vehicle use off of designated routes have been ongoing. Appropriate informational signs have been placed at visitor kiosks located at each of the major entry portals. Route signing of open routes began in October 2007, and was completed in April 2008. Public education and outreach efforts have also been conducted by the OHV Ambassador program, Arizona Game and Fish, BLM law enforcement, monument staff, and the Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument. While these efforts have likely reduced the overall occurrence of unauthorized off highway vehicle use on the monument, some illegal use continues to occur in several areas. The riparian area along the Agua Fria River near Cordes Lakes is one area that is being impacted by unauthorized vehicle use. Due to the proximity (2.4 miles) to Cordes Lakes and the relatively gentle topography; frequent off highway vehicle incursions occur in the area from here on referred to as the “River Bend” site.

## **1.2. Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the proposed action is to utilize vehicle barriers to protect riparian areas within the Agua Fria National Monument that are being impacted by unauthorized vehicle use. The need stems from resource impacts from unauthorized vehicle use. These impacts include, but are not limited to; alteration of stream banks, damage to riparian vegetation, reduced recruitment of woody vegetation, loss of wildlife habitat characteristics, and the spread of invasive plants.

The proposed action was developed in order to better manage off-highway vehicle use in the River Bend site, comply with the monument Proclamation, and protect monument objects.

### 1.3. Conformance with the Land Use Plan

As of April, 2010, the monument has been operating under the Agua Fria National Monument-Bradshaw Harquahala (AFNM-BH) Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan. The proposed action is in conformance with the AFNM Resource Management Plan. The action is consistent with implementation of the Statewide Land Use Plan Amendment for Implementation of The Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration (1997), specifically Standard 2; riparian-wetland areas are in proper functioning condition.

Emphases and priority will be given to managing priority species and priority habitats in the conflicts between resource management objectives. The Monument was established to protect an “expansive mosaic of semi-desert grassland, cut by ribbons of valuable riparian forest.” Management activities will maintain or promote watersheds that are in properly functioning condition, including their upland, riparian, and aquatic components. Soil and plant conditions support infiltration, storage, and release of water that are in balance with climate and landform (BLM, 2010). The proposed action would not impose any constraints on other actions or activities otherwise authorized in the AFNM-BH RMP/EIS.

- **AFNM-Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource Management Plan** (April 2010)

- The proposed action would not impose any constraints on other actions or activities otherwise authorized in the Phoenix RMP/EIS.

TE-23. Conservation of Federal threatened or endangered, proposed, candidate, and other special status species is promoted by maintaining or restoring their habitats.

WF-1. Maintain, restore, or enhance the diversity, distribution, and viability of populations of native wildlife, and maintain, restore, or enhance overall ecosystem health. Discretionary activities will be managed to ensure connectivity of habitats and maintenance of unrestricted wildlife movement.

WF-7. Emphasize and give priority to managing priority species and priority habitats in the event of conflicts between resource management objectives.

WF-9. Management of habitat for Birds of Conservation Concern will emphasize avoidance or minimizing impacts and restoring and enhancing habitat quality to implement Executive Order 13186. Through the permitting process for all land use authorizations, ensure the maintenance of habitat quantity and quality. Take) of migratory birds from authorized activities will be minimized or avoided.

TM-2. Motorized and mechanized uses on all monument lands are limited to designated routes only. Limited to Designated Routes = 70,900 acres

WR-5. Maintain the free-flowing characteristics of the Agua Fria River and the eligible streams by prohibiting new stream impoundments, diversions, channelizing, or rip-rapping to the extent the BLM is authorized under law.

WR-6. Protect the outstandingly remarkable values identified for the Agua Fria River and each eligible stream segment, subject to valid existing rights, until the segment is determined not suitable for designation or Congress makes a decision regarding designation.

WR-7. Protective management actions shall apply to the areas within ¼ mile on either side of the Agua Fria River and each eligible stream segment.

WR-10. Implement route closures, identified in the section on Travel Management, to help protect outstandingly remarkable values along Ash, Sycamore, Silver, Bishop, and Lousy Creeks. Prohibit new vehicle routes in areas managed as wild segments.

RR-57. Fence the Cordes Lakes area (in T. 11 N., R. 3 E., Section 20) near the Agua Fria River to prevent motorized access and provide for safe vehicle parking.

