

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Long Lake Recreation Improvement Projects**

**Mogollon Rim Ranger Districts
Coconino County, Arizona**

Introduction

An environmental assessment (EA) has been completed for the construction of recreation facilities and fishery enhancement structures at Long Lake. The EA and the Project Record is available for review at the Blue Ridge Ranger Station, 60 miles south of Flagstaff, AZ on State Highway 87.

Decision and Rationale

Based on the Environmental Assessment for this project, as well as comments received during the 30-day public comment period for the completed EA, it is my decision to select Alternative 1 for implementation. Alternative 1 emphasizes improvements that are the most beneficial in achieving purpose and need. This decision will:

- Improve boating access by constructing a new (South) boat ramp, and an elongated north boat ramp.
- Improve parking by constructing parking areas near each of the two boat ramps
- Improve sanitation and water quality by constructing concrete vault toilets near each boat ramp.
- Improve fish habitat by constructing “catfish houses” to support game fish.
- Increase vegetation along the shoreline and in the riparian area by planting transitional or emergent vegetation (sedges, rushes and bulrushes) with protective cages.

Alternative 1 is superior to Alternative 2, “no action” because it provides for much-needed improvements as described in the Coconino National Forest Plan.

Alternative 1 is superior to Alternative 2, “no Action”, because it provides for needed improvements as funded by partnership opportunities with the Arizona Game and Fish Department for boater access and for fish habitat improvement that would otherwise not be achieved because of declining recreation budget for new construction within the Southwest Region.

Description of the Selected Alternative (Alternative 1)

The Mogollon Rim Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest proposes to install recreation facilities at two locations along the west edge of Long Lake and improve fisheries habitat as described below. See attached maps.

EACH of the boat launch sites, approximately 3/4 mile apart, would have the same three basic elements:

- Two permanent compartment vault toilets with 1000-gallon capacity.
- Two 15 foot wide by 200foot long boat launch ramps. The existing launches would be extended to accommodate the high/low water fluctuation.
- Graveled access roads to the boat ramps from Forest Road 82 and parking lot suitable for turning around and parking approximately 30 vehicles with trailers.

Each of the two sites (North Long Lake Boating Site and South Long Lake Boating Site) would be designed to accommodate traffic load similar to the current level. The toilet at each site would be located and designed to meet Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) sanitation standards. The developed Boating Site (or group of facilities) would be located to meet the needs of day use boating and fishing visitors and be convenient for overnight dispersed campers. No developed camping sites are proposed with this action.

- Upland and wetland transition vegetation such as native bulrushes, sedges, and rushes would be planted in small plots, (both transplanted and/or native seed species) along the shoreline and in the lake. Temporary fencing would be constructed to protect the newly planted vegetation from browsing animals. Fishery enhancement structures for catfish would be constructed and installed in Long Lake. Large individual juniper trees would be removed during construction of the boat ramps, parking areas and toilets and used as fish enhancement in Tremaine Lake.

Mitigation

Mitigation actions required to implement Alternative 1 are outlined in the EA, Chapter 2 (Alternatives). These actions include:

- Equipment will be operated when ground conditions are such that unacceptable soil compaction or displacement will be minimized. After construction, disturbed areas will be seeded or re-vegetated.
- Direct and drain water off the parking lot surface into nearby vegetation, to prevent standing water in the parking lot.
- Heavy hauling and construction activities shall not occur between November 15th and April 15th to prevent disturbance to wintering Bald Eagles.
- If any heritage resource sites are discovered during construction and clearing, all operations will be stopped immediately, to protect and preserve heritage resources in the area.
- During construction, traffic caution signs will be posted at critical locations along FR 82, to protect and caution the traveling public of heavy equipment in the area.

- During construction, equipment will be cleaned of visible mud, dirt and plant parts before moving onto the project site to remove a seed source that could be picked up by passing vehicles and to limit seed transport into a relatively weed-free area at moderate or high ecological risk.
- Gravel and fill to be placed must come from weed-free sources. Gravel pits and fill sources will be inspected to identify weed-free sources, to minimize weed spread caused by moving infested gravel and fill material to relatively weed-free locations.

These mitigation measures will become part of the 10-Year Term Grazing Permit, Allotment Management Plan and Annual Operating Plan for permitted livestock grazing use on this allotment, and will be included as appropriate in the implementation of the approved site-specific resource projects.

Monitoring

Monitoring required to implement Alternative 1 is outlined in EA, Chapter 2 (Alternatives), and includes monitoring of the construction by the Contracting Officer's Representative, and by the District Recreation Staff to make sure that design criteria are being met.

Public Involvement

An integral and ongoing element of the environmental analysis is contact with the public. Scoping was used early in this process to identify the issues to be addressed and the depth of the analysis required for the Environmental Assessment.

