

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**CAMP VERDE SANITARY DISTRICT PROPOSAL
TO ACQUIRE NATIONAL FOREST LAND**

Beaver Creek Ranger District

Coconino National Forest

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 Proposed Acquisition of Coconino National Forest Land
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CHAPTER 1 - PROJECT SCOPE

A. Introduction

The objective of this EA is disclosure of environmental effects.

This Integrated Resource Management (IRM) environmental assessment documents the analysis of a land acquisition and land use proposal made to the Coconino National Forest by the Camp Verde Sanitary District.

The Forest Service has received a proposal from the Camp Verde Sanitary District to purchase approximately 162 acres of federal land at their current Sanitary District plant location within the Coconino National Forest in Arizona. Also included in the proposal is the construction of a new force main pipeline along State Route 260, the access road, and the retention of the access road under a special use permit with a required fee. The Forest Service is considering the proposal under the authorities of the Townsite Act of July 31, 1958 (72 Stat. 438, 7 U.S. C. 1012a, 16 U. S. C. 478a) as amended by the Act of October 21, 1976 (90 Stat. 2760) and the Exchange for Schools Act of December 4, 1967. (81 Stat. 531; 16 U.S.C. 484a). The Townsite Act provides that when the Secretary of the Agriculture determines that a tract of National Forest System land in Alaska or in the eleven contiguous Western States is located adjacent to or contiguous to an established community, and that transfer of such land would serve indigenous community objectives that outweigh the public objectives and values which would be served by maintaining such tract in Federal ownership, the land may be sold to a local government entity for not less than fair market value. The Secretary may condition conveyances to townsites upon the enactment, maintenance, and enforcement of a valid ordinance which assures any land conveyed will be controlled by the governmental subdivision so that the use of the area will not interfere with protection, management, and development of adjacent or contiguous National Forest System lands. The Exchange for Schools Act authorizes the exchange of not more than 80 acres of National Forest System land with a State, county or municipal government or with a public school authority. The non-Federal property may consist of land, cash, or a combination of both. There is no limitation on the amount of cash equalization. Lands may be conveyed to a State, county, or municipal government only if such entities were using the lands on January 22, 1983. Lands so conveyed may be used only for the purposes for which the State, county, or municipal

government was using them prior to conveyance. The Camp Verde Sanitary District is a Yavapai County governmental entity.

The land being considered for the acquisition by the Camp Verde Sanitary District is shown on Figure 1.

B. Background

The Camp Verde Sanitary District was formed in 1972 with 55 customers including the school. The formation of the District was in response to the demand on septic systems and leach fields in the Townsite area of Camp Verde created by an increase in the school population. The school was located on Main Street and is now the Town Hall. The Townsite at that time was bordered by 7th Street to the Verde River and Finney Flat to the Y. The original Sanitary District lagoons were adjacent to the Verde River.

An earlier wastewater treatment system was constructed in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration to serve the then Camp Verde High School on Main Street. It consisted of a septic tank and lagoon. The Camp Verde Sanitary District took over these facilities in 1972 when the District was formed. The lagoon was washed out in 1978 and 1979 by flooding along the Verde River. The lagoon was replaced with a leach field in 1980. The leach field was in the flood plain, approximately 65 feet from the river channel. The system capacity was approximately 18,000 gallons per day.