TM-1. Designate, implement, and monitor a comprehensive travel management network affording a range of high-quality and diverse motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. The network consists of a system of roads, primitive roads, and trails. The designated travel management network and associated recreation opportunities are consistent with all monument resource management objectives, recreation settings, and preservation of monument objects.

TM-4. All motorized and mechanized vehicles are limited to designated routes, except in emergency situations or for BLM-approved administrative purposes. Motorized use shall keep within the designated route with reasonable use of the shoulder and immediate roadside, allowing for vehicle passage, emergency stopping, or parking unless otherwise posted.

#### 1.4. Additional Resource Management Sources

- **Black Canyon Habitat Management Plan** (March 1993)
  - Identify additional riparian habitat areas that would benefit from OHV closures and pursue closure implementation.
- **Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans**
  - According to guidance provided in BLM manual 6840 (Special Status Species Management 2008), the proposed action is consistent with Bureau policy to conserve Bureau sensitive species (which include federal candidate species) to reduce the likelihood that the species will need to be listed. The construction of these vehicle barriers will help to curtail unauthorized use and protect habitat for the western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*), a federal candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*), a Bureau sensitive species, inhabit the perennial pools within the River Bend Site. Mortality losses by frequent unauthorized motorized travel will be eliminated.

#### 1.5. Scoping and Public Involvement

The proposed river protection project has been developed with considerable public input from individuals, special interest groups, interested landowners, other interested public individuals, and resource specialists within the Bureau of Land Management. Feedback regarding the proposed action has been received in writing and a public scoping meeting held at the Cordes Lakes Community Center on September 8, 2010.

Through the scoping process, it was revealed that the public uses the area for a wide variety of recreational uses including:

- Camping
- Off-Highway vehicle driving – including in the river
- Hiking
- Equestrian riding
- Wildlife viewing
- Hunting
- School Education
- Relaxing

The River Bend site is located in close proximity to the Cordes Lakes Community and consequently receives a high level of recreational use. Due to ease of access and unique riparian qualities, the River Bend site attracts a wide variety of recreationists. Some enjoy the solitude of the natural landscape with ample wildlife viewing opportunities whereas others prefer the unique opportunity of riding Off-Highway vehicles in a river which is often associated with loud noise. The area has been identified as the most utilized and recreationally impacted area within the entire Agua Fria National Monument.

## **1.6. Issues and Concerns**

The following issues and concerns were identified during the scoping process. These issues and concerns help frame the purpose and need for the planning effort and shape the alternatives and design modifications, and define impacts analysis:

- Reduced Handicap access from barrier construction
- Ensure Equestrian access to the Agua Fria River
- Concern about no motorized access across the Agua Fria River via public land near Cordes Lakes
- Concern about the possibility of developing and creating fee area
- OHV-related resource damage
- Contamination of water by camping activities
- Lack of Law Enforcement in the area
- Inability of Law Enforcement to protect proposed project
- Visual Impact of a vehicle barrier on landscape

## **2.0. Proposed Action and Alternatives**

A range of alternatives was considered in the development of the proposed action in order to meet the purpose of protecting monument objects and the need to better manage off highway vehicle use and comply with the monument proclamation. In attempt to encourage recreation use that is compliant with the Agua Fria National Monument Proclamation (January 2000), the Black Canyon Habitat Management Plan (March 1993) and the Agua Fria National Monument Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (April 2010), a vehicle barrier has been identified as the preferred method to reach resource management goals. The alternatives that were considered include the No Action (current management) alternative and the construction of two different vehicle barrier design alternatives.

### **2.1. Proposed Action – Metal Barrier**

Under the proposed action, vehicle barriers would be constructed at key access points along EZ Ranch Road and Box Bar Ranch Road to physically deter vehicle use in the Agua Fria River (see map in Appendix A). The barrier along the EZ Ranch Road is referred to as the River Bend barrier and the barrier along the Box Bar Ranch Road is referred to as the Big Bug barrier.

