



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Southwestern
Region

September 2004



Environmental Assessment for the Sedona Administrative Site Sale

Coconino National Forest

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

September 2004

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need	1
Document Structure	1
Background.....	1
Purpose and Need for Action	2
Proposed Action.....	3
Decision Framework.....	3
Public Involvement	3
Issues.....	4
Chapter 2 - Alternatives	6
Alternatives	6
Mitigation Measures	7
Comparison of Alternatives	8
Chapter 3 - Environmental Consequences	10
Vegetation	10
Invasive Species.....	10
Special Status Species.....	11
General Wildlife.....	12
Soils & Water	14
Air Quality	16
Cultural Resources (Issue 1)	16
Environmental Justice.....	19
Scenic Quality.....	19
Chapter 4 - Consultation and Coordination	21
List of Tables	
Table 1. Alternative Comparison	9
List of Figures	
Figure 1. Red Rock (Sedona) Ranger Station	7

Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need

Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Assessment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. This Environmental Assessment discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action and alternatives. The document is organized into four parts:

- **Introduction:** The section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.
- **Comparison of Alternatives, including the Proposed Action:** This section provides a more detailed description of the agency's proposed action as well as alternative methods for achieving the stated purpose. These alternatives were developed based on significant issues raised by the public and other agencies. This discussion also includes possible mitigation measures. Finally, this section provides a summary table of the environmental consequences associated with each alternative.
- **Environmental Consequences:** This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives. Within each section, the affected environment is described first, followed by the effects of the No Action Alternative that provides a baseline for evaluation and comparison of the other alternatives that follow.
- **Agencies and Persons Consulted:** This section provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the environmental assessment.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Red Rock Ranger District Office in Sedona, Arizona.

Background

This proposal is a result of special legislation, the Arizona National Forest Improvement Act of 2000, P.L. 106-458 passed in November 2000, which allows the Forest Service to exchange or sell several sites in various locations in Arizona and use the proceeds of those sales to acquire, construct or improve administrative facilities. This legislation responded to a long standing issue of Verde Valley Forest Service offices being in locations that do not best serve National Forest or public purposes and limited funding for administrative site facilities construction. Proceeds from land sales in combination with Forest Service funding will be used to build ranger station facilities at new sites in the Verde Valley starting in Fall 2005. The Sedona Ranger Station site was identified in the legislation: This is a 21 acre parcel on Brewer Road in Sedona where the existing Red Rock Ranger District (Coconino National Forest) office is located.

Purpose and Need for Action

There is a need for the Forest Service to use the Arizona National Forest Improvement Act legislation to sell the Sedona Ranger Station location in order to obtain funding to build Verde Valley administrative facilities in locations that better serve the public. This action is needed because the existing Sedona Ranger Station location is not able to provide quality public service or employee work conditions due to their locations and poor facilities. The existing ranger station site is located near the center of the City of Sedona but off the main highways in a residential area. The site is not easily found by the general public and is not in a gateway area into Sedona where the public is looking for National Forest information.

The greater Sedona area has high tourist use because of the surrounding beauty of the red rocks mostly located on National Forest lands around the City and communities. This scenic draw has resulted in high visitor use and construction of many trails and facilities. Although many recreation facilities are visible from the highway, other etiquette, resource protection, directional information and safety messages are not readily available as visitors arrive in the area. This type of information and service is currently not provided for at the current Red Rock Ranger Station. Most visitors have already obtained information before reaching the center of Sedona and the existing ranger station facilities. As a result, many users do not get quality information needed for activities on the National Forest. A temporary ranger station has been located within private property in the Village of Oak Creek to meet these needs. Visitor contacts at the Village of Oak Creek site (50,491 from October 1, 2003 to April 30, 2004) are almost five times higher than contacts made at the Sedona Ranger Station (13,413 from October 1, 2003 to April 30, 2004). At the current time, the visitor contact numbers for the Village of Oak Creek contact station indicate better service to the public than is provided at the Sedona Administrative Site. This indicates that the Sedona Administrative site does not provide quality services to the public. However, a site on National Forest near the Village of Oak Creek that is even more visible than the existing contact station at Tequa Plaza would better be able to provide for these services to the public.

In addition, the current ranger station site has limited access from the highway and for parking larger recreational vehicles or for accommodating the number of existing staff necessary to manage the newly combined Red Rock Ranger District (combined offices for the old Sedona Ranger District and the old Beaver Creek Ranger District.)

