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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

$\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	micrograms per cubic meter
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AGFD	Arizona Game and Fish Department
amsl	above mean sea level
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
ASLD	Arizona State Land Department
ASM	Arizona State Museum
ATC	all-terrain cycle
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
AZVJC	Arizona Virtual Jeep Club
AZOHVC	Arizona Off Highway Vehicle Coalition
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
bls	below land surface
CAA	Clean Air Act
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO	carbon monoxide
CWA	Clean Water Act
dBA	A-weighted decibels
DRMP/DEIS	Draft Resource Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
G&SRB&M	Gila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian
HDMS	Heritage Data Management System
HIT	hole-in-top
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
I-8	Interstate 8
I-10	Interstate 10
LCRV	Lower Colorado River Valley
Ldn	the equivalent, steady state sound level expressed in dBA, which, on an hourly basis, contains the same acoustic energy as the time-varying sound level during the same period
Leq(h)	a 24-hour day-night noise level expressed in decibels

MCAQD	Maricopa County Air Quality Department
MCAQR	Maricopa County Air Quality Rule
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NO _x	nitrogen oxides
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
O ₃	ozone
OHM	off-highway motorcycle
OHV	off-highway vehicle
ORV	off-road vehicle
Pb	lead
PM10	particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or smaller
PM2.5	particulate matter 2.5 microns in diameter or smaller
ppm	parts per million
R&PP	Recreational and Public Purposes
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
S	Sensitive
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
SO _x	sulfur oxides
SR	state route
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VRM	Visual Resources Management
WUS	waters of the United States

Executive Summary

The Town of Buckeye is located in Maricopa County, Arizona, in the western portion of the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. For the past 20 years, growth in the greater Phoenix area has been robust, and the present population in the metropolitan area is approximately 3.4 million people. The Town of Buckeye has been no exception to this growth. The Town's population is projected to be over 100,000 by the year 2010, with a final projected population of more than 2 million. Along with homes, various retail, entertainment, health care, education, and employment uses are also planned for the Town. With such growth has been the need to expand existing recreational facilities to accommodate new population in the area.

The proposed project is for the Town to lease approximately 8,675.36 acres of land in the southern White Tank Mountains from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in order to establish the Buckeye White Tanks Regional Park. If the proposed action is selected, the BLM will grant the Town of Buckeye a lease to develop park infrastructure on the space. Eventually, the BLM will determine if the Town of Buckeye can acquire the land if it has successfully completed the project in accordance with the approved Plan of Development and management, and has substantially developed the lands in accordance with the approved Plan of Development and management to indicate, in the opinion of the authorized officer, that the project will be completed in the foreseeable future. Both during the lease period and after the acquisition, management responsibility for the approximately 8,675.36 acres of land would be transferred to the Town.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared by the BLM pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The EA identifies the environmental consequences that may result from the lease and patent of BLM managed lands in the southern White Tanks Mountains. The EA also identifies methods to avoid, minimize, and mitigate, as appropriate, potential adverse impacts.

Environmental analysis of the resource potential susceptible to impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed action found no significant adverse impact to the human environment. Resources evaluated in this document include earth, water, air, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural/historical resources, land use, socioeconomics, noise, visual resources, and transportation/access.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Since 1960, when the first nationwide survey on outdoor recreation trends was conducted, Americans have demonstrated an ever-growing level of interest and active participation in outdoor recreation (Interagency National Survey Consortium 2004). Throughout the U.S., expanding urban populations, increased mobility and leisure time, and a higher standard of living have simultaneously created a demand for more and better recreation facilities. Urban expansion and a growing population have increased the need for more public services, such as schools, community buildings, hospitals, and sanitary landfills.

Recognizing the strong public need for a nationwide system of parks and other recreational and public purposes areas, Congress, in 1954, enacted the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act (68 Statute 173; 43 United States Code [USC] 869 et seq.), which is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This Act authorizes the sale or lease of public lands for recreational or public purposes to state and local governments and to qualified nonprofit organizations. Examples of typical uses under the R&PP Act include historic monument sites, campgrounds, schools, firehouses, law enforcement facilities, municipal facilities, landfills, hospitals, parks, and fairgrounds.

Founded in 1888, the town of Buckeye is located in Maricopa County, Arizona, in the western portion of the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. For the past 20 years, growth in the greater Phoenix area has been robust, and the present population in the metropolitan area is approximately 3.4 million people. Only about 32,000 people currently live in Buckeye, but this population is expected to increase dramatically.

Currently, more than 240,000 new homes are planned within Buckeye. Given the size and number of the master-planned developments within the town limits, the population is projected to be over 100,000 by the year 2010, with a final projected population of more than 2 million (Town of Buckeye 2006). Along with homes, various retail, entertainment, health care, education, and employment uses are also planned.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Project is for the Town of Buckeye (Town) to lease approximately 8,675.36 acres of land (approximately 17 square miles) in the southern White Tank Mountains in order to establish the Buckeye White Tanks Regional Park (Figure 1-1). The approximate 8,675.36 acre area discussed in this document is currently managed by the BLM and would be leased by the Town through the authority of the R&PP Act.

The need for the Project stems from the intense growth in the far west valley. As detailed in the Socioeconomics section of this document (Section 3.3), the greater Phoenix metropolitan area is experiencing intense growth. Areas of open desert are being developed into housing, retail, commercial, and industrial developments at an unprecedented rate.

The Town has responded to this growth by planning for open space and recreational opportunities. As part of this planning process, the Town specifically identified an area of BLM land in the White Tank Mountains that would be appropriate to meet this need and has applied to the BLM to lease the land for recreational purposes under the R&PP Act. Because the application and lease would involve federal land, this Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared.

1.3 COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES

1.3.1 Conformance with Resource Management Plans

The BLM's planning process is governed by Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (43 USC 1711) and 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1600, which governs the administrative review process for most of BLM's decisions. Land use plans ensure that BLM-administered public lands are managed in accordance with the intent of Congress as stated in FLPMA and under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. As required by FLPMA, public lands must be managed in a manner that protects the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values; that, where appropriate, preserves and protects certain public lands in their natural condition and provides food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that provides for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use by encouraging collaboration and public participation throughout the planning process. In addition, public lands must be managed to help meet the nation's needs for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from public lands.

Land use plans are the main mechanism for guiding BLM's activities to achieve the mission and goals outlined in the BLM's Strategic Plan (BLM 2000). BLM currently manages the 8,675.36 acres of land discussed in this document under the BLM (1983) *Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan*. The BLM (2000) *Final Amendment and EA to the Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan and the Lower Gila South Resource Management Plan* states that the land adjacent to the White Tank Mountain Regional Park (county park) would be retained by BLM and would be available only to government entities for recreation/park purposes. These plans are currently being updated and reviewed, and new management prescriptions for the lands covered in the EA will be provided in the *Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (RMP/EIS), which is scheduled to be completed in late 2008.

1.3.2 Compliance with Other Applicable Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and Policies

The following is a summary of selected statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders (EOs) pertaining to the preparation of EAs on federal land.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Public Law 91-190, 42 USC 4321-4370(e), as amended. NEPA requires Federal agencies to take into consideration the environmental consequences of proposed actions as well as input from State and local governments, Indian tribes, the public, and other Federal agencies, during their decision-making process. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) was established under NEPA to ensure that all environmental, economic, and technical considerations are given appropriate consideration in this process. This EA complies with NEPA statutes and regulations, the U.S. Department of Interior Manual, and BLM's NEPA Handbook.

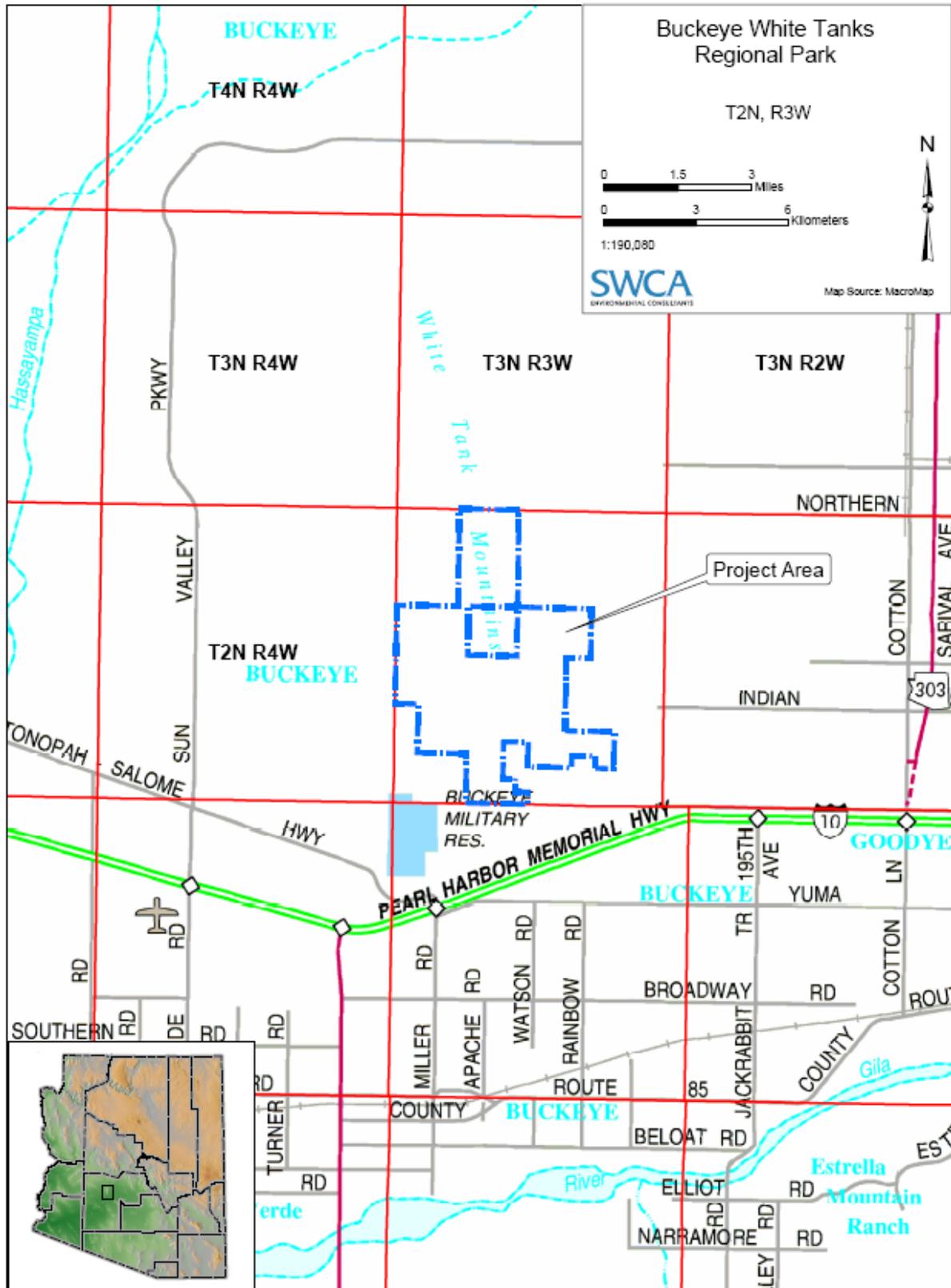


Figure 1-1. General location of the project area.

Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) identifies conditions under which a permit is required for construction projects that result in the discharge of fill or dredged material into waters of the United States (WUS). There are some jurisdictional WUS within the Project area. The Town will prepare a detailed jurisdictional delineation for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and will obtain necessary permits prior to any discharge into WUS. Section 402 of the CWA identifies conditions under which a permit is required for the discharge of pollutants from a point source into WUS. A point-source National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit is not required, as there would be no pollutants discharged as a result of the proposed alternative. The NPDES stormwater permitting rule requires all operators of construction activity disturbing 5 or more acres of land to apply for a NPDES stormwater permit. The Proposed Project Alternative would “disturb” more than a total of 5 acres of land at the site; therefore, an NPDES permit would need to be obtained before any construction activities begin.

Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, as amended. Section 1424 of this Act regulates underground injection into an aquifer, which is the sole or principal drinking water source for an area. The aquifer beneath the Project area is not a designated sole source aquifer; therefore, this Act does not apply.

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, May 24, 1977. EO 11988 requires avoiding or minimizing harm associated with the occupancy or modification of a floodplain. Neither alternative for this Project would cause any harm to the floodplain. Any recreation amenity or facility developed at the Proposed Regional Park would need to be sited and operated in such a manner that it would not result in adverse modifications to the floodplain.

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, May 24, 1977. EO 11990 requires Federal agencies or Federally funded projects to restrict uses of Federal lands for the protection of wetlands through avoidance or minimization of adverse impacts. The EO was issued to “avoid to the extent possible the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands whenever there is a practicable alternative.” No wetlands will be affected by this Project.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. This Act requires consideration of wild and scenic rivers in planning water resources projects. Developing water resources projects is prohibited on any river designated for study as a potential component of the national wild and scenic river system. There are no such rivers or candidates in the area that would be affected by this Project.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934, as amended. The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act requires coordination with Federal and State wildlife agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] and Arizona Game and Fish Department [AGFD]) for the purpose of mitigating losses of wildlife resources caused by a project that impounds, diverts, or otherwise modifies a stream or other natural body of water.

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires Federal agencies to consult with the USFWS to ensure that undertaking, funding, permitting, or authorizing an action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. Critical Habitat, as defined under the Act, exists only after USFWS officially designates it. Critical Habitat refers to areas 1) within the geographic area, features essential to the conservation of the species and that may require special management consideration or protection; and 2) those specific areas outside the geographic area occupied by a species at the time it is listed that are essential to the conservation of the species.

Clean Air Act of 1963, as amended. The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires any Federal entity engaged in an activity that may result in the discharge of air pollutants to comply with all applicable air pollution control laws and regulations (federal, state, or local). This Act directs the attainment and maintenance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six different criteria pollutants, including carbon dioxide (CO), ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM), sulfur oxides (SO_x), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and lead (Pb). Implementation of the Proposed Project Alternative would include ground-disturbing activities that would create short-term fugitive dust and PM₁₀ air quality impacts. Maricopa County Air Quality Rules (MCAQR) outline measures that would be incorporated into construction specifications to minimize potential dust emissions. MCAQRs 310 and 310.01 include work practice standards that will ensure emissions from fugitive dust sources, such as open areas, vacant lots, unpaved parking lots, and unpaved roadways, are minimized to the extent practicable. An earth-moving permit and dust control plan are required for any operations that disturb a total surface area equal to or greater than 0.10 acre.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, February 11, 1994. This Order directs Federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. The Project would not introduce disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on the surrounding population; there would be no adverse effect as defined by this EO.

Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites, 1996. EO 13007 requires that all Executive Branch agencies having responsibility for the management of Federal lands will, where practicable, permitted by law, and not clearly inconsistent with essential agency functions, provide access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and will avoid adversely affecting the integrity of such sacred sites. The EO also requires that Federal agencies, when possible, maintain the confidentiality of sacred sites. The BLM will consult with the appropriate Tribes during the NEPA process.

Executive Order 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, January 10, 2001. This EO directs Federal agencies to support the conservation intent of the migratory bird conventions by integrating bird conservation principles, measures, and practices into agency activities and by avoiding or minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts on migratory bird resources when conducting agency actions.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Federal undertakings must comply with Section 106 of National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which mandates that potential effects on significant historic properties be considered prior to approval of such undertakings. Significant historic properties are defined as sites, districts, buildings, structures, and objects eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Consideration of these resources is to be made in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other interested agencies and parties. Three properties were identified as eligible for listing in the NRHP, in compliance with the NHPA.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) (25 USC 3001-3013). This Act requires protection and repatriation of Native American cultural items found on, or taken from, Federal or tribal lands, and requires repatriation of cultural items controlled by Federal agencies or museums receiving Federal funds. Should previously unidentified cultural resources, especially human remains, be encountered during construction, work will stop immediately at that location and the BLM Field Manager will be notified to ensure proper treatment of these resources.

Chapter 2

ALTERNATIVES AND PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

The town of Buckeye is located west of the City of Phoenix in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. Buckeye is experiencing intense growth from residential, commercial, and industrial developments. Because of the intense growth in the area, the Town made the decision to improve recreational opportunities in the vicinity of Buckeye while preserving some of the pristine desert open space for the residents and surrounding communities.

Because of the beautiful mountainscape and open space provided by the southern White Tank Mountains, the Town chose to evaluate the BLM-administered property for its recreational potential. The approximate 8,675.36-acre White Tank Mountains create a picturesque landscape as well as ideal recreational conditions. Recreationists have been using the property for hiking, biking, off-road vehicle (ORV) use, and other forms of general recreation for many years, as well as for a variety of unsanctioned activities including dumping, uncontrolled shooting, outdoor parties, and the removal of natural plants. In order to accommodate a project on the Regional Park scale, other properties in the vicinity were cursorily considered but none were of the size or topography to support the Project proposal for a Regional Park. Because of the location and expanse of the White Tank Mountains, this property was a natural option for the Town to consider.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

Two alternatives have been considered in detail in this EA. Both the No-Action Alternative and the Proposed Action (Proposed Project Alternative) were assessed and analyzed during preparation of this document.

- No-Action Alternative—maintains the current conditions and BLM management of the approximately 8,675.36 acres of land.
- Proposed Project Alternative—includes the lease and subsequent conveyance of the approximately 8,675.36 acres of land, management of the lands by the Town, the development of recreational amenities, and development/improvement of trails.

2.2.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the proposed park would not be developed and the approximately 8,675.36 acres of land would remain as BLM-managed land. The land is currently vacant and is used for general, dispersed outdoor recreation and unsanctioned activities. Access to the property occurs via the southern, eastern, and western edges of the property near trails and off-highway vehicle (OHV) tracks. OHV and recreational shooters as well as hikers and mountain bikers heavily use the area. No facilities currently exist on the site.

2.2.2 Proposed Project Alternative

The Town is planning the development of a Regional Park that encompasses approximately 8,675.36 acres of land currently administered by the BLM. The area is located east and north of downtown Buckeye in the southeastern portion of the White Tank Mountains (Figure 2-1). The Town has applied for the lease of the 8,675.36 acres of BLM land to accommodate the regional park. Table 2-1 lists the specific location of the properties encompassed in the 8,675.36-acre land agreement.

Table 2-1. Specific Property Locations

Subdivision	Section	Township	Range	Meridian
Lots 1–4, S ½ N ½, S ½	4	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
Lot 1, SE ¼ NE ¼, E ½ SE ¼	5	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
E ½ E ½	8	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
All	9	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
W ½	14	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
All	15	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
All	17	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
Lots 1–4, E ½ E ½	18	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
Lots 1–4, E ½ E ½	19	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
All	20	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
All	21	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
All	22	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
S ½	26	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
N ½, N ½ S ½, SE ¼ SW ¼, S ½ SE ¼	27	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
N ½, N ½ S ½, S ½ SW ¼, SW ¼ SE ¼	28	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
All	29	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
Lots 1–4, W ½ NE ¼, NW ¼, N ½ S ½	33	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
Lot 1, N ½ NE ¼, NE ¼ NW ¼	34	2N	3W	G&SRB&M
NE ¼ NE ¼, E ½ NW ¼ NE ¼, W ½ NW ¼ NW ¼	35	2N	3W	G&SRB&M

After review of the application and associated environmental documentation, the BLM may then grant the Town a lease for a currently undetermined period of time. Once the BLM is satisfied that the park development plans are sufficiently underway or completed, the BLM may then allow the Town to purchase the land, patenting the land over to the Town. Both during the lease period and after the patent, management responsibility for the 8,675.36 acres of land would be transferred to the Town. The Town would be responsible for management consistent with the plan of development. If the land use changes, the land may revert back to the Federal government.

Park Details

The park will be developed for recreational use to accommodate hiking, picnicking, mountain biking, camping, and equestrian use. The park will be developed primarily for day use and short-term camping. A 5-year phased approach has been proposed for the initial development of the park facilities. As the area develops and use of the park increases, future facilities envisioned by the Town include a visitor center, small amphitheatre, increased parking and camping facilities, improved restrooms, equestrian parking, and utilities to support the facilities on the site. OHVs, including all-

terrain vehicles (ATVs), “quads,” and dirt bikes, would be prohibited on the park property. In addition, recreational shooting, hunting, and archery would be prohibited on the park property.

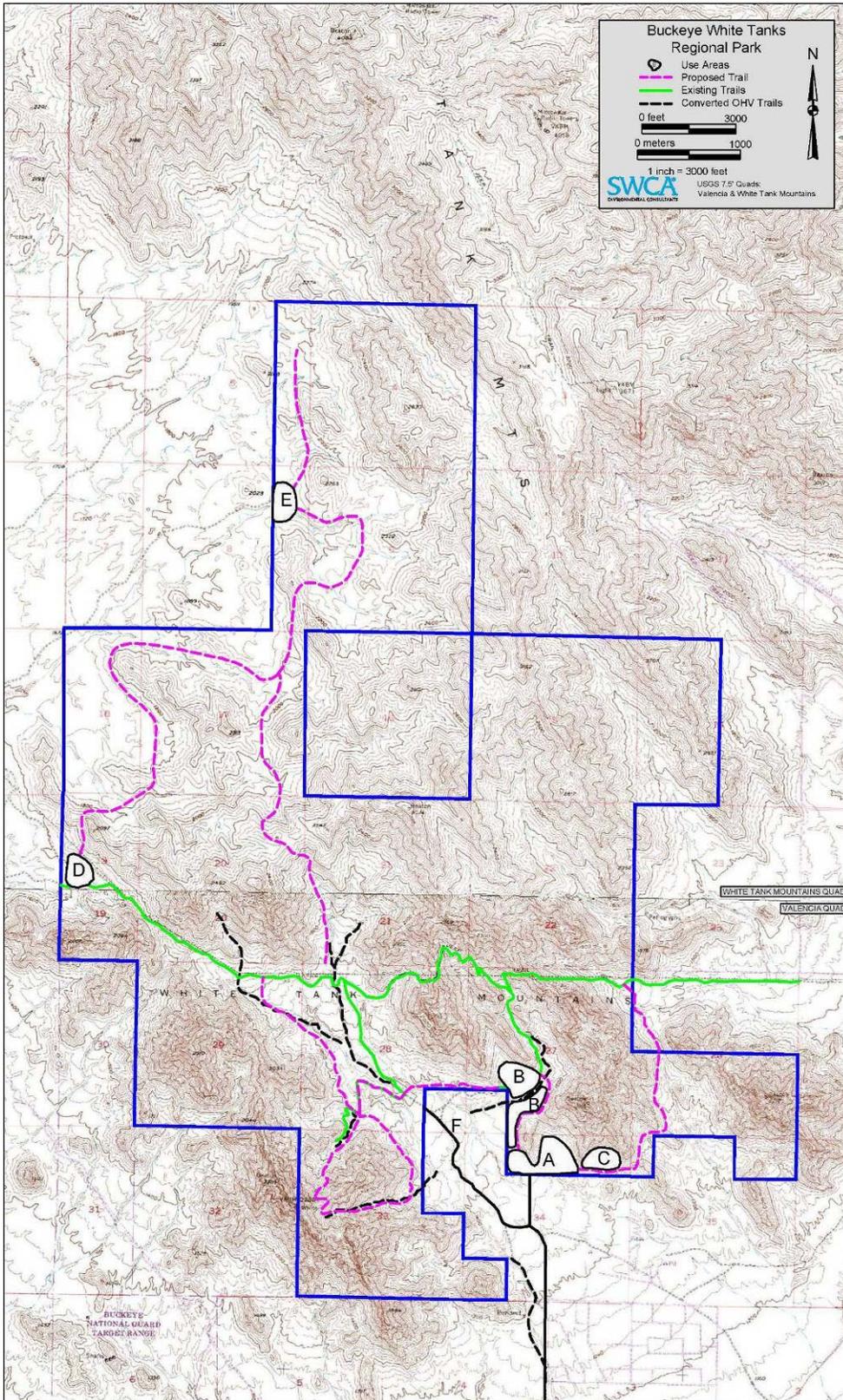


Figure 2-1 Project Area Location

Off-Highway Vehicle and All-Terrain Vehicle Uses and Definitions

An OHV is a class of vehicles that includes ATVs, off-highway motorcycles (OHMs), and ORVs. For the purposes of this Project, the definition of an ATV will reflect that of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), a non-profit institute that helps develop consensus standards for products, services, processes, and systems in the U.S. ANSI defines an ATV as a vehicle that travels on low-pressure tires, has a seat that is straddled by the operator, and has handlebars for steering control. Throughout this document, the term ATV refers to the ANSI definition and includes vehicles intended for use by a single operator or a two-person-capable vehicle. Four-wheel versions are most commonly called quads or four-wheelers. Models with three wheels are typically called three-wheelers or all-terrain cycles (ATCs). Two-wheeled models are generally called two-wheelers, dirt bikes, or OHMs. The use of any type of OHV, including ATV, ATC, and OHM models, will be prohibited within park boundaries.