The proposed River Bend barrier will be constructed of pipe rail fencing along the length of the EZ Ranch Road. The River Bend barrier would be constructed with 3.0” sq. posts 36.0” high connected with two 1.5”sq rails and one 2.5” sq rail. Posts would be set in concrete to enhance durability. Under the proposed action at the River Bend site, approximately 2500 linear feet of post/pipe rail fence would be erected to prevent unauthorized vehicular access to the Agua Fria River. A solar powered swing gate would be installed in a location near the EZ Ranch private property boundary to restrict public access. Two vehicle parking areas and a turnaround would be provided. One parking lot would be 60’ x 320’ and the other 60’ x 145’. Multiple horse and handicap accessible walk throughs would be provided at key points.

At the Big Bug site, a post/pipe rail fence would be constructed perpendicular to the restricted access road. The fence would be built with 2.5” sq. posts 4” high connected with two 1.5”sq rails. Posts would be set in concrete to enhance durability. A locking swing gate would be used to restrict access to a road that goes to a water gaging station on the Agua Fria River. Under the proposed Big Bug barrier action, 90’ of fence would be erected and a lockable gate would be installed to prevent unauthorized vehicular access onto a restricted access road.

### **2.2. No Action (Current Management)**

Under the No Action Alternative, vehicle barriers would not be constructed to prevent unauthorized vehicle access to the Agua Fria River. Vehicles would continue to drive in approximately 2 miles of the Agua Fria River and 2.5

miles of a restricted access road. This alternative is inconsistent with the Monument proclamation limiting travel to designated routes. These waterways are not designated routes; motorized travel within them is prohibited.

### **2.3. Alternatives Considered but Removed From Detailed Analysis**

- **Rock Barrier:** Vehicle barriers constructed of large boulders would be placed at key access points along the EZ Ranch road. The Rock Barrier would be very resistant to vandalism and theft. However, a large number of rocks would be needed to be placed very close together to prohibit vehicle incursion. The limited spacing would not allow for handicap access and make equestrian access difficult. Additionally, a wall of large rocks would likely negatively impact visual resources. Lastly, the cost of a boulder barrier has been identified as cost prohibitive.
- **Bridge across Agua Fria River:** Bridges across the Agua Fria River would prevent OHV incursions into the Agua Fria River. However, multiple bridges (3) would be needed to restrict access at all points of entry. Two of the bridges needed would still allow access to a section of road identified in the AFNM RMP/ROD as closed. Barriers would still be needed to limit OHV access to the road identified as closed. The cost to construct multiple bridges would be far greater than the proposed action.
- **Increased law enforcement presence only:** A stronger law enforcement presence in the area would reduce overall OHV incursions in the Agua Fria River. Additionally, law enforcement officers could effectively communicate BLM policies and explain rationale behind land management decisions. Although increased law enforcement presence would reduce OHV incursions, there would be no deterrent while officers are off duty. Signs have been ineffective to date. Due to the small area that would be impacted, it would not be cost effective to commit an officer to the area.
- **Increased public education only:** While public education is an important tool to explain the rationale behind land management actions, it is not always effective. Especially when users of the area have had a long time presence using the area inappropriately. Signs, intended for public education, have been posted for over one year in the area but were ignored by some. AFNM staff and BLM law enforcement officers have patrolled the area and made multiple efforts at public education. Public outreach and education only work if all individuals agree with the rationale behind land management decisions.
- **Fencing alternate locations:** Barrier installation is an effective method to prohibit OHV use of areas closed to motor vehicles. The River Bend barrier would do the same. To move the barrier to an alternate location would prevent OHV use of that area. It would do nothing to prevent motor vehicle use of the River Bend site.

### **3.0. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**

#### **3.0.1 General Landscape Setting**

The general vegetative community of the proposed action falls within the desert grasslands biome (Brown, 1982) at an elevation of about 3,500 feet. While the majority of the Agua Fria National Monument is semi-desert grasslands, riparian deciduous forest are interspersed along most rivers, streams and perennial waters. The primary purpose of the proposed project is to prevent unauthorized vehicle use and protect riparian habitat.

The following resources of the human environment have been analyzed and would not be affected by the alternatives: Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Hazardous and Solid Wastes, Native American Religious Concerns, Prime or Unique Farmlands, Rangeland Management, Flood Plains, Wilderness, Visual Resource Management, and Environmental Justice Issues.