Congress passed this legislation in recognition limited funding is available to construct new facilities. This legislation allows for income derived from the sales of identified properties to be used in construction of new facilities that better provide for public service. In addition, in order to obtain appropriate land values and return of value to the general public from the sale of this property, the Forest Service is trying to limit any restrictions or requirements that could affect future use (and therefore sale value) of the property.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Coconino National Forest Plan, and helps to promote overall implementation of the Forest Plan by providing quality administrative facilities that better serve the public and meet administrative service needs. The Coconino Forest Plan under FA&O Facility Maintenance Guidelines (page 90) states "Pursue exchange of the existing Sedona Administrative Site for office, warehouse and parking facilities," as well as identifying the parcel as base for exchange by meeting one or more of the criteria under the Landownership Planning/Land Classification standards and guidelines (page 86) for possible conveyance to private ownership. This project also helps to implement the standard and

guideline under General Administration that states “Maintain an aggressive and pro-active public affairs program, Forest-wide, to establish and maintain informed consent for resource management objectives.” New offices in a gateway location also would implement the Neighborwoods Management Area guideline of allowing for the exchange/sale of the Brewer Road/Sedona Administrative Site to facilitate a new ranger station or welcome center. This also implements the ability to provide quality employee work facilities and public facilities by retaining sale proceeds to be used to replace administrative facilities.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to sell through a competitive process the 21-acre Sedona Ranger Station and use the funds derived from this sale to build administrative facilities in a new location to meet the purpose and need. The result of the sale of this site would likely be some form of private development as allowed through the local City of Sedona development process. The land is subject to the conditions of the Sedona Community Plan. About 13 acres are currently zoned as Single-Family/ Medium Density Residential with the remainder of the 21.4 acres currently zoned as Public/Semi-Public Uses. Refer to Section 5 of the Sedona Community Plan for details regarding these Use designations. Once this land is sold into private ownership the Public/Semi Public Uses designation may no longer be appropriate; however it would become the responsibility of the landowner to work with the City of Sedona to amend the Sedona Community Plan as appropriate. Section 18 of the Sedona Community Plan provides the process and procedures applicable to amendment proposals. The property also borders the Sedona School on three sides which also is currently zoned as Public/Semi-public uses.

Decision Framework

Given the purpose and need, the deciding official reviews the proposed action and the other alternatives in order to make the following decisions:

- Should the ranger station site be sold?
- Should any parts be excluded from the sale?
- Should the site be sold with restrictions or limitations?

The deciding official may choose either the no action alternative or the proposed action alternative that includes mitigation to protect resources. Issues were not identified that required an alternative to exclude portions of the Red Rock Ranger Station site.

This decision does not define the method of sale of the property nor how it will be used in the future except as identified under current City of Sedona ordinances.

Public Involvement

The proposal was listed in the Coconino National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions starting in July 2003. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping in November and December 2003. As part of the public involvement process, the agency sent letters to adjacent landowners and interested parties describing the proposal. A news release was also distributed announcing the proposal and asking for comments. In addition, a local

Sedona group (Sedona Women) has sponsored several meetings that discussed the proposal and future land use possibilities for the Sedona site that were open to the public.

Initially this project was announced to the public in combination with the proposed Verde Ranger Station site sale in Camp Verde. These two projects have since been split into two separate project analyses and will have two separate decisions. During the initial public scoping for both the Sedona and Camp Verde sites, approximately 14 letters or email comments were received.

In addition, a 30-day public comment period was announced on June 26, 2004 and a summary of the proposed Sedona Administrative Site Sale and its potential effects was available for review. During this comment period, six letters were received with one letter received after the end of the comment period. Comments during this time period indicated support for a local concept of a town square use of this property. One comment letter indicated concerns about the ability of providing better services at a new site, as well as water quantity concerns about development. Using the comments from the public, other agencies, including the City of Sedona and adjacent property owners (see *Issues* section), the interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address.

Issues

The Forest Service separated the issues into two groups: significant and non-significant issues. Significant issues were defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action. Non-significant issues were identified as those: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. The Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, "...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)..." A list of non-significant issues and reasons regarding their categorization as non-significant may be found at 26.0 in the project record.

As for significant issues, the Forest Service identified one topic raised during scoping.

Historical and Cultural Resources: *Sale of the Sedona Ranger Station site could result in loss or removal of cultural resources, including historical buildings at Sedona and their historic connection with the development of Sedona.* This issue would be analyzed with how well the alternatives address preservation of the historic facilities and meet the objectives of the federal cultural resource laws. The City of Sedona has designated three buildings (barn, ranger house and pumphouse) as City historical landmarks which are specifically protected under City ordinance. The pumphouse is located on private land under easement that may not pass to a successive owner of the Sedona Ranger Station parcel. Once the Forest Service no longer uses the facility the pumphouse would revert to private ownership. This analysis focuses on cultural resources located on the federal parcel – the barn and ranger house..

There were several other comments made that were not considered significant issues. They include scenery, land values, traffic, light, water use, noise and the "Heart of Sedona" public use concept. These were not considered significant issues because they are outside of the scope of this analysis. The ultimate development and impact of possible development of the site will be the responsibility of the local jurisdiction, the City of Sedona, in accordance with their plans and

ordinances. Water use, noise, traffic, lighting, scenery and public uses are issues that the City will likely consider when determining the types of development that will be allowed on the property once it is no longer in federal ownership. The City's existing public process would determine what would be developed on the site and would address concerns raised during the development process.

Some adjacent owners commented that they were interested in acquiring pieces of the property next to their property. This analysis only describes the effects of the sale of the property and not how the process will occur. Adjacent owners could participate in the bidding process or negotiate a purchase from the successful bidder. Several parties indicated support for the "Heart of Sedona" proposal. While several members of the community would like to see this proposal be developed on this site, the future owner and their use of the site will also not be determined in this analysis but by future development actions by the prospective owner and the City.