Management of Park

Broad management zones are defined to provide low maintenance for park staff, to protect natural resources, and to establish a framework for future improvements. These zones are similar to management zones in place at Maricopa County's White Tank Mountain Regional Park. A Use and Development Plan will be adopted to govern the management of the park. The plan will be periodically re-evaluated and updated as needed.

The Proposed Park will have three primary zones: entrance zones, passive recreation zones, and resource protection zones (see list below). The central use area, known as the Watson Road Entrance Zone, is initially (within the first 5 years) intended to provide limited facilities. Future entrances may be located at the northern or western boundaries of the Project area (see Figure 2-1). The passive recreation zone will consist of areas within 100 feet of trails and other facilities. Passive recreation is a form of non-consumptive recreation that includes activities such as hiking, biking, and sightseeing.

1. Primary Entry Zone (Watson Road)

- Access road, park entry with pay station
- Trailheads
- Day-use parking
- Camping
- Shade ramadas
- Visitor services (toilets, picnic tables, potential visitor center)
- Park staff to provide surveillance, vehicle control, fire alarms, etc.
- Signage
- Potential special-use areas such as a mountain-bike-only trail system or equestrian trailhead
- Utility services (water, sewer, electrical) if these become readily available at or close to the park entry
- Vehicular controls (railings or other means of preventing off-trail driving) and posted 15-mph speed limit on paved roads

2. Passive Recreation Zone (areas within 100 feet of trails and other facilities)

- Multi-use non-motorized trails and trail-related improvements
- Signage
- Natural and cultural resource conservation
- Fire prevention or suppression

3. Resource Protection Zone (areas more than 100 feet from trails and other developed facilities)

- Preservation of natural and cultural resources

The resource protection zone will consist of areas more than 100 feet from trails and other developed facilities. This zone will focus on preservation of natural and cultural resources.

Park Facilities

The facilities analyzed in this EA will be located on approximately 48 acres of land at the Watson Road entrance area. A general design concept for these facilities and two potential trailheads on the park's west and north sides has been created; however, exact locations will be determined based on the EA and associated environmental reports (see Figure 2-1). Future desired development of the entrance zones and other proposed facilities is discussed below.

The Watson Road Entrance Zone would consist of

- approximately 7 acres available for the park entry, day uses, trailhead facilities, parking, and visitor services;
- approximately 1 acre available for park offices and/or park maintenance yard;
- approximately 15 acres available for campground development; and
- approximately 25 acres to the north available for future facilities, viewed as an area for long-range expansion of park facilities but is not currently assigned to specific uses and is subject to further study and planning.

Initial development (first 5 years) will consist of

- a dust-controlled access road over state land from the end of Watson Road to the park's primary entry, initially with wet wash crossings;
- entry/fee station;
- initial trail improvement and trail links;
- parking for 10 to 20 cars;
- up to 15 camping spaces with shade ramada(s);
- portable or composting toilets;
- picnic tables and shade ramada(s); and
- vehicular control to limit off-road driving (vehicles would be required to stay on paved roadways and follow posted speed limits of no more than 15 miles per hour; Park Ranger enforcement will be in place to control unauthorized vehicle entry and use).

Additional phased improvements will be developed as funding allows (5–10 years). Additional environmental studies may be warranted at the time of development.

Future improvements in the Watson Road Entrance area may consist of

- improvements to the public access road over state land;
- trail development in the Passive Recreation Zone 13.9 miles of trails at 10 feet wide;
- 14 miles of trail conversion from motorized to nonmotorized;
- rehabilitation of over widened motorized trail areas 10.89 acres;
- additional day-use parking;
- additional camping or campground improvements;

- additional shade ramadas;
- visitor services (toilets, picnic tables, potential visitor center);
- potential nonresident Park Ranger to provide surveillance, vehicle control, fire alarms, etc.;
- improved directional and regulatory signage;
- potential special-use areas such as a mountain-bike-only trail system or equestrian trailhead;
- vehicular controls (railings or other means of managing vehicular traffic); and
- utility services (water, sewer, electrical) *if these become readily available at or close to the park entry along Watson Road as part of future private development adjacent to the park.*

Future potential improvements in other areas of the property include one or two entrances on the western portion of the property, encompassing approximately 5 acres each. Additional environmental studies coordinated with the BLM would be necessary before developments in these areas occur. The improvements would include

- day use parking
- trailhead and ADA trail development 1 mile at 5 feet wide
- toilets
- picnicking
- utility services (water, sewer, electrical) *if these become readily available at or close to the park entry as part of future private development adjacent to the park.*

Trail Facilities

Within the proposed park boundaries are two primary trail types. The Powerline trail runs east–west along the length of the park boundaries for approximately 8.2 miles (see Figure 2-1). In addition to equestrian, mountain biking, and hiking activities, OHV use has been one of the primary functions along the Powerline trail, which has contributed to the 20- to 30-foot width along the majority of the trail length. The trail has an estimated footprint of 24.76 acres of disturbance. Under the proposed action, the trail would be reduced to a width of 14 feet to accommodate non-motorized multi-use functions.

The second trail type within the proposed park boundaries is a variety of OHV trails that have been in use throughout the proposed Project area. These trails total 5.8 miles long and are typically 14 feet wide. They contribute to extensive dust, erosion, and habitat destruction issues. Total disturbance from these trails is an estimated 9.88 acres. Under the proposed action these trails will remain 14 feet wide in order to accommodate non-motorized multi-use activities such as equestrian, hiking, and biking.

Both primary trail types will remain native to soil under the proposed action. New trails will also remain primarily natural with the exception of a proposed Americans with Disabilities Act–compliant (ADA) trail loop approximately 1 mile long, which will be a 4- to 5-foot-wide paved trail with railing or curbing where necessary. It is expected that the ADA loop trail will be close to the park entrance. An additional 13.9 miles of a north–south hiking trail will be available for much of the length of the proposed Project area. A typical trail width for hiking-only trails is 10 feet. Total new disturbance for ADA and natural north–south hiking trails will be approximately 15.1 acres.

The proposed action will result in a total new disturbance from trails and park facilities of 52.21 acres. Of that acreage, 48 acres will be designated for park facilities, and the remaining 4.21 acres

will be for new trails. Table 2-2 depicts total existing and new disturbances. Proposed, existing, and OHV trails can be seen in Figure 2-1.

Table 2-2. Expected Existing and New Disturbance from No Action and Proposed Action Alternatives

Use Type	No Action ¹ (acres)	Proposed Action ⁴ (acres)
Proposed Trails	--	15.1
Powerline Trails	24.76	13.87
OHV trails	9.88 (motorized)	9.88 (nonmotorized)
Park Facilities	--	48
50-Foot Area of Influence	170.2	--
100-Foot Area of Influence	341.8	--
Total	204.84² / 376.48³	86.85

1 Calculations based on existing conditions

2 Total based on 50-foot area of influence

3 Total based on 100-foot area of influence

4 Calculations based on total disturbance at park buildout

BLM has indicated that the zone of influence along motorized trails can be between 50 to 100 feet wide, as tortoises within that buffer will likely interact with trails at some point in the future and risk loss of life. The proposed action will include the prohibition of OHV use within park boundaries. The potential total acreage of Sonoran Desert tortoise habitat potentially gained by taking into account the zone of influence could be between 170.2 and 341.8 acres total. This would result in no net loss of habitat goal for the Sonoran Desert tortoise, as mandated by the BLM (see Table 2-2).

2.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM CONSIDERATION

As discussed in Section 2.1, alternative locations for the Regional Park were not available in the area of the Town. Large properties in the area have either already been designated (such as the Maricopa County Buckeye Hills Park) or do not exist.

Alternative park facility configurations have been considered but eliminated. Both larger and smaller development plans were considered for the Regional Park property. Factors such as the size of the park, population increase, potential recreational users, and Town resources were considered to determine the current preferred development plan.

After review of the factors listed above, large development plans for the property were dismissed because the Town did not want to overdevelop the property and wanted to keep the recreational component of the property intact. Additionally, the Town was cautious to balance their development plans with resource protection and preserving the open space character and natural resources of the property. A Regional Park with fewer developed facilities was also considered, but did not accommodate the Regional Park concept or the estimated numbers of potential future visitors to the property.

Chapter 3

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the existing environment potentially affected by the Project alternatives and the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects (or impacts) of activities pertaining to each alternative. Resources considered include the following:

- Land Use (Section 3.2)
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice (Section 3.3)
- Recreation (Section 3.4)
- Earth and Water Resources (Section 3.5)
- Biological Resources (Section 3.6)
- Cultural Resources (Section 3.7)
- Air Quality (Section 3.8)
- Hazardous Materials and Health and Safety (Section 3.9)
- Transportation and Access (Section 3.10)
- Noise (Section 3.11)
- Visual Resources (Section 3.12)

The sections that follow this introduction describe the existing environment and address the potential impacts on each resource. Most sections contain information characterizing the existing conditions, followed by a discussion of the environmental consequences (including a description of impacts by alternative and cumulative effects). Impacts are defined as modifications to the existing condition of the environment and/or probable future condition that would be brought about by the proposed undertaking. Impacts can be beneficial (positive) or adverse (negative) and can result from the Project directly or indirectly. Impacts can be permanent and long lasting (long term) or temporary (short term). Long-term impacts are defined as those that would remain substantially throughout and beyond Project construction and operation. Short-term impacts are defined as those changes to the environment during construction that would revert to preconstruction conditions at or within a few years of the end of construction, either naturally or through mitigation. Impacts can vary in degree from no change or only slight discernible change to full modification of the environment.

Using the information regarding the existing environmental conditions and the description of the alternatives (Chapter 2.0), the types and magnitudes of impacts anticipated to occur from each alternative were identified and quantified to the extent practicable given this conceptual stage of the

Project. Impact discussions in this chapter are based on the types and amounts of disturbance estimated to occur under each alternative and cumulatively with other planned projects in the area.

Cumulative impacts also were considered in this document. Cumulative impacts result when the effects of an action are added to or interact with other effects in a particular place and within a particular time. For example, one construction project may not have an effect on the noise levels in a particular area, but if several construction projects occur at the same time, then there may be an effect on noise levels in the area. It is the combination of these effects and any resulting environmental degradation that is the focus of a cumulative impact analysis. Cumulative impact analyses have been incorporated in each resource section. Projects in the vicinity of the BLM property that have been considered in the assessment of cumulative impacts include the following:

Past Projects

- Maricopa County White Tank Mountain Regional Park
- Verrado Residential Master-Planned Community in 2004
- Limited development of residential properties south of the property boundary

Present Projects

- Residential master-planned communities west of property boundary (Sun Valley)
- Verrado Residential Master-Planned Community to the east of the property boundary
- Improvements to the military reservation south and east of the property boundary

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects

- Residential and commercial development south of the property boundary
- Northward extension of the Watson Roadway to the property boundary
- Verrado Residential Master-Planned Community continued development
- Potential sale of State land for residential or mixed-use development
- Interstate 10 (I-10) corridor improvements to the south of the property boundary and Sun Valley Parkway improvements to the west.

3.2 LAND USE

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Current Land Uses

The Proposed Project area consists of approximately 8,675.36 acres of undeveloped mountainous land located entirely on BLM land at the south end of the White Tank Mountains. One parcel of approximately 640 acres, located in the middle of the Proposed Project area, is Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) land and is not considered part of this Project. The Proposed Project area is currently managed under the BLM *Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan* (1983). Figure 3-1 shows land uses in and around the Proposed Project area.

The north end of the White Tank Mountains is a designated Maricopa County White Tank Mountain Regional Park; it consists of nearly 30,000 mountainous acres, making it the largest Regional Park in

Maricopa County. The park is used for general recreation in the form of biking, hiking, horseback riding, stargazing, camping, and picnicking. The area surrounding the Maricopa County White Tank Mountain Regional Park to the north, east, and west is designated ASLD State Trust land.

The area to the east of the Proposed Project is private land zoned by the Town for planned development. Verrado, a master-planned community in the early stages of development that opened in 2004, is located at the base of the White Tank Mountains to the east of the Proposed Project area. Verrado consists of 8,800 acres and may include up to 14,080 homes and 4 million square feet of office, light industrial, and retail space.

The area to the south of the Proposed Project is a mix of private and ASLD State Trust land. The I-10 corridor runs east–west approximately 1.5 miles south of the Proposed Project. The majority of current commercial and industrial uses are located south of I-10.

Immediately west of the Proposed Project is the Arizona Army National Guard Military reservation. This land is used by the military for shooting and training exercises. The master-planned communities of Tartesso and Sun Valley South will consist of 18,000 acres bordering the BLM property to the west. Other private land, zoned by the Town for planned communities, also borders the Project area to the west.

Planned Land Use

The general Proposed Project area is located in a growing area of the west valley, which, once built out, would include residential, industrial, and commercial properties. The BLM is in the process of revising the RMP governing this area. The property would be included in the *Agua Fria National and Bradshaw-Harquahala RMP/EIS*, which is currently in draft form.

According to the Town General Plan Map (July 2006), the Proposed Project is designated Open Space Preserve. The land to the east and west of the Project consists mostly of master-planned communities, and the area to the south of the Proposed Project consists of ASLD State Trust and private lands. The military reservation, located south and east of the area, is planning to implement improvements, including a parking area and improved facilities for military training use.

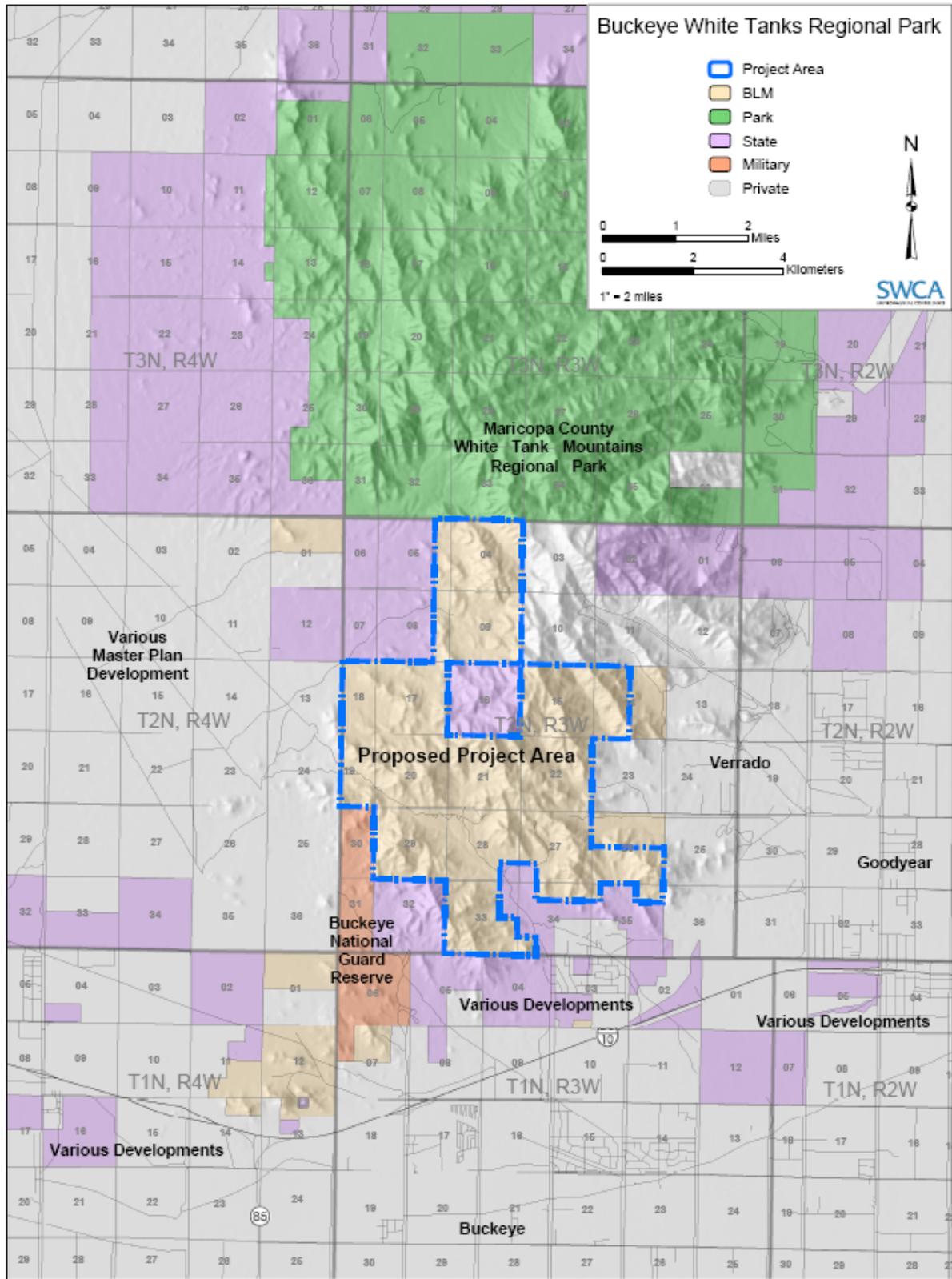


Figure 3-1. Land use around proposed project area.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the proposed lease would not occur. The land would remain BLM's and no facilities or improvements would occur. The surrounding properties would continue to develop consistent with current development plans. It is reasonable to assume that the ASLD State Trust land south of the Project area would be sold/auctioned consistent with the policies of the ASLD.

The land use designation of the BLM land (open space and recreation) is compatible with surrounding land uses; however, some of the uses of the BLM property, such as OHV and recreational shooting, would conflict with neighboring residential properties and with other recreational uses of the land (see the Recreation section for more information). Land use impacts would continue from the conflict in uses on the BLM property.

Proposed Project Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, the Town would lease the approximately 8,675.36 acres, and a Regional Park would be developed. The land use designation of Open Space Regional Park is compatible with surrounding land uses, is incorporated into the Town land use plan, and would help accommodate the projected build-out population of 2 million (Williams 2006). The restriction on recreational shooting, hunting, archery, and OHV use is compatible with the existing and future residential properties surrounding the park because it specifically prohibits recreational shooting and motorized uses within the park. The use and management of the property would also be compatible with surrounding land uses because the use of OHVs and recreational shooting, which contributes to the majority of conflicts, would be prohibited. No impacts associated with implementation of the Proposed Project Alternative would occur.

Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts associated with land use would occur in the Project area.

3.3 SOCIOECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This section of the EA addresses socioeconomic conditions within the study area, including population, housing, principal economic activities, income, and revenues, and a discussion of environmental justice as it relates to the proposed action. Section 3.3.1 provides a description of the current socioeconomic conditions within the study area of the Proposed Project. Section 3.3.2 provides a description of the potential socioeconomic impacts of the Proposed Project.

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The Proposed Action encompasses 17 square miles of public lands in western Maricopa County located north of I-10 and the Town. For purposes of this EA, the socioeconomic study area includes information and data from the Town, the Phoenix Greater Metropolitan Area, Maricopa County, and the State of Arizona.

The socioeconomic study area is a mix of both urban and rural land use. Maricopa County, located in south-central Arizona, contains 60% of the state's population, with a population density of

333.8 persons per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau [Census] 2000a). The Town is located at the confluence of the Hassayampa and Gila rivers 35 miles southwest of Phoenix and encompasses a planning area of almost 600 square miles (Town 2006).

Population and Demographics

Numbers from the Census indicate considerable growth in the state of Arizona, Maricopa County, and the Phoenix Greater Metropolitan Area since the 1980s. As shown in Table 3-1, the state's population increased by 34.9% between 1980 and 1990 and by 40.0% between 1990 and 2000 (Census 1980, 1990, 2000a). Between 1990 and 2006, the population of Maricopa County grew by about 77.6%, while the population statewide increased by 68.2% for the same period (Census 1980, 1990, 2000a, 2006a). Future estimated population growth for Maricopa County indicates that by 2010, the population could reach 4,217,427; in 2025, it is projected to grow to 5,756,690 (Arizona Workforce 2006). This is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the U.S., as over 3 million people occupy the Phoenix metropolitan area (Town 2005b). According to the Census, the Phoenix metropolitan area population increased by 61.6% between 1980 and 1990 and by 90.3% between 1990 and 2006 (Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2005b).

While the population continues to increase in Maricopa County and the Phoenix metropolitan area, a shift in the areas experiencing growth has moved to the west of Phoenix. The Town is expected to experience one of the most rapid transformations in the region (Town 2005b). Census numbers confirm this development; the Town's population in 2000 was 6,537 up from 5,038 (29.8%) in 1990 and up from 3,434 (46.7%) in 1980. The Town population continues to increase, growing by approximately 530% between 1990 and 2006 (Census 1990, 2000a, 2005a). Scenarios estimating population growth for the Town over the next 10 years range from a population increase of 198% to a growth increase of 885% (Town 2006). By 2010, the Town is estimated to have a population of 100,000 individuals and in 2025, 325,000 individuals (Buckeye Chamber of Commerce 2006).

Table 3-1. Historical and Projected Population Characteristics

Location	Population ¹				Total Change in Population (%)		
	1980	1990	2000	2006	1980–1990	1990–2000	1990–2006
State of Arizona	2,717,866	3,665,228	5,130,632	6,166,318	34.9%	40.0%	68.2%
Maricopa County	1,509,171	2,122,101	3,072,149	3,768,123	40.6%	44.8%	77.6%
Phoenix Metro Area ²	1,313,471	2,122,101	3,251,876	4,039,182	61.6%	53.2%	90.3%
Town of Buckeye ³	3,434	5,038	6,537	31,745	46.7%	29.8%	530.1%

¹ Census 1980, 1990, 2000a, 2005a, 2005a

² Phoenix Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Maricopa and Pinal counties

³ The Greater Phoenix Economic Council

As summarized in Table 3-2, Census numbers indicate the median age for residents statewide in Arizona and in Maricopa County is 34.2 and 33.3, respectively. For the Town, the median age of residents is 30; the majority of residents living in the Town (55.0%) fall between the ages of 20 and 64, with over 70% of residents having obtained a high school education. Over 10% of the residents have earned a college degree (Census 2000a).

Table 3-2. Age and Education Characteristics, 2000

	School Age 5–19 (%)	Aged 20–64 (%)	Age 65 or older (%)	Median Age (years)	High School Education	College Bachelor Degree or Higher
State of Arizona	22.2%	57.3%	13.0%	34.2	81.0%	23.5%
Maricopa County	22.0%	56.4%	11.7%	33.3	82.5%	25.9%
Town of Buckeye	22.7%	54.8%	8.2%	30.0	70.2%	10.3%

Source: Census 2000a

Housing

Housing characteristics for the area are summarized in Table 3-3. According to the Census and the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, the number of housing units in the state of Arizona, Maricopa County, and the Phoenix metropolitan area increased by approximately 80% between 1990 and 2004 (Census 1990, 2000b, 2004; Greater Phoenix Economic Council 2006).

The Town experienced a 255% increase in the number of housing units within the Town's planning area for the same period (Census 1990, 2000b, 2004; Greater Phoenix Economic Council 2006). Table 3-3 shows the median home value for the Town in 2000 was \$86,400 (Census 2000b). Census numbers reported a median home value of \$121,300 for the state of Arizona and \$129,200 for Maricopa County for the same period (Census 2000b).

Table 3-3. Housing Units and Values

	Housing Units ¹			Total Change in Housing Units	Median Home Value
	1990 ²	2000 ³	2004 ^{4,5}	1990–2004 (%)	2000 ³
State of Arizona	1,368,843	2,189,189	2,458,231	80%	\$121,300
Maricopa County	807,560	1,250,231	1,429,101	77%	\$129,200
Phoenix Metro Area	720,225	1,115,686	1,284,678	78%	NR
Town of Buckeye	1701	2,344	6,032	255%	\$86,400

1 Census defines housing units as a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters, or if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters.

2 Census (1990)

3 Census (2000b)

4 Census (2004)

5 Greater Phoenix Economic Council (2006)

Employment, Income, and Revenues

As one of the largest producers of Pima cotton in the country, the predominant employer for the Town is the agriculture industry. In addition to agriculture, other major employers in the Town include the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, the Lewis Prison Complex, and the Wal-Mart Distribution and Transportation Complex (Town 2006). The Town is in the unique position of having all of its industrial sites located within the Western Maricopa County Enterprise Zone; employers who create new jobs in or relocate to this zone are eligible for State of Arizona incentives for job creation. Location or expansion within this zone can provide substantial benefits to qualifying businesses. In 2004, the unemployment rate for the Town was 9.2%, a rate that is higher than both the state of Arizona (4.8%) and Maricopa County (4.0%) (Arizona Department of Commerce 2004). The

median household income for the Town in 2000 was \$35,383, compared with the state median of \$40,558, and Maricopa County of \$45,358 for the same time period (Census 2000a). Between 1990 and 2004, taxable sales for the Town increased from \$23,515,000 to \$192,831,700; this represents a 122% increase in taxable sales for the Town (Arizona Department of Commerce 2004).