### 3.1. Wildlife, Migratory Birds and Special Status Species Resources

#### 3.1.1. Affected Environment:

The Agua Fria National Monument is located within the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Wildlife Management Unit 21. The riparian areas of the Agua Fria River, along with the adjacent uplands and mesas, provide habitat for a variety of different wildlife species. This includes game species such as javelina (*Pecari tajacu*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), coyotes (*Canis latrans*), mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*) and Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*). This area also provides important breeding, foraging, wintering, and migration habitat to numerous bird species. To date over 190 bird species have been documented on the monument. Numerous small mammals, reptiles and amphibians also occur in this area. The diversity of wildlife found in this area is due in large part to the habitat and forage provided by the vegetative communities which occur in the area. Plant associations occurring on the mesas and slopes consists primarily of tobosa (*Pleuriphus mutica*), curly mesquite (*Hilaria belangeri*), various grammas (*Bouteloua sp*), cat-claw (*Acacia gregii*), mesquite (*Prosopis velutina*), and prickly pear (*Opuntia sp*). The riparian areas generally have an over story canopy consisting of Goodding's willow (*Salix gooddingii*), cottonwood (*Populus fremonti*), Arizona sycamore (*Platanus wrightii*), and velvet ash (*Fraxinus velutina*) with the understory and open areas dominated by herbaceous species like deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*), seep-willow (*Baccharis salicifolia*), bulrushes (*Scirpus sp*) and sedges (*Carex sp*).

No threatened or endangered species occur within the project area. The endangered Gila chub (*Gila intermedia*) does occur in Sycamore Creek within the Agua Fria River watershed, above the project area. The lower reaches of Sycamore Creek and the Agua Fria River within the monument are not suitable for the chub due to lack of water and the presence of nonnative predatory fishes. Gila chub could temporarily exist in the project area following large storm events but do not persist in the area.

The western yellow-billed cuckoo was found to be a distinct population segment and is currently a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act (USFWS 2000). This migratory bird can typically be found in the riparian areas within the Agua Fria National Monument from mid-June through early-September. During this time, breeding and fledgling activities occur primarily in mature cottonwoods and willows. Yellow-billed cuckoos have been documented in the Agua Fria River and many of its tributary streams.

The Agua Fria River has documented occurrences of the following Bureau-sensitive species; lowland leopard frogs (*Rana yavapaiensis*), longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*), desert sucker (*Catostomus clarki*), and western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*).

The habitat associated with the proposed action is not suitable for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax extimus trailii*), a federally listed endangered species. To date, surveys have not documented flycatchers utilizing the Monument's riparian areas for breeding or nesting. The linear nature of the riparian vegetation does not provide for the development of suitable habitat for this species.

#### 3.1.2. Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative:

Increased human activity and noise associated with construction could have a negative impact on wildlife. Wildlife may be temporarily displaced from the project area during construction due to noise associated with construction activities. This impact would be relatively short in duration with construction activities expected to take less than 3 weeks. Vegetation removal along the EZ Ranch road is necessary to construct the barrier and parking areas. However, overall condition of vegetation in the Agua Fria River area would be enhanced by excluding vehicles; thus, improving habitat conditions for wildlife.

The proposed action would have beneficial effects for native fish which occupy the area such as the longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*) and gila sucker (*Catostomus insignis*) by preventing off highway vehicle use. Additionally, removing vehicles from the riparian areas would allow for increased cottonwood, willow, sedge, and bulrush recruitment.

### **3.1.3. Effects of the No Action Alternative:**

Wildlife would continue to be temporarily displaced over the long-term by the frequent incursions of off-highway vehicles in the waterways. Habitat conditions would likely continue to deteriorate and the proper functioning of the riparian areas would be jeopardized by the reduced regeneration of woody vegetation, damage to stream banks, and the spread of invasive species associated with unauthorized use.

Special status fish would continue to be impacted by off-highway vehicle use under the no action alternative. Longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*) and the gila sucker (*Catostomus insignis*) populations in the area would continue to suffer losses. The no action alternative is inconsistent with BLM policy to conserve special status species and their habitat (BLM manual 6840 Special Status Species Management).

The no action alternative has the potential to negatively impact the yellow-billed cuckoo. Depending on the frequency and duration, OHV incursions during the summer months may disrupt breeding and nesting attempts. Unauthorized OHV use in the area would continue to degrade habitat conditions. Over time, this activity has the potential to substantially reduce the amount of suitable habitat available for yellow-billed cuckoo's nesting and breeding activities. The entire 1.5 mile section of riparian habitat could, over time, become unavailable to yellow-billed cuckoos through habitat loss. The no action alternative is inconsistent with BLM policy to conserve candidate species and their habitat (BLM manual 6840 Special Status Species Management).