Chapter 2 - Alternatives

This chapter describes and compares the alternatives considered for the Sedona Administrative Site Sale project. It includes a description and map of each alternative considered. This section also presents the alternatives in comparative form, sharply defining the differences between each alternative and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public. Some of the information used to compare the alternatives is based upon the design of the alternative and some of the information is based upon the environmental, social and economic effects of implementing each alternative.

Alternatives

Alternative 1 - No Action

Under the No Action alternative, no sale of the current administrative site at Sedona would be implemented to accomplish project goals. New administrative facilities for the Red Rock Ranger District would likely not be built in the short term due to limited funding availability for new facilities.

Alternative 2 - The Proposed Action

Alternative 2: The Forest Service proposes to sell the 21-acre Sedona Ranger Station site in Sedona and use the proceeds to build new administrative facilities that better serve the public. This alternative includes mitigation measures that would protect and preserve National Register Eligible Historic buildings. The alternative does proceed with sale of the entire property with appropriate other requirements that would protect both of the historic City landmark buildings (ranger house and barn/warehouse building). This protection is required under the existing ordinances of the City of Sedona for City designated historical landmarks. The site would be developed as approved through a City of Sedona planning process, which could include uses under the existing approved land use of community facilities and residential or other uses if approved through a Community Plan amendment process in the future.

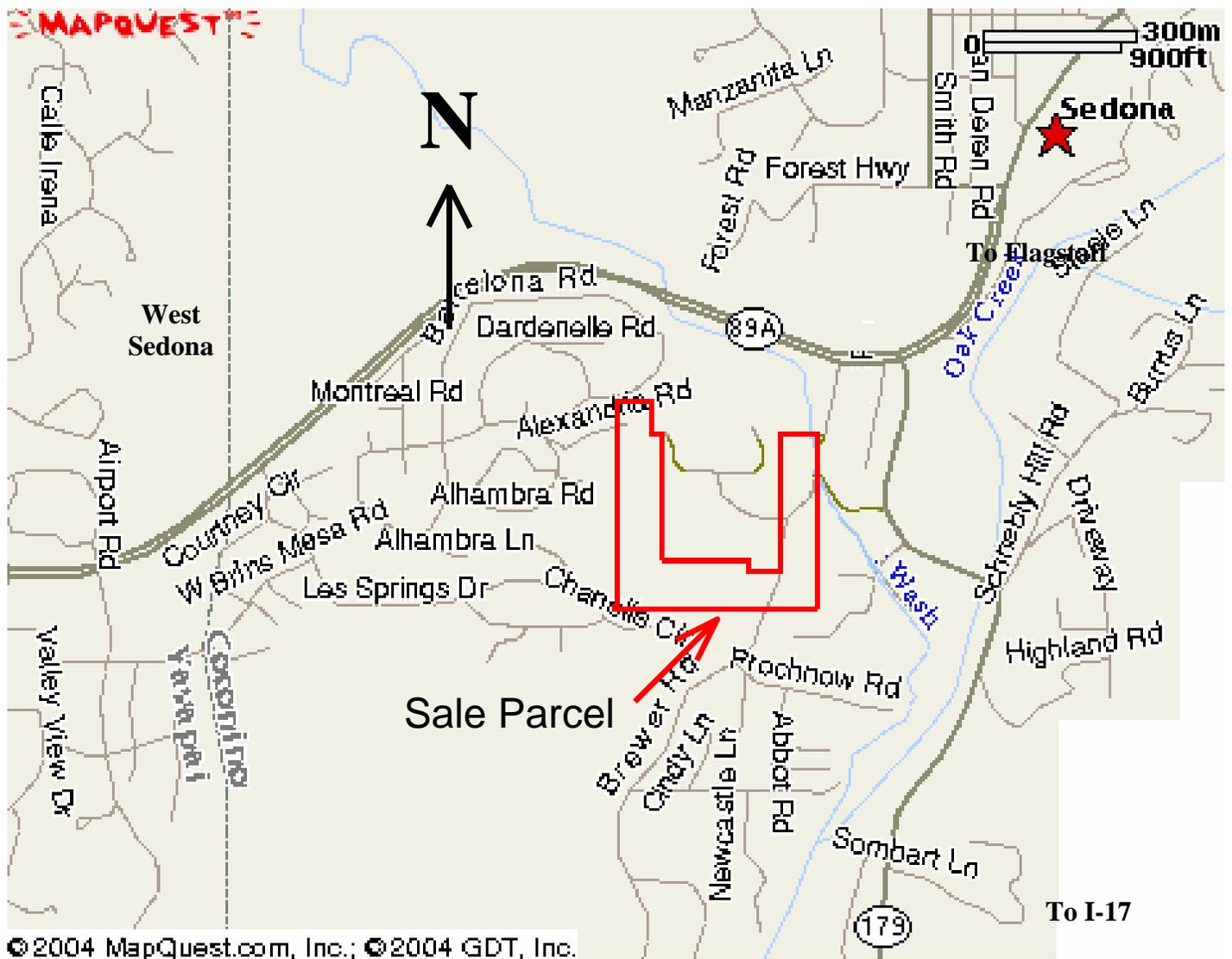


Figure 1. Red Rock Ranger Station (Alternative 2)

Mitigation Measures

In response to public comments on the proposal, mitigation measures were developed to ease some of the potential impacts the proposed action may cause.