Camp Verde Sanitary District Site Acquisition Proposal Coconino National Forest

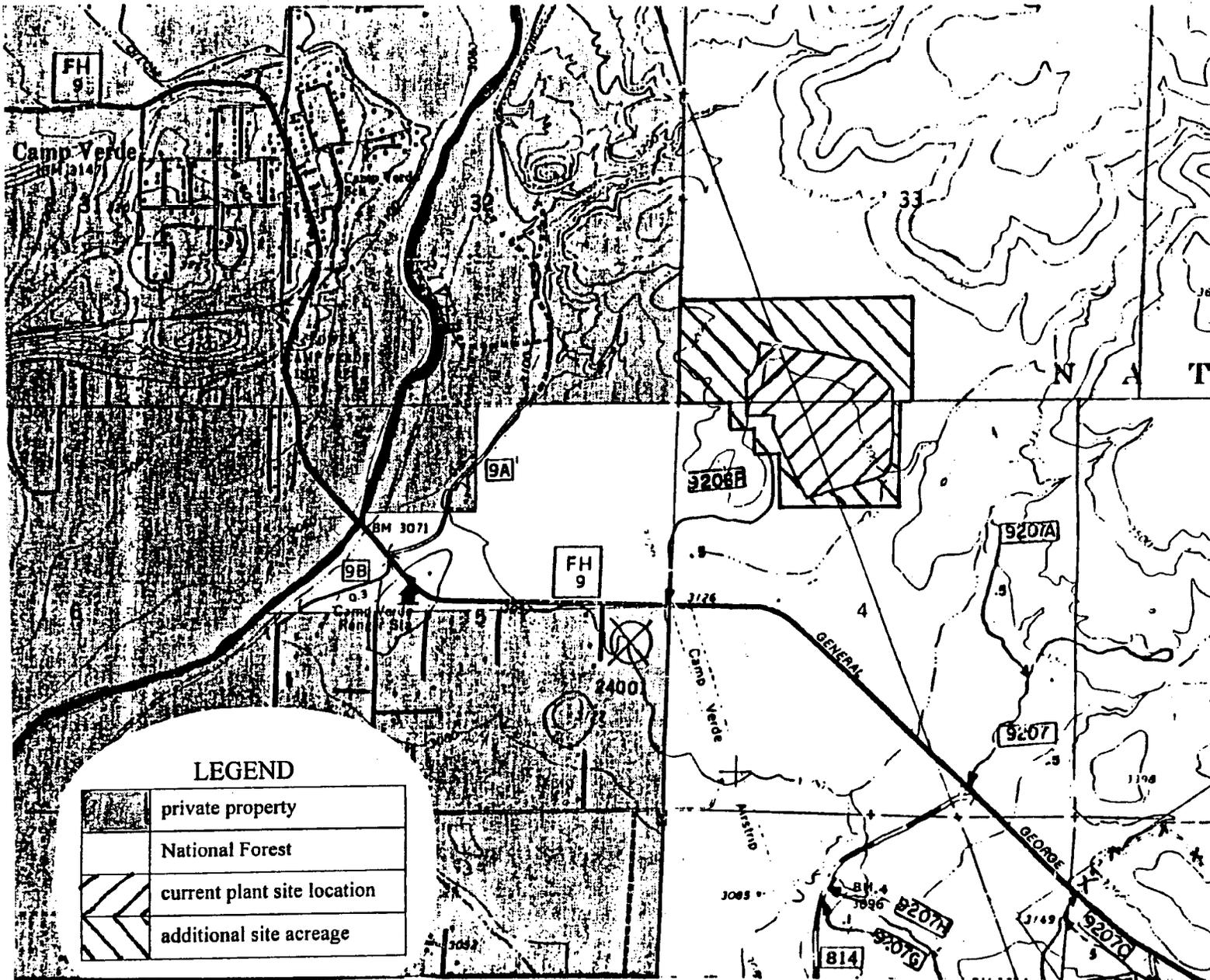


Figure 1.

