

**United States
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Tucson Field Office**

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Ironwood Forest National Monument Travel Management Plan
Environmental Assessment NEPA # DOI-BLM-AZ-G020-2013-033-EA**

Background

The Bureau of Land Management prepared an Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-AZ-G020-2013-033-EA) which analyzed the effects of implementing a Travel Management Plan within the Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM). The EA considered the Proposed Action, which would be to undertake a strategic program (Travel Management Plan) to implement the transportation and travel management decisions in the IFNM RMP, and the route designations established concurrently with the IFNM Resource Management Plan (RMP) Record of Decision (ROD), to support allowable uses and protect Monument objects, and the No Action alternative which would implement those decisions on an *ad-hoc* basis as emergencies arise.

Context

The Proposed Action would occur in the IFNM, which is approximately 80 miles south of Phoenix and 45 miles northwest of Tucson, in Pinal and Pima counties, Arizona. Under the Proposed Action, a strategic program (Travel Management Plan) will be undertaken to implement the transportation and travel management decisions in the IFNM RMP and the route designations established concurrently with the IFNM RMP ROD, to support allowable uses and to protect Monument objects. Monument transportation maintenance will depend on the type of access a route provides, and follow the proposed guidelines to achieve consistency in the way that Monument routes are maintained for the purposes that they serve. BLM will work with Pinal and Pima Counties on needed improvements to county-maintained roads. On-the-ground maintenance will be accomplished to address drainage problems, soil and roadbed erosion, side and overhead vegetation clearance, mitigation of safety conditions and mitigation of soil conditions (soils prone to fugitive dust and/or muddy conditions) on roads, trails, turnouts (portal sites, group sites), and dispersed campsites. Restoration will be accomplished in areas damaged from intense past activities and on decommissioned routes.

Intensity

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Ironwood Forest National Monument Travel Management Plan EA decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA considered both potential beneficial and adverse effects of the Proposed Action. None of the effects are beyond the range of effects analyzed in the IFNM RMP ROD (February 2013).

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

The improved routes and consistent transportation network would benefit public health and safety.

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

Cultural sites were avoided in the designation of routes established concurrently with the IFNM RMP ROD. The Proposed Action includes conducting Class 3 cultural surveys prior to project implementation. Sites, if found during surveys, will be avoided. If cultural resources are discovered during construction activities, construction will be halted and BLM Archaeology staff will be contacted so that construction personnel can receive instructions on how to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts.

There are no park lands, prime or unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas where projects are proposed.

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

The possible effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be controversial.

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

The possible effects on human environment are not uncertain.

6. The 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.

This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions.

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

This action is not related to other actions that would cumulatively cause significant negative actions.

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

Cultural sites were avoided in the designation of routes established concurrently with the IFNM RMP ROD. The Proposed Action includes conducting Class 3 cultural surveys prior to project implementation. Sites, if found during surveys, will be avoided. If cultural resources are discovered during construction activities, construction will be halted and BLM Archaeology staff will be contacted so that construction personnel can receive instructions on how to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts.

Significant scientific resources, if found incidental to mandatory surveys (cultural, Threatened and Endangered species) will be avoided. If significant scientific resources are discovered during construction activities, construction will be halted and the appropriate BLM specialist(s) will be contacted so that construction personnel can receive instructions on how to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts.

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

There are two Federally listed species that potentially could be affected by the Proposed Action: the endangered lesser long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris yerbabuena*) and the endangered Nichol Turk's head cactus (*Echinocactus horizonthalonius* var. *nicholii*). It has been determined that the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the lesser long-nosed bat and the Nichol Turk's head cactus. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination through informal consultation.

There are two Special Status Species that could be affected by the Proposed Action: the Tucson shovel-nosed snake (*Chionactis occipitalis klauberi*) and the Sonoran desert tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*). The Proposed Action would be mostly beneficial for the Tucson shovel-nosed snake and Sonoran desert tortoise, because conservation actions are incorporated into the design of all specific actions that could impact the snake or the desert tortoise, natural processes will be encouraged, and the overall ecological condition of the decision area would be maintained or improved during the life of the TMP. Implementation of the Proposed Action may affect individual Tucson shovel-nosed snakes, but is not likely to cause a trend to Federal listing or loss of population viability. Implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in adverse effects to the Sonoran desert tortoise and its habitat.

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

The Proposed Action does not threaten to violate any law. All necessary permits will be obtained before implementation of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is in compliance with the IFNM RMP.

Finding of No Significant Impact

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

_____/s/_____
Viola E. Hillman
Field Manager

_____/9/10/14_____
Date