A proposal (Proposed Action) for managing the recreation facilities was developed by an interdisciplinary team (Team) of Forest Service Specialists, and the Arizona Game & Fish Department (AG&FD) Boater Access and Fish Habitat specialists. This proposal was mailed to interested and affected individuals, groups, Federal and State resource agencies, American Indian Tribes and local agencies and political entities in the February 2001. No significant issues were raised during scoping, so no additional action alternatives were developed.

The Team then analyzed the environmental impacts of implementing each alternative, which is summarized in the EA.

The Long Lake Recreation Improvements Environmental Assessment was completed and made available for public comment for 30 days ending March 13, 2003. The public's responses were evaluated by the Team; the comments and the Forest Service responses are included in Appendix E of the EA.

Other Alternatives Considered

Based on the scope of the concerns received from the public during the early phases of this process, no alternatives were considered beyond the Proposed Action Alternative (listed above) and the No Action Alternative (outlined below).

This alternative is required by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, and forms the baseline for comparison between the alternatives. No Action is a continuation of the current management. Even though no action would be taken, there are still effects from no action.

- No permanent compartment vault toilets would be constructed. Port-a-potties would continue to be used and pumped as needed. Recreationists would continue to use the “bushes” for sanitation facilities.
- No new boat launch ramps would be constructed. The existing launches would continue to either be high and dry or be under water.
- Since there would be no new boat launch ramps constructed, no graveled access roads would be needed.
- No upland and wetland transition vegetation such as native bullrushes, sedges, and rushes would be planted along the shoreline and in the lake. Fishery enhancement structures for catfish would not be constructed and installed in Long Lake.

Finding Of No Significant Impact

I have determined through an environmental assessment that Alternative 1 is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with others actions in the general vicinity. This determination is made considering significance in both context and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27).

Context

I have determined that Alternative 1 is a site-specific action that by itself does not have international, national, region-wide, or statewide importance. The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended actions and is within the context of local importance in the area associated with the Mogollon Rim Ranger District.

Intensity

Beneficial and Adverse Impacts:

The physical and biological effects are confined to the immediate Long Lake area.

Public Health and Safety:

Given the current and expected numbers of people recreating in the project area and the mitigation measures prescribed to reduce potential conflicts, there are no known or expected adverse effects on public health and safety.

Implementing Alternative 1 will not disproportionately impact any minority population in the immediate area or surrounding counties. Implementation will have a positive benefit to Americans with disabilities because new facilities will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Unique Characteristics:

This project area is not in proximity to any unique historic sites, park lands, prime farm land, wetlands or ecologically critical areas. Therefore, the unique characteristics of the area will not be significantly affected.

Controversy:

The environmental effects to the human environment are documented in the environmental assessment and are typical for the action proposed. The effects are not controversial from a scientific or technical standpoint.

Uncertainty and Risk:

The actions also do not involve unique or unknown risks, nor are the environmental effects highly uncertain. The activities are typical of past activities in the vicinity. To the best of my knowledge, the effects of activities are known and have been addressed.

Precedent:

Implementing Alternative 1 does not set a precedent for future actions that would have significant effects.

Cumulative Effects:

The cumulative effects are addressed in the EA, and the analysis team evaluated the projects listed on the current Schedule Of Proposed Actions (SOPA) for the Coconino National Forest for potential impacts of reasonably foreseeable action. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.

Significant Scientific, Cultural or Historical Resources:

Implementing Alternative 1 will not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources. An Archaeological Survey and Cultural Resources Clearance report for the Long Lake Recreation Improvements project area is complete and available for review in the Project Record. The State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with a determination of No Adverse Effects for implementation of the projects.

Threatened and Endangered Species or Critical Habitat:

Implementing Alternative 1 will have no significant effects on threatened, endangered, candidate or proposed species or Forest Service listed sensitive species, and is not likely to destroy or adversely modify proposed critical habitat of any species. A Biological Assessment and Evaluation is complete for all threatened, endangered, candidate and sensitive species occurring within or adjacent to the Long Lake Recreation Improvements area.

Federal, State and Local Laws:

Implementing Alternative 1 does not threaten a violation of Federal, State or local laws, or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Consistency

The actions planned under this decision are consistent with the management direction in the Coconino National Forest Land Management Plan, and with Forest Service direction and policy.

Implementation Date

This project will not be implemented sooner than five (5) business days following the close of the appeal filing period established in the Notice of Decision in the *Arizona Daily Sun*. If an appeal is filed, implementation will not begin sooner than 15 calendar days following a final decision on the appeal if the decision is upheld. Implementation means actually doing the ground disturbing activities described in this notice. Preparation work may proceed.

Appeal Procedures and Administrative Review Process

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR 215.7. A written notice of appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer:

Forest Supervisor
Coconino National Forest
2323 E. Greenlaw
Flagstaff, Arizona 86004

The Notice of Appeal must be filed within 45 days of publication of notice of this decision in the newspaper of record, the *Arizona Daily Sun*.