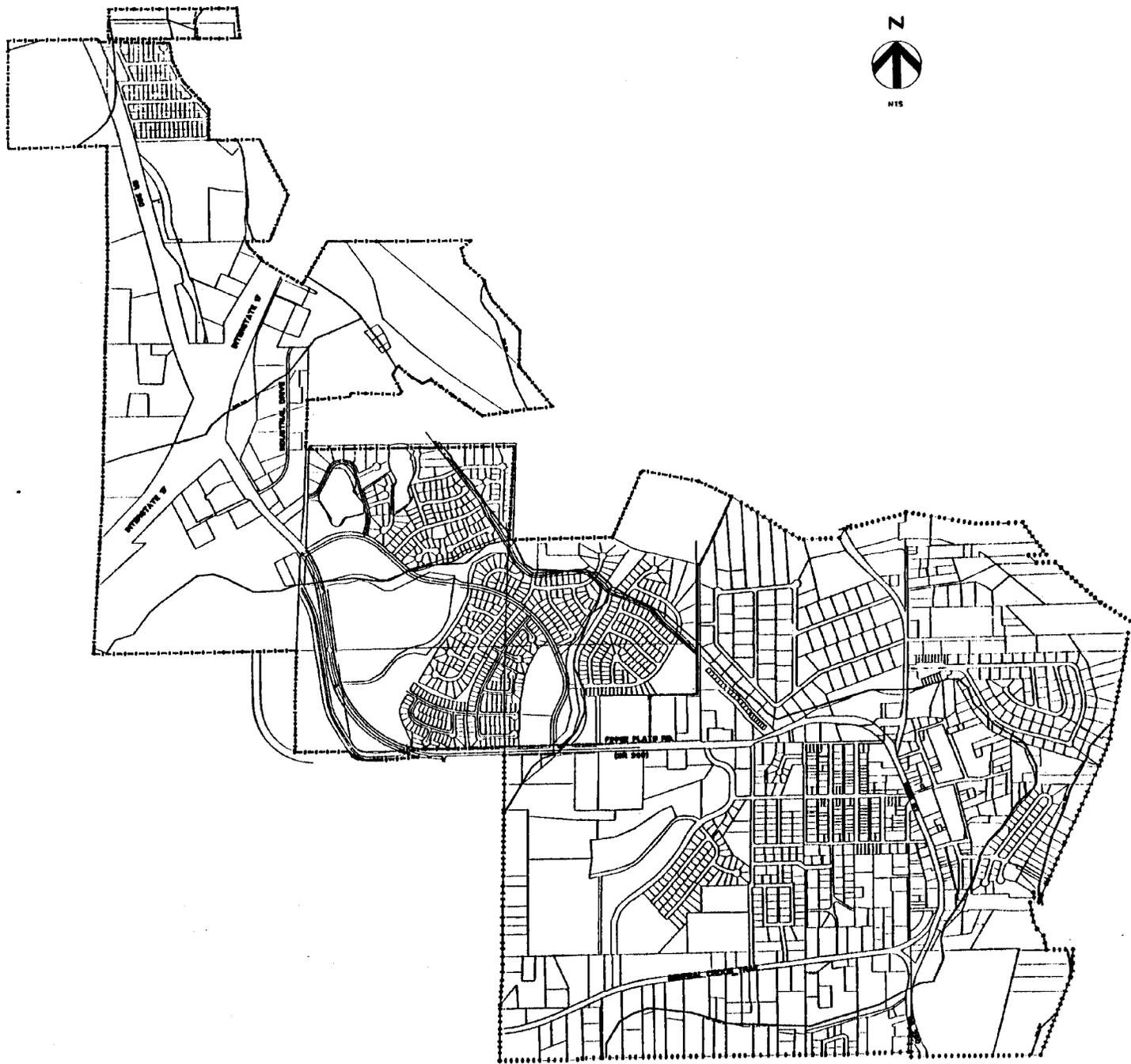
The Arizona Department of Health Services issued a Cease and Desist Order on January 31, 1980 and brought suit against the Camp Verde Sanitary District because of water quality concerns. This resulted in a court order that required in part, the prevention of any discharge of sewage or sewage effluent into the Verde River, the construction of a temporary multi-stage leach field, and the design and construction of a properly engineered facility outside the flood plain.

In January 1981, the court appointed an engineer as “Master” of the Sanitary District. An improvement district was subsequently formed. Several alternate sites and conveyance systems were studied. Site selection criteria included: soils with limited permeability, cost effectiveness, met State and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements, have sufficient area and room for expansion, could be screened from view, would be outside the community air shed, and would be outside the flood plain.