## **3.2. Cultural Resources**

### **3.2.1 Description:**

The Agua Fria National Monument was established to preserve and protect the unique cultural and biological resources found in the area. The presidential proclamation establishing the monument defines "objects of scientific and historic interest" which include the area's prehistoric and historical archaeological sites. It also states that "the Secretary of the Interior shall manage the monument to implement the purposes of this proclamation," which are the "proper care and management of the objects to be protected."

Prehistoric archaeological sites have been documented to exist along the Agua Fria River. BLM staff completed an intensive cultural resource survey of the proposed areas that would be used for the construction of barriers to restrict unauthorized travel off of designated routes. The survey results documented no sites that would be affected within the areas of proposed barrier construction.

### **3.2.2. Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative:**

The installation of the proposed vehicle barriers are not expected to have adverse impacts on cultural resources. However, construction activities have the potential to disturb unknown subsurface archaeological resources thus requiring the stipulation for monitoring. Restricting OHV access, as proposed, would limit and/or negate the possibility of adverse impacts to any nearby cultural resources. Restricting OHV access would also reduce the probability of resource damage in other areas by providing clearly defined routes for motorized travel.

### **3.2.3. Effects of the No Action Alternative:**

The no action alternative would have no direct impact on cultural resources. Given that OHV incursions are currently taking place in waterways around existing barriers and signs, the absence of barriers could allow this unauthorized, motorized use to spread outward from the Agua Fria River, potentially causing damage to archaeological sites elsewhere on the Monument. Ground disturbance could cause direct adverse impacts, through the displacement or breakage of archaeological artifacts or features, or indirect impacts through the effects of soil erosion. Such disturbance could result in a loss of scientific information and/or destruction of sites.

### **3.3. Wild and Scenic Rivers**

#### **3.3.1. Description:**

Nearly the entire length of the Agua Fria River within the monument has been determined suitable for designation to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (WSRS). Following the guidance in BLM manual 8351, until Congress makes a decision regarding designation, the Agua Fria River will be managed to protect the outstandingly remarkable wildlife, scenic, and cultural values that define its suitability for wild and scenic designation.

#### **3.3.2. Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative:**

The proposed project would not adversely affect the eligibility or tentative classification of the Agua Fria River and Silver Creek under the National WSRS. Furthermore, the construction of vehicle barriers would provide added protection for the outstandingly remarkable values for which the area is being considered for inclusion in the National WSRS.

#### **3.3.3. Effects of the No Action Alternative:**

Continued use of the Agua Fria River by unauthorized OHVs has the potential to adversely impact the outstandingly remarkable values for which the area is being considered for inclusion under the National Wild and Scenic River Act (WSRA). The WSRA preserves certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The River Bend area meets these criteria. The continued impact of OHV travel in riparian areas would degrade these objects through the loss of vegetation, habitat, and continued soil erosion, pollution and noise associated with OHV recreation. Lastly, OHV travel may expand to areas with cultural resources. All of these OHV related impacts may prevent the Agua Fria River from inclusion under the WSRA.

### **3.4. Recreation Resources**

#### **3.4.1. Description:**

The Agua Fria National Monument, which is 40 miles north of the Phoenix metropolitan area, is a popular destination for many Arizona residents and out of state tourists. The River Bend area is located 2.4 miles from the community of Cordes Lakes. It is a popular local destination for recreationists. Recreational use of the River Bend area consists primarily of sight-seeing, hiking, hunting, camping, and OHV use.

#### **3.4.2. Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative:**

Recreational uses allowed by the AFNM RMP and ROD would remain unchanged under the proposed action alternative. Motorized travel within the Monument is already limited to designated roads and trails; the proposed vehicle barriers would serve as a physical deterrent to OHV travel outside designated routes. Equestrian and pedestrian access to the area would not be affected. Recreational camping would still be permitted in the area. The installation of barriers would negatively impact OHV recreation in the River Bend area. Currently, OHV travel frequently occurs in the riparian areas as well as on roads designated as closed/administrative access only. The construction of vehicle barriers would limit motorized travel to existing routes, thus a popular recreation destination would become inaccessible to OHV recreationists. Non-motorized recreation would benefit from the exclusion of OHV traffic in the area. Noise associated with OHV use would be reduced. The general landscape scenery and wildlife viewing opportunities would improve.