Environmental Justice

Presidential Executive Order 12898, entitled *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (Federal Register 59:7629), instructs Federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice as part of their Mission. As such, Federal agencies are directed to identify and address as appropriate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

For this analysis, the Town identified the low-income and minority communities within the state of Arizona, Maricopa County, and the Town (Tables 3-4 and 3-5). In addition, communities located near or adjacent to the Project area were identified and similar data were analyzed (Maricopa County Parks and Recreation 2006) (see Table 3-4). New communities such as Verrado that are located near the Project area were not included in this analysis because of the lack of Census data. According to CEQ guidance, a minority population exists if the minority population percentage of the affected area is greater than 50% of the general population of the affected area. Table 3-5 shows Census 2000 data on the number and percentage of families and individuals within nearby communities who live below the federal poverty level.

Table 3-4. Minority Demographics in Arizona, 2000

	Litchfield Park	Glendale	Sun City	Goodyear	Surprise	Buckeye	Maricopa County	State of Arizona
Total Population	3,810	218,812	38,309	18,911	30,848	6,537	3,072,149	5,130,632
American Indian and Alaskan Native	15 (0.4%)	3,181 (1.5%)	48 (0.1%)	200 (1.1%)	134 (0.4%)	112 (1.7%)	56,706 (1.8%)	255,879 (5.0%)
Asian	110 (2.9%)	6,003 (2.7%)	115 (0.3)	323 (1.7%)	329 (1.1%)	29 (0.4%)	66,445 (2.2%)	92,236 (1.8%)
Black or African American	53 (1.4%)	10,270 (4.7%)	196 (0.5%)	983 (5.2%)	806 (2.6%)	220 (3.4%)	114,551 (3.7%)	158,873 (3.1%)
Hispanic or Latino	1,295,617 (25.3%)	54,343 (24.8%)	383 (1.0%)	3,933 (20.8%)	7,184 (23.3%)	2,396 (36.6%)	763,341 (24.8%)	1,295,617 (25.3%)
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	8 (0.2%)	293 (0.1%)	10 (0.0%)	16 (0.1%)	16 (0.1%)	5 (0.1)	4,406 (0.1%)	6,733 (0.1%)
Some Other Race	57 (1.5%)	26,188 (12.0%)	63 (0.2%)	2,056 (10.9%)	2,427 (7.9%)	1,264 (19.3%)	364,213 (11.9%)	596,774 (11.6%)
Two or More Races	59 (1.5%)	7,584 (3.5%)	167 (0.4%)	558 (3.0%)	615 (2.0%)	165 (2.5%)	89,469 (2.9%)	146,526 (2.9%)

Source: Census (2000a)

Table 3-5. Low-Income Characteristics, 2000

	Families below Poverty Level	Individuals below Poverty Level
Arizona	128,318 (9.9%)	698,669 (13.9%)
Maricopa County	61,519 (8.0%)	355,668 (11.7%)
Town of Buckeye	262 (16.2%)	1,200 (18.8%)
Litchfield Park, AZ	32 (2.7%)	157 (4.2%)
Glendale, AZ	4,820 (8.8%)	25,688 (11.9%)
Sun City, AZ	318 (2.5%)	1,733 (4.6%)
Goodyear, AZ	178 (3.6%)	1,005 (6.1%)
Surprise, AZ	550 (5.6%)	2,689 (8.7%)

Source: Census (2000b)

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the proposed lease would not occur and the property would remain BLM-managed land. Residential and commercial development surrounding the property would occur consistent with current and future plans. Economic development in the area would continue consistent with current and future development plans. No negative impacts to the Town's demographics, housing, employment, or revenues would occur under the No-Action Alternative.

Proposed Project Alternative

Under the Proposed Project Alternative, there would be no direct negative impact to the Town's demographics, housing, employment, or revenues. As a result of the increase in recreational activities in the Proposed Project area, numerous beneficial effects associated with the park and open space would occur. According to the Town's Master Plan, Regional Parks are large enough areas that they tend to attract people from within a 1-hour drive or a 100-square-mile radius (Town 2006). As such, local retail businesses in the Town could benefit positively from people visiting the Project area. Additionally, residents within the Town area would benefit from the recreational amenities and increased property values. Because the Town would be offsetting the costs of the park through development impact fees, general taxation, and park entry fees, the Project would not negatively impact the Town's general operating fund.

Compared with the state, minority and low-income populations disproportionately exist in the Town, where over 40% of the population belongs to a minority group, and there is a 16.2% family poverty level compared with the Arizona average of 9.9% (Census 2000). Tables 3-4 and 3-5 illustrate these differences. The Project would not, however, have a negative impact to those populations. In fact, open space recreational opportunities would benefit all demographics.

Cumulative Impacts

The proposed Project would not have negative impacts to socioeconomic aspects of the area; thus, cumulative impacts are not expected to occur related to the socioeconomic aspects of the area, including to minority and low-income populations.

3.4 RECREATION

In 1954, Congress enacted the R&PP Act. The Act authorizes the BLM to sale or lease public lands to state, county, and local governments, and to qualified nonprofit organizations for recreational or public purposes. Under the R&PP Act, government entities can purchase lands from the BLM for such uses as historic monument sites, campgrounds, parks, and public infrastructure such as fire stations and municipal facilities.

3.4.1 Affected Environment

Current Recreation Management (BLM)

The general Project area is located within the planning boundaries of several BLM resource planning areas. The approximate 8,675.366 acres of land discussed in this document are currently managed by the BLM under the 1983 *Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan*. The 2000 *Final Amendment and EA to the Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan and the Lower Gila South Resource Management Plan* states that the land adjacent to the White Tank Mountain Regional Park (county park) would be retained by the BLM and would be available only to governmental entities for recreation or park purposes. These plans are currently being updated and reviewed, and new management prescriptions for the lands covered in the EA will be provided in the *Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala RMP/EIS*, which is scheduled to be finalized in 2008.

According to the current management plans, the Project area is specifically developed for recreational permits because of its proximity to concentrated population centers (BLM 1983). Permitted recreational activities included licensed ORV use, hunting, biking, camping, sightseeing, and rock collection.

The *Lower Gila South Resource Management Plan* was amended in 2000 in response to recreational conflicts. According to the *Final Amendment and EA to the Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan and the Lower Gila South Resource Management*, the BLM Phoenix Field Office addressed the recreation management in the Project area to continue providing the desired recreational opportunities and to protect natural resources (BLM 2000). Amendments to the *Lower Gila South Resource Management Plan* included designating the Project area as a semi-primitive motorized area under the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) (BLM 2000). The ROS system is used by the BLM to inventory, plan, and manage recreational opportunities. As a semi-primitive motorized area, ORV use within the proposed Project area is limited to existing and/or designated roads and vehicle routes.

The 2005 *Agua Fria and Bradshaw-Harquahala Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Resource Management Plan (DRMP/DEIS)*, developed by the BLM, describes and analyzes five alternatives for managing approximately 967,000 acres of public land in central Arizona north and west of Phoenix. The purpose of DRMP/DEIS is to guide future land management actions within the planning areas. The need comes from the amount of time that has lapsed since the last major planning

effort in the area and the degree of urban expansion and population growth around the planning area. The proposed Regional Park falls into this DRMP/DEIS planning area, but minimal impact to recreational uses is expected under the preferred alternative discussed in the DRMP/DEIS.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

BLM uses the ROS classification system to determine which areas are suitable to be managed or maintained for various types of recreation. The ROS classification system is a way to help ensure that people recreate in desirable settings and that opportunities exist for a broad range of users. The approximate 8,675.36 acres of BLM land in the Project area was assigned a “Rural” ROS classification, meaning that there is evidence of human influences within the physical setting. New facilities should be in harmony with the natural setting and automobile and road access would be acceptable in these areas. Hunting is not allowed because of the concentration of people present.

Current Uses

The Project area encompasses approximately 8,675.36 acres of open desert and mountainscape in the midst of a rapidly developing area. Recreators come from nearby communities to use the open space for hiking, mountain biking, OHV riding, and recreational shooting. The area has been intensively used by recreators, who have scarred the landscape with OHV tracks and spent cartridges. The area is also used for illegal trash dumping and nighttime gatherings.

Future Recreation Management (Town of Buckeye)

The Town Parks and Recreation Department maintains over 103 acres of public parks for Town residents (Town 2005b). An inventory of parks in the Town Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces lists four types of parks in the Town area: pocket parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, and Regional Parks.

The two pocket parks offer shaded areas and one contains a playground for children. Five neighborhood parks are located in the Town area, and they range in size from 2 to 17 acres. Most of the neighborhood parks provide picnic areas and one contains several types of athletic fields. The park inventory lists one community park. The park encompasses 18 acres and has numerous athletic fields and open space areas. Earl Edgar Recreational Facility is the largest park in the Town. This regional park provides the community with four baseball and softball fields, two handball courts, a basketball court, a football field, three soccer fields, two picnic tables, and approximately 16 acres of open space (Town 2005b).

Regional parks are also included as part of the Town’s park inventory. The Town’s master plan describes regional parks as areas more than 1,000 acres that can serve many different communities. The five regional parks near the Town are the Maricopa County White Tank Mountain Regional Park, Buckeye Hills Regional Park, and Estrella Mountain Regional Park, both managed by Maricopa County Parks and Recreation; South Mountain Park managed by the City of Phoenix; and the Sonoran Desert National Monument, which includes the North Maricopa Wilderness Area, managed by the BLM (Town 2005b).

Future Uses

The rapidly growing population of the Phoenix metropolitan area, coupled with the growth of other communities in the region, will continue to increase recreational use of nearby public lands. Visits to public lands are expected to grow at an annual percentage at least equal to the population growth of the region, whether or not BLM provides more opportunities, facilities, or management presence

(BLM 2006). The Town intends for the Proposed Project area to allow for recreational opportunities similar to existing activities, with the exception of recreational shooting activities and OHV use. Additional recreators, such as equestrian users, are expected to be attracted to the property as facilities are developed.

The management of the Park would be similar to the “Rural” classification; however, some areas of the park would be better described as semi-primitive because of the mountainous terrain and remoteness from convenient access points. The Town’s “ultimate vision for the property is to create and maintain the vast open spaces” (Town 2005).

3.4.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, recreational management of the 8,675.36 acres would remain consistent with current BLM management practices. Recreational opportunities for hiking, biking, and OHV use would continue to be dispersed and undeveloped. Dispersed recreational shooting would also continue to occur. Because of the population growth in the area, increased numbers of visitors to the area are expected.

Under the No-Action Alternative, increased numbers of motorized users and recreational shooters would increasingly impair recreational benefits for hikers, bikers, and other park users through noise and air quality impacts and the danger associated with unrestricted, unmonitored shooting activities.

Proposed Project Alternative

Under the Proposed Project Alternative, management responsibility for the property would change from BLM to the Town. The Town would manage the property in support of recreational uses that tend not to mar or destroy the natural environment, such as picnicking, camping, hiking, equestrian riding, and biking. These uses would be restricted to designated areas and trails.

In order to limit the negative impacts associated with OHV use and hunting, those activities will be prohibited within the park boundaries. A 15-mph speed limit will be posted on all vehicular roads leading in to the park. Railings and other structures will be placed alongside roads to prevent any additional off-road impacts, and Park Ranger law enforcement will be in place.

New facilities would be developed to accommodate day users, such as picnic areas, parking facilities, short-duration camping locations, and toilet facilities. In addition to the development and improvement to the facilities and trails, recreational management of the 8,675.36 acres would include increased signage to give recreators an understanding of the allowed uses of the property. Future facilities could include a visitor’s center and small amphitheater, allowing for educational opportunities that would enhance the recreational experience for visitors. The area would have surveillance by park staff. In addition to policing, signs, and barricades, OHV use, recreational shooting, and trash dumping in the Park would be strictly prohibited.

Positive, long-term recreation impacts would occur as a result of the improved facilities and trail system at the site. Hikers, bikers, equestrian riders, and general recreators would find an improved recreational experience from the developed facilities at the Park. Educational opportunities would also occur via Ranger-led activities, organized hikes, and group activities, etc.

The southern White Tank Mountains have been used for OHV and recreational shooting for over 20 years; thus, short-term, negative impacts to these recreators would occur as a result of the restrictions the Town will put in place for the Proposed Project Alternative. The decision was made to prohibit OHV uses because of the conflict between recreational uses, dangers associated with unlimited OHV use, and the liability associated with OHVs operating in a public space. Under the Proposed Project Alternative, OHV users would be prohibited from participating in motorized recreational activities within the park. Recreational shooting was considered a liability by the Town because of increased public use of the property under the Proposed Project Alternative. Because of this, OHV use and recreational shooting would be prohibited under the Proposed Project Alternative.

Only short-term impacts are expected, as there are other opportunities in the west valley for recreational shooting and OHV use. Potential alternative locations for OHV use and recreational shooting are listed and mapped in Figure 3-2.

Cumulative Impacts

If public lands continue to be developed, restrictions to open space recreators would persist. Recreational shooters and OHV riders would have more difficulty finding locations to use. As a result, cumulative impacts to these recreators is possible.

3.5 EARTH AND WATER RESOURCES

3.5.1 Affected Environment

General Environment

The general Phoenix area, including the Town, is part of the Basin and Range Physiographic Province, which generally consists of gently sloping alluvial plains separated by predominantly north-to northwest-trending mountain ranges. Land surface elevations range from less than 800 feet above mean sea level (amsl) to over 6,000 feet amsl. The climate is semi-arid, with hot summers and mild winters. The average annual temperature for the Project area is approximately 71°F, with average annual precipitation ranging from 7 to 8 inches. The majority of the rainfall occurs in the winter, although thunderstorm activity and rainfall is associated with the summer monsoon season in July and August.

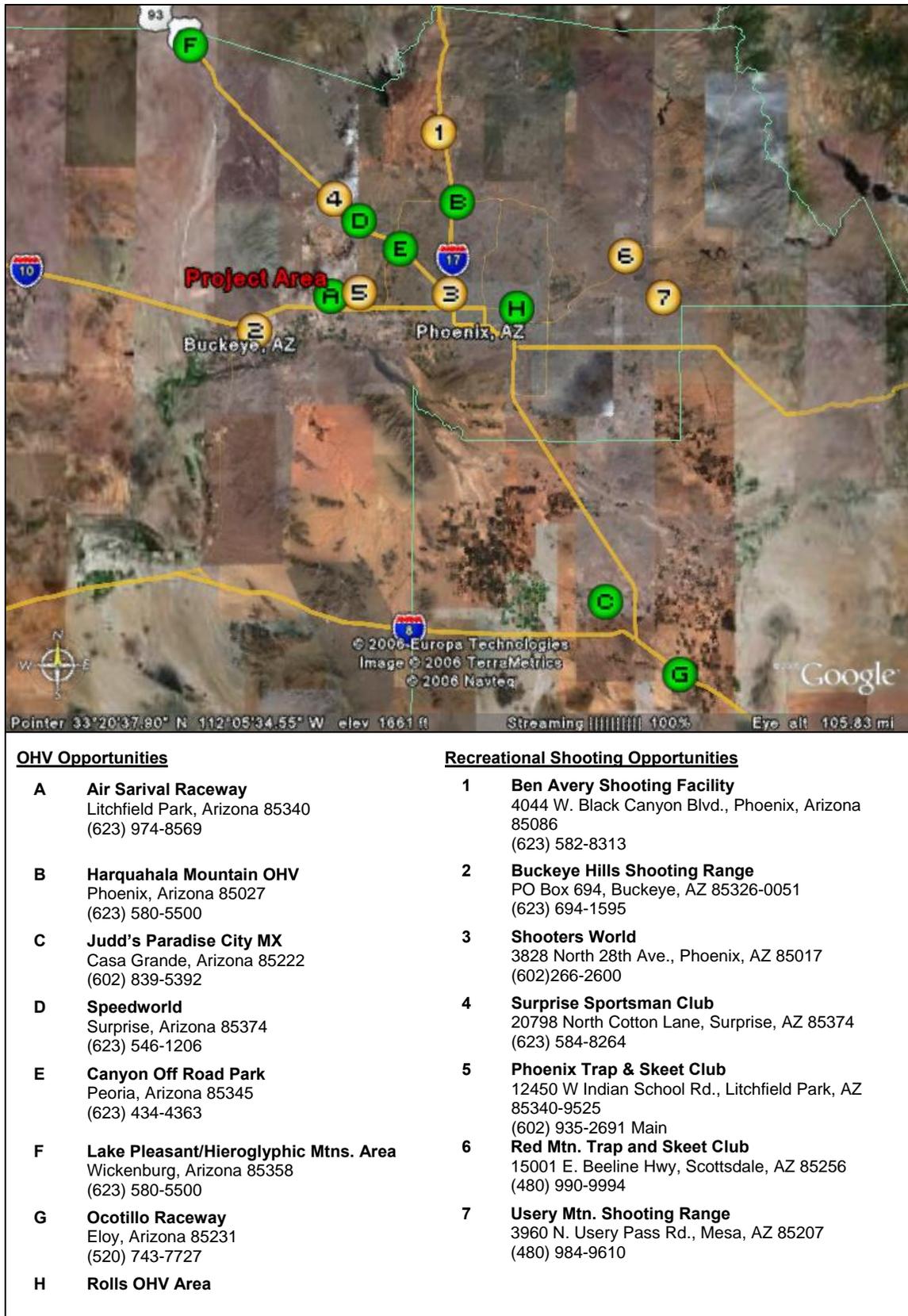


Figure 3-2. Recreational shooting and OHV opportunities.

Geology

The White Tank Mountains is a moderate elevation (4,000 feet) mountain range about 25 miles west of Phoenix and adjacent to the Town. The White Tank Mountain range is within the Basin and Range Physiographic Province and is one of several metamorphic-core complexes in central Arizona that contain both Tertiary volcanic/granitic rocks and Precambrian metamorphic rocks. In the early Proterozoic, central Arizona lay along an active margin at the southeastern edge of the North American Continent. Continental crust, including the White Tanks rocks, was developed along this margin through magmatism, compression directed northwest–southeast, and accretion. The range was brought to the surface in the mid-Tertiary time as part of the lower plate of a detachment fault system.

Water Resources

The Project area is within the Phoenix Active Management Area (AMA), a geographic water resource-planning region defined by the Arizona Department of Water Resources. The area east of the White Tank Mountains is within the West Salt River Valley Sub-Basin, and the area west of the White Tank Mountains is within the Hassayampa Sub-Basin.

Surface Water

Five major rivers drain the Phoenix AMA: the Salt, Gila, Verde, Agua Fria, and Hassayampa rivers. The Hassayampa River is west of the Project area and flows ephemeral, meaning that it flows intermittently in response to precipitation. The Gila River is located south of the Town and flows perennially (year-round) because of the effluent discharge from the City of Phoenix 91st Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Surface water on the Proposed Project property exists in small drainages that flow ephemeral from higher elevations of the White Tank Mountains. One major drainage exists just north and west of the proposed location of the camping, picnic, and parking site. This drainage flows northwest–southeast during heavy precipitation events.

Groundwater

The West Salt River Valley Sub-basin is to the east of the White Tank Mountains and covers 1,330 square miles. The basin consists of three hydrologic units: an upper sand and gravel unit, a middle silt and clay unit, and a lower conglomerate unit (Brown and Pool 1989). Groundwater depths vary from less than 50 feet below land surface (bls) near the Salt and Gila Rivers to over 500 feet bls near Luke Air Force Base. The area to the west of the White Tank Mountains is within the Hassayampa Sub-Basin, which covers an area of approximately 1,200 square miles. Depth to groundwater ranges from less than 20 feet bls near the Gila River to over 659 feet bls in the northern part of the basin near the Vulture Mountains. Water is recharged into both sub-basins through ephemeral flows in rivers and mountain-front drainages. The Proposed Project area consists mostly of mountainous bedrock. Bedrock has little groundwater storage or production capacity and is therefore not considered to be an aquifer.

Floodplains and Drainage

A floodplain is an area adjoining a watercourse that may be covered by floodwater during a flood or storm event. Storm runoff and flood events may cause alterations in the floodplain in certain areas. Protection of floodplain areas is important in reducing the impact of future flood events and because these areas are typically important wildlife and natural habitat areas.

Delineated floodplains on the Proposed Project property exist along the large drainage originating in Sections 26–29, Township 2 North, Range 3 West, flowing southeast toward Watson and McDowell roads. The area of flatter terrain toward the southern end of the property drains to the southeast toward a flood-retention berm located north of I-10.

3.5.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the White Tank Mountains property would be retained by the BLM and current management of the property would continue.

Geology

The property consists of a mountainous region with no special geologic features or mineral resources. Although the surface rights are held by BLM, the State of Arizona, or private parties, federally administered minerals beneath these lands would be open to exploration and leasing (BLM 2006). No impacts to geologic resources on the property are expected to occur under the No-Action Alternative.

Water Resources

Surface water on the property consists of ephemeral drainages. Because of the limited surface water and natural use of the property, there would be no impacts to surface water from the No-Action Alternative.

Groundwater on the site is limited because the majority of the site consists of bedrock; therefore, no impacts to groundwater are expected under the No-Action Alternative.

Floodplains and Drainage

Delineated floodplains on the property exist towards the southern edge of the property boundary. Because no facilities or improvements are included in the No-Action Alternative, no impacts to the floodplain are anticipated.

Proposed Project Alternative

Under the Proposed Project Alternative, the 8,675.36 acres of BLM land would be leased to the Town, and facilities on the site would be built and improved as detailed in the Project description in Chapter 2.0.

Geology

The property consists of a mountainous region with no special geologic features or mineral resources. The land would be closed to mineral exploration under the Proposed Project Alternative, and no impacts to geologic resources on the property would occur.

Water Resources

Surface water on the property consists of ephemeral drainages. Surface disturbance could result in increased sediment load to ephemeral drainages; however, the area to initially be disturbed is minimal, and impacts are likely to be insignificant. There would be no impacts to surface water from the Proposed Project Alternative.

Groundwater on the site is limited because the majority of the site consists of bedrock; therefore, no impacts to groundwater are expected under the Proposed Project Alternative.

Floodplains and Drainage

Delineated floodplains on the property exist near the southern edge of the property boundary. Camping, picnicking, and parking facilities are planned near the delineated floodplain, but at this time they are to be located north of the floodplain. During final design, facilities will be designed outside the known, delineated floodplain and will not encroach on the floodway. Final designs will be approved by BLM staff prior to construction of any facility.

The Phase I NPDES stormwater permitting rule promulgated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires all operators of construction activity who will be disturbing 5 or more acres of land to apply for a NPDES stormwater permit. The Proposed Project Alternative would initially disturb approximately 23 acres of land; therefore, an NPDES permit would be needed.

Modifications to on-site drainage such as grading and paving would be necessary to accommodate the new facilities. Generally, stormwater would continue to drain in a southeasterly direction. Through Project design and an established permitting process (NPDES), there would be no impact to drainage on the Proposed Project site.

Cumulative Impacts

The Proposed Project would cause minimal to no impacts to earth and water resources. Development around the Project property could impact earth and water resources by potentially impacting the floodplain and by causing increased sedimentation in downstream environments. It is possible, but unlikely, that developments around the Project property could cause impacts to groundwater quality. Developers would be subject to county floodplain regulations as well as to NPDES requirements. Cumulative impacts to earth and water resources are not anticipated under the Proposed Project Alternative.

3.6 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.6.1 Affected Environment

General Project Area Description

Elevations within the Project area range from approximately 1,300 to 3,152 feet amsl. The Project area consists of native desert with mountains, hills, rock outcrops, and ephemeral washes. The hills and mountains of the White Tank Mountains are rugged terrain with steep slopes that consist of gneiss and granite. The valleys, canyons, and arroyos are filled with alluvium. These areas are highly dissected by narrow to wide, entrenched drainages that are up to 15 or more meters deep.