A total of five sites were analyzed. Site Four, the current treatment plant site on Coconino National Forest Lands, was the best at meeting all of the selection criteria. This site selection is documented in a Decision Notice and Finding Of No Significant Impact signed by the Coconino National Forest Supervisor on August 31, 1982 which approved construction and maintenance of the waste water treatment system under a special use permit. This document and a summary of the history and site selection process is a part of the Project Record, Document 87, of this analysis.

To solve the problem of seasonal flooding and address the court order, the District obtained Farm and Home Administration and EPA loan and grant money in 1982 to construct the existing wastewater treatment plant on the Coconino National Forest land currently under special use permit. Included in the 1982 project was a joint agreement with the Forest Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Sanitary District for the construction, management, and maintenance of duck ponds created by disposal of treated effluent. These duck ponds have a retention capacity of 38.7 million gallons. The current treatment plant has a capacity of 278,000 GPD. Annexation of Reddell Ranch Acres, Fort River Caves, and the Salt Mine Road area occurred in 1982 when residents voted to be included in the District and to support the District operation and maintenance by tax levy. The I-17/State Route 260 area became part of the District in 1993. Figure 2 shows the 1982 District boundary and the area annexed to the District in 1993.

According to Sanitary District regulations, the annexed area includes proposed sewer connections requiring immediate connection when service becomes available with this project. The remainder of the services will occur as the community grows. Immediate services connected will generate an estimated 160,000 gallons per day (GPD) which will increase the flow to the expanded 650,000 GPD plant at start-up to approximately 400,000 GPD. Other connections serving anticipated community needs within the District service area yield a future average daily flow of 1.3 million gallons per day. A second 650,000 GPD treatment train would be constructed to accommodate this need. The District served a base of 200 hundred users by 1982, increased to approximately 435 by 1999, and is expected to include 892 upon completion in two to three years of the improvements currently planned.



----- ORIGINAL DISTRICT BOUNDARY
 BOUNDARY OF AREA ANNEXED TO DISTRICT IN 1993

Figure 2.

The purpose of the Sanitary District's acquisition is to allow for the future expansion of, improvements to, and to provide the required buffer zone/setback for the wastewater treatment plant that serves the residents of the Camp Verde Sanitary District within the Town of Camp Verde. The Sanitary District has a special use permit with the U.S. Forest Service for approximately 71.5 acres of the land presently being used and which they propose to acquire under the authorities of the Sisk Act. The Sanitary District is proposing to purchase this property plus an approximate 90.5 additional adjacent acres under authorities of the Townsite Act at this time because that special use permit will expire in October 2002. The existing special use permit is free. The Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan requires that any special use permit issued or renewed to a governmental entity will be a charge permit. Revised Forest Service policy requires charging for special use permits of this type. If the Sanitary District did secure another special use permit, it would have to pay an annual fee of five percent of the fair market value of the national forest land under permit and own nothing.

The present facility consists of pipes for collecting sewage, a force main pipe that transports the collected sewage to the treatment plant, two controlled aeration lagoons, and two evaporation or duck ponds. The July 2000 inflow to the treatment facility was approximately 134,000 GPD. The present plant capacity is an average daily flow of 278,000 GPD. While the existing facility is old, it is in compliance with ADEQ standards because it was 'grandfathered' in. The Sanitary District is under the authority of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and is working to secure an Aquifer Protection Permit (APP). An APP is needed at this time because the existing population of Camp Verde has reached a threshold that requires a treatment plant capacity expansion and the expansion requires an APP. The treated effluent from the planned facility will meet current ADEQ standards for reuse and human contact.

C. Purpose and Need For Action

Existing Condition. At present, the area within the Camp Verde Sanitary District is experiencing an increase in population with growth expected to continue in the foreseeable future. Sanitary sewer service is provided to only a part of the residences and businesses in the District. In addition, effluent quality from the treatment plant does not meet the more exacting standards of an Aquifer Protection Permit. Construction is occurring rapidly within the District's boundaries. Connecting the non-sewered areas of I-17/260, Reddell Ranch Acres, and Fort River Caves to protect water quality while accommodating the increase in population is needed. All of these areas are tributary to the Verde River. The needs survey completed by the District indicated that the existing acreage of the wastewater treatment plant currently under special use permit would allow for expansion and improvement, but would not provide for the required ADEQ buffer/setback from treatment facilities to comply with APP standards. The existing lagoon process, number of customers, and the volume of effluent did not necessitate acquiring an Aquifer Protection Permit. With the expected gradual increased flow of effluent and addition of customers, the District must now meet more stringent requirements of an APP under the guidelines of ADEQ. The District has the funds available in the form of a loan commitment that is tied to the acquisition of the site.

