

Joseph M. Branco

REC'D OCT 22 2019

October 21, 2019

Neil Bosworth  
Tonto National Forest Supervisor  
2324 E. McDowell Road  
Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Dear Mr. Bosworth,

This letter addresses the Bar X and Heber-Reno Driveway Grazing Authorization project on the Tonto National Forest, Pleasant Valley Ranger District in Gila County, Arizona; the Environmental Assessment of the area in 2019 (EA 2019); and the subsequent proposed Grazing Authorization.

In the 1970's and 80's the United States Forest Service ( Forest Service) conducted extensive studies of the BarX allotment and the environmental impact those allotments had on the resources of the area. Those studies proved the allotment of 468 head of cattle severely degraded the natural resources. Due to these findings the Forest Service suspended grazing on certain pastures and decreased head count on others. These studies were not even mentioned in the 2019 EA and should be part of the administrative record and part of the new decision to authorize grazing. Given that Colcord and Haigler Creek pastures have not been grazed by livestock since 1979, except in 2015, these prior studies are VERY relevant concerning the impacts of sustained livestock grazing on the resources in these specific pastures.

The forest Service decision to not complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and rely on an Environment Assessment instead seems shortsighted. Given that the proposed action will expand grazing into large areas that have not been grazed for decades, and which contain numerous threatened and endangered wildlife species as well as big game species elk, deer and turkey, there may be significant effects from the action, warranting an EIS.

Since the Allotment Management Plan was instituted in the early 1980's the land and resources have improved, as have recreational opportunities. Now however, the current owner of the Bar X, Bar X L.L.C., is asking for increased numbers of cattle, greater than those that the Forest Service's own studies of the 70's showed devastated range resources. The increased number of cattle will bring a reversal of improved land resources and a decrease in the quality of recreational opportunities in our forests and waterways.

In reading the 2019 EA, I cannot help but feel that the primary purpose of the Forest Service's action is for the current permittee's success and productivity and not necessarily for the greater good of the community and the public in general.

I am not asking the Forest Service to end grazing on the Bar X allotment, I am only asking you as the Forest Supervisor to look at the effect your decision will have on the many people who live and recreate in the Colcord/ Haigler pasture area and not just the one ranch owner. We should also keep in mind the Forest Service mission statement "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations". In doing so we should also realize that the implementation of the proposed management and stocking level will ultimately result in an irreversibly depleted range resource incapable of supporting economic livestock operations or human enjoyment of our beautiful Mogollon Rim country.

Respectfully,



Joseph M. Branco