In accordance with 36 CFR Section 215.14, it is the responsibility of those who appeal a decision to provide the Appeal Deciding Officer sufficient evidence and rationale to show why the Responsible Official's decision should be remanded or reversed. The written notice of appeal must meet the following requirements:

- State that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to CFR part 215.
- List the name, address and telephone number of the appellant.
- Identify the decision document by title and subject, date of decision, and name and title of the Responsible Official.
- Identify the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks or portion of the decision to which the appellant objects.
- State how the Responsible Official's decision fails to consider comments previously provided either before or during the comment period specified in 36 CFR 215.6 and, if applicable, how the appellant believes the decision violates law, regulation, or policy.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning the decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Carol Holland, Planning Staff; Mogollon Rim Ranger District; HC31 Box 300; Happy Jack, AZ 86024 or by telephone at (928) 477-2255.

LARRY G. SEARS
District Ranger
Mogollon Rim Ranger District

Date

Figure 1. Project Area Map.

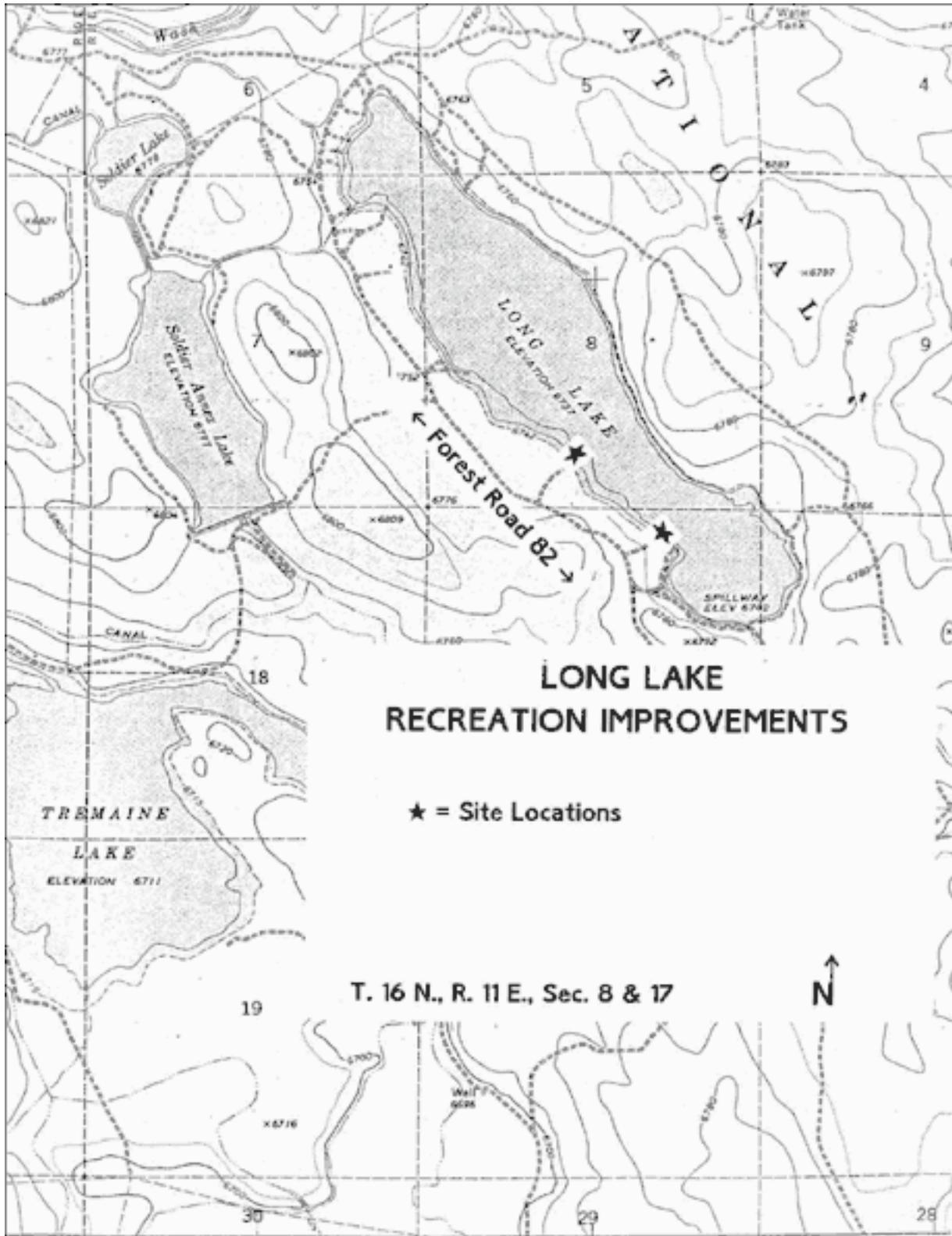


Figure 2. Vicinity Map.