The District's Revised Rules and Regulations adopted in July 2000 require mandatory connection when service is available.

Desired Future Condition. The Camp Verde Sanitary District would own the land and the facility, have the capacity to meet the existing and future needs of residents and businesses during the next 20 to 30 years, have the space to provide the required buffer/setback to adjacent properties, and provide improved effluent quality by installing new treatment facilities. The non-sewered areas of I-17/260, Reddell Ranch Acres, and Fort River Caves would be connected to the system.

Meeting the requirements of ADEQ and the APP would provide a treated effluent using Best Available Demonstrated Control Technology (BADCT) standards - almost drinking water quality. This quality of treated effluent could become a future commodity for the Sanitary District because it could supplement needs for water such as irrigation. This would require the construction of reuse lines in the future. Until such time as population increases and other uses for treated effluent are required, the existing duck ponds at the wastewater treatment plant will be retained. Because the minimum amount of water required to retain the duck ponds evolved over the last 20 years, it is anticipated that they can be retained even in the event of other uses for the treated effluent.

Objectives.

- ❖ Acquisition of the existing treatment plant property and proposed adjoining lands by the District.
- ❖ Construct necessary improvements to the facilities.
- ❖ Meet the waste water disposal needs of current District residents and anticipated District growth in the next 20 to 30 years.
- ❖ Establish the required buffer zone/setback area around the facilities.
- ❖ Use a conservation easement to retain the required buffer/setback and to allow continued access to adjacent national forest lands.

D. Proposed Action

The proposed action under review by the Forest Service in this document is to allow a purchase of national forest land by the Camp Verde Sanitary District under authorities of the Sisk Act and the Townsite Act. The land under consideration is at the District's present 71.5-acre plant site currently under special use permit and approximately 90.5 acres of adjacent national forest lands. The land under consideration is located in Sections 4 and 33, Township 13 North, Range 5 East, Gila & Salt River Meridian, on the east edge of Camp Verde and north of State Route 260. See Figure 1. The proposed action would:

- ❖ Facilitate the installation of improved wastewater treatment technology on the existing 71.5-acre site within the next two years with an eventual capacity of 1.3 million gallons per day.
- ❖ Provide for increased treatment capacity to accommodate growth for the next 20 to 30 years within the District.
- ❖ Enable an improved effluent quality from the treatment plant.
- ❖ Provide an ADEQ-required buffer/setback to adjacent properties by the use of a conservation easement on the acquired surrounding lands.

A part of the Aquifer Protection Permit requirements is contained in Arizona Administrative Code, Title 18, Part B, specifically R18-9-B201. Setbacks are part of these requirements. All of the Title 18 requirements must be met for the Sanitary District to obtain an APP.

The District will employ odor control facilities and process changes to meet the 350 foot setback requirement allowed under R18-9-B201.I as the plant is expanded. The following changes will be accomplished by the District as required for APP compliance:

- Retire septage receiving and pretreatment facilities - send septage to Yavapai County facility.
- Retire flow equalization lagoon – operate plant as non-flow –equalized plant.
- Install covers and air collection ductwork on oxidation ditches.
- Install covers and air collection ductwork on aerobic digester.
- Provide centralized scrubber system for odor control of headworks, oxidation ditches and aerobic digester.

Figure 3 shows the location and type of improvements planned for the facility. These improvements would be constructed within the present 71.5 acres under permit, and when fully completed, would be capable of treating an average inflow of 1.3 million GPD. The existing duck ponds at the wastewater treatment plant will be retained. The designed improvements include an aerobic digester, oxidation ditches, clarifiers, filtration, UV disinfection, new lines, and other pertinent structures. The Sanitary District does not anticipate the addition of aerated lagoons or additional duck ponds to the facility.

