

COCHISE COUNTY POLICIES REGARDING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LANDS

INTRODUCTION:

Of Cochise County's 6,200 square miles, approximately 58% are lands administered by federal and state agencies. Therefore, policies for managing these lands significantly impact Cochise County's culture, history, economy, environment and lifestyles. Accordingly, it is extremely important for local governments, including Cochise County, to participate in making these policies, with opportunities for the public to be heard. Federal law, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), require federal agencies to allow local governments, including Cochise County, to participate in the developing of land use plans, to cooperate and coordinate with local governments in developing such plans, and to ensure that federal policies are consistent with policies of local governments. Furthermore, A.R.S. § 11-269.09 mandates that "[i]f a county has laws, regulations, plans or policies that are less restrictive than a federal or state regulation, rule, plan or policy, the county shall demand by any lawful means that the federal or state government coordinate with the county before the federal or state government implements, enforces, expands or extends the federal regulation, rule, plan or policy within the county's jurisdictional boundaries. This subsection is mandatory unless the county specifically votes to not demand coordination."

Cochise County therefore establishes the following policies regarding use of federal lands in Cochise County.

POLICIES

1. San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA)

Goal: Coordinate efforts with other organizations and jurisdictions, including the Bureau of Land Management, to protect the SPRNCA, as well as the economic and social well-being of Cochise County residents, by assisting Fort Huachuca in meeting its environmental goals, especially regarding water conservation.

Comment: Cochise County recognizes both the historic and current value of the SPRNCA as a national riparian wildlife habitat, migratory bird corridor, recreational and agricultural resource, and critical habitat for an endangered species. Fort Huachuca and its dependent and associated organizations both on and off the military reservation form the economic underpinning of the communities in the surrounding area and contribute nearly \$3 billion annually to the economy of the State of Arizona. The economic, social and cultural character of Cochise County would change unacceptably were we to fail to preserve the SPRNCA and thereby protect the Fort from environmental sanctions.

Policies:

1. Public lands, including the SPRNCA, shall be managed so as to minimize negative impacts on the regional ground water aquifer.
2. Public access to public lands, including the SPRNCA for recreation, should be consistent with preservation of a viable conservation area.
3. Agricultural uses, including grazing, shall be permitted on public lands, including the SPRNCA, within limits consistent with preservation goals.
4. Sub-watershed-wide conservation, reuse, recharge and augmentation policies and projects must be used to resolve both riparian condition issues and the overall balance of water levels in the aquifer.
5. All water use, including riparian water use, must be carefully minimized in order to help return the aquifer to historic levels, maintain a viable riparian area and protect the economic and social sustainability of Cochise County.

2. Other Federal Lands

Goal: To protect the culture, history, economy, environment and lifestyles of Cochise County residents by requiring federal agencies to coordinate land use plans with Cochise County and to establish plans that are consistent with the following policies:-

Comment: By becoming a participating and ~~cooperating~~ coordinating agency, Cochise County is guaranteed a “seat at the table” in the preparation of Environmental Assessments (EAs), Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) and other federal land use considerations that have the potential to affect the cultural, historical, economic and environmental character of the County, and to preserve traditional rural ways of life, including farming, ranching and other agricultural-related activities in the County. In addition, however, the County seeks to require federal agencies to establish plans consistent with County policies by requiring them to coordinate with County government. To that end, the following policy statements were developed regarding various public land management issues:-

A. Wilderness Designation

1. Any consideration of any new ~~new~~ wilderness designations of federal lands in Cochise County will be a result of a collaborative process, including ~~by~~ federal, state and county officials.
2. The only legal designations of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) are those designated under section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the opportunity to create additional wilderness ended in 1991, except as authorized by

Congress; any new wilderness designation must be provided for by Congress and created in cooperation with the County and the State.