Vegetation

The Project area occurs within the Lower Colorado River Valley (LCRV) subdivision of the Sonoran Desertscrub biotic community, as defined by Brown (1994). Within the LCRV subdivision of the Sonoran Desertscrub biotic community in the Project area, two plant communities exist: upland and xeroriparian. Upland vegetation includes the following common plant species: creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata* var. *tridentata*), foothills paloverde (*Parkinsonia microphylla*), Mediterranean grass (*Schismus* sp.), brittlebrush (*Encelia farinosa*), plantain (*Plantago* sp.), and triangle-leaf bursage

(*Ambrosia deltoidea*). Cacti species observed within the Project area were saguaro (*Carnegiea gigantea*), teddybear cholla (*Opuntia bigelovii*), buckhorn cholla (*Opuntia acanthocarpa*), Graham's nipple cactus (*Mammillaria grahamii*), strawberry hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus engelmannii*), and barrel cactus (*Ferocactus* sp.). Xeroriparian vegetation is associated with an ephemeral water supply (ephemeral washes typically flow only briefly, usually in direct response to significant precipitation in the immediate vicinity).

Plant species observed along the ephemeral washes include foothills paloverde, desert ironwood (*Olneya tesota*), and wolfberry (*Lycium* sp.).

Wildlife

Bird species detected aurally or visually were cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*), black-tailed gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*), black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), and roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*). Other wildlife species or sign detected in or near the Project area included woodrat (*Neotoma* sp.), deer (*Odocoileus* sp.), coyote (*Canis latrans*), rabbit or hare (Family Lagomorph), and round-tailed ground squirrel (*Spermophilus tereticaudus*). In addition, during a field visit in February 2006, Gila woodpecker (*Melanerpes uropygialis*), Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), whip-tailed lizard (*Cnemidophorus* sp.), and gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) were visually detected.

Federally Listed Species

The USFWS Internet database (USFWS 2006) was accessed to obtain information on federally listed species that may potentially occur in Maricopa County. Fourteen federally listed species and one candidate species were identified through the database search, but none of the species were likely to occur in the Project area because their known geographic ranges are distant from the Project area or because the Project area does not contain conditions similar to those known to be necessary to support these species, or both. A summary table of this information can be found in Appendix A.

BLM Special Status Species

The Project area occurs within the boundaries of the BLM Phoenix Field Office, so the most current list of BLM special status species with verified occurrence or the potential to occur in the BLM Phoenix region was obtained. The potential for occurrence of special-status species was evaluated based on 1) existing information, and 2) qualitative comparisons between the known habitat requirements of each species and the vegetation communities and conditions likely found in the Project area. Twenty-five BLM special-status species were assessed for occurrence in the Project area. As summarized in Table 3-6, five species have the potential or low potential to occur in the Project area.

Special-Status Species

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) also maintains a statewide database, the Heritage Data Management System (HDMS), which tracks records for federally listed species or other species of special concern. At the request of SWCA, AGFD searched this database for areas of proposed or designated Critical Habitat and for occurrence records of special-status species in the vicinity of the Project area. The AGFD response letter indicated that the Project area does not occur in the vicinity of any proposed or designated Critical Habitat; however, the AGFD response letter indicated records of occurrence for one special-status species within a 3-mile buffer of the Project area.

Table 3-6. BLM Special-Status Species, Their Habitat Needs, and Their Potential to Occur within the Project Area

Species	Status	Known Distribution and Habitat Needs	Likelihood of Occurrence in Project Area
Chuckwalla <i>Sauromalus obesus</i>	S	Creosotebush desert near lava flows, rocky hillsides, and rock outcrops in the southwestern U.S. and also in Mexico at sea level to 6,000 feet in elevation (Stebbins 2003).	Potential to occur—suitable habitat occurs in the Project area and the Project area is within the known geographic distribution of this species. The closest known location for chuckwalla is in the Maricopa Mountains, approximately 25 miles south of the Project area (Stebbins 2003).
Rosy boa <i>Charina trivirgata</i>	S	Rocky shrublands and desert in California, Arizona, and Mexico at sea level to 4,500 feet in elevation (AGFD 2003a).	Potential to occur—suitable habitat occurs in the Project area. Even though the Project area occurs outside the current known geographic distribution of this species, this area has not been surveyed for this species. Also, the closest known location for rosy boa is in the Maricopa Mountains, approximately 30 miles south of the Project area, and in the Harquahala Mountains approximately 60 miles to the west of the Project area (AGFD 2003a).
Western burrowing owl <i>Athene cucicularia hypugea</i>	S	Grasslands, pastures, coastal dunes, desertscrub, edges of agricultural fields, and other human areas where there is sufficient friable soil for a nesting burrow in western North and Central America (AGFD 2001a).	Low potential to occur—suitable habitat occurs within portions of the Project area and the Project area is within the known geographic distribution of western burrowing owl. Western burrowing owls are known to occur in Buckeye, approximately 6 miles south of the Project area (AGFD 2001a).
Cave myotis <i>Myotis velifer</i>	S	Desertscrub with roosts in caves, tunnels, mineshafts, and under bridges in extreme southwestern U.S. and south to Mexico at 300 to 5,000 feet in elevation (AGFD 2002).	Low potential to occur—although suitable foraging habitat occurs in the Project area for this species, roosting habitat is limited to rock outcrops and crevices. However, prospects occur in the White Tank Mountains north of the Project area. The Project area occurs within the known distribution and geographic range of this species. The closest known location for cave myotis is approximately 20 miles northwest of the Project area (AGFD 2002).
Pocketed free-tailed bat <i>Nyctinomops ferrosaccus</i>	S	Desertscrub and pine-oak forests near high cliffs and rugged, rocky outcrops in southwestern U.S. and central Mexico from 190 to 7,520 feet in elevation; roost site include rock crevices and human built structures (AGFD 2003b).	Potential to occur—suitable foraging and roosting habitat occurs in the Project area for this species. Additionally, the Project area is within the known distribution and geographic range of this species. However, the closest known location for pocketed free-tailed bat is approximately 15 miles north of the Project area (AGFD 2003b).

BLM categories: Sensitive (S) – taxa occurring on BLM Field Office lands in Arizona that are considered sensitive by the Arizona State Office.

Sonoran Desert Tortoise

Sonoran Desert tortoise habitat occurs in the hills and rocky mountainous terrain of LCRV and Arizona Upland Sonoran Desertscrub communities. Desert tortoise habitat can also be found along washes in more level terrain adjacent to hills and desert mountain ranges (AGFD 2001b). Although no Sonoran desert tortoises were observed during the field visit, suitable habitat for the desert tortoise occurs in the Project area. The Sonoran Desert tortoise is listed as Species of Concern under the ESA and as Wildlife Species of Concern in Arizona by the AGFD. This listing does not give this species any statutory protection under the ESA. However, the Project area is located within BLM-administered lands, which have category designations associated with habitat for the Sonoran population of the desert tortoise that are outlined in two policy documents: the November 1988

Desert Tortoise Habitat Management on the Public Lands: A Rangeland Plan and the 1990 Strategy for Desert Tortoise Habitat Management on the Public Lands in Arizona. Category designations include Categories I–III.

- Category I includes areas with a goal to maintain stable, viable populations; protect existing tortoise habitat values; and increase populations, where possible. The most important criterion used for designating areas as Category I habitat is that these habitat areas are essential to the maintenance of large, viable populations.
- Category II includes areas with a goal to maintain stable, viable populations and halt further declines in tortoise habitat values. The most important criterion used for designating areas as Category II habitat is that these habitat areas may be essential to the maintenance of viable populations.
- Category III includes areas with a goal to limit tortoise habitat and population declines to the extent possible by mitigating impacts. The most important criterion used for designating areas as Category III habitat is that these habitat areas are not essential to maintenance of viable populations.

The entire Project area is located within Category III desert tortoise habitat.

State Protected Native Plants

Protected native plants classified under the Arizona Native Plant Law (Arizona Revised Statutes §3-904) by the Arizona Department of Agriculture (ADA) are present in the Project area. This law states that protected plants cannot be removed from any lands, including private lands, without permission and a permit from the Arizona Department of Agriculture. No Highly Safeguarded plants (no collection allowed) are known to exist or were observed in the Project area. All cacti present in the Project area are Salvage Restricted plants. Table 3-7 lists the Arizona Department of Agriculture–protected plant species found in the Project area and the type of protection they are afforded under the law.

3.6.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the approximately 8,675.36 acres of land would continue to be managed by the BLM. The continued presence of damaging recreational activities, such as unrestricted OHV use and recreational shooting, would continue to jeopardize the natural landscape, including plant and animal species, especially the desert tortoise.

Table 3-7. Plants with the Potential to Exist within the Project Area that Are Protected under the Arizona Native Plant Law

Species	Category of Protection
blue paloverde	Salvage Assessed
foothill paloverde (observed during site visit)	Salvage Assessed
desert ironwood (observed during site visit)	Harvest Restricted; Salvage Assessed
velvet mesquite	Harvest Restricted; Salvage Assessed
banana yucca	Harvest Restricted; Salvage Assessed
ocotillo	Salvage Restricted
All cacti (saguaro, buckhorn cholla, chainfruit cholla, teddybear cholla, Graham's nipple cactus, strawberry hedgehog, and barrel cactus); cacti observed during site visit	Salvage Restricted

Salvage Restricted—Collection or destruction by permit only.

Salvage Assessed—These plants have a significant value if salvaged.

Harvest Restricted—Permits required to remove plant by-products (fuel wood).

Proposed Project Alternative

The Proposed Project Alternative includes the lease and possible conveyance of the approximately 8,675.36 acres to the Town for the creation of a Regional Park. Parking, picnicking, camping, toilet facilities, and improved trails are also included in the initial Project description.

Trail Development and Sonoran Desert Tortoise Habitat Mitigation

As discussed in Section 2.2.2, the entire Project area occurs within a designated Category III area for desert tortoises. This Project would affect approximately 23 acres through construction of the proposed Project. Thus, 23 acres of Category III desert tortoise habitat would be affected. Additionally, habitat for five BLM special-status species has the potential to exist in the Project area. Impacts to habitat and species such as the desert tortoise could occur in the areas to be cleared for the construction of the new park facilities. Additionally, impacts to habitat and species could occur as a result of the improvement of the trail system to allow improved access to remote areas of the park.

Other Conservation Measures

In addition to trail rehabilitation activities, several mitigation measures have been proposed to help manage potential impacts to the natural resources that may result from any new disturbance generated by trail building and park facility additions. These include the following:

- Survey areas targeted for development of facilities early on the planning process to ensure that cultural and biological resources will not be negatively impacted.
- Locate facilities to avoid occupied desert tortoise habitat and/or minimize impacts to desert tortoise habitat.
- Conduct pre-construction surveys to move desert tortoises following *Guidelines for the Handling Sonoran Desert Tortoises Encountered on Development Projects* (Appendix A).
- Train contractors, construction workers, construction monitors, and park employees regarding sensitive species and their habitat, including the desert tortoise.

- Monitor construction activities for presence of desert tortoise and other sensitive species.
- Close the park to OHV use to avoid conflict with desert tortoises.
- Place public education signs in key locations (camping areas, visitor center, trailheads, and information kiosks).
- Develop information/educational brochure for visitors informing them about desert tortoise biology, ecology, and management, emphasizing avoidance.
- Monitor property regularly to ensure the public is adhering to park regulations.
- Use of erosion abatement materials along trails

Impacts to native plants would occur if native plants were found in areas to be cleared and developed. Salvaging and successfully replanting within the Project area would minimize the impacts.

During the scoping process, several individuals expressed concern for a golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) nest located within the proposed Project Area. No impact is expected to the golden eagle nest, because it is located where there is no planned construction. Furthermore, no impacts (i.e., direct take) to any birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are expected through the implementation of the proposed Project. Park development and management would have no effect on any listed or proposed threatened or endangered species.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts on vegetation and wildlife from ongoing development would include removing native vegetation. Plant salvage requirements would partially reduce the loss of vegetation and habitat. No cumulative impacts to listed threatened or endangered species would occur. No cumulative impacts to desert tortoise would occur as a result of the lack of suitable habitat in the lower-lying areas to the east, west, and south of the property.

3.7 CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section of the EA addresses cultural resources and Native American concerns, including the results of a records review and intensive pedestrian surveys completed in support of this EA.

A cultural resource study consisting of detailed records review and an intensive pedestrian survey was conducted to evaluate the effects of the Proposed Project Alternative. The study was conducted to determine whether any historic sites and structures or archaeological sites were located within the original 9,200-acre property, which is now an 8,675.36-acre property. This study was undertaken to support the preparation of the EA and the BLM's compliance with the NHPA.

3.7.1 Affected Environment

Previous Research

Prior to this survey, files were checked at the SHPO and the BLM Phoenix Field Office to determine the location of any previously recorded archaeological sites or previous archaeological work in and around the Project area. SWCA also consulted the AZSITE database, which includes records from the Arizona State Museum (ASM) and Arizona State University, for previous surveys and documented archaeological sites within the Project area and within a 1-mile radius of the Project area (SHPO

Standards for Conducting and Reporting Cultural Resource Surveys on State Lands IV.E.4.b). Twenty-nine archaeological sites have been recorded in the Project area or within a 1-mile radius of the Project area.

Seventeen archaeological surveys have been conducted in the vicinity of the Project area. Several of these surveys were conducted by the BLM Phoenix office in the 1970s and 1980s and overlap small portions of the current Project area. The piece of previous work that provides the most insight into the archaeological potential of the area is the survey of 6,024 acres of the Caterpillar Proving Grounds, now the Verrado development (Ellis et al. 2004).

Survey Methods

The Project area was surveyed at two levels of intensity (Foster 2005). The Phase I area, consisting of 4,300 acres and corresponding to the South Unit in Figure 3-3, saw a Class III level of effort (100% survey because the South Unit will be the focus of development and recreational use). The Phase II area, also consisting of 4,300 acres and corresponding to the North Unit in Figure 3-3, was the subject of a Class II sample (50%) survey, resulting in the archaeological inventory of 2,000 acres (Figure 3-3). The North Unit will remain largely undeveloped open space; it is rugged and therefore less likely to contain archaeological sites. Thus, 6,300 acres, or 73% of the 8,675.36-acre park, was surveyed for the presence of archaeological resources. The archaeological fieldwork was conducted between October 2005 and the end of February 2006.

Phase I includes Sections, in their entirety or in part, 19–22, 26–29, and 33–35, Township 2 North, Range 3 West on the Valencia, Arizona, 7.5-minute quadrangle. Phase II includes all or portions of Sections 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 17, and 18, Township 2 North, Range 3 West on the USGS White Tank Mountains, Arizona, 7.5-minute quadrangle.

Results

A total of 92 isolated occurrences (IOs) and 11 archaeological sites was recorded or rerecorded. The IOs represent both prehistoric and modern periods and occurred mostly in the lower slopes and level portions of the Project area. Table 3-8 summarizes the 11 archeological sites recorded in the Project area.

Three of the archaeological sites were recommended as eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. These sites are summarized on the next page.

Table 3-8. Summary of Archaeological Sites Recorded during the White Tanks Regional Park Survey

Site No. AZ T:__(ASM)	Site Type	Culture / Age	No. Artifacts Present	Artifact Types	Features	NRHP Eligible
6:104	Limited use, resource procurement	Hohokam, pre-Classic	500+	Ceramics, flaked stone, ground stone, shell	Possible rock alignments	Yes
6:105	Historical trash, small prehistoric component	Euroamerican, 1920s–1930s; Hohokam, pre-Classic	165+ historical, 65+ prehistoric	Cans, cartridge cases, broken glass; prehistoric ceramics		No
6:106	Limited use, resource procurement	Hohokam, pre-Classic	200±	Ceramics, flaked stone, ground stone		No
6:107	Limited use, resource procurement	Hohokam, pre-Classic	85+	Ceramics, flaked stone, ground stone		No
6:108	Limited use, resource procurement; trash dumping	Hohokam, pre-Classic; Euroamerican, 1920s–1940/50s	500+ prehistoric, 50+ historical	Ceramics, flaked stone, ground stone; cans, glass, stove parts	Cairn	Yes
6:109	Limited use, resource procurement	Hohokam, pre-Classic	300+	Ceramics, flaked stone, ground stone		No
6:110	Boulder with petroglyph	Hohokam, pre-Classic?	1	Possible grinding slab with petroglyph		No
6:111	Limited use, resource procurement	Hohokam, pre-Classic	60±	Ceramics, flaked stone, ground stone		No
10:219	Limited use, resource procurement	Hohokam, pre-Classic and Classic	200±	Ceramics, flaked stone, ground stone		No
10:220	Rock art	Hohokam, pre-Classic		Two rock art panels		Yes
10:221	Electric transmission line	Euroamerican, 1940/50s?		Transmission line poles, insulators, guy wires		No

AZ T:6:104(ASM)

Site Type/Function: Artifact scatter and features / Limited-use resource procurement and processing camp

Cultural/Temporal Affiliation: Hohokam / pre-Classic period

Dimensions/Area: 158 × 108 m / 1450 m²

Elevation: 1,920 feet amsl

Vegetation: Sonoran Desertscrub; saguaro, creosotebush, saltbush, palo verde, ironwood, ocotillo, buckhorn cholla, teddy bear cholla, barrel cactus.

Local Topography: The site is on a broad ridge that slopes to the west. A large arroyo is located to the east and north of the site.

Site Description: AZ T:6:104(ASM) is a dense artifact scatter with several possible rock features. There are 500+ artifacts, consisting of ceramics, flaked stone, and ground stone, on the site. There are

also three possible rock features, all of which, if cultural, are poorly preserved. Artifact density is estimated to be less than 2/m².

Prehistoric ceramics make up the majority of artifacts at the site. An estimated 300 to 400 sherds are present, and most of these occur in the center of the site. The ceramic types identified include Gila Plain, Salt variety, Santa Cruz/Sacaton Red-on-buff, buff wares, incised buff wares, and Wingfield Plain. There are 100+ pieces of flaked stone, which include mostly flakes along with some possible scrapers and several hammerstones. Material types include chert, rhyolite, basalt, quartzite, and one piece of obsidian. Ground stone consisted of nine fragmentary or whole metates, including a grinding slick. Other ground stone artifacts include fragments of manos and one piece of ground sandstone. One *Glycymeris* bracelet fragment and one unworked piece of *Glycymeris* shell were recorded.

Two of the rock features are short, linear alignments with little or no deposition. Their function is unknown. They do not appear to be terracing of any kind in that they are short and run parallel to the slope of the ridge rather than perpendicular to it. Feature 1 consists of a row of seven rocks; it is 1 m long. Approximately 3 m to the southeast are five rocks that are aligned but with a slight curve. This feature is 97 cm long. The third feature, Feature 3, is a scattered cluster of 35+ rocks that cover an area 2.3 m in diameter. The size of the rocks differentiates the material from the normal surface rock on the site. The rock is not fire cracked, nor is it clearly a prehistoric agricultural rock pile. It could be the remains of a historical or modern cairn. At least seven sherds from two vessels and one piece of flaked stone occur in the area of the feature.

AZ T:6:104(ASM) is interpreted as limited-activity site at which the procurement of nearby plant foods occurred. It is likely that this was a seasonally occupied site and that it was used in the spring or fall for short periods. The presence of the ceramics is probably associated with the storage and transportation of water. It is interesting that shell, albeit a limited amount, is present. The bracelet fragment would suggest that personal ornamentation was worn daily. The presence of the flaked stone indicates that flaked lithic tools were manufactured and/or maintained at the site. They could have been use in food processing along with the ground stone.

Based on topography and geomorphology, the archaeological remains at the site appear to be superficial. No evidence of buried features (e.g., pit structures, roasting pits) was noted.

Site Condition: Fair. The site has been impacted by natural erosion (sheet wash) and livestock grazing. A two-track trail runs through the middle of the site. No evidence of vandalism was noted, although it is possible the surface remains have been partially collected.

NRHP Eligibility Recommendation: Eligible. AZ T:6:104(ASM) is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion D, information potential on the prehistory of Hohokam occupation and use of the White Tank Mountains. Further study of this site may yield new or important scientific information regarding prehistoric use of the site and area, in particular intrasite organization, land-use pattern, subsistence, and sociopolitical organization.

AZ T:6:108(ASM)

Site Type/Function: Prehistoric artifact scatter with a Historic period component / Short-term use

Cultural/Temporal Affiliation: Hohokam/pre-Classic period / Euroamerican / Late Historic period

Dimensions/Area: 142 × 70 m / 18,300 m²

Elevation: 1,960 feet amsl

Vegetation: Sonoran Desertscrub; saguaro, creosotebush, saltbush, palo verde, ironwood, ocotillo, buckhorn cholla, teddy bear cholla, barrel cactus.

Local Topography: The lower slope of a ridge and on the north side of a major drainage.

Site Description: AZ T:6:108(ASM) is a prehistoric artifact scatter with a small, dispersed historical trash scatter. It has 500+ prehistoric artifacts, mostly ceramic sherds and includes flaked stone and ground stone. No features were observed. There are four artifact concentrations of varying artifact numbers scattered across the site. Artifact Concentration 1 is near the center of the site in an area that measures approximately 30 × 16 m. It contained an estimated 95 sherds, mostly Gila Plain, Salt variety along with some buff wares and a few red wares. A small number of fine-grained basalt and rhyolite flakes are also present, but no ground stone. Artifact density is estimated to be less than 1/15 m².

Artifact Concentration 2 measures approximately 15 × 10 m and is also near the middle of the site, but to the east of Artifact Concentration 1. It contains an estimated 170 sherds, mostly Gila Plain, Salt variety. Several Santa Cruz/Sacaton Red-on-buff and buffwares are also present. Thirty-five flaked stone artifacts—chert, rhyolite, and basalt flakes, scrapers, cores, and a chopper—were recorded. Also present is a small basalt grinding slab that measures 23 × 24 × 10 cm. The use area is 17 × 18 cm and it exhibits heavy use.

Artifact Concentration 3 measures approximately 16 × 7 m and is located at the northeastern boundary of the site. It is made up of small number of artifacts, mostly lithics. The flaked stone consists of one chert core and flake, two fine-grained basalt cores, two fine-grained basalt flakes, one rhyolite flake, one fine-grained basalt core/hammerstone, and one porphyritic rhyolite scraper. The two ground-stone artifacts are a small ground piece of vesicular basalt that may be a lapstone and a rhyolitic grinding slick. The grinding slick is 56 × 45 × 17+ cm (partially embedded), and it has a use area of 29 × 16 cm that exhibits heavy use. There was also a quartzite cobble manuport. The ceramics present includes three Gila Salt, Gila variety sherds.

Artifact Concentration 4 is a small cluster of artifacts in an area that measures approximately 15 × 5 m. It is located at the far north end of the site. Five pieces of flaked stone, two basalt cores, one basalt flake, and two rhyolite flakes were also identified. Ground stone artifacts include a one small rhyolite fragment that exhibits heavy grinding and one small pink vesicular basalt fragment that may have been part of a basin metate. Only two buff ware sherds were recorded.

Additional artifacts dispersed across the site include 125+ sherds, 45+ pieces of flaked stone, and two pieces of ground stone. Most of the sherds are Gila Plain, Salt variety, including a sherd spindle whorl fragment. Also found were buff ware sherds, including one red-on-buff incised sherd. The flaked stone artifacts consist of flakes, cores, scrapers, one hammerstone, one chopper, and one biface. A variety of lithic material is represented, including fine-grained basalt, porphyritic basalt, rhyolite, quartzite, and chalcedony. Two pieces of ground stone were recorded—one quartzite mano fragment with light use and one rhyolite basin metate fragment. The metate fragment measures 16.5 × 19 × 12 cm; it has a use area of 10 × 13 cm and a depth of approximately 1.1 cm. It shows heavy use.

Artifact density and types suggest AZ T:6:108(ASM) was used for gathering and processing food over an extended period. The site has areas of topsoil but it appears to be shallow. Most of the site is rocky with some exposed bedrock. While there could be some cultural subsurface deposits, the site most likely is limited to surface features.