E. Decision To Be Made

The Southwestern Regional Forester is the official responsible for deciding whether or not to approve the conveyance of national forest land to the Sanitary District, a special use permit for the access road, and construction of new lines on Coconino National Forest lands outside the acquisition area. The Regional Forester may decide to select the No Action alternative or select the proposed action. The Regional Forester would also have to decide on appropriate mitigation measures to implement if the national forest land was conveyed to the Sanitary District.

F. Issues

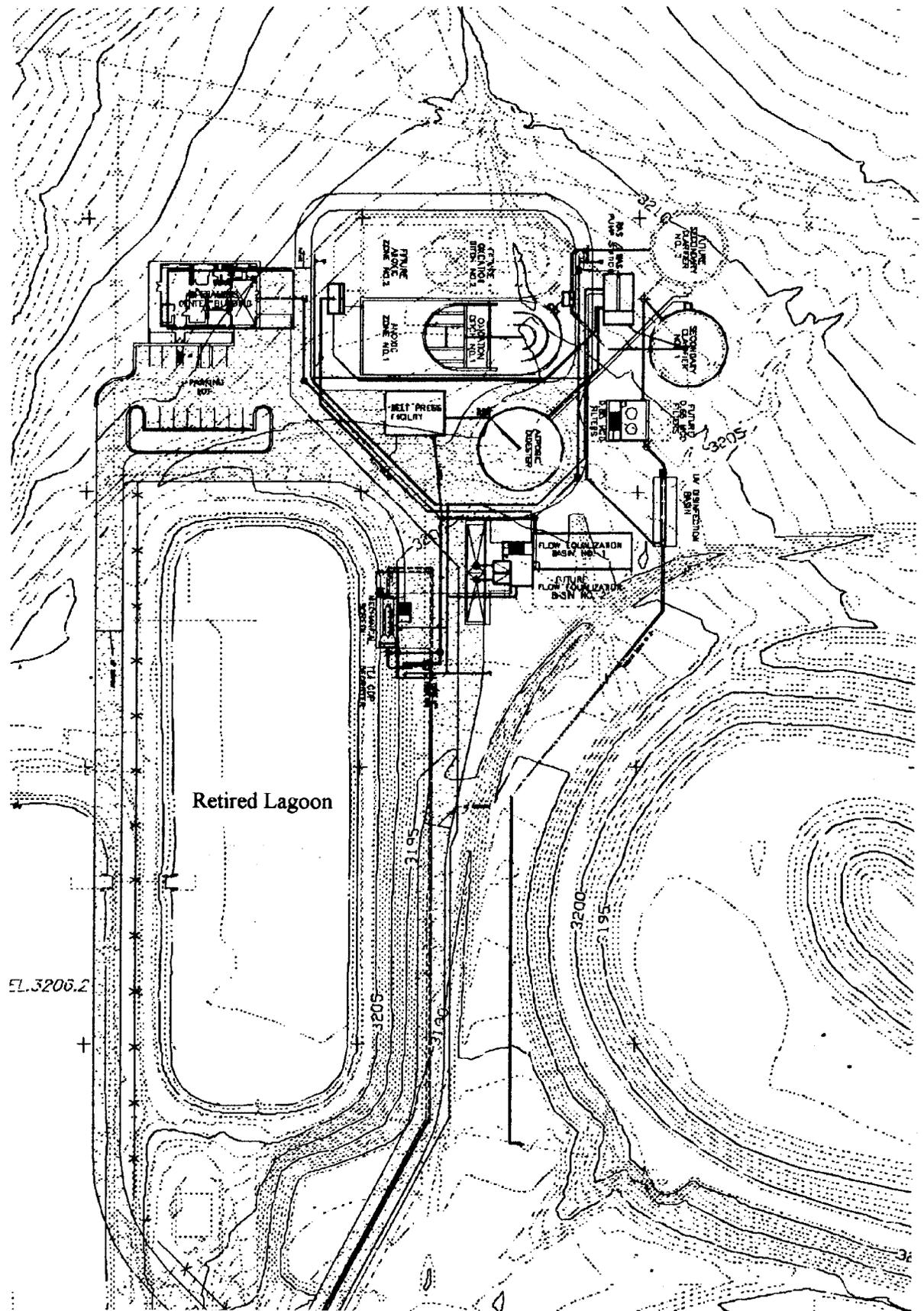
Forest Service policy is to address within an environmental analysis potential effects of each developed alternative on five elements of the environment: vegetation, soil, water, wildlife and air. Several of the preliminary issues raised through comment of the public are associated with the above elements. Specific concerns are identified below. Additional issues are listed, as well. These issues will define the scope of environmental concerns that will be addressed in this IRM process.