3. Wilderness designation is not an appropriate, effective, efficient, economic or wise use of land. These lands can be adequately protected through mitigation, minimizing negative impacts and proper reclamation.
4. Wilderness management must provide for continued and reasonable access for holders of property rights within the area and provide for full use and enjoyment of these rights.
5. WSAs released by Congress must be managed based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

B. Wilderness Designation

1. Special designations, such as wilderness, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), critical habitat, semi-primitive and non-motorized travel, etc., result in single-purpose or non-use and are detrimental to the area economy, lifestyles, cultures, and heritage.
2. Needed protections can be provided by well-planned and managed development.
3. No special designations should be proposed until it is determined and substantiated by verified scientific data, that there is a need for the designation, that protections cannot be provided by other methods, and the area in question is truly unique when compared to other area lands.
4. Designations must be made in accordance with the spirit and direction of the acts and regulations that created them.

C. Introduced, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species, Recovery Plans, Experimental Populations and Related Guidelines and Protocols

1. These designations or reintroductions often grow beyond boundaries and scope and can result in detrimental effects on the area economy, lifestyles, cultures and heritage.
2. No such designations or reintroductions should be made until it is determined and substantiated by verified scientific data that there is a need for such action, that protections cannot be provided by other methods and the area in question is truly unique when compared to other area lands.
3. Designation or reintroduction plans, guidelines, and protocols must not be developed or implemented without the full involvement of the County and full public disclosure.

4. Any analysis of such proposed designations or reintroductions must be inclusive and analyze all needed actions associated with the proposal to prevent growth beyond the scope and boundaries that were analyzed in the proposal.
5. Recovery plans must provide for indicators to track the effectiveness of the plan and identify at what point recovery is accomplished.

D. Public Access, RS 2477 Roads

1. Access across and to public lands is critical to the use, management, and development of those lands and adjoining private lands.
2. No roads, trails, rights-of-way, easements or other traditional access for the transportation of people, products, recreation, energy or livestock may be closed, abandoned, withdrawn, or have a change of use without full public disclosure and analysis.
3. Roads covered by RS 2477 should remain open and the County will take any action needed to protect these rights. This includes identification, inventory, and participation in any legal process to protect them.
4. Access to all water-related facilities such as delivery systems, monitoring facilities, livestock water and handling facilities, etc., must be maintained. Unreasonable restrictions may result in the loss of use of such facilities and property rights.

E. Land Exchanges, Acquisitions and Sales

1. ~~There shall be no net loss of the private land base and that the federal and state government holds a sufficient amount of land to protect public interest. No "net loss" should be measured, in both acreage and fair value, without approval of the County Board of Supervisors.~~
2. The State and Federal Governments hold a sufficient amount of land to protect public interest, so there shall be no net loss of private land base.
3. Any affected district within The County should must be compensated for any net loss of private lands with public lands of equal value and or compensated for any loss of tax base assessed valuation resulting from these exchanges by the appropriate acquiring agency.
4. A private property owner has a right to dispose of or exchange his property as he/she sees fit within applicable law.

F. Recreation and Tourism

1. The County has outstanding potential for recreation and tourism.

2. Resource development, recreation, and tourism are compatible through proper planning and management.
3. Potential developments should include family-oriented activities and developments that are accessible to the general public and not limited to special interest groups.
4. It supports cultivating recreational facility development and maintenance partnerships with other entities, agencies, and general special interest groups.

G. Wildlife

1. Properly managed wildlife populations are important to the recreation and tourism economy and to the preservation of the culture and lifestyles of its residents.
2. With proper management and planning, healthy wildlife populations are compatible with other resource development.
3. No increases in wildlife numbers or the introduction of additional species may be made until the increase in forage or habitat has been provided for and the impacts on other wildlife species have been assessed.

H. Forage Allocation/Livestock Grazing

1. The proper management and allocation of forage on public lands is critical to the viability of the county's agriculture, recreation and tourism industry.
2. The viability of a large number of agriculture and livestock operations is dependent on access to grazing on public lands.
3. Forage allocated to livestock should not be reduced for allocation to other uses. Current livestock allocation should be maintained.

I. Off Highway Vehicles (OHV)

1. OHV's have become an important segment of the recreation industry and is an important tool and mode of transportation for farmers, ranchers, and resource development.
2. Public Land Management agencies must implement and maintain an aggressive OHV program to educate users on how to reduce resource impacts. This is to be followed by an aggressive enforcement program.
3. The non-recreational use of OHVs, such as development and livestock operations, should be provided for in all areas unless restricted by law.