- The actual sale process will not be determined in this decision. The sale process will be designed to obtain the best value and return to the government. Options for the sale process could likely include a competitive bidding process, negotiated sale, sale of only a portion of the properties, sales at different timeframes or a possibility of multiple methods of sale. At this time, the preferred method is for a competitive sale process.

- Existing permitted uses other than grazing activities will be protected under the sale. This would include utility and road corridors that have existing permits or easements authorizing the use of the federal lands.
- Existing land ordinances and regulations would be applied by the local government jurisdictions after sale of the properties. Future uses and development will be managed under those regulations and ordinances, including floodplain ordinances that protect 100 year floodplain.
- The sale of the property into private ownership will require the protection of the two historic buildings on the property to be protected under the City of Sedona's ordinances relating to Designated Sedona Historic Landmarks. The City's Land Development code, Article 15 empowers the Historic Preservation Commission duties related to designated landmarks that would protect them. The historic ranger house and barn/warehouse building are both Designated Sedona Historic Landmarks. A Historic Properties Management Plan will define the important elements of these structures that would require preservation in order to protect the National Register listing potential. Future uses or other activities associated with these buildings would be reviewed and approved by the City of Sedona under the City's ordinance. The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office would also be involved in monitoring the preservation of these buildings.
- Lead paint mitigation associated with the historic buildings will be mitigated through removal of contaminated materials and the buildings repainted and siding replaced to preserve and protect the structures into the future.
- Invasive weed species capable of spreading will be removed prior to conveyance.

Comparison of Alternatives

This section provides a summary of the effects of implementing each alternative. Information in the table is focused on activities and effects where different levels of effects or outputs can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively among alternatives.

Table 1. Alternative Comparison

	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action
Cultural Resources	On-going use of historic buildings, subject to archeological regulations regarding adaptive reuse.	Likely adaptive reuse of buildings by buyer. Protection of these resources would be administered by the City of Sedona Historic Preservation Commission consistent with City ordinances that protect these designated City Historical Landmarks.
Management Indicator Species	Undeveloped areas could provide habitat for MIS species.	Sale of the property and potential loss of habitat will not contribute to downward trend of MIS species.
Special Status Species	Existing management would continue that has little impact on special status species.	Post disposal activities could result in minor impacts to foraging peregrines and minor loss of habitat for some species.
Soil & Water	Forest Service use would continue with similar uses.	Development would occur that would change native vegetation but floodplain regulations would protect water quality and other resources. There would be increased use of water and sewer disposal needs depending on the development approved by the City of Sedona.
Scenery	Existing uses would remain depending on how the administrative site would be used into the future. A portion of the site would likely remain in undeveloped, natural setting.	Development on the undeveloped area would change the appearance in those areas depending on the requirements placed on the buyer by the City of Sedona. Current historical buildings would remain and other facilities would likely be developed replacing existing facilities, again under City of Sedona ordinances.
Vegetation/ Invasive species	Site managed as currently continued use and maintenance of existing vegetation including some control of invasive species	Construction activities during development could result in loss of native plants depending on the proposed development. Invasive weeds may become re-established and spread.
Other land use issues	Uses would likely remain the same with possible need for further development on the ranger station developed area to better meet Forest Service needs. No change in other uses likely. As use continues to grow, traffic impacts of visitors is likely to increase.	Land use values would likely not be impacted as the use of the property would be similar to adjacent lands. Traffic could increase depending on the approved development of the land by the City of Sedona. Traffic and other issues would be considered during the City's development process and the public can participate to determine the ultimate use of the site.

Chapter 3 - Environmental Consequences

This section summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments due to implementation of the alternatives. It also presents the scientific and analytical basis for the comparison of alternatives presented in the chart above.

Vegetation

Vegetation at the Sedona Administrative site is comprised of a mixture of pinyon-juniper, chaparral, and landscaped areas with a high density of ornamental species. The undeveloped portion of the 21 acres includes pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*), red berry juniper (*Juniperus coahuilensis*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), Arizona cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*), buckbrush (*Ceanothus fendleri*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* sp.), mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*), cliffrose (*Purshia subintegra*), desert olive (*Foresteria pubescens* var. *pubescens*), barberry (*Berberis* sp.), skunkbush (*Rhus trilobata*), sugar sumac (*Rhus ovata*), snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), night scented stock (*Matthiola longipetala**), side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), and blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*). The developed portion of the Sedona site has ornamentals such as tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima**), Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila**), several varieties of fruit trees, Pyracantha (*Pyracantha* sp.), pomegranate (*Pomegranate* sp.), honeysuckle (*Japonica* sp.), iris (*Iris* sp.), vinca (*Vinca major**), trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*), London rocket (*Sisymbrium irio*), Shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus**), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum**) and Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*).