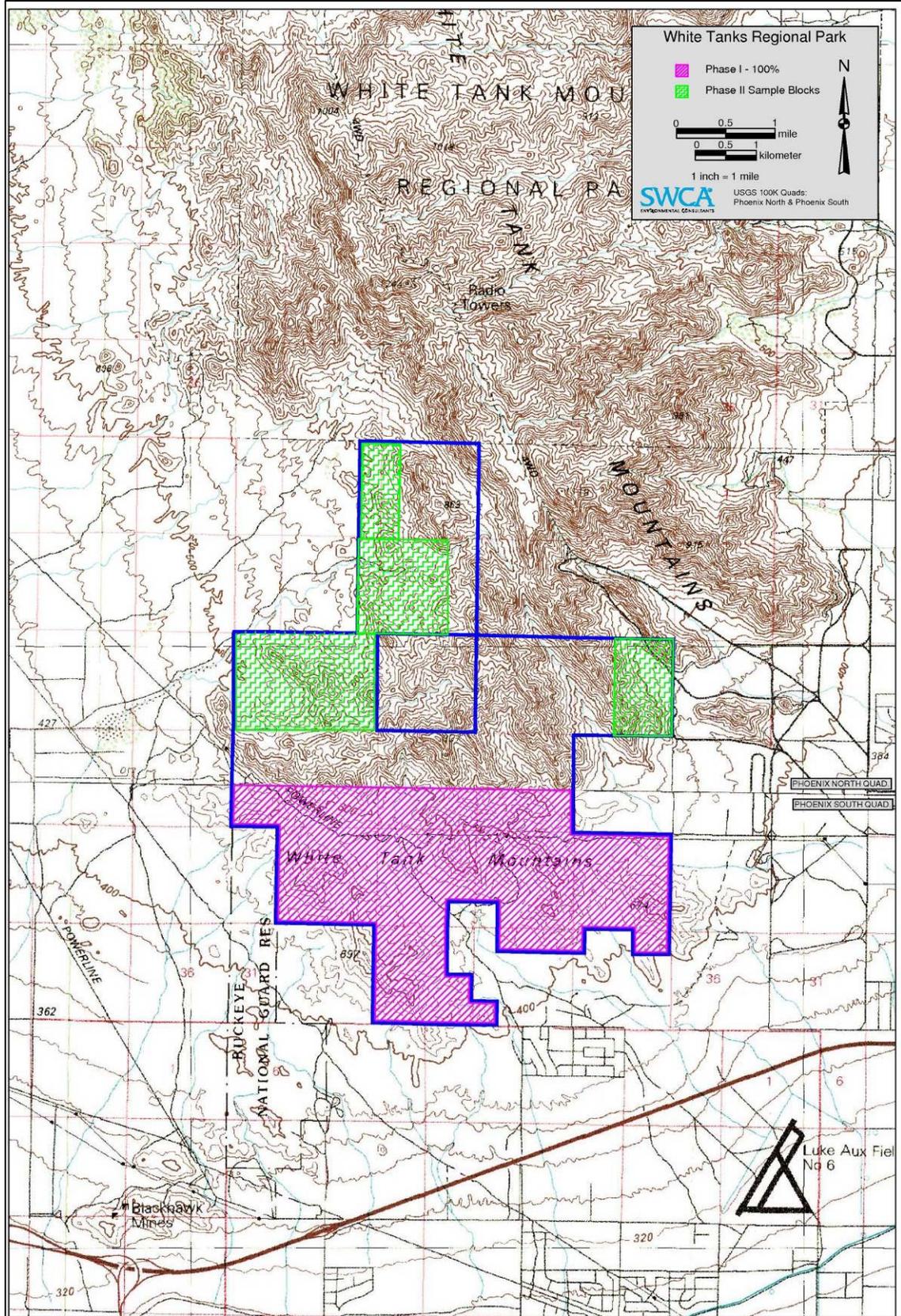


Figure 3-3. Project area map showing Phase I and Phase II survey areas.

The historical component is scattered over the southeastern portion of the site. Two small Historic period artifact concentrations are identified within the general scatter. The scatter is located near the end of the two-track and it has been heavily disturbed by modern recreational use, including ORV traffic, camping/outdoor cooking (three fire rings), and dumping of large amounts of modern trash. Artifact Concentration 5 is in an area that measures approximately 70 × 25 feet and includes a hole-in-top (HIT) evaporated milk can (207 × 208 [Type 18, 1920–1931]) opened with a small knife, two HIT evaporated milk cans (208 × 205 [Type 20, 1950–present]), one opened with a continuous knife cut and the other opened with a small knife, a HIT evaporated milk can (215 × 315, type unknown), small knife opened, and an upright pocket tobacco tin, with strike plate on base, 5-pin hinged lid (1907–1948).

Artifact Concentration 6 is on a bench below the terrace and above the large drainage. It is in an area that measures approximately 20 × 25 feet and includes a rock cairn 34 inches in diameter, 10 inches tall, and 3 courses high, two HIT evaporated milk cans (214 × 315, type unknown), small knife opened; a HIT evaporated milk can (? × 404 [probably Type 13, 1917–1929]), two HIT evaporated milk cans (215 × 314 [Type 15, 1917–1929]), one punctured and small knife opened, and the other punctured open, a key-wind open can (500 × 308), sanitary cans (306 × 508, 404 × 508, and 315 × 410), and a rectangular can 6 × 4 inches in diameter, height unmeasurable with a “C inside a diamond” embossed on base and a heavy-gauge wire handle.

Also observed in the historic component were a possible back panel from a portable wood-burning stove (21 inches long × 20 inches wide) with six small, circular holes across the bottom-center portion and a vertical rectangular opening to one side, a sardine can, one piece body and base key-wind open (403 × 302 × 13 [1880–1918]), two cartridges with headstamps “Peters Sav 300” and “Peters 38-40” (Peters 1887–1934), a cartridge with headstamp “U.S.C. Co * 18 *” (United States Cartridge Company 1864–1938); a cartridge with headstamp “303 Brish R-P,” clear glass bottle base with basemark of “M over V inside a circle” and 20+ clear glass shards, 10+ shards of brown Clorox bottle with solid lettering on neck and shoulder and finger ring holder (1939–1950) and bottle base fragment with basemark of “I inside oval and diamond (Owens-Illinois Pacific Glass Company 1929–1966), and a small, circular, clear glass bottle base with basemark of “A-S/12/I inside oval and diamond/0/10” (Owens Illinois Pacific Glass Company 1929–1966; A-S is possibly Alka-Seltzer (Miles Laboratories Inc., 1931–?).

Diagnostic historical artifacts suggest two possible periods of use, one in the 1920s and the other during the 1940s and 1950s. The limited number and variety of Historic period artifacts indicates short term use of the site.

Site Condition: Poor/fair. The site is in poor to fair condition, having been impacted by vehicular traffic, recreational activities, erosion, and bioturbation. The historical component has been very badly disturbed.

NRHP Eligibility Recommendation: The prehistoric component at AZ T:6:108(ASM) is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion D, information potential on the prehistory of the area. Further study of the site may yield information on the Hohokam occupation and use of the White Tank Mountains, in particular intrasite organization, land-use pattern, subsistence, and sociopolitical organization.

The Historic period components are not eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criteria A, B, C, or D. Further study of the historical remains will not contribute any new or important scientific information that would further our current understanding of local, state, or regional history. None of the remains can be associated with an important event or person in Arizona history, and there is no architectural significance to the site. Any research potential the site holds has been exhausted with its recording.

AZ T:10:220(ASM)**Site Type/Function:** Petroglyph / undetermined**Cultural/Temporal Affiliation:** Hohokam / pre-Classic period?**Dimensions/Area:** 46 × 5 m / 2,300 m²**Elevation:** 1,440 feet amsl**Vegetation:** Sonoran Desertscrub; saguaro, creosotebush, palo verde, ironwood, ocotillo, buckhorn cholla, teddy bear cholla, barrel cactus**Local Topography:** On a slope that faces west-southwest.

Site Description: This site consists of two panels of rock art (petroglyphs). Both are on large boulders that are part of the alluvial detritus (talus) below an eroded ridge. Both boulders are heavily patinated. The patination is a dark, shiny gray that looks like a metallic coating. Panel 1 (Figure 3-4) consists of a single small, zoomorphic figure that measures 16.5 cm long. A small pecked area also occurs to the left of the figure, but no identifiable design or element can be discerned. The figure is very fresh looking, although there is some slight discoloration (pinkish red) to the pecked surface. The surface on which the zoomorph is pecked faces east and the inclination of the surface is 35° to the west.

Panel 2 (Figure 3-5) is about 40 m south of Panel 1. Panel 2 is also on a boulder. Although not a particularly large (size and number of elements) petroglyph panel, it is nevertheless spectacular. The elements are dominated by stars. Also included are a zoomorph and a squiggle that may represent a snake. Another zoomorph appears to represent a deer or perhaps a mountain sheep.

The boulder face that faces southwest is covered with stars. Four complete stars and the beginnings of at least five others are represented. Three of the four complete stars are eight-pointed, and one is seven-pointed. The top-side panel, which faces northwest, has two complete stars and a possible third star in progress at the left edge of the pane. One complete star has eight points, and the other has nine. A squiggle that may represent a snake is located to the left of the two complete stars. The zoomorph that may represent a deer or mountain sheep is located in the upper right part of the panel near a zigzag squiggle and another indistinguishable marking (see Figure 3-5).



Figure 3-4. Panel 1 at AZ T:10:220(ASM), zoomorphs (facing northwest).



Figure 3-5. Panel 2 at AZ T:10:220(ASM), stars and zoomorphs (facing east).

The maximum diameters of the complete stars range from 17.3 to 11.3 cm. The overall length of the snake-like squiggle is 18.5 cm, and the length (from tail to head) of the horned zoomorph is 10.1 cm.

The design elements on both Panels 1 and 2 appear to be Hohokam in style. They are similar to pottery design elements found on pre-Classic period pottery. Stars very similar to those found on Panel 2 are represented on Snaketown and Sacaton phase pottery (Haury 1976:274). The zoomorphs and squiggles on Panels 1 and 2 are also generally similar to Hohokam pottery design elements. It is however, interesting to note, that although some stylistic similarities exist, the White Tank Mountains rock art recorded during this Project appears different than that recorded at South Mountain in the heart of the Hohokam core area (Bostwick and Krocek 2002).

Site Condition: Very good. No vandalism, some modern trash. It is fortunate the site has not been vandalized.

NRHP Eligibility Recommendation: Eligible. Petroglyphs represent a somewhat rare and valuable prehistoric resource. In Arizona, most petroglyphs are assessed for NRHP eligibility under Criteria C and D (Thiel 1995:144). Under Criterion C, the artistic value of the rock art is assessed. Under Criterion D, the scientific value of the rock art is considered.

Most of the design elements at AZ T:10:220(ASM) appear similar to Hohokam pre-Classic period ceramic design elements. They appear to be fairly rare representations in Hohokam rock art, and thus, in terms of Hohokam rock art, they are a relatively rare expression of prehistoric artistic endeavors and worldview. Therefore, it is possible to consider AZ T:10:220(ASM) NRHP eligible under Criterion C.

Under NRHP Criterion D, rock art may be considered of scientific importance under a number of potential topics including cultural interaction/boundaries, chronology, trade, ritual activity, sociopolitical organization, and subsistence.

3.7.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the Town would not lease the land and no Regional Park would be developed. Under the No-Action Alternative, the property would not be developed. However, the continued uncontrolled recreational use of the property could impact the cultural resources present.

Proposed Project Alternative

Under the Proposed Project Alternative, the 8,675.36 acres of property would be leased to the Town and would be developed into a Regional Park. Human presence and increased use of the property by recreators would create a potential impact to the cultural resources on the property.

Only three of the 11 sites recorded are believed to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. AZ T:10:220(ASM) is a prehistoric Hohokam rock art site. AZ T:6:104(ASM) and AZ T:6:108(ASM) are artifact scatters thought to represent multiple, short-term occupations or uses of the area. As human population increases in the vicinity of the Town's proposed White Tanks Regional Park, more people will explore the area. It is likely that eventually AZ T:10:220(ASM) will be discovered and the boulder either vandalized or removed. The rock art panels at AZ T:10:220(ASM) are on large boulders and it is unlikely they could be hauled off. Nevertheless, it is possible that they could be removed one way or another, and the potential for vandalism of the site is high. Thus, protective measures for AZ T:10:220(ASM) should be considered.

Although most of the sites recorded in this survey are not eligible for listing in the NRHP, development of the area as a Regional Park should take into consideration the general archaeological sensitivity of the area. That said, the cultural resources identified pose few constraints to the development of the proposed park. The areas that would be the focus of developed facilities and uses have been fully surveyed and found to have a low density of archaeological sites. Also, although recreation use would likely increase, recreational activities would be monitored and managed. The three NRHP-eligible sites are outside the areas proposed for development of primary facilities. Any adverse impacts to those sites and other cultural resources would be mitigated through the development and implementation of a cultural resources treatment plan. Thus, as stated below, cumulative impacts to cultural resources are therefore not anticipated.

The BLM requires that a management plan for the protection and preservation of the archaeological remains within the Town's White Tanks Regional Park be prepared to ensure that no damage to these sites occurs. The cultural resources treatment plan, which would be required under the terms of the lease and subject to approval by the BLM, would address the following items.

- Regularly monitor and document the condition of sites AZ T:6:104, T:6:108, and T:10:220(ASM), as well as any newly discovered sites that are determined eligible for the NRHP.
- Implement site-specific protection measures if needed, such as restrictions on vehicle access, fencing, or erosion control. Proposed restrictions on OHVs and recreational target shooting within the park would help protect cultural resources.
- Provide for long-term protection of AZ T:10:220, the significant petroglyph site, and allow approved access for scientific studies or cultural preservation.
- Avoid impacts to NRHP-eligible sites in planning for new facilities. If AZ T:6:104 or T:6:108(ASM) would be affected by planned facilities, mitigate adverse impacts through the implementation of a BLM-approved plan for scientific data recovery.

- Complete Project-specific surveys of any unsurveyed areas that are proposed for the development of facilities. Consult with the BLM regarding the survey results.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding the locations of cultural resources.
- Consider removing the small petroglyph boulder, AZ T:6:110(ASM), to prevent its theft. Consider its use in an educational exhibit that highlights the need to protect cultural resources.
- Notify the BLM Field Manager in the event that new sites are discovered during construction or other activities.
- Provide a brief annual report to the BLM regarding the condition of cultural resources and the status of implementation of the cultural resources treatment plan.

Cumulative Impacts

Provided that the cultural resources management plan for the Town's White Tanks Regional Park is prepared and implemented, as detailed above, impacts to cultural resources as a result of the Proposed Project would be unlikely. Cumulative impacts to cultural resources are therefore not anticipated.

3.8 AIR QUALITY

3.8.1 Affected Environment

Climate

The Phoenix area is characterized by an exceptionally dry climate, which is characteristic of the Sonoran Desert region. Normal rainfall amounts rarely exceed 10 inches per year and average approximately

7 inches per year. Two distinct seasons generally account for the majority of rainfall in the Phoenix area. During the summer months of July, August, and September, moist tropical air moves northward from the Gulf of Mexico, causing moderately heavy afternoon and evening thunderstorms. During the cooler season of October through March, additional precipitation occurs as moist air moves easterly across much of the Southwest as a result of Pacific fronts. Typically April, May, and June are the driest months of the year.

Summer temperatures in the Phoenix metropolitan area are very high, with afternoon maximums frequently exceeding 110°F; morning lows above 80°F are common. During winter, temperatures are generally mild, with lows ranging from the high 30s to the low 50s. Subfreezing temperatures are uncommon, normally occurring fewer than 10 days per year.

Ambient Air Quality

Since 1970, the federal CAA and subsequent amendments have provided the authority and framework for EPA regulation of emission sources and the establishment of requirements for the monitoring, control, and documentation of activities that will affect ambient concentrations of certain pollutants that may endanger public health or welfare. Under the CAA, each state or delegated permitting authority has the responsibility to achieve and maintain air quality that meets the NAAQS. The EPA has promulgated primary and secondary NAAQS for six criteria pollutants (CO, NO₂, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, O₃, SO₂, and Pb). The primary standards are concentration levels of pollutants in ambient air, averaged over a specific time interval, designed to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety. The secondary standards are concentration levels judged necessary to protect public welfare

and other resources from known or anticipated adverse effects of air pollution. Although states may promulgate more stringent ambient standards, the State of Arizona and Maricopa County have adopted standards identical to the federal levels (see Arizona Administrative Code Title 18, Chapter 2, Article 2). Table 3-9 presents the NAAQS for five of the six “criteria” pollutants, including both primary standards (pertaining to human health) and secondary standards (pertaining to human welfare, such as visibility, socioeconomics, and effects on flora and fauna). Lead is not measured, as it generally does not pose a problem due to the removal of lead from gasoline.

Ozone

The Phoenix metropolitan area has had a significant O₃ problem and between 1997 and 2005 was classified as being in “serious” nonattainment. Since that designation, a noticeable and continuing decline in both peak values and the number of days that approached or exceeded an air quality index of 100 had been recorded, and in May 2005, EPA formally redesignated the Phoenix metropolitan area as having met the federal health standard for 1-hour O₃. The EPA also proposed to approve the state’s plan to maintain healthy levels of 1-hour O₃ in the area. However, the Phoenix area continues to exceed the newer, more protective, 8-hour national standard of 0.08 parts per million (ppm).

Table 3-9. National Ambient Air Quality Standards

Pollutant	Averaging Period	Primary (µg/m ³)	Secondary (µg/m ³)
NO ₂	Annual	100 (0.05 ppm)	100 (0.05 ppm)
	3-hour	–	1,300
SO ₂	24-hour	365 (0.14 ppm)	–
	Annual	80 (0.03 ppm)	–
CO	1-hour	40 (35 ppm)	–
	8-hour	10 (9 ppm)	–
O ₃	1-hour	240 (0.12 ppm)	240 (0.12 ppm)
	8-hour	160 (0.08 ppm)	160 (0.08 ppm)
PM _{2.5}	24-hour	65	65
	Annual	15	15
PM ₁₀	24-hour	150	150
	Annual	50	50

Source: EPA (2006)

Carbon Monoxide

The Phoenix metropolitan area is currently classified as in “serious” nonattainment for CO. In recent years, the level of CO has been greatly reduced, and for several years there has not been an exceedance of the NAAQS.

Particulate Matter

PM₁₀ refers to solid and liquid particles that are 10 microns in diameter or smaller. Sources of particulate matter include air pollution from cars, trucks, buses, non-road vehicles and equipment, unpaved roads, fireplaces, farming, power plants, and other industries. The Phoenix metropolitan area is currently classified as in “serious” nonattainment for PM₁₀. To address this issue, Maricopa County has established regulations with strict requirements for the identification of affected parcels

plus “best available control measures” to control significant sources of PM₁₀. Recently, additional standards have been promulgated for PM_{2.5}. For the new PM_{2.5} standard, regulatory agencies have initiated a 3-year period during which air monitoring data will be acquired to determine present ambient levels of PM_{2.5}.

Rule 310—Fugitive Dust Requirements

MCAQRs 310 and 310.01 include work practice standards to ensure emissions from fugitive dust sources, such as open areas, vacant lots, unpaved parking lots, and unpaved roadways, are minimized to the extent practicable. An earthmoving permit and dust control plan are required for any operations that disturb a total surface area equal to or greater than 0.10 acre.

Table 3-10. Metropolitan Phoenix Ambient Air Pollution Data

Year	CO	O ₃		PM		Total	Highest Air Quality Index
	8-Hour	8-Hour	1-Hour	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀		
1990	4	15	6	No data	0	19	154
1991	2	8	0	No data	0	10	132
1992	3	18	8	No data	2	23	174
1993	0	24	3	No data	0	24	132
1994	2	7	2	No data	0	9	129
1995	3	19	5	No data	2	24	149
1996	2	18	1	No data	0	20	154
1997	0	16	0	No data	12	28	370
1998	0	35	0	No data	4	39	270
1999	1	21	1	1	7	30	151
2000	0	21	0	0	7	28	173
2001	0	12	0	4	6	22	164
2002	0	14	0	5	2	21	160

Maricopa County

All portions of Maricopa County are deemed in attainment with the NAAQS for SO₂, NO_x, and Pb. Although for the past 8 years Maricopa County has achieved compliance with NAAQS 1-hour O₃ standard, the Phoenix metropolitan area has been designated as a serious nonattainment area since 1997 (EPA 2006). Non-attainment areas are regions within the country where the concentration of one or more criteria pollutants exceeds the NAAQS.

Phoenix Metropolitan Area

In 2004, the Maricopa County Air Quality Department (MCAQD) reported one site (North Phoenix) exceeded the 8-hour primary standard for O₃. Four sites (Buckeye, Durango Complex, Higley, and West Forty-Third) exceeded the annual standard for PM₁₀. In addition, there was one site that exceeded the PM₁₀ 24-hour standard. No sites located in Phoenix metropolitan area exceeded standards for NO₂, CO, or SO₂ in 2004.

Town of Buckeye

In August 2004, the MCAQD constructed an air monitoring station at the Maricopa County Department of Transportation Southwest Facility in the Town. The Town station, located in an area of mixed agriculture and new residential development, measures CO, O₃, PM₁₀, and NO₂ levels. The MCAQD reported that the Buckeye Site exceeded the 24-hour standard and the annual standard for PM₁₀ (Table 3-11) (MCAQD 2005). Exceedances recorded for PM₁₀ were caused by exceptional events. The Town station did not record exceeding standards for CO, NO₂, or SO₂ during 2004 (see Table 3-11) (MCAQD 2005).

Table 3-11. Critical Pollutant Concentrations and Standard Exceedances, Buckeye Air Monitoring Station

Critical Pollutants	2004
Maximum 8-hour carbon monoxide average (ppm)	0.5
Number of exceedances of 8-hour CO	0
Maximum 1-hour O ₃ average (ppm)	0.088
Maximum 8-hour O ₃ average (ppm)	0
Number of daily exceedances >0.08	0.068
Three-year average of fourth high	- ¹
Maximum 24-hour PM ₁₀ average (µg/m ³)	289 ^{2,3}
Number of exceedances of 24-hour PM ₁₀	1
Annual PM ₁₀ average (µg/m ³)	51 ^{2,3}
Annual NO ₂ average (ppm)	- ²

1 Indicates <75% data recovery.

2 Indicates an exceedance of the standard.

3 Indicates Exceptional Events.

Source: MCAQD (2005)

Proposed Project Area

Public lands are designated as a Class II air quality classification pursuant to the CAA. Under the CAA, Class II airsheds allow for moderate deterioration associated with moderate, well-controlled industrial and population growth. The nearest air monitoring station to the study area is the Buckeye site. In 2004, the site reported one exceedance of PM₁₀; levels of all other criteria pollutants were under NAAQS (MCAQD 2006). Air quality in the study area is most likely affected to a minor degree by emissions from automobiles and OHVs, campfire smoke, and dust from gravel roads.

3.8.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the Town would not lease the approximately 8,675.36 acres of land from the BLM, and the Regional Park development would not occur. Current activity on the property would continue; thus, sources of air quality pollution would remain constant. The southern area of the property contains dirt roads and significant ORV use. OHV use on the property would continue to create localized dust. Development around the Project area would still occur, which would add to air quality concerns in the area.

Proposed Project Alternative

The Proposed Project Alternative would involve the lease of 8,675.36 acres of land to the Town and the development of a Regional Park, including parking, picnicking, camping, toilet facilities, and trail development/improvements.

Dust from construction on the Project is expected to create temporary air quality impacts. Because of the intense development of the surrounding area, dust from local construction Projects is also expected to create temporary air quality impacts. Construction operations associated with the development of Park facilities, including land clearing and earthmoving, would be sources of localized dust emissions. Potential impacts from these operations would vary from day to day depending on meteorological conditions. Dust emissions must be substantially controlled to comply with the requirements of MCAQR 310. Essentially, all dust-generating activities would be subject to dust suppression measures. Such measures may include wind barriers, watering, dust palliatives, limits on vehicle traffic, and other measures described in an approved dust control plan.

Under the Proposed Project Alternative, OHV and other ORV use would be prohibited. These restrictions would have a positive, long-term impact to air quality in the immediate vicinity and western Maricopa County.

Cumulative Impacts

The dust from the Proposed Project combined with the dust from surrounding development could create a minimal short-term cumulative impact. Strict dust control requirements and coordination with surrounding developments would minimize the cumulative dust impact in the area.

3.9 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.9.2 Affected Environment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was conducted to evaluate the hazard potential of the 8,675.36 acres of BLM land for this Project. Although the property is vacant, mountainous land, the site has evidence of both current and historic human activity. Current activity on the site consists mostly of recreational activities, such as hiking, biking, OHV use, and recreational shooting. Historic use of the property is detailed in the cultural resource section of this document. Modern historic use of the property consisted of presence of a military beacon and associated power line from the World War II era and general recreation.

Hazardous Materials

Areas of potentially hazardous conditions within the 8,675.36 acres were investigated and are detailed below.

Trash Dumping—There is evidence of trash dumping throughout the site. According to the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment completed for this property, scattered *de minimis* debris, including metal, broken glass, windblown trash, two tires, and empty gun casings were observed in the southern portion of the site. These items, for the most part, are not considered to be hazardous environmental concerns. An empty 55-gallon drum was also located on the southern portion of the site and contained shotgun holes.

Plane Crash—Remnants of a plane crash exist on the western portion of the subject site. The crash site did not appear to contain petroleum products or hazardous materials.

Tow Target—A large, metallic military tow target was observed on the property. These targets are pulled behind military aircraft and are used for aerial gunnery practice. Luke Air Force Base personnel removed this target on March 6, 2006.

Power Line and Beacon—A non-functioning power line and remnants of a military beacon were found on the site. Both were abandoned and were dilapidated.