- Issue 1. Ground water wells and surface water could be contaminated by seepage, flood runoff, or facility failure. Several neighbors were concerned about their domestic wells and the possible effects from plant expansion.

- Issue 2. Expansion of the wastewater treatment facility could further impact adjacent residential and Arizona State Trust Lands by changing the natural appearance of the landscape.

- Issue 3. Conveyance of the new and larger area to the District could limit or eliminate current recreation and trail use of the national forest. Several comments were received concerning use of existing horse trails in the area.

The influences and potential effects on vegetation, soils, water, wildlife, air, visual resources, minerals, and hazardous materials will be considered during this analysis.



In accordance with other laws and Executive Orders, the potential effects on caves, floodplains, wetlands, archaeological, biological, water rights, environmental justice and range resources will also be analyzed.

G. Measures

The following measures have been selected to evaluate issue resolution, compare alternatives, evaluate attainment of objectives, and describe environmental effects. Some of the measures are quantified. When the measures are not quantified, a narrative discussion of specific effects will be presented in the environmental document. These effects will be described for each alternative. The measures anticipated for use in this analysis are:

- Issue 1. Water quality standards/ADEQ permitting/monitoring requirements.
- Issue 2. Description of scenic quality objectives and changes in scenic quality from critical viewpoints. Describe noise and odor and changes that would occur from facility improvements.
- Issue 3. Describe existing recreation activities and changes to those activities. List Recreation Opportunity Spectrum objectives for the area and possible changes in meeting those objectives.

H. Project Location/Analysis Area

This IRM process will result in a site specific environmental document that discloses the environmental effects related to the major issues created by the proposed action to make national forest lands available for sale. The lands are located on the Beaver Creek Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest near Camp Verde Arizona. The land under consideration is located in Sections 4 and 33, Township 13 North, Range 5 East on the east edge of Camp Verde, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile east of the Verde River, and north of State Route 260. See Figure 1.

Other past and future projects that may contribute to cumulative effects because they are all within the Verde River watershed and may affect water quality are:

- ❖ City of Cottonwood waste water treatment plant
- ❖ City of Jerome waste water treatment plant upgrade
- ❖ Verde Valley Ranch – Town of Clarkdale new waste water treatment plant
- ❖ Big Park waste water treatment plant expansion and upgrade
- ❖ City of Sedona waste water treatment plant

Additional projects that may contribute to cumulative effects in terms of land use, erosion, sedimentation, species habitat, biological resources, and visual quality are:

- ❖ ADOT detention / flood control basin along State Route 260
- ❖ State Route 260 widening
- ❖ Private land development
- ❖ Sale of the Verde Ranger Station/Administrative Site
- ❖ Nearby Verde River recreation access site

CHAPTER 2 – ALTERNATIVES

A. Alternative Development

These alternatives and mitigation measures were developed in response to issues identified by a Forest Service ID Team, and from public scoping.