The consequences of selling the Sedona Administrative site (Alternative 1) will be the loss of some native vegetation as these sites are subsequently developed. The No action alternative would retain this property under National Forest jurisdiction likely remaining some type of administrative facility in the short term. Cumulatively loss of native vegetation would continue as a result of potential development of the property and there could be continue conversion to non-native, landscaped vegetation associated with probable development.

Invasive Species

Invasive plant species are indicated in the above vegetation section with an asterisk after the scientific name. Invasives at the Sedona administrative site includes tree of heaven, Chinese elm, ripgut brome, cheatgrass, scented night stock, vinca, and iris.

Invasive weed species that have a potential to spread will be removed from the administrative site prior to conveyance. Although efforts will be made to thoroughly eradicate invasive weeds, it is impossible to eradicate the seeds that are present in the soil. As this site is sold and subsequently developed, soil disturbing activities associated with development will likely trigger germination of weeds from seeds retained in the soil. Cumulatively soil disturbing activities that could result

in spread of weeds could continue to adjacent properties. However since the property is isolated and surrounded by existing development and primarily landscaped properties, further spread of the weeds would be limited to the existing site and nearby areas.

Special Status Species

Special status species consist of species listed as threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate under the Endangered Species Act, Forest Service sensitive, and Forest Service management indicator species (MIS) as identified in the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

There is no riparian vegetation associated with the Sedona administrative site and therefore there is little potential for most special status species to occur at this site. Of the forty-nine possible TES species, two birds, two invertebrates, and one reptile may occur on site (refer to Table 2). Three MIS have been identified for the area; antelope (Verde Valley MA), and deer and juniper titmouse (Pinyon-juniper MA).

Table 2: Special Status Species/Habitat at the Sedona Administration Site.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Birds		
American Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	S
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	T, S
Reptiles		
Arizona Night Lizard	<i>Xantusia vigilis arizonae</i>	S
Invertebrates		
Early Elfin	<i>Incisalia fotis</i>	S
Comstock's Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys comstocki</i>	S
Other		
Pronghorn (historical)	<i>Anitiocarpa americana</i>	MIS
Mule Deer	<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i>	MIS
Juniper titmouse	<i>Baeolophus griseus</i>	MIS

T= Threatened, S=Sensitive, MIS = Management Indicator Species,

Special Status Birds

Bald eagles are primarily winter visitors to the Coconino National Forest occupying all habitat types and elevations. Wintering eagles arrive in the fall, usually late October or early November, and leave in early to mid-April. They feed on fish, waterfowl, terrestrial vertebrates, and carrion. No suitable nesting habitat is present for the bald eagle at the Sedona site. Foraging habitat is also limited associated with the Sedona site. Post-disposal activities will not affect nesting bald eagles, however, winter eagles may incidentally occur near the administration site during foraging forays. Disturbance to wintering bald eagles is likely to be of low frequency and low intensity.

Peregrines prey mainly on birds found in wetlands, riparian areas, meadows, parklands, croplands, mountain valleys, and lakes within a 10 to 20 mile radius from the nest site. Prey items include bats, other mammals, and birds. Although no nesting peregrine falcons occur in the vicinity of the administrative site, peregrine falcons have a large foraging radius and potential occurs for peregrine falcons to utilize the administrative sites for foraging. Post-disposal activities may cause aural and visual disturbance to foraging peregrine falcons, this is anticipated to be infrequent and of low intensity

Special Status Reptiles

Suitable habitat for the Arizona night lizard is present at the Sedona administrative site. The Arizona night lizard is found in arid and semiarid lands where it occupies the spaces beneath fallen branches, logs, dead clumps of agave, dead brush, and cow dung. It is also found in rock crevices. Ground-altering activities may result in the destruction of hiding cover, potentially crushing individuals, and potentially resulting in abandonment of the area.

Special Status Invertebrates

Suitable host plants for two sensitive butterflies, early elfin and Comstock's hairstreak, occur at the Sedona administrative site indicating the potential for these species to occur as well. The early elfin favors roadsides with flowers and dry areas in mountains. Larva feed on cliffrose (*Cowania [Purshia] mexicana [ssp stansburniana]*). Comstock's hairstreak favors dry, rocky areas of foothills and canyons of the Upper Sonoran plateaus and their larvae feed on buckwheat (*Eriogonum* sp.) and possibly sulphur flower (*Eriogonum bell*). Post-disposal activities may result in ground-altering activities, which may limit the presence of these butterflies' host plants thereby reducing the potential for these two butterflies to occur in the future.

Other Special Status Species - Management Indicator Species

Antelope no longer occur in the Sedona or Camp Verde areas due to habitat fragmentation and loss of grasslands due to juniper, mesquite, and acacia encroachment. Therefore post-disposal activities will not affect this species. Mule deer and juniper titmice occur on the undeveloped portion of the Sedona administrative site. Post-disposal activities that modify this undeveloped land can reduce the area of unaltered habitat resulting in increased potential for deer to abandon the area. Removal of junipers, especially the larger diameter junipers, in which juniper titmice breed, feed, and find shelter, will reduce the suitability of the site for juniper titmice. Due to the limited amount of acreage associated with the Sedona administrative site, post-sale activities will not change the forest-wide trend for these MIS species.