#### **3.4.3. Effects of the No Action Alternative:**

Negative impacts to non-motorized recreation would continue. Noise associated with OHVs would conflict with those who seek quiet, nature orientated recreation activities and solitude. Continued OHV travel in the area would also negatively affect equestrian recreation opportunities.

### **3.5. National Monument Objects**

#### **3.5.1. Description:**

The Agua Fria National Monument was established to preserve and protect the unique cultural and biological resources found in the area. The presidential proclamation establishing the Monument defines “objects of scientific and historic interest” as the area’s prehistoric and historical archaeological sites; its expansive semi-desert grassland and riparian forests; its vegetative diversity and ready availability of water; and the productive habitats for diverse and abundant wildlife species. The Proclamation upholds valid existing rights and confirms the jurisdiction of the State of Arizona with respect to fish and wildlife management. It also states that “the Secretary of the Interior shall manage the monument through the Bureau of Land Management, pursuant to applicable legal authorities, to implement the purposes of this proclamation,” which are the “proper care and management of the objects to be protected.”

#### **3.5.2. Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative:**

The purpose of the proposed action is to protect resources for which the Monument was designated; in particular, riparian forests, vegetative diversity, and habitat for wildlife. Due to the ineffectiveness of signs and visitor information to curtail illegal vehicle use; vehicle barriers are necessary to protect Monument resources. Therefore, the construction of the proposed barriers would enhance protection of Monument resources.

#### **3.5.3. Effects of the No Action Alternative:**

Due to the relatively easy access to the Agua Fria River, attempts to curtail motorized use in the riparian areas have been largely unsuccessful. In many instances, users remain undeterred by signs and t-posts clearly indicating the area as closed to motorized access. This is evidenced by the fact that vehicle tracks are regularly found directly beside, or occasionally, on top of the signs. The effects of the no action alternative on Monument resources are identical to those identified in the wildlife section. If left unchecked, this activity would continue to degrade riparian habitats by reducing vegetative recruitment, destabilizing stream banks, increasing erosion, and spreading invasive species.

### **4.0. MITIGATION MEASURES**

A Bureau of Land Management archaeologist will monitor all ground disturbing activities. Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered shall be immediately reported to the Bureau of Land Management authorized officer. All operations shall be suspended in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values. Construction activities will not be permitted during yellow-billed cuckoo nesting season, June 1 to August 15, or unless the area has been determined to be clear of yellow-billed cuckoos by a wildlife biologist.

### **5.0. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

Scott Smith, EZ Ranch  
Willie Kelton, Box Bar Ranch  
Jake Fousek, Arizona Game and Fish Department  
Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument  
Cordes Lakes Community Association  
Cordes Lakes Community Members  
Greg Beatty, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Following BLM Employees:  
Rem Hawes, Agua Fria National Monument Manager  
Amanda James, Natural Resource Specialist  
Nancy Stallard, Park Ranger

Leah Baker, Planning and Environmental Coordinator  
Matt Russo, GIS Specialist/Public Affairs Representative  
Mary Skordinsky, Recreation Planner  
Brian Culpepper, Archeologist  
Tim Hughes, State Lead Wildlife Biologist  
J.A. Vacca, Wildlife Biologist

## **6.0. REFERENCES**

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Bureau of Land Management. 2010. *Bradshaw Harquahala Record of Decision & Approved Resource Management Plan*. Phoenix District, Phoenix, AZ.