Health and Safety

Health and safety concerns on the site, natural and/or human-made, may pose risks for those visiting or working on the property.

Desert Lands—Safety concerns related to the vacant natural character of the landscape exist on the property. The natural desert environment contains plants and animals that could be hazardous to human health, such as cactus, rattlesnakes, spiders, and scorpions. Additionally, the rugged topography could pose safety concerns to those who recreate on the trails and lands on the property.

Recreational Conflicts—Recreational shooting on the property could pose safety concerns for other recreators on the property. Currently, dispersed and unrestricted shooting occurs throughout the property.

Off-Road Vehicles—ORVs are widely used on the property, creating potential safety concerns for those using the vehicles. Additionally, ORVs tend to create large amounts of dust, causing a reduction in the quality of the air in the immediate area of the activity.

3.9.3 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the 8,675.36-acre BLM property would not be developed and would remain managed by the BLM. Conditions on the Project property identified in the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment and through site reconnaissance consist of trash dumping, plane crash remnants, a tow target, and remnants of historic power line and military beacon.

- **Trash Dumping**—The observed trash dumped on the property does not appear to pose an environmental concern other than the visual disturbance caused by the presence of trash heaps in desert areas. The trash could pose a potential safety hazard by attracting pests to the area and potential human disturbance of unknown discarded materials.
- **Plane Crash Remnants**—The plane crash does not appear to be causing environmental concerns, but could pose a safety concern to humans if remnants are disturbed.
- **Tow Target**—Luke Air Force Base personnel removed this target on March 6, 2006. No hazard or safety concerns exist.
- **Power Line and Beacon**—The non-functioning power line and beacon do not presently pose environmental concerns; however, safety concerns could exist if humans climb, knock over, or otherwise disturb the remnants.
- **Desert Lands**—The wild character of the 8,675.36-acre property poses certain safety concerns for recreators on the property. Wildlife such as snakes, spiders, scorpions, and other desert-dwelling creatures could harm recreators on the property. However, these hazards are not extraordinary and would exist on all desert open space in the area. Additionally, the mountainous terrain poses safety concerns to those who hike or bike on the property. Again,

these hazards are not extraordinary and would exist on all open, mountainous areas throughout the metropolitan Phoenix area.

- **Recreational Conflicts**—Recreational shooting on the property could pose safety concerns for other recreators on the property. Additionally, spent shells litter the property with lead-laden waste materials, which could create environmental concerns if the waste were allowed to collect and remain on the site.
- **Off-Highway Vehicles**—Safety concerns related to OHVs exist, both for those riding the vehicles and other recreators in the area, who could potentially be struck by the vehicles. Also, dust pollution caused by the vehicles is hazardous to those riding the vehicles and to other recreators on the property.

Under the No-Action Alternative, site conditions would remain essentially unchanged. Thus, safety hazards on the site and potential future environmental conditions related to trash dumping, ORV use, and recreational shooting would continue.

Proposed Project Alternative

Under the Proposed Project Alternative the 8,675.36-acre BLM property would be leased/sold and developed as a Regional Park. The Town would assume management responsibility of the property. Conditions on the Project property identified in the Phase I Environmental Assessment and through site reconnaissance consist of trash dumping, plane crash remnants, a tow target, and remnants of historic power line and military beacon.

- **Trash Dumping**—The observed trash dumped on the property does not appear to pose an environmental concern, other than the visual disturbance caused by the presence of trash heaps in desert areas. The trash could pose a potential safety hazard by attracting pests to the area and potential human disturbance of unknown discarded materials. Under the Proposed Project Alternative, trash dumps would be removed, thus improving safety and reducing the environmental hazards associated with these dumps.
- **Plane Crash Remnants**—The plane crash does not appear to be causing environmental concerns, but could pose a safety concern to humans if remnants are disturbed. Under the Proposed Project Alternative, the plane crash remnants would be removed from the site, thus removing any safety hazard associated with it.
- **Tow Target**—Luke Air Force Base personnel removed this target on March 6, 2006. No hazard or safety concerns exist.
- **Power Line and Beacon**—The non-functioning power line and beacon do not presently pose environmental concerns, but safety concerns could exist if humans climb, knock over, or otherwise disturb the remnants. Under the Proposed Project Alternative, the power line and beacon would be removed from the property, thus removing the safety concerns associated with these facilities.
- **Desert Lands**—The wild character of the 8,675.36-acre property poses certain safety concerns for recreators on the property. Wildlife such as snakes, spiders, scorpions, and other desert-dwelling creatures could harm recreators on the property. However, these hazards are not extraordinary and would exist on all desert open space in the area. Additionally, the mountainous terrain poses safety concerns to those who hike or bike on the property. Again, these hazards are not extraordinary and would exist on all open, mountainous areas throughout the metropolitan Phoenix area. Although such hazards are inherent in mountainous desert terrain, the Town will place signs at the major park entrances and visitor center alerting recreators to wildlife concerns and outlining rules and regulations for the site.

- **Recreational Conflicts**—Recreational shooting and OHV use will be prohibited on the Regional Park property, which will eliminate the safety hazard to general recreators. Gun casings will be cleaned up and removed as found.
- **Off-Highway Vehicles**—OHV use would be prohibited on the Park property. Health concerns related to short-range dust pollution would be eliminated as a result. Safety issues would be eliminated with OHV restrictions, allowing separate recreational uses to occur with minimal risk.

Under the Proposed Project Alternative, most hazardous site conditions would be removed, thus eliminating hazardous and safety concerns related to trash dumping, the plane crash, spent gun casings, and the power line and beacon. OHV use and recreational shooting would be prohibited, thus decreasing health and safety concerns related to these activities. In addition, signs will be posted at the main entrances of the property that outline the rules and regulations for the site and inform recreators regarding general desert wildlife hazards. As a result, safety hazards on the site and potential future environmental conditions related to trash dumping, OHV use, and recreational shooting would be greatly diminished.

Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts are expected to occur.

3.10 TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

This section of the EA addresses transportation and access in and around the general Project location. A description of the local transportation network as well as access into the proposed Regional Park is included in this section.

3.10.1 Affected Environment

Transportation

The general Proposed Project is located in a growing area of the west valley, which, once built out, would include residential, industrial, and commercial properties. Roadways are planned to accommodate this growth, including arterial, collector, and local roadways as well as improvements to major interstate and state highways.

Freeways and Highways

Interstate 10—The I-10 corridor generally trends east–west and is located approximately 1.5 miles south of the Proposed Project area. The freeway currently has four lanes, and a future general-purpose lane is planned. I-10 is used both as a major interstate transportation route as well as a local and regional transportation route to access the communities of the west valley, such as the Town, and communities in other parts of Arizona, such as Tucson and Yuma.

State Route 85—This two-lane highway travels in a north-south direction in the southwest Valley, extending south from I-10 to I-8 at Gila Bend. The facility also continues south of I-8 to the Maricopa County boundary, but experiences relatively low volumes of traffic along that stretch. Between I-10 and I-8, State Route (SR) 85 is a major link for automobile and truck traffic traveling to points west on I-8. In conjunction with I-8, it also serves truckers using I-10 to bypass the metropolitan area. To

address the increasing growth in the area, widening of SR 85 between I-8 and I-10 to a four-lane, divided roadway is planned.

Arterial and Local Streets

Current arterial and local streets exist mostly south of I-10 in the Town. These roads consist of two-lane streets used by local traffic. Future development shows extensive arterial improvements and development both to the north and south of I-10 near the Town and west of the White Tank Mountains in response to the extensive planned growth in the area. Planned roadways consist of local and arterial streets with mostly two and four lanes, which will be used for local travel and for access to residential and commercial developments.

Sun Valley Parkway currently consists of four lanes trending north–south west of the White Tank Mountains and the Proposed Project. This roadway serves as a major arterial for service between the Town and the northwest Valley communities, such as Surprise.

The Town has numerous large, master-planned communities under development. Each development must contribute positively to the transportation network in order to properly accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles, trucks, and other forms of transportation. While a large portion of the transportation infrastructure in the Town will be constructed in conjunction with private development projects, the Town does have several transportation improvements planned:

- Extensive future development is planned west of the White Tank Mountains, which will use Sun Valley Parkway as a major roadway for access to and from both the north and south metropolitan Phoenix areas.
- Extension of Watson Road from existing terminus at Southern Avenue south to MC-85 (Baseline Road), a distance of approximately 1 mile, including construction of new crossings at the existing Union Pacific Railroad line and the Buckeye Canal.
- Acquisition of 66-foot right-of-way adjacent to existing Luke Air Force Base Auxiliary Airfield for future extension of Airport Road from Yuma Road north to Roosevelt Street alignment, a distance of approximately 1.5 miles.
- Realignment of Dean Road to shift the roadway alignment 0.25 mile east of the section line, from a point approximately 0.5 mile north of Lower Buckeye Road to a point approximately 0.5 mile north of Yuma Road, a distance of approximately 1 mile, in order to avoid a large wash at the intersection of Yuma and Dean roads.

Airports

The Town Municipal Airport is located approximately 8 miles southwest of the Proposed Project area. The airport currently has one runway that is 5,500 feet long × 70 feet wide, which is planned to be widened to 100 feet and lengthened to 7,300 feet. The airport is equipped with a terminal building and 40 T-hangers. Although the Buckeye Municipal Airport is currently used for small, general aviation aircraft, its size (800 acres) and location (0.25 mile from a major interchange of I-10) give it the potential to be a large commercial airport.

Luke Air Force Base is the largest and only active-duty F-16 training base in the world, with more than 200 F-16s assigned. The host command at Luke Air Force Base is the 56th Fighter Wing, under Air Education and Training Command's 19th Air Force. Luke Air Force Base is located approximately 10 miles east of the Proposed Project area, and flights from this base routinely fly over the Project area.

Access

Currently, motorized and non-motorized transportation can access the study area from the south through two dirt roads located off McDowell Road (MCAQD 2006) and from the primitive extension of Watson Road. The park can be accessed from both the east and the west via small dirt roads and OHV tracks and trails that transect the study area.

3.10.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, no land lease would occur. Transportation planning in the general Project area would continue; there could be an increase in arterial and local roadways as well as improvements to existing roadways to accommodate the planned growth in the area. Access to the property from the east and west would continue via informal trails and OHV tracks. Access to the property from the primitive extension of Watson Road would also continue. No impacts to transportation and access are expected to occur from the No-Action Alternative.

Proposed Action

It is expected that the Regional Park would attract visitors from neighboring communities in the general metropolitan Phoenix area (including the Town), as well as from areas south and north of the metropolitan area. However, because of the planned improvements to the local transportation network, the number of visitors to the park is not expected to create a burden on the existing and planned transportation system in the general Project area.

An extension of Watson Road into the Proposed Regional Park is planned, but is not a part of the Proposed Project. This extension would be the main access to the park and to the facilities proposed in this document. Access to the park is available to those communities to the east and west of the White Tank Mountains via informal trails and OHV tracks. The Proposed Project proposes to limit access to the trails and natural areas of the park.

It is not anticipated that the Proposed Project would impact transportation and access in the general Project area. Because the Project prohibits use of OHVs as described in Section 2.2.2, the Proposed Project would impact access to the park's trails via those uses. No other impacts are expected.

Cumulative Impacts

Development in the surrounding area will bring more residents and visitors to the surrounding area. However, because of the concurrent transportation network improvements, cumulative impacts are not expected.

3.11 NOISE

3.11.1 Affected Environment

Presently, there are no universal standards or policies for recreational noise levels. The most widely accepted land use-related noise standards are those of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The FHWA noise guidelines (23 CFR 772) for residential, recreation, and

picnic areas specify a maximum noise level of 67 Leq(h). Leq(h) represents the equivalent, steady state sound level expressed in A-weighted decibels (dBA), which, on an hourly basis, contains the same acoustic energy as the time-varying sound level during the same period. The HUD noise guidelines (24 CFR 51 B) for residential areas specify a maximum noise level of 65 Ldn. Ldn represents a 24-hour day-night noise level expressed in decibels. In calculating an Ldn noise level, a penalty of 10 dBA is added to noise occurring between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. to represent the greater perceived impact of noise during these hours.

Ambient Conditions

The BLM property is located in an area of mountainous open space. The area around the property is undergoing intense residential, commercial, and industrial development. Residences, hospitals, libraries, recreation areas, and other similar uses are generally considered to be sensitive noise receptors. Sensitive receptors in the area consist of residential areas to the east and west of the property as well as the recreational users on the property.

The factors contributing to the ambient noise in the vicinity of the park are summarized below.

- **Luke Air Force Base**—Luke Air Force Base is the largest and only active-duty F-16 training base in the world, with more than 200 F-16s assigned. The base is approximately 10 miles east of the Proposed Project area, and flights from this base routinely fly over the Project area. Noise from low-flying aircraft contributes to ambient noise on the property.
- **Area Development**—As described in previous sections, the area around the property is under intense development and is taking on the characteristics of a typical suburban setting; thus, it is exposed to typical urban and suburban noise sources. Construction noise from the areas to the east and west is not currently noticeable on the property; however, as developments encroach on the property, temporary construction noise may be noticeable.
- **Recreational Activities**—Most of the recreational activities on the property, such as hiking, biking, and stargazing, do not add to the ambient noise in the area. However, recreational uses, such as recreational shooting, hunting, and ORV use, add to the ambient noise. Recreational shooting noise is frequently heard throughout the property, as is OHV-related noise.
- **Traffic**—Existing traffic noises on the site are minimal to non-existent. Major roadways such as I-10 and Sun Valley Parkway are located far enough from the property to not contribute to the ambient noise on the property. Because of the topography of the property, many of the areas are secluded and screened from general community noises, including traffic. As the area develops and increases in traffic and congestion become routine, limited traffic noise may be noticeable in the southern portion of the site.

3.11.2 Environmental Consequences

No-Action Alternative

Existing noise levels in and around the property are influenced by low-flying military aircraft and recreational activities on the site. Some limited noise from the developing area can also be heard. Under the No-Action Alternative, no new facilities would be built, and management of the 8,675.36 acres would remain BLM responsibility. Noise in the area would be similar to that currently experienced, although future development or construction noise in the vicinity of the property would also contribute to ambient levels.

Proposed Project Alternative

Existing noise levels in and around the property are influenced by low-flying military aircraft and recreational activities on the site. Some limited noise from the developing area can also be heard. Under the Proposed Project Alternative, the Town would lease the approximately 8,675.36 acres of land from the BLM and would assume management responsibility for the property. Noise in and around the property would increase slightly as a result of the increase in the number of visitors to the site. Camping, picnicking, and Ranger-led activities would be concentrated near the main entrance at the southern portion of the property. Dispersed recreation activities (e.g., hiking and biking) are not expected to add to the noise level on the property. In fact, overall recreational noise levels would be reduced under this alternative because recreational shooting and OHV use would be prohibited. Some noise from construction of the Park facilities would occur, but it would be temporary and limited to the southern portion of the property.

Ambient noise levels around the property will increase as a result of residential and commercial development in the area. Ambient noise levels in the southern portion of the property are expected to increase as a result of the development of camping, picnicking, and parking facilities on the site. Ambient noise levels throughout the majority of the property are expected to decrease as a result of the reduction in noise-related recreational activities, such as recreational shooting and OHV use.

Cumulative Impacts

Noise from neighboring developments surrounding the proposed Project may create added noise in and around the Project area during intermittent periods of construction for the Watson Road entrance. Construction control methods can be put in place to ensure that an unavoidable increase in noise only occurs during daytime working hours and not on weekends or holidays.

3.12 VISUAL RESOURCES

This section includes an assessment of the current visual environment of the Proposed Project and the potential impacts of the Project to the visual character of the environment. The visual study was based on the BLM Visual Resources Management (VRM) system and addresses the potential visual effects of the proposed Project on the landscape scenic quality and sensitive viewers.

3.12.1 Affected Environment

Project Setting

The Project study area is located within the Basin and Range Physiographic Province in the western Phoenix metropolitan area. The Project area occurs within the LCRV subdivision of the Sonoran Desertscrub biotic community. Elevations within the Project area range from approximately 1,300 to 3,152 feet amsl. The Project area consists of native desert with mountains, hills, rock outcrops, and ephemeral washes. The hills and mountains of the White Tank Mountains are rugged terrain with steep slopes consisting of gneiss and granite. The valleys, canyons, and arroyos are filled with alluvium. These areas are highly dissected by narrow to wide, entrenched drainages that are up to 15 or more meters deep.

Agency Visual Resource Management Classes

BLM VRM classes are assigned to lands managed by the BLM and are typically dictated by the scenic quality of the landscape, public concern for the maintenance of the scenic quality, key observation points, and agency management objectives.

Scenic Quality

Scenic Quality Rating Units were used to describe specific natural landscape types and cultural modifications found within the regional landscape. The designations are categorized into three classes—A (outstanding), B (above average), and C (common). The degree of diversity and variety of landscape character were used to establish the Scenic Quality of the Proposed Project area.

The quality of scenic resources on the Project site varies. Areas near the southern property boundary would be considered Class C landscapes and consist primarily of areas of creosotebush and other smaller vegetation with little visual diversity. A few dirt roadways are visible, as well as developing areas south of property. The central and northern areas of the property would be considered Class B because of the topographic and vegetation variation in the landscape.

Key Observation Points and Visibility

The inventory of Key Observation Points includes 1) key viewers and visual sensitivity; 2) distance zones; and 3) viewing conditions. Sensitive viewers are organized into three categories: 1) residential; 2) recreation; 3) and transportation views.

Numerous viewpoints and viewing areas associated with sensitive viewers were identified in conjunction with land use investigations, including individual residences, communities, recreation areas, and transportation routes. Visual sensitivity reflects the degree of concern change in the scenic quality of the natural landscape or to the visual image of the rural residential settings. Visual sensitivity levels (high or moderate) reflect the type of viewpoint or viewer (residential, recreational, or travel) and viewer concern for change, volume use, public and agency concerns, influence of adjacent land use, and viewing duration. The distance from the viewer to the property was also considered in the analysis.

For the purposes of this Project, high-sensitivity viewers were associated with existing residential areas, the existing property, and Sun Valley Parkway. Sun Valley Parkway is considered high sensitivity because of its scenic corridor designation (Town 2001). Viewers within the property were considered high sensitivity because of their concern for the maintenance of the natural and pristine landscape. The residential areas were designated high sensitivity because of the long duration of their views and their concern for the maintenance of the natural landscape. Moderate-sensitivity viewers were associated with the travel routes and future residential development to occur in the study area, including approved development master plan, platted subdivision, master-planned community, and rural residential designations. The travel route viewers were identified as having a moderate sensitivity because of the short duration of their views based on vehicular speed or the modest level of vehicular traffic associated with these routes. Because of the topography and expanse of the mountain range, the mountains are visible throughout the Town and communities to the east and west of the property.

Residential Views

As noted in the land use section, existing and future residential development in the study area occurs to the east, west, and south of the White Tank Mountains. Master-planned communities are located on

both the east and west sides of the Mountains with fairly unobstructed (no large buildings or facilities located between the developments and mountains) views of the mountainscape.

Recreation Views

Visitors and recreators on the property and from the Maricopa County Park to the north can view the mountainscape and open space. Views of the mountainscape and open space are important components of the recreational aspect of the property.

Transportation Views

Travelers along I-10 have extensive views of the Park property and mountainscape and may have limited views of the facilities proposed on the south entrance of the property. Travelers along Sun Valley Parkway would have extensive views of the property and mountainscape; however, they would not have a view of the facilities proposed on the south end of the property.

3.12.2 Environmental Consequences

The purpose of the visual impact assessment is to characterize and describe the level of visual modification in the landscape that could result from the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Action.

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative no new facilities at the 8,675.36-acre property would be built. The Property would remain managed by the BLM. Impacts to recreational viewers would occur as a result of the OHV and recreational shooting on the property. These recreational uses mar and scar the landscape, causing views to be less pristine. Other views would be consistent with current conditions.

Proposed Project Alternative

Residential Views

Impacts that may occur to residential viewers as a result of the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project Alternative are anticipated to be low. The majority of residences are located outside of direct view of the proposed facilities in the southern portion of the site. Potential future residences could be located south of the property boundary and may have some direct views of the facilities; however, for the most part, the facilities will be low profile, constructed in a manner that will blend architecture, colors, and textures to be compatible with the natural environment, and screened by vegetation and topography. A developed entranceway would exist to increase the aesthetics of the human-made facilities and would bridge the viewer from the human-made environment and the more pristine park environment.

Recreation Views

Low to moderate impacts to recreation viewers are anticipated to occur as a result of the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project Alternative. These impacts would occur because of the existence of the new facilities in the southern portion of the property. Recreational viewers in the area of the new facilities would be most impacted, and recreators farther away from the human-made structures would be less impacted. The facilities will be low profile, constructed in a manner that will blend architecture, colors, and textures to be compatible with the natural environment, and screened by vegetation and topography, which reduces the impact to viewers. Some beneficial

impacts to recreational viewers will occur as a result of the elimination of OHV use and recreational shooting on the property. These recreational uses scar and mar the natural setting; thus, limiting them would encourage more natural and pristine views. Eventually, natural processes would reclaim the scarred landscape and restore pristine views.

Transportation Views

No impacts to travel route viewers would be expected. The mountainous property can be viewed from the roadways; however, facilities at the property would not be visible from I-10 or the Sun Valley Parkway.

Cumulative Impacts

No cumulative impacts are expected to occur.

Chapter 4

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND COMMITMENTS

	NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED PROJECT ALTERNATIVE
LAND USE		
General Land Use	No impact.	Changes in land ownership and use would occur; changes would be consistent with land use plans and zoning for the area.
SOCIOECONOMICS		
Social and Economic Conditions	No impact beyond current conditions.	Beneficial impacts to economic conditions of the area through direct and indirect financial gains.
Environmental Justice	No impact.	No impact.
RECREATION		
General Recreation— Biking, Hiking, Stargazing, Picnicking	No impacts beyond current conditions.	Short-term, adverse impacts on general recreation resources would result during construction activities if recreational uses and users were displaced temporarily. Long-term positive impacts to general recreation would be realized as a result of the improved access, trails, and new facilities planned for the site.
Off-Highway Vehicle Use	No impacts beyond current conditions.	Long-term adverse impacts to OHV users on the property would occur as a result of the restriction of this activity on the property. Positive impacts would occur from the limitation of this recreational activity to other types of recreators and natural resources.
Recreational Shooting	No impacts beyond current conditions.	Long-term adverse impacts to recreational shooting and hunting on the property would occur as a result of the banning of those activities on the property. Other recreators and natural resources would experience positive impacts from the prohibition of recreational shooting and hunting.
Camping	No impacts beyond current conditions.	Long-term positive impacts to camping would occur with this Alternative as a result of the creation of camping sites and toilet facilities.

	NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED PROJECT ALTERNATIVE
EARTH AND WATER RESOURCES		
Soils	No impact beyond current conditions.	Negligible impacts from construction.
Groundwater	No impact.	No impact.
Floodplains	No impact.	No impact. Design of facilities should be outside the delineated floodplain.
Drainage/Stormwater	No impact beyond current conditions.	No impact. Phase I NPDES permit will be obtained if more than 5 acres of disturbance at the site.
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES		
Vegetation Resources	Impacts to native plants from ORV use and recreational shooting.	Native plant loss from clearing and ground disturbance. Town will conduct a native plant inventory and coordinate with the BLM regarding salvaging and replanting.
General Wildlife	Impacts to habitat and desert tortoises from ORV use and recreational shooting.	Habitat loss from clearing and ground-disturbing activities may occur. Tortoise disturbance could also take place, though habitat will be regained after rehabilitation of OHV trails takes place. Town will follow a BLM-approved Tortoise Management Plan as described in biology section of this document.
Threatened or Endangered Species	No impact.	No impact.
CULTURAL RESOURCES		
General Cultural Resources	Uncontrolled recreational use of the property could impact cultural resources found on the property.	Increased human presence on the property could negatively impact cultural resources. A management plan for protecting and preserving archeological remains will be developed to ensure protection of sensitive areas.
AIR QUALITY		
CO, SO ₂ , NO _x , Pb	No impact beyond current conditions.	No impact.
Fugitive Dust including PM ₁₀ and PM _{2.5}	Impacts to air quality from ORV use on the property.	Dust emissions are probable; however, would be below regulatory levels. Positive impact would occur as dust levels decrease with restrictions on OHV use. Dust will be controlled to comply with MCAQR 310.

	NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE	PROPOSED PROJECT ALTERNATIVE
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY		
Hazardous Materials	No impact beyond current conditions.	Positive impacts would occur as a result of the removal of hazardous materials currently on-site and restrictions on OHV use and recreational shooting on the property.
Health and Safety	No impact beyond current conditions.	Positive impacts to health and safety would occur on-site, and future environmental conditions related to trash dumping, OHV use, and recreational shooting would be greatly diminished.
TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS		
Access	No impact beyond current conditions.	Positive impacts to access would occur as a result of the improvement in the roadway and southern access to the site. Negative long-term impacts to access would occur for OHV users as a result of restricting their access to only outside park boundaries.
Transportation	No impact beyond current conditions. General growth in the area may tax the existing transportation system until improvements and new roadways can be built.	No impact. The number of visitors to the site is not expected to tax the existing transportation system beyond current estimates.
NOISE		
Operational Noise	No impact beyond current conditions.	Overall reduction in noise levels would most likely occur as a result of restrictions on recreational shooting and OHV use. Some noise increase in southern portion of property would occur from an increase in visitors.
Construction Noise	No impact beyond current conditions.	Construction noise would most likely be noticeable to surrounding sensitive land users in the southern portion of the property, but this would be intermittent and temporary. Construction activities will be restricted to between sunset and sunrise.
VISUAL RESOURCES		
Dust and View Blockage	No impact.	Short-term, adverse impacts to scenic resources would result from construction activities that require excavating, filling, and grading. Park facilities will be designed and constructed to complement the natural surroundings.

Chapter 5

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A public involvement program for the White Tank Mountains EA Project was conducted during the preparation of the EA to establish communication with the public. Appendix B includes examples of the public meeting announcements and other materials that were distributed.

5.1 SCOPING PROCESS

A public scoping process took place from June 6, 2006, to June 23, 2006. Two public scoping meetings were held on June 6 and 7, 2006, to provide Project description information and to get public input on the Proposed Project. The BLM sent postcard notification of the Project and the scoping process to an extensive mailing list of over 1,000 individuals, businesses, and agencies. Additionally, newspaper announcements were included in the *Arizona Republic*, the *West Valley View*, and the *Southwest Valley Sun* announcing the Project and the meetings.

The meetings featured an informal open house format with Project-related information in the form of boards and handouts. Comment forms were made available for public input. Reporters from the *Arizona Republic* and the *Southwest Valley Sun* attended the meetings and ran stories on the Project in their respective newspapers. Articles were published in the *Arizona Republic* on June 6, 2006, and in the *Southwest Valley Sun* on June 14, 2006.

A total of approximately 70 people attended the two scoping meetings; 20 comments were received at those meetings, and 41 comments were received via email or letter. A breakdown of the number of times each topic was discussed in public comments is shown in Table 5-1. Appendix C presents a more detailed analysis of the scoping comments received.

Table 3-12. Comment Topics

Topic	Times Addressed	Topic	Times Addressed
OHV	49	Biological Resources	3
Cultural Resources	7	Equestrian	4
Firearms	7	Hiking	4
Access	1	Trail Compatibility	12
Regional Park	1	Town Management	3
Agency Coordination	1	Dust	3
Trail System	1	Camping	1
Park Amenities	5	Park Enforcement	1
Socioeconomics	2	Illegal Dumping	6

The majority of input, approximately 50 comments, addressed OHV access to the proposed site. Forty-three people were in favor of promoting OHV use in the Project area. Those in favor mainly represented various OHV groups in Arizona, including the Arizona Virtual Jeep Club (AZVJC) and Arizona XJ. Others not representing off-road groups were typically neutral about OHV use, but only if the trails were specifically dedicated to that use and did not interfere with other recreational opportunities. Those who were not in favor of OHV use in the proposed park cited noise, illegal dumping, and land degradation as their reasons for opposition. As well, those who expressed negative concerns for OHV use typically lived in areas adjacent to the proposed park area.

Firearm use was also mentioned several times within the public comments. Only one person wanted to ensure that recreational shooting in the area would continue to be allowed. The rest of the comments pertaining to firearm use (six in total) wanted it banned or limited.

In addition to the comments pertaining to OHV and firearm use in the Project area, several comments expressed concern with illegal dumping—a significant problem in the White Tanks area. Many were happy to see the proposed park established because it would help ensure that illegal dumping is reduced or prevented. Those who commented about illegal dumping (six in total) cited OHV users and/or recreational shooters as the main contributors to the problem, although it cannot be determined who is responsible for the dumping without further investigation.

Another major issue addressed in the comments was trail compatibility. Twelve people expressed concerns about keeping trail uses separate from one another, or ensuring that trails could be multi-use. The desire for separation came from people concerned with OHV use interfering with other trail users. Those who favored multi-use capabilities wanted to ensure that hiking, biking, equestrian riding, and OHV use would all be allowed on the property.

Cultural resources were of great concern in the public comments as well. Those who commented wanted the petroglyphs discovered in the Proposed Project area to be protected from damage. Several people also expressed concern about the method of protection that will be offered once the park is established. Seven people mentioned cultural resources in their comments.

Less-prominent issues discussed in the public comments included some concern for biological resource protection, alternative access routes to and from the Proposed Project area, hiking and equestrian opportunities, Town management, and park amenities.

5.2 COORDINATION WITH AZVJC AND AZOHVC

In order to consider plans for ORV use in the Proposed Park area, Jeanine Guy from the Town met with representatives from the AZVJC and Arizona Off Highway Vehicle Coalition (AZOHVC). Individuals representing those groups who were in attendance at the meeting included Chris Radoccia, Geno Haranczak, Jim Florence, Sandee McCullen, and Jeff Gursh. The groups created a proposal to keep OHV use in the Proposed Park and presented it to Jeanine Guy at this meeting. Some of the requests outlined in their proposal included a desire for more OHV trails to reduce traffic, open trails at night during the summer months, and establishment of a staging area for loading and unloading vehicles.

In addition to requesting that OHV trails remained open within the park boundaries, the groups both addressed possible mitigation for problems associated with OHV use, including dust, noise, vegetation, trash, and erosion. The groups also suggested a trail adoption program, peer patrolling, and trail maintenance provided by both AZVJC and AZOHVC. These suggestions have been considered thoroughly by both the Town and BLM, but due to the safety risks associated with

including off-road use within the park and additional mitigation measures required to protect sensitive cultural and natural resources, OHV use will be restricted once the park is in place.

5.3 AGENCY CONTACTS

The following list indicates individuals contacted from various local, state, and national agencies during the scoping process for the EA:

Transportation Planning ADOT	State Engineers Office ADOT	Arizona State Land Dept.
Arizona State Parks	Director Arizona Dept. of Mines Mineral Resources	Director Arizona Game and Fish
Arizona State Director	Dept. of Energy	Dept. of the Army
Maricopa County Planning and Development	Maricopa County Dept of Transportation	Office of Senator John McCain
BLM Arizona Arizona State Office	Office of Senator Jon Kyl	Fareed Abiu-Haidar Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
Richard Ahern Arizona State Land Dept.	Michael Anable Arizona State Land Dept.	Julie Albrooks Arizona State Parks
Annie M. Alvarado Arizona Dept. of Commerce	Frank Barba ADOT	Hon. Steven M Berman Mayor of the Town of Gilbert
Ellen Bilbrey Arizona State Parks	Tom Bickaushas BLM	Debra Bills USFWS Arizona Ecological Field Office
Patty Boland Attorney General's Office	Richard Boston Bureau of Reclamation	Ken Bouas ADOT
James Bourey MAG	Pat Brasington BLM	Bob Broschied Arizona Game and Fish
Donald Butler Arizona Dept. of Agriculture	Randy Buletich ADOT Materials Section	Bureau of Land Management
Peter O. Castaneda Bureau of Reclamation	Laura Canaca Arizona Game and Fish - Habitat Branch	Pierre Cantou BIA
Hon. James M Cavanaugh Mayor of the City of Goodyear	Kyl Cooper Arizona Game and Fish	Glendon Collins BLM RAC
Carla Cristelli Dept. of Energy Western Area Power	Jay Cook Arizona Game and Fish	James Crean Town of Buckeye

Maria A. Deeb-Roberge ADOT	Dianna Cunningham Maricopa County	Lorraine M. Eiler BLM RAC
William Dowdle Arizona State Land Dept.	Daisy Eldridge ADOT	Michael Ellegood Flood Control District of Maricopa County
Bruce Eillia Bureau of Reclamation	Leo Drumm Arizona Game and Fish	Carol Erwin Bureau of Reclamation
Steven D. Fairaizl USDA	Hon. Vincent Francia Mayor of the Town of Cave Creek	Meredith Flinn City of Peoria Community Development Dept.
Lisa Gage Maricopa County Planning and Development	Hon. Adolfo Gamez Mayor of the City of Tolleson	Mayor Neil G. Giuliano City of Tempe
James Garrison Arizona State Historic Preservation Office	Dick Gibson CAP	Rich Glinski Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
Barbara Garrison ADOT	Jim Garrison Arizona State Historic Preservation Office	Hon. Phil Gordon Mayor of the City of Phoenix
Jason Hall Arizona State Parks	Steve Hansen Dept. of Transportation	Dave Harlow USFWS
Russ Haughey Arizona Fish and Game	Carol Heathington Bureau of Reclamation	Mayor Keno Hawker City of Mesa
Ruth Anne Henry City of Phoenix	Hon. JD Hayworth House of Representatives	Amy Heuslein BIA
Chris Horyza BLM Agua Fria National Monument	Robert Hollis Federal Highway Administration	Matt Holm Maricopa County
Bill Higgins ADOT	Hon. Dustin Hull Mayor of the Town of Buckeye	Rand Hubbel Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
Cathy Humphrey BLM	Jeff Humphrey USFWS Arizona Ecological Services Office	Joshua Hurst Arizona Fish and Game
John Keegan City of Peoria	Thomas Kelly BLM RAC	Darci Kinsman Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
Curt Knight Arizona Dept. of Public Safety	Jennifer Lawrence-Harris Maricopa County Parks and Recreation	Hon. Andrew Kunasek Maricopa County Board of Supervisors

Jody Latimer Arizona State Land Dept.	Jennifer Lawrence Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Dept.	Carolyn Clark Loder BLM RAC
Delvin Lopez Cave Creek Ranger District	Joanie Losacco BLM	Hon. Edward Lowry Mayor of the City of Paradise Valley
Ken Mahoney BLM	Mayor Mary Monross City of Scottsdale	Mark McDermott Office of Tourism
Hon. John McCain U.S. Senate	Tom McMann Arizona Game and Fish	Jackie Meck Town of Buckeye
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Nyal Niemuth Arizona Dept. of Mines and Mineral Resources	Mayor Edward Morgan Town of Carefree	Hon. Sharon Morgan Mayor of the City of Fountain Hills
Mary Peters ADOT	Rich Ockenfels Arizona Game and Fish	John Pein ADOT Transportation Division
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Mike Self Peoria Police Dept	Bill Ruddick BLM	Hon. Elaine Scruggs Mayor of the City of Glendale
Hon. John Shadegg House of Representatives	Karl Siderits Forest Service - Tonto National Forest	Mike Senn Arizona Game and Fish
Dennis Smith MAG	Carol Slaker ADOT	Madan Singh Arizona Dept. of Mines and Mineral Resources
Mary Tara Skordinsky BLM	Bob Skaggs Maricopa Parks and Recreation	Marlynn Spears BLM-PFO
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Chapter 6

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Chapter 7

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Appendix A

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES (MARICOPA COUNTY SPECIES LIST, DESERT TORTOISE HANDLING GUIDELINES)

Table A-1. Federally Listed Species with the Potential to Occur in Maricopa County, Arizona

Range/habitat information is from the following sources: Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) Heritage Data Management System (HDMS) website (HDMS 2006); USFWS Arizona Ecological Services Field Office website (USFWS 2006); *Arizona Rare Plant Field Guide* (Arizona Rare Plant Committee n.d.); and Corman and Wise-Gervais (2005).

Species Name	Status*	Range/Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence in Project area	Determination of Effect
Arizona cliffrose (<i>Purshia subintegra</i>)	USFWS E	Found in rolling limestone hills within Sonoran desertscrub, usually on white Tertiary limestone lakebed deposits high in lithium, nitrates, and magnesium from 2,500 to 4,000 feet elevation. All four localities of this species are in central Arizona below the Mogollon Rim and include Burro Creek drainage (Mohave County), Horseshoe Lake (Maricopa County), Verde Valley (Yavapai County), and the San Carlos Indian Reservation (Graham County).	Unlikely to occur—no limestone hills are present in the Project area, and the Project area is below the lower elevational limits of this species.	No effect.
Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	USFWS T	Nesting sites are usually isolated, located high in trees or on cliffs in close proximity to water. A small resident population of approximately 40 pairs nests along the Salt, Verde, Gila, Bill Williams, Agua Fria, San Pedro, and San Francisco Rivers and along Tonto and Canyon Creeks. At least 200 to 300 winter each year throughout the state, with the greatest numbers found along the Mogollon Rim east though the White Mountains.	Unlikely to occur—no large lakes or rivers to support this species are present in the Project area. The closest known bald eagle nest location is at Lake Pleasant (Jacobson et al. 2005).	No effect.
California brown pelican (<i>Pelicanus occidentalis californicus</i>)	USFWSE	Found in coastal areas, with nesting occurring on islands. Most Arizona records are of transients along the Colorado River north to Davis Dam, Lake Mead, and the Gila River valley, but stragglers reach most of the state (Tolani Lakes, Navajo Indian Reservation, Salt River, and other areas).	Unlikely to occur—no large lakes or rivers to support this species are present in the Project area.	No effect.

Desert pupfish (<i>Cyprinodon macularius</i>)	USFWSE	Found in shallow waters of desert springs, small streams, and marshes below 5,000 feet elevation. One natural population still occurs in Quitobaquito Spring and Pond in Pima County, and reintroductions have been made in Pima, Pinal, Maricopa, Graham, Cochise, La Paz, and Yavapai Counties, Arizona. New introductions continue.	Unlikely to occur—no suitable aquatic habitat exists in the Project area for this species. There are no known natural or translocated populations present in the Project area.	No effect.
Gila chub (<i>Gila intermedia</i>)	USFWSE	Normally found in smaller headwater streams, cienegas, and springs or marshes of the Gila River Basin from 2,720 to 5,420 feet elevation.	Unlikely to occur—no suitable aquatic habitat exists in the Project area for this species. There are no known natural or translocated populations present in the Project area.	No effect.

Table A-1. Federally Listed Species with the Potential to Occur in Maricopa County, Arizona (Continued)

Range/habitat information is from the following sources: Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) Heritage Data Management System (HDMS) website (HDMS 2006); USFWS Arizona Ecological Services Field Office website (USFWS 2006); *Arizona Rare Plant Field Guide* (Arizona Rare Plant Committee n.d.); and Corman and Wise-Gervais (2005).

Species Name	Status*	Range/Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence in Project area	Determination of Effect
Gila topminnow (<i>Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis</i>)	USFWE	Occurs in small streams, springs, and cienegas below 4,500 feet elevation, primarily in shallow areas with aquatic vegetation and debris for cover. In Arizona, most of the remaining native populations are in the Santa Cruz River system.	Unlikely to occur—no suitable aquatic habitat exists in the Project area for this species. There are no known natural or translocated populations present in the Project area.	No effect.
Lesser long-nosed bat (<i>Leptonycteris curasoae yerbabuena</i>)	USFWE	Found in southern Arizona from the Picacho Mountains southwesterly to the Agua Dulce Mountains and southeasterly to the Galiuro and Chiricahua Mountains at elevations ranging from 1,600 to 11,500 feet. Roosts in caves, abandoned mines, and unoccupied buildings at the base of mountains where agave, saguaro, and organ pipe cacti are present. Forages at night on nectar, pollen, and fruit of paniculate agaves and columnar cacti. The foraging radius of <i>Leptonycteris</i> bats may be on the order of 30 to 60 miles or more.	Unlikely to occur—no potential roost sites (i.e., mine shafts, mine adits, or natural caves) are known to occur on the property. No agaves are present within the Project area. Additionally, this Project area is outside the known typical foraging range of this species in Arizona.	No effect.
Mexican spotted owl (<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>)	USFWS T	Found in mature montane forest and woodland and steep, shady wooded canyons. Can also be found in mixed conifer and pine-oak vegetation types. Generally nests in older forests of mixed conifer or ponderosa pine/Gambel oak. Nests in live trees on natural platforms (e.g., dwarf mistletoe brooms), snags, and on canyon walls at elevations of 4,100 to 9,000 feet.	Unlikely to occur—Project area is below the typical elevation range of this species and habitats within the Project area are not similar to those known to be used by this species.	No effect.
Razorback sucker (<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>)	USFWS E	Found in backwaters, flooded bottomlands, pools, side channels and other slower-moving habitats below 6,000 feet elevation. In Arizona, populations are restricted to Lakes Mohave, Mead, and the lower Colorado River below Havasu in the Lower Basin. In the Upper Basin, small remnant populations are found in the Green, Yampa, and mainstream Colorado Rivers.	Unlikely to occur—no suitable aquatic habitat exists in the Project area for this species. There are no known natural or translocated populations present in the Project area.	No effect.
Sonoran pronghorn (<i>Antilocapra americana sonoriensis</i>)	USFWS E	Found in Sonoran desertscrub vegetation communities at elevations ranging from 2,000 to 4,000 feet. The only extant U.S. population is in southwestern Arizona, primarily in Buenos Aires NWR.	Unlikely to occur—vegetation communities in the Project area are not similar to those known to support this species.	No effect.

Table A-1. Federally Listed Species with the Potential to Occur in Maricopa County, Arizona (Continued)

Range/habitat information is from the following sources: Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) Heritage Data Management System (HDMS) website (HDMS 2006); USFWS Arizona Ecological Services Field Office website (USFWS 2006); *Arizona Rare Plant Field Guide* (Arizona Rare Plant Committee n.d.); and Corman and Wise-Gervais (2005).

Species Name	Status*	Range/Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence in Project area	Determination of Effect
Southwestern willow flycatcher (<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>)	USFWS E	Found in dense riparian habitats along streams, rivers, and other wetlands where cottonwood, willow, boxelder, tamarisk, Russian olive, buttonbush, and arrowweed are present. Nests are found in thickets of trees and shrubs primarily those that are 13 to 23 feet tall, among dense and homogeneous foliage. Habitat occurs at elevations below 8,500 feet.	Unlikely to occur—vegetation communities in the Project area are not similar to those known to support this species.	No effect.
Yuma clapper rail (<i>Rallus longirostris yumanensis</i>)	USFWS E	In Arizona, found in freshwater marshes often dominated by cattails, bulrushes, and sedges below 4,500 feet elevation. The range includes the Colorado River from Lake Mead to Mexico; the Gila and Salt Rivers upstream to the area of the Verde confluence; Picacho Reservoir; and the Tonto Creek arm of Roosevelt Lake. This species may be expanding into other suitable marsh habitats in western and central Arizona.	Unlikely to occur—no heavily vegetated streams or marshes are present in the Project area.	No effect.
Yellow-billed cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>)	USFWS C	Typically found in riparian woodland vegetation (cottonwood, willow, or tamarisk) below 6,600 feet elevation. Dense understory foliage appears to be an important factor in nest site selection. The highest concentrations in the state are along the Agua Fria, San Pedro, upper Santa Cruz, and Verde River drainages and Cienega and Sonoita Creeks.	Unlikely to occur—vegetation communities in the Project area are not similar to those known to support this species.	No effect.

*USFWS Status Definitions:

E = Endangered: The ESA specifically prohibits the take of a species listed as endangered. Take is defined by the ESA as: to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to engage in any such conduct.

T = Threatened: The ESA specifically prohibits the take of a species listed as threatened. Take is defined by the ESA as: to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to engage in any such conduct.

C = Candidate: Candidate species are those for which USFWS has sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support proposals to list as endangered or threatened under the ESA. However, proposed rules have not yet been issued because they are precluded by other listing activity that is a higher priority. This listing category has no legal protection

Maricopa County

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	COUNTY	ELEVATION	HABITAT	COMMENTS
Arizona cliffrose	<i>Purshia subintegrifolia</i>	Endangered	Evergreen shrub of the rose family (Rosaceae). Bark pale shreddy. Young twigs with dense hairs. Leaves 1-5 lobes and edges curl downward (revolute). Flowers: 5 white or yellow petals <0.5 inches long.	Graham, Maricopa, Mohave, Yavapai	< 4,000 ft	Characteristic white soils of tertiary limestone lakebed deposits.	White soils of tertiary limestone lakebed deposits can be seen from a distance.
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Threatened	Large, adults have white head and tail. Height 28-38 inches; wingspan 66-96 inches. Dark with varying degrees of mottled brown plumage. Feet bare or feathered.	Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai, Yuma	Varies	Large trees or cliffs near water (reservoirs, rivers, and streams) with abundant prey	Some birds are nesting residents while a larger number winters along rivers and reservoirs. An estimated 200 to 300 birds winter in Arizona. Once endangered (32 FR 4001, 03-11-1967; 43 FR 6233, 02-14-78) because of reproductive failures from pesticide poisoning and loss of habitat, this species was down listed to threatened on August 11, 1995. Illegal shooting, disturbance, and loss of habitat continues to be a problem. Species has been proposed for delisting (64 FR 36454) but still receives full protection under the ESA.
California Brown pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis californicus</i>	Endangered	Large dark gray-brown water bird with a pouch underneath long bill and webbed feet. Adults have a white head and neck, brownish black breast, and silver gray upper parts.	Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai, Yuma	Varies	Coastal land and islands; species found around many Arizona lakes and rivers.	Subspecies is found on Pacific Coast and is endangered due to pesticides. It is an uncommon transient in Arizona on many Arizona lakes and rivers. Individuals wander up from Mexico in summer and fall. No breeding records in Arizona.
Desert pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon macularius</i>	Endangered	Small (2 inches) smoothly rounded body shape with narrow vertical bars on the sides. Breeding males blue on head and sides with yellow on tail. Females and juveniles tan to olive colored back and silvery sides.	Graham, La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai	< 5,000 ft	Shallow springs, small streams, and marshes. Tolerates saline and warm water.	Critical habitat includes Quitobaquito Springs, Pima County, portions of San Felipe Creek, Carrizo Wash, and Fish Creek Wash, Imperial County, California. Two subspecies are recognized: Desert Pupfish (<i>C.m macularius</i>) and Quitobaquito Pupfish (<i>C.m arenus</i>).

Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Maricopa County

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COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	COUNTY	ELEVATION	HABITAT	COMMENTS
Gila chub	<i>Gila intermedia</i>	Endangered	Deep compressed body, flat head. Dark olive-gray color above, silver sides. Endemic to Gila River Basin.	Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai	2,000 - 5,500 ft	Pools, springs, cienegas, and streams.	Found on multiple private lands, including the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, and others. Also occurs on Federal and state lands and in Sonora, Mexico. Critical habitat occurs in Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz and Yavapai counties.
Gila topminnow	<i>Poeciliopsis occidentalis</i>	Endangered	Small (2 inches), sippy-like, live bearing, lacks dark spots on its fins. Breeding males are jet black with yellow fins.	Gila, Graham, La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai	< 4,500 ft	Small streams, springs, and cienegas vegetated shallows.	Species historically occurred in backwaters of large rivers but is currently isolated to small streams and springs.
Lesser long-nosed bat	<i>Leptonycteris curasoae yerbabueneae</i>	Endangered	Elongated muzzle, small leaf nose, and long tongue. Yellowish brown or gray above and cinnamon brown below. Tail minute and appears to be lacking. Easily disturbed.	Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, Pinal, Maricopa, Santa Cruz	< 6000 ft	Desert scrub habitat with agave and columnar cacti present as food plants.	Day roosts in caves and abandoned tunnels. Forages at night on nectar, pollen, and fruit of paniculate agaves and columnar cacti. This species is migratory and is present in Arizona usually from April to September and south of the border the remainder of the year.
Mexican spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	Threatened	Medium sized with dark eyes and no ear tufts. Brownish and heavily spotted with white or beige.	Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai	4100-9000 ft	Nests in canyons and dense forests with multi-layered foliage structure.	Generally nest in older forests of mixed conifer or ponderosa pine/gambel oak type, in canyons, and use variety of habitats for foraging. Sites with cool microclimates appear to be of importance or are preferred. Critical habitat was finalized on August 31, 2004 (69 FR 53182). Critical habitat in Arizona occurs in Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Maricopa, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai counties.
Razorback sucker	<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	Endangered	Large, up to 3 feet long and up to 6 lbs, high sharp-edged keel-like hump behind the head. Head flattened on top. Olive-brown above to yellowish below.	Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Pinal, Yavapai, Yuma	< 6000 ft	Riverine and lacustrine areas, generally not in fast moving water and may use backwaters.	Species is also found in Horseshoe reservoir (Maricopa County). Critical habitat includes the 100-year floodplain of the river through the Grand Canyon from confluence with Pana River to Hoover Dam; Hoover Dam to Davis Dam; Parker Dam to Imperial Dam. Also Gila River from Arizona/New Mexico border to Coolidge Dam; and Salt River from Hwy 60/SR77 Bridge to Roosevelt Dam; Verde River from FS boundary to Horseshoe Lake.