General Wildlife

Mammals

Game species at the Sedona administrative sites include mule deer, mountain lion, bobcat, gray fox, coyote, javelina, cottontail, jackrabbits, and squirrels.

Non-game mammal species include chipmunks, mice, rats, woodrats, skunks, ring-tailed cats, and numerous species of bats. Spotted and striped skunks occur primarily within riparian and other vegetative zones within areas proximal to riparian areas. Cliff chipmunks, white-footed mouse, and white-throated woodrat are a few small mammal species that occur within the chaparral and pinyon-juniper habitats and likely occur at the Sedona site. Rock squirrel, cliff chipmunk, western harvest mouse, and brush mouse are other small mammals that likely occur at this site.

Approximately 10 species of bats may occur at the Sedona administrative site (Table 3 in the specialist report, PR #39.0). Potential roosts occur in natural structures such as underneath loose bark on snags, in tree and snag cavities, in tree canopies, and under rock, and in man-made structures such as buildings, and bridges. All of the bat species occurring or potentially occurring in the area are insectivorous. Water sources such as the overflow of the water storage tank and the fire crew's open water tank at Sedona site are important for bat foraging due to the abundance of insects found flying above the water.

Many of the birds found at the Sedona administrative site are neotropical migrants (Table 4 of the specialist report, PR#39.0) and spend only a portion of each year (spring and summer) in this area. These birds travel each year from their wintering grounds in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean to North America to breed during the spring and summer months. Precipitous declines in neotropical migratory bird populations have occurred over the last twenty years and are caused mainly by habitat loss and modification in the wintering grounds, breeding grounds, and along migrational routes. Neotropical migrants follow riparian corridors during migration and frequently stop to forage and replenish fat reserves. Since there is riparian habitat near the Sedona administrative site, there are likely more species of migrants that utilize the Sedona administrative site when compared to upland habitats further away from riparian zones.

In addition to direct affects to individual animals, construction activities can directly affect wildlife species when workers, vehicles, and equipment cause aural and visual disturbance to individuals that may be present in the construction area. Most bird, mammal, and reptile are mobile and are capable of dispersing from disturbance. Since construction activities will be limited in duration, permanent abandonment of the area is unlikely. Individuals incapable of dispersal (nestling, altricial young, eggs, and tadpoles) or individuals unwilling to disperse (adults with immobile young, aestivating individuals) can experience negative affects including: trampling and crushing, increased physiological stress; flushing of birds from incubating eggs thus increasing potential for eggs to become unviable; premature fledging of young from nests; and increased potential for predation.

Construction activities can directly affect wildlife habitat through the loss, destruction, modification, or fragmentation of vegetation.

Cumulative Effects

Upland Species

In addition to proposed activities, there are many activities that occur in the uplands of the Sedona administrative site that contribute to cumulative effects to species and their habitat. Other activities include: maintenance of utility lines; road maintenance; and limited recreation. All these activities can visually and aurally affect wildlife species as well as cause destruction or modification to wildlife and plant habitat.

The presence of people, vehicles, and equipment at the Sedona site can result in aural and visual disturbance to wildlife species, particularly during critical periods such as breeding, roosting, and feeding. Disturbance that occurs frequently and over a period of time can result in increased physiological stress, nest, roost, or site abandonment, flushing of birds from eggs, premature fledging of young from nests, and reduction in the amount of suitable nesting and foraging areas.

In addition to direct disturbance to wildlife species, these other activities can affect wildlife habitat when activities reduce the amount of soil-stabilizing ground cover, compact soil, reduce the amount of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and recruitment trees; increase the potential for invasion of exotic weeds; all of which contributes to decreased infiltration of water during rain events and increase rates of water and soil run off.

Soils & Water

Affected Environment

The soils in the proposed disposal area have been mapped in 2 soil map units. A detailed description of the soil map units can be found in the Terrestrial Ecosystems Survey of the Coconino National Forest (TES, 1991).

The soils found at the Ranger Station developed site have been mapped in map unit 45. This area which is in landscaping and structures is approximately 5 acres in size. The soils are deep, occur on 1 to 5 % slopes, have sandy surfaces, and have developed in mixed alluvium.

The soils found on the remaining undeveloped hills to the west of the Ranger Station have been mapped in map unit 458. This area is approximately 16.4 acres in size and supports Pinyon-Juniper woodland. The soils are shallow to moderately deep, occur on 15 to 40% slopes, have fine sandy loam surfaces with large amounts of surface rock fragment, and have developed from sandstone parent material.

There are approximately 1.6 acres of 100 year floodplain within the proposed disposal site. The floodplain is associated with Soldier Wash which crosses the site in the northeast corner. There is also floodplain associated with an Unnamed Wash that crosses the site in the southern third from west to east. Both washes are ephemeral and flow in response to rainfall events.

The Ranger Station developed site is on City of Sedona water and sewer.

Environmental Consequences

No Action Alternative

There would be no change in environmental effects to water and soil under the No Action alternative. Current management of the administrative site would continue.

Proposed Action

The upland hills on the east side of the disposal area may be developed into residential areas. The present Pinyon-Juniper woodland protecting the soils would be converted to landscaped areas similar to surrounding areas of development.