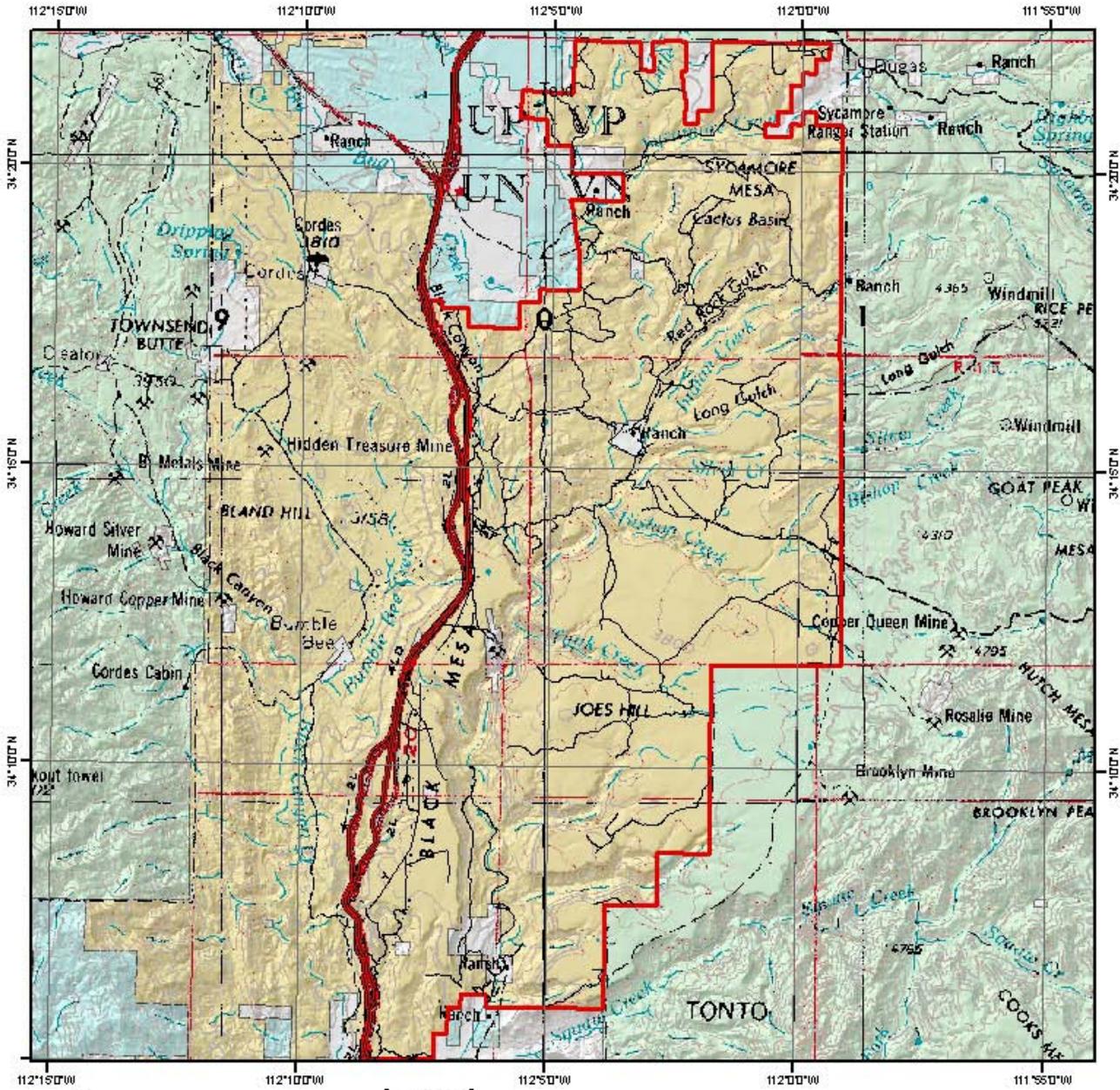
U.S. Department of Interior. 2002. *Interim Management Policy for Bureau of Land Management National Monuments and National Conservation Areas (Instruction Memorandum No. 2002-008)*. Washington, DC.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2000. *Notice of 90-day finding on petition to list the yellow-billed cuckoo as endangered, with critical habitat*. Federal Register 65 (33):8104-8107. Washington, DC.

Appendix A:

Appendix A.1

Agua Fria National Monument with Proposed Facilities Insert



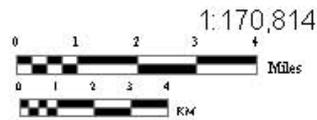
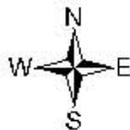
Legend

- BLM National Monuments
- BR
- State
- AFNM\_Routes
- BLM
- Private
- USFS
- Interstate Highways