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS	DESCRIPTION	COUNTY	ELEVATION	HABITAT	COMMENTS
Somoran pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana sonoriensis</i>	Endangered	Buff on back and white below, hooves with slightly curved black horns having a single prong. Smallest and palest of the pronghorn subspecies	Maricopa, Pima, Yuma	500 - 2,000 ft	Broad intermountain alluvial valleys with creosote-bursage and palo verde-mixed cacti associations.	Typically bajadas are used as fawning areas and sandy dune areas provide food seasonally. Historical range was probably larger than exists today. This subspecies also occurs in Mexico.
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii eximius</i>	Endangered	Small passerine (about 6 inches) grayish-green back and wings, whitish throat, light olive-gray breast, and pale yellowish belly. Two wingbars visible. Eye-ring faint or absent.	Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai, Yuma	<8500 ft	Cottonwood/willow and tamarisk vegetation communities along rivers and streams.	Migratory riparian-obligate species that occupies breeding habitat from late April to September. Distribution within its range is restricted to riparian corridors. Difficult to distinguish from other members of the Empidonax complex by sight alone. Training seminar required for those conducting fly-catcher surveys. Critical habitat was finalized on October 19, 2005 (50 CFR 60886) and can be viewed at http://arizonaes.fws.gov . In Arizona there are critical habitat segments in Apache, Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Maricopa, Mohave, Pima, Pinal, and Yavapai counties.
Yuma clapper rail	<i>Rallus longirostris yumanensis</i>	Endangered	Water bird with long legs and short tail. Long, slender decurved bill. Mottled brown or gray on its rump. Flanks and undersides are dark gray with narrow vertical stripes producing a barring effect.	Gila, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Pinal, Yuma	<4,500 ft	Fresh water and brackish marshes.	Species is associated with dense emergent riparian vegetation. Requires wet substrate (mudflat, sandbar) with dense herbaceous or woody vegetation for nesting and foraging. Channelization and marsh destruction are primary sources of habitat loss.
Yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Candidate	Medium-sized bird with a slender, long-tailed profile, slightly down-curved bill, which is blue-black with yellow on the lower half of the bill. Plumage is grayish-brown above and white below, with rufous primary flight feathers.	Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Graham, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Yavapai, Yuma	<6,500 ft	Large blocks of riparian woodlands (cottonwood, willow, or tamarisk galleries).	Listing was found warranted, but precluded as a distinct vertebrate population segment in the western U.S. on July 25, 2001. This finding indicates that the Service has sufficient information to list the bird, but other, higher priority listing actions prevent the Service from addressing the listing of the cuckoo at this time.

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING SONORAN DESERT TORTOISES
ENCOUNTERED ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Arizona Game and Fish Department
Revised January 17, 1997

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) has developed the following guidelines to reduce potential impacts to desert tortoises, and to promote the continued existence of tortoises throughout the state. These guidelines apply to short-term and/or small-scale projects, depending on the number of affected tortoises and specific type of project.

Desert tortoises of the Sonoran population are those occurring south and east of the Colorado River. Tortoises encountered in the open should be moved out of harm's way to adjacent appropriate habitat. If an occupied burrow is determined to be in jeopardy of destruction, the tortoise should be relocated to the nearest appropriate alternate burrow or other appropriate shelter, as determined by a qualified biologist. Tortoises should be moved less than 48 hours in advance of the habitat disturbance so they do not return to the area in the interim. Tortoises should be moved quickly, kept in an upright position at all times and placed in the shade. Separate disposable gloves should be worn for each tortoise handled to avoid potential transfer of disease between tortoises. Tortoises must not be moved if the ambient air temperature exceeds 105 degrees fahrenheit unless an alternate burrow is available or the tortoise is in imminent danger.

A tortoise may be moved up to two miles, but no further than necessary from its original location. If a release site, or alternate burrow, is unavailable within this distance, and ambient air temperature exceeds 105 degrees fahrenheit, the Department should be contacted to place the tortoise into a Department-regulated desert tortoise adoption program. Tortoises salvaged from projects which result in substantial permanent habitat loss (e.g. housing and highway projects), or those requiring removal during long-term (longer than one week) construction projects, will also be placed in desert tortoise adoption programs. *Managers of projects likely to affect desert tortoises should obtain a scientific collecting permit from the Department to facilitate temporary possession of tortoises.* Likewise, if large numbers of tortoises (>5) are expected to be displaced by a project, the project manager should contact the Department for guidance and/or assistance.

Please keep in mind the following points:

- ! These guidelines do not apply to the Mohave population of desert tortoises (north and west of the Colorado River). Mohave desert tortoises are specifically protected under the Endangered Species Act, as administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- ! These guidelines are subject to revision at the discretion of the Department. We recommend that the Department be contacted during the planning stages of any project that may affect desert tortoises.
- ! Take, possession, or harassment of wild desert tortoises is prohibited by state law. Unless specifically authorized by the Department, or as noted above, project personnel should avoid disturbing any tortoise.

RAC:NLO:rc

Appendix B

PUBLIC INFORMATION (SCOPING MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS, HANDOUT, PUBLIC COMMENT FORM)



PUBLIC MEETING

TOWN OF BUCKEYE WHITE TANKS REGIONAL PARK LAND ACQUISITION

The Town of Buckeye will be holding two open house style public meetings to present information related to the BLM land acquisition project.

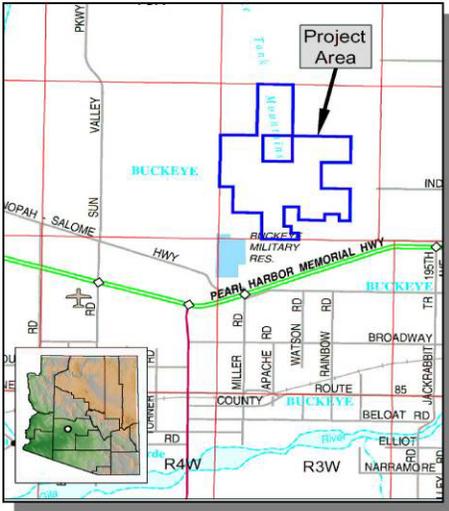
June 6th , 2006 • 5:30 – 8:30 pm
 Verrado Middle School
 20880 West Main Street | Buckeye, AZ 85326

June 7th, 2006 • 5:30 – 8:30 pm
 Town of Buckeye Community Center
 201 East Centre Avenue | Buckeye, AZ 85326

The Town of Buckeye has applied to acquire from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 9,200 acres of land in the southern White Tanks Mountains. The purpose of the land acquisition is to establish the Town of Buckeye White Tank Mountain Regional Park. The land is currently managed by the BLM and would be leased with the intent to provide patent to the Town of Buckeye (which is similar to selling the land to the Town of Buckeye) through the authority of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared for the project. The EA will describe the natural and human environment and any potential impacts resulting from the approval of a 9,200-acre, approximately 17 square mile, land acquisition in the southern White Tank Mountains. As part of the EA process, a scoping period is conducted in which public comments and input are solicited.

During the scoping period, the Town of Buckeye will be accepting comments related to the Town of Buckeye's application for the land acquisition and development of a regional park. Comment forms will be available at the meeting for those interested in providing input. Comments will also be accepted by mail, e-mail, and phone until June 23, 2006.



If you have any questions regarding the comment period, public meeting or the project, please contact Jeanine Guy at the Town of Buckeye: 201 East Centre Avenue, Buckeye, Arizona 85326, Phone: 623-386-2588, E-Mail: jguy@buckeyeaz.gov

PUBLIC NOTICE

**PUBLIC MEETINGS ON BLM WHITE TANKS PROPERTY
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The Town of Buckeye is planning the development of a regional park that encompasses approximately 9,200-acres of land currently administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The area is located east and approximately eight miles north of downtown Buckeye in the southeastern portion of the White Tank Mountains. The Town of Buckeye has applied to lease the 9,200-acres of land from the BLM under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act and hopes to eventually purchase the property.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to take into consideration the environmental consequences of proposed actions as well as input from the public and agencies. To comply with the NEPA law, an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be completed for this project. As part of the NEPA process, two public scoping meetings are being held to inform the public of this potential undertaking and to solicit public comments, questions, and concerns related to the project.

Meeting Times and Locations

The public is encouraged to attend one of the public meetings, which will be held at the locations listed below. Town and BLM representatives will be available to answer questions and to accept comments on the proposed land acquisition.

June 6th, 2006	5:30 – 8:30 pm	Verrado Middle School 20880 West Main Street Buckeye, AZ 85326
June 7th 2007	5:30 – 8:30 pm	Town of Buckeye Community Center 201 East Centre Avenue Buckeye, AZ 85326

Additional Information

If you would like information related to the upcoming meetings or the proposed land acquisition, please contact the BLM using the contact information listed below. If you are disabled or need special accommodations to attend the public meeting, please contact the Town of Buckeye at least one week prior to the meeting.

Contact Information

Jeanine Guy
Town of Buckeye
Community Services Department
201 East Centre Avenue
Buckeye, Arizona 85326
Email: jguy@buckeyeaz.gov
Telephone: 623-386-2588



TOWN OF BUCKEYE WHITE TANKS REGIONAL PARK LAND ACQUISITION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Hassayampa Field Office is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) that will describe potential environmental impacts resulting from the approval of a 9,200-acre, approximately 17-square-mile land acquisition in the southern White Tank Mountains. The purpose of the project is to establish the Town of Buckeye White Tanks Regional Park. The need stems from intense growth in the west valley and an increased demand for open space and recreational activities. The land is currently managed by the BLM and would be leased with the intent to provide patent to the Town of Buckeye (which is similar to selling the land to the Town of Buckeye) through the authority of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

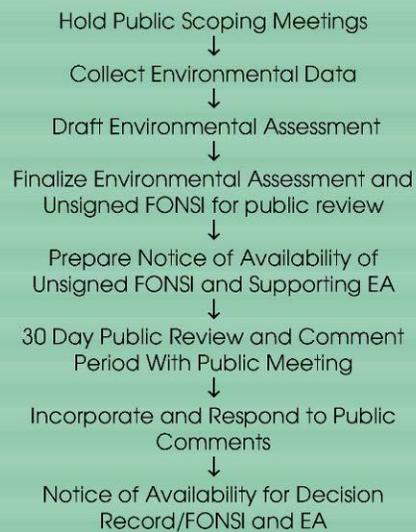
NEPA PROCESS: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that Federal agencies fully disclose impacts that would occur from major Federal actions. Public input is specifically requested during this process to help identify the scope of the EA and to provide comments on the adequacy of the draft EA before it is finalized.

The EA is prepared to determine whether a Federal action would significantly affect the environment and thus require a more detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). If significant impact is not found, then the agency issues a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The proposed project can begin after the final EA is produced with a Decision Notice (DN).

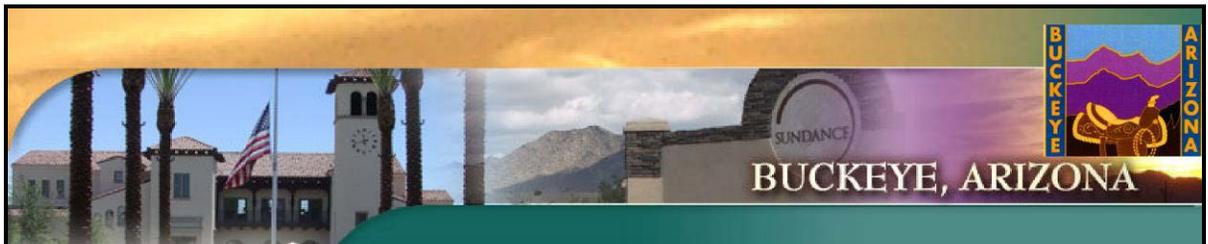
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: The EA document will address issues relating to the project and its impacts on the environment. Aspects that will be studied in the document include biological resources, water resources, and cultural resources, air quality, land use,

transportation, noise, visual resources, socioeconomics, recreation, and more.

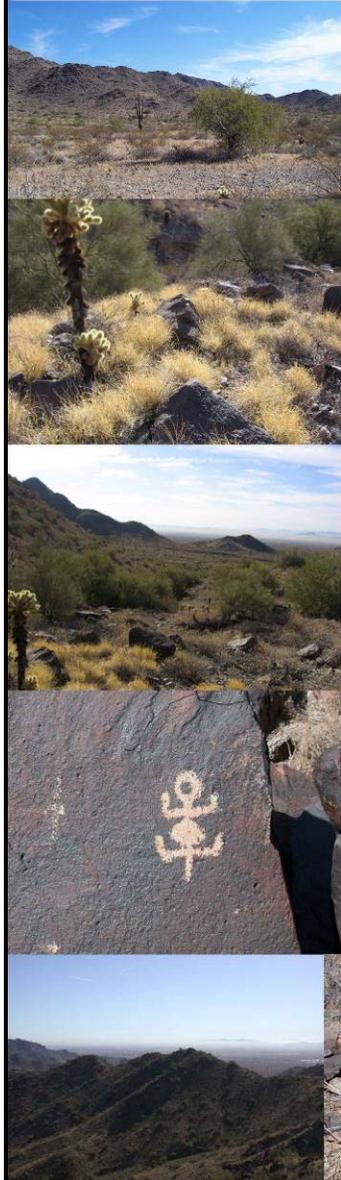
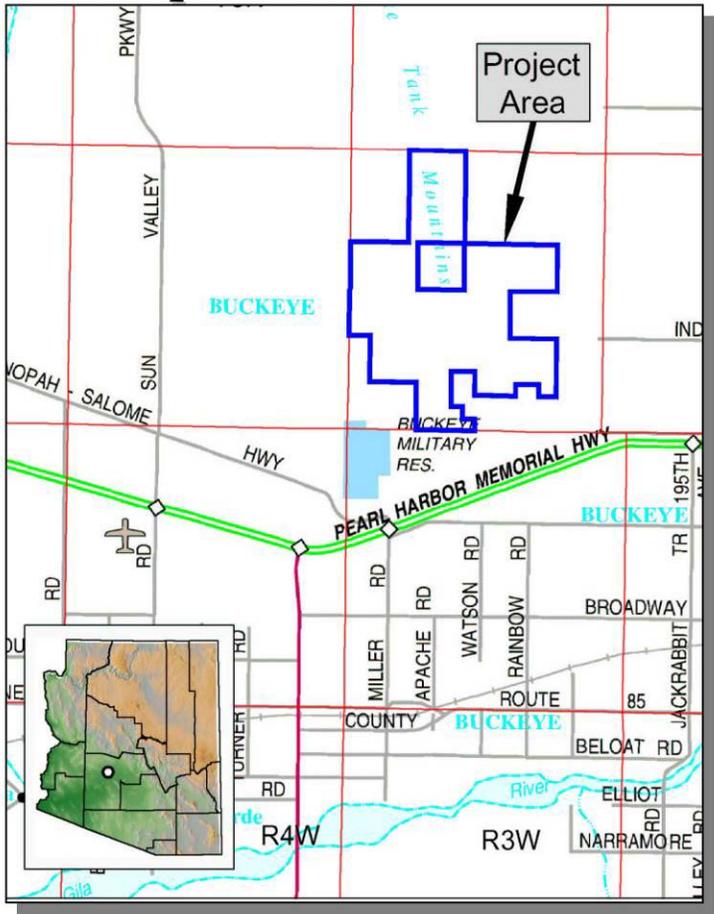
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS:



**Scoping comments will be accepted until June 23, 2006. Questions and comments should be directed to Jeanine Guy at the Town of Buckeye: 201 East Centre Avenue, Buckeye, Arizona 85326
Phone: 623-386-2588,
E-Mail: jguy@buckeyeaz.gov**



White Tanks Regional Park Land Acquisition



The map displays the project area in Buckeye, Arizona, outlined in blue. Key features include the White Tanks Mountains, Buckeye Military Res., and Pearl Harbor Memorial Hwy. Surrounding roads include Valley Pkwy, Sun Valley Rd, Miller Rd, Apache Rd, Watson Rd, Rainbow Rd, Broadway, Beloit Rd, and Narramore Rd. The map also shows the Buckeye River and various residential lots. An inset map shows the location within Maricopa County, Arizona.



Town of Buckeye Comment Form

Draft Environmental Assessment for the White Tanks Regional Park Land Acquisition

Please provide us with your comments on the proposed land acquisition and Regional Park development:

Please provide any questions for the project team on the proposed land acquisition and Regional Development:

(use additional sheets as needed)

Please provide the following information:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State & Zip _____

Organization (if any): _____

Please check all that apply:

- Add my name to the mailing list
- Do not include my name on the mailing list
- Withhold my name/address to extent allowed by law (only for persons not representing organizations)¹

¹All comments received by June 23, 2006 become part of the public record associated with this action. Accordingly, your comments (including name and address) will be available for review by any person that wishes to review the record. At your request, we will withhold your name and address to the extent allowed by the Freedom of Information Act or any other law.

Written comments will be accepted until June 23, 2006.

(To mail: Fold with address showing on front, tape and add stamp)

Appendix C

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING SCOPING PROCESS

**White Tanks Regional Park Land Acquisition
Town of Buckeye Environmental Assessment
Public Comment and Response Summary Table**

Comment No.	Date	Name	Comment Source	Issue	Comment (Summary)
1	6/6/2006	David Boyle	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
2	6/6/2006	Alan Troxel	Form	Trail Compatibility Cultural Resources	Will trails be segregated in use? How will resources be protected?
3	6/6/2006	Carol Melton	Form	Hiking Equestrian	Maximum trails needed Maximum trails needed
4	6/6/2006	Gene Melton	Form	Hiking Equestrian Access	Maximum trails needed Maximum trails needed Maximum trails needed
5	6/6/2006	R.J. Cardin	Form	Regional Park Town Management Agency Coordination	Recommend eastern Verrado entrance Concern for proximity to WTRP Town has limited experience with resources Lack of communication b/w Town and County
6	6/6/2006	Shelley Rasmussen	Form	Cultural Resources	How will resources be protected?
7	6/6/2006	Rodney Jacobson	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
8	6/6/2006	David Cole	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
9	6/6/2006	Leonard Pennock	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
10	6/6/2006	Douglas Newton	Form	Cultural Resources OHV Biological Resources Equestrian	No trail access to petroglyphs Should be limited or restricted Protect habitats Off loading horse trailer locations needed
11	6/6/2006	Richard Wilmes	Form	Cultural Resources Information Request	Ensure protection Is site steward for area and wants info on petroglyphs
12	6/6/2006	Joe Pompa	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
13	6/6/2006	Roy Beal	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
14	6/9/2006	Sandy Haddock	Email	Dust Cultural Resources OHV Information Request	Roads can be treated to control OHV dust Will entire area be surveyed for materials? What are survey methods? Will they be allowed? More detailed maps for public needed, more information on project and data collection methods
15	6/7/2006	Donna Ruiz y Costello	Email	Trail System Town Management Information Request	Will trails be near cultural resources? How will the Town be responsible for area? Electronic comment form request
16	6/7/2006	Roger Dunkel	Email	OHV	Allow OHV Access

17	7/6/2006	Stu Olsen	Email	OHV Firearms	Allow OHV Access
	6/22/2006				Wants them to be disallowed OHV users will help clean. Cause is firearms owners
18	6/7/2006	Brad McManis	Email	Illegal Dumping Trail Compatibility	In support of multi-use trails
	6/7/2006			Allow OHV Access Businesses who rely on OHV use need to be taken into account	
19	6/7/2006	Chris Radocchia	Form	Socioeconomics Information Request OHV	Allow OHV Access OHV users will help clean and maintain trails
	6/12/2006			Illegal Dumping Park Fees Park Enforcement	How much/will there be fees to enter? What kind will be in park? Will there be rangers?
20	6/7/2006	Neal Greene	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
	6/7/2006			Trail Compatibility Firearms	Ensure trails are separated by use Irresponsible shooting needs to be stopped
21	6/7/2006	Sally Sedig	Form	Dust OHV	Dust control an issue with current OHV use Create dust and illegal dumping problem
	6/7/2006			Illegal Dumping Illegal Dumping	OHV and firearms creates problem Happy to see reduction with park. Fines should be imposed
22	6/7/2006	Kristen Ahlstrom	Form	OHV Hiking Trail Compatibility	On designated trails only, separate from other uses Enjoys possibility of more options OHV's should be on designated trails only
	6/7/2006			Camping OHV	Camping is welcome Do not allow OHV access
23	6/7/2006	Ann-Louise Truschel	Form	Firearms Equestrian Trail Compatibility Town Management Cultural Resources	Do not allow firearm use Provide dedicated equestrian trails Multi-use trails should indicate who yields to whom Ensure Town doesn't allow development in area Will petroglyphs be protected?
	6/7/2006			Biological Resources Cultural Resources	Golden Eagle nest needs protection Secure petroglyphs with fence
24	6/7/2006	Trish Thompson	Form	Firearms OHV	Do not allow firearm use Have separate trail system for OHV use
	6/7/2006			Biological Resources Trail Compatibility OHV	Golden Eagle on S side need protection Development should be encouraged to link their trails to park Allow OHV Access
25	6/7/2006	Annette Napolitano Vince Evans	Form	OHV	Allow OHV Access
	6/12/2006			OHV	Allow OHV Access
26	6/22/2006	Louis DiCamillo	Email	OHV	Allow OHV Access and require special permits to enter with motorized vehicle
	5/19/2006			Illegal Dumping Firearms	Firearms users responsible and need to be stopped Limit use

28	5/20/2006	Dustin McDaniel	Email	OHV	Allow OHV Access and require special permits to enter with motorized vehicle
	6/7/2006			Illegal Dumping Firearms	Firearms users responsible and need to be stopped Limit use
29	5/22/2006	Matt Mallory	Email	Firearms	Wants firearms allowed for continued hunting
30	6/13/2006	Scott James	Email	Hiking OHV	Doesn't see need for park if trails already exist Allow OHV access
31	6/7/2006	George Lemly	Email	OHV Trail Compatibility	Allow OHV Access Trail inventory needed and designated areas created for different uses
32	6/7/2006	Michael Kidd	Email	Park Amenities OHV Trail Compatibility	Include ramadas, restrooms, kiosks for information in park plans Allow OHV Access Trail inventory needed and designated areas created for different uses
33	6/8/2006	Symon DeVries	Email	Park Amenities	Include ramadas, restrooms, kiosks for information in park plans
34	6/8/2006	Robert Rogers	Email	OHV OHV Trail Compatibility	Allow OHV Access Allow OHV Access Trail inventory needed and designated areas created for different uses
35	6/8/2006 6/22/2006	Darren Barrett	Email	Park Amenities OHV	Include ramadas, restrooms, kiosks for information in park plans Allow OHV Access
36	6/13/2006	David Tucker	Email	OHV Trail Compatibility	Allow OHV Access Trail inventory needed and designated areas created for different uses
39	6/22/2006	Mike Fissel	Email	Park Amenities	Include ramadas, restrooms, kiosks for information in park plans
40	6/22/2006	Phillip Thompson	Email	Dust OHV	Dust will happen anywhere regardless of vehicle type. In support of OHV/Against ATV
41	6/22/2006	Russell Gevarter	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access
42	6/22/2006	Brian Shull	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access
43	6/22/2006	Jim Flowers	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access
44	6/22/2006	Robert Sheldon	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access
45	6/22/2006	Joey Kulich	Email	OHV	Allow OHV/leap access
46	6/22/2006	Dustin	Email	Trail compatibility Park Amenities OHV	Trail inventory needed and designated areas created for different uses Include ramadas, restrooms, kiosks for information in park plans Allow OHV access.
47	6/23/2006	Earl Holladay	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
48	6/22/2006	Jason DeMonto	Email	Socioeconomics OHV	Businesses who rely on OHV use need to be taken into account Allow OHV access.
49	6/21/2006	James & Shirley Corley	Email	Trail Compatibility	In support of multi-use trails
50		Sr.		OHV	Allow OHV access.

51	6/22/2006	Matt (+3) O'Brien	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
52	6/22/2006	Jack Hickman	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
53	6/22/2006	Roger Thomas	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
54	6/22/2006	Alan Moore	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
55	6/22/2006	David Sirota	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
56	6/22/2006	Bill Hooven	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
57	6/22/2006	Richard Kuhn	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
58	6/22/2006	Bill & Diane Witt	Email	OHV	Allow OHV access.
59	6/22/2006	Brad Burdic	Email	OIHV	Allow OIHV access.
60	6/22/2006	Jim Guerrero	Email	OIHV	Allow OIHV access.
61	6/22/2006	Jim Florence	Email	OIHV	Allow OIHV access.