The affected parcels in the proposed disposal area are located in Coconino County. Coconino County qualifies for and participates in the Federal Flood Insurance Program. This program requires private landowners obtaining necessary flood insurance to comply with local land use and floodplain regulations. Adherence to local land use regulations, therefore meets the Forest goals of Executive Order 11988 concerning protection of floodplains.

The change in zoning could result in more dense development than is currently with the Forest facilities. The steep topography of the upland hills could limit the density of development in this area. The development with residential and commercial sites would result in a greater demand for domestic water and sewer than there is presently.

Cumulative Effects

The potential development of residential and commercial sites would result in an additional demand on local water supply and sewer facilities. The Sedona area is presently developing at a high rate and is expected to continue. There would be a cumulative additive effect to local water supply and sewer from development at the proposed disposal area.

Air Quality

Affected Environment:

Air quality is determined by the ambient concentrations of pollutants that are known to have harmful effects. The Environmental Protection Agency has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards for six criteria pollutants: carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter (PM10), ozone, sulfur dioxide, and lead. Coconino County is in attainment for all criteria pollutants.

Ambient air quality over the proposed disposal areas is very good with few exceptions. In the fall and winter, inversions may occur trapping pollutants from wood burning and other local pollutants in the Verde Valley. Also periodic high winds can contribute to temporary increases in levels of atmospheric dust, from gravel/base parking areas.

Environmental Consequences:

No Action Alternative

There would be no new environmental effects to air quality under the No Action alternative. Existing management and use would likely remain the same in the short term.

Proposed Action

Potential development at the proposed disposal areas would result in construction activities. During construction, sources of air pollution would occur from fugitive dust as result of soil disturbance and from tailpipe emissions associated with vehicles. These sources of air pollution would be temporary and occur primarily during the period of active construction. Dust mitigation is usually required during construction activities.

Cumulative Effects:

The localized short term effect to air quality from development activities would not be cumulatively additive to any air quality impact occurring in the region at present or within the future.

Cultural Resources (Issue 1)

One designated archeological site lies within the Sedona Administrative Site. This site is described below.

The historic and cultural resources of the 21 acre parcel on Brewer Road in Sedona consist of the historic Forest Service structures on the Sedona Administrative Site. The Sedona parcel has been 100% surveyed and one site was found, the historic structures of the Ranger Station itself (AR-03-04-06-478) (Condrey 1976, Stein 1986, Davenport 1996).

Site AR-03-04-06-478

The Sedona parcel is undeveloped except for the eastern portion across from the Sedona School office. The Sedona Administrative Site (AR-03-04-06-478) consists of four main buildings, two modular offices, a carport/shed, nine small storage sheds, and one trailer pad. The main buildings are the cinder block Ranger Station office that was constructed in 1959, the modular office additions (1990 and 2001), the Ranger Residence constructed in 1917, and the barn, built in 1935. The rock walls between the barn and the house are not associated with the 1917-1935 era, but were constructed in 1954 to accommodate a Clear Creek Ranger Station building which was moved onto the site to serve as an office and was subsequently moved again, in 1967, to the Beaver Creek Ranger Station. An additional component of the Administrative Site complex is the Delia Hart well and pump house, and pipeline. The pump house is located outside of the administrative site boundaries on the banks of Oak Creek. The well, pump house, and pipeline were constructed and are maintained by the Forest Service under a Right-of-Way agreement with the Lewis and Delia Hart dated 1947. The 1917 Ranger Residence and the barn were determined eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 (CNF Project No. 95-86-A). The well and pump house are in the process of evaluation and appear to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sedona Site - Historical Landmarks and the Connection with the Forest Service Historical Location

The Sedona Administrative Site has been a part of the Sedona landscape since the early 1900's. The Ranger Station residence and barn structures have been designated as City of Sedona Landmarks for their age, architecture, their use by the first District Rangers, and the importance the Forest Service played in the development of Sedona. The Delia Hart Pump House is an additional property associated with the Sedona Administrative Site. The well was dug, the pump and engine installed, and a distribution pipeline placed, circa 1935 by the US Forest Service on the Hart property. The Forest Service has an easement for 50% of the water from the well. At one time the well serviced the Ranger station, the Hart family, and the community of Sedona. Currently the well provides irrigation water for the Ranger Station. The Forest Service was an integral part of the early Sedona settlement and two of the earliest teachers for the settlement were, or would become, Ranger's wives. The Forest Service provided a stable influence in the community and the Rangers and their families were an important part of the early settlement community.

Cultural Resources

Analysis – Alternative 1 (No Action)

Under Alternative 1, no specific actions would be taken to change the existing conditions. The Sedona Administrative Site would continue to operate as it does today with minimal degradation due to Forest Service and visitor use, routine maintenance, and natural processes. Under this alternative, no effect is anticipated at AR-03-04-06-478, as the existing settings would not change.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts to archaeological resources discussed herein are based on analysis of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the Sedona project areas, in combination with potential effects of this alternative. In general, the archaeological resources of the Sedona Administrative Site are the result of the occupation and function of the site since 1907 when the first Forest Service structures were constructed. The historic resources have been affected by past actions at the site since its first occupation by the Forest Service. These resources could be subject to damage from ongoing maintenance, new construction, demolition, rehabilitation of existing facilities and utility corridors, vandalism, visitor access, and natural processes. These occurrences could damage the record of past behavior and compromise the site context.