United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Arizona State Office

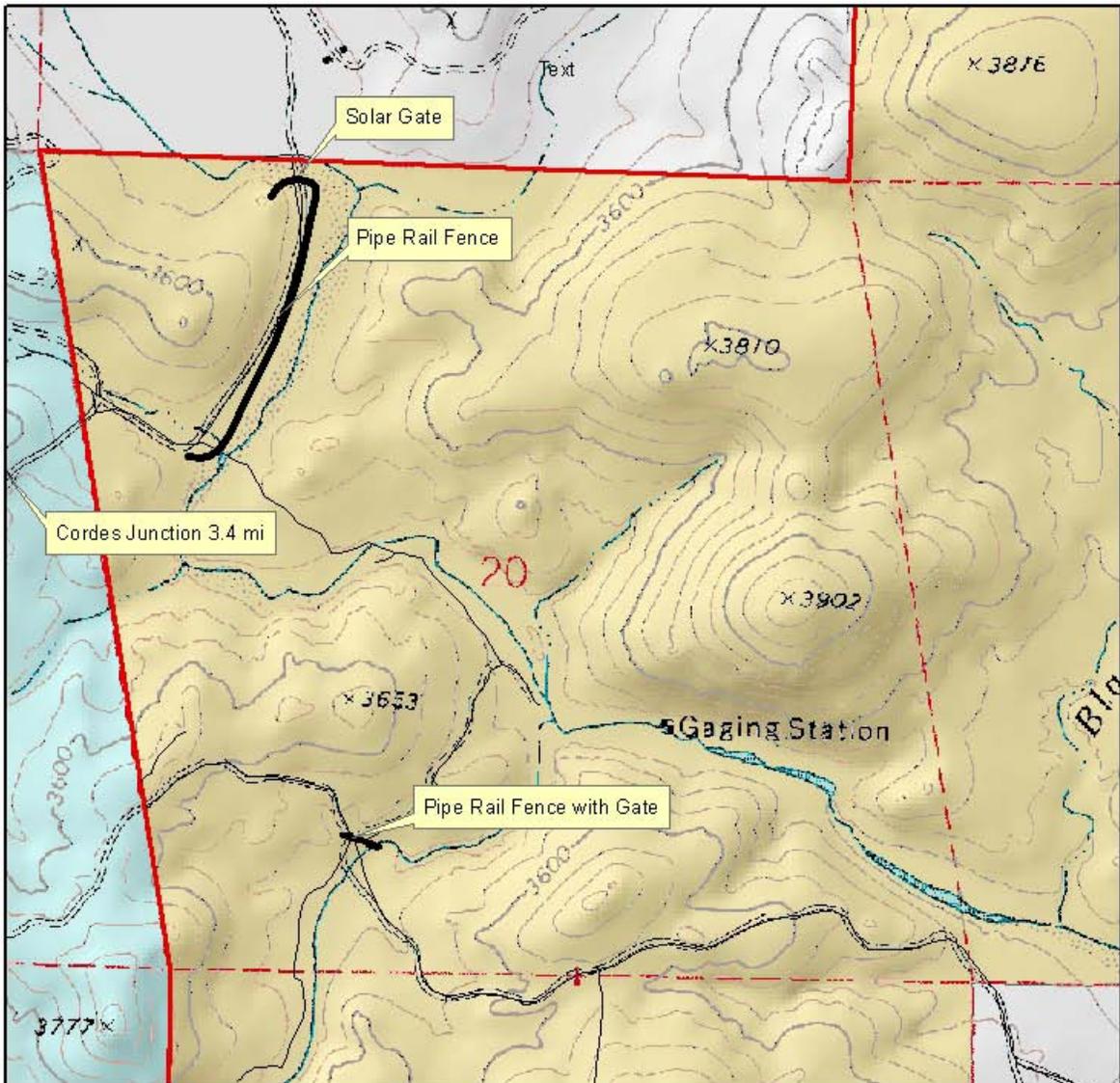
Map created on Aug 21, 2009  
Land Status Updated February 20, 2007



**CAUTION:**  
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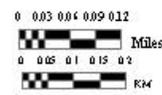
# Agua Fria National Monument with EZ and Big Bug Barriers



### Legend

- BLM National Monuments
- BR
- State
- AFNM\_Routes
- BLM
- Private
- USFS
- Interstate Highways

1:11,500



United States Department of the Interior  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 Arizona State Office  
 Map created on Aug 21, 2009  
 Land Status Updated February 20, 2007

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