Section 106 Summary for Alternative 1. For purposes of assessing effects to historic properties under the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations 800), the effects are considered either adverse or not adverse, or there is no effect. The historic structures on the Sedona Administrative site are subject to ongoing maintenance of existing facilities that would have the potential to adversely affect the historic properties. In accordance with Forest Service policies and procedures, the Forest Service would continue to protect cultural resources to the greatest extent allowable under present funding and staffing levels. Disturbance of identified historic properties resources would be avoided wherever possible, but in instances where avoidance or preservation could not be achieved, appropriate mitigation would be carried out under the provisions of the implementing regulations.

Cultural Resources

Analysis – Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Under Alternative 2, the Forest Service proposes to sell the Sedona Administrative Site. Under this alternative, sale of the Sedona Administrative Site would result in no adverse effect after mitigation of the historic structures of site AR-03-04-06-478. There exists protective restrictions associated with existing City of Sedona ordinances in regards to the historic structures. The historic facilities are identified in the City of Sedona Community Plan as City Landmarks. As such, the Historic Preservation Commission has oversight responsibility for reviewing and protecting the historic values of these landmarks. Restrictions that would preserve the historic facilities would remain in place by City ordinance and exist after completion of the sale. The City of Sedona would provide oversight of the historic facilities, as coordinated with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Cumulative Effects

Archaeological resources are located within the Sedona administrative site. The Sedona administrative site has been occupied continuously by the Forest Service since the early 1900's

and played an important role in the early settlement of Sedona. The historic structures that comprise site AR-03-04-06-478 represent some of the longest continually occupied Forest Service facilities in northern Arizona. Preservation of the facilities and recognition of the link to the Forest Service are an important element of the decision to require protection of the historic properties. Sale of the Sedona property will result in a change of usage. Identified possible development includes community usage: a park, museum, gardens, connections to a creek/historic walk, meeting space/town square, picnic area; commercial usage: shops/retail, timeshare/lodging, retirement home, day care center, cemetery; residential use; open space preservation; and education uses. Each of the proposed usage changes will result in a change in the setting for the historic structures. Mitigation measures would include documentation and interpretation and assignment of an oversight agency to monitor the effects on the historic properties after the sale. The transfer of Federal property out of Federal ownership may be regarded as “Not an Adverse Effect” if restrictions are imposed, as conditions of the transfer, to guarantee that the historical significance of the property will be preserved by the new owner. Alternative 2 would result in the transfer of oversight for the cultural resources from federal to city jurisdiction as a consequence of the sale of the property and result in no adverse impact on the resources of the Sedona Administrative Site.

Section 106 Summary for Alternative 2. For purposes of assessing effects to historic properties under the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations 800), the effects are considered either adverse or not adverse, or there is no effect. One historic site is located within the Sedona Administrative site project area. Mitigation measures would include documentation and interpretation, preparation of an historic buildings plan and assignment of an oversight agency to monitor the effects on the historic properties after the sale. Alternative 2 would contribute to the loss of historic resources in public ownership as a consequence of the sale of the property but would result in no adverse impact on the resources of the Sedona Administrative Site.

Environmental Justice

The project area does not include an area that is adjacent to minority, low income or underrepresented parties that would be unduly affected by the proposed action.

Scenic Quality

Existing Condition: The east side of the Sedona Administrative site is mostly developed with a mix of historic character buildings and more modern residential buildings and modular structures. The area includes parking lots with government fleet and many outbuildings and various construction supplies. It is consistent with the surrounding level of development in an urban and residential setting, surrounded by commercial, residential and a school development. The remainder of the property is undeveloped except for utility lines, a water tank and various road access. There is a ridge where the water tank is located that is visible from many areas in Sedona and currently the water tank is not visible from the distance.

Environmental consequences:

No Action Alternative: The property would remain under current management and used as an administrative site. Additional development may occur within the existing developed ranger station site or remain as is.

Alternative 1: There would be a change from undeveloped land to developed land on the west side of the property. Scenic views of the ridgeline may be changed and developed. However, there is development in the foreground views from State Route 179 and also in the background behind this ridge. The City of Sedona may require mitigation and preservation of this ridgeline in the development approval process. However the remaining area will likely be developed into residential homes under current zoning. The existing developed ranger station area may become further developed after the sale however; this is consistent with the surrounding development. Historic character buildings would likely remain as identified as Sedona Historic Landmarks.

Chapter 4 - Consultation and Coordination

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, state and local agencies, tribes and non-Forest Service persons during the development of this environmental assessment:

ID TEAM MEMBERS:

Judy Adams, Lands Staff, Team Leader
Janie Agyagos, Wildlife Staff
Sharynn Blood, Archeology Staff
Jack Norman, Watershed Staff

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES:

Roger Eastman, City of Sedona
Mike Raber, City of Sedona
William Collins, Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

TRIBES:

Yavapai Apache Nation