A public open house was held October 12, 2000 from 5 to 7 PM in the Camp Verde Sanitary District Office at 435H South Main Street, Camp Verde, Arizona. The purpose of the open house was to furnish additional information and to gather comments from any interested party. In addition, a scoping letter was sent to 75 nearby property owners using a mailing list developed by SEC, the NEPA contractor, from Forest Service mailing lists. The letter summarized the proposed acquisition, listed areas of potential resource concerns, invited comments using an enclosed form, and invited them to the public open house. An article appeared in the October 11, 2000 issue of the *Camp Verde Journal* and the *Verde Independent* inviting attendance at the open house. Eight people signed in at the open house and three separate written responses were mailed to the Forest Service by November 17, 2000. Responses from the public were analyzed to develop a list of issues and a Comment Analysis Summary. That Summary is included in Appendix A which starts on page 42 of this environmental assessment.

B. Alternatives Dropped From Detail Study

The interdisciplinary team considered several alternatives as the analysis process progressed. Some of the alternatives were dropped from detail study for the reasons described below.

An alternative conveying the existing 71.5-acre site without the adjacent lands was considered. Even though the proposed plant improvements could be constructed within the present site, the required 1,000-foot setback from odor producing components would not be available to meet APP and ADEQ requirements. As a result, this alternative was dropped from detail study.

Another alternative that would convey a slightly larger piece of land to meet the setback requirements was considered. This would allow construction of the proposed improvements and provide the required setback. It was considered infeasible because a new survey by the Bureau of Land Management with additional costs would be required due to the military reservation boundary and a small area of national forest between two pieces of private land would exist that would be difficult to manage.

An alternative conveying the existing 71.5-acre site while retaining the buffer area under national forest management was considered. This would allow construction of the proposed improvements and provide the required setback. The site would be an isolated private parcel within national forest lands which is inconsistent with policy. A new Bureau of Land Management survey would be required.

This alternative could restrict national forest management options within the setback area. For these reasons, this alternative was considered infeasible.

An alternative of moving the entire wastewater treatment plant to a new site was considered. The original site selection criteria and the original site selection process were reviewed. The original criteria included soils with limited permeability, cost effectiveness, met State and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements, have sufficient area and room for expansion, could be screened from view, would be outside the community airshed, and would be outside the flood plain. Potential sites to the north of Camp Verde would require a more expensive force main and pumping and be in the community's airshed. Potential sites to the southeast would require a longer, more expensive force main and potentially effect air quality in the Verde Lakes area. Potential sites to the south would involve purchase of private land and would be in the floodplain. The Sanitary District would also be required to fund closure of the existing site. This would result in a considerable additional expense for District patrons. As a result, this alternative was dropped from detail consideration.

An alternative featuring a combined Cottonwood – Camp Verde wastewater treatment system was considered. Contacts with both communities indicated that this is a concept that has been explored but issues of annexation of the State Trust Land in question or other potential sites between the two communities have not been resolved. In addition, a treatment plant in that area would serve only a small part of the land along State Route 260 within the Town of Camp Verde and not the entire Town or area within the Sanitary District boundary. The City of Cottonwood has stated that it intends to pursue selection of a site in that area to meet the needs of future expansion within Cottonwood and Verde Village. As a result, this alternative was not considered feasible.

Another alternative that would establish another treatment site to handle the increased demand with a new plant while keeping the existing treatment plant was considered. This alternative was considered infeasible because the previous site selection criteria are still valid, other potential sites do not meet all of those criteria, and construction and maintenance of two plants by the District is not cost effective.

Alternatives of expanding the area under special use permit were considered. The annual cost to the District would be considerable and maintaining long-term facilities under special use permit is inconsistent with current Forest Service policy. Loan funds for needed treatment facility improvements are only available if the District owns the land. For these reasons, this alternative was dropped from detail consideration.

C. Alternatives Considered In Detail

1. Objectives Common To Alternatives

Both the No Action and the Proposed Action alternatives contain several resource issues that can be resolved under both alternatives. Accordingly, both alternatives were analyzed under the following common objectives.

Cultural resources will be protected by compliance with management direction contained in the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Threatened, endangered, and Forest Service sensitive species habitat will be maintained under both alternatives by avoidance and by compliance with management direction contained in the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

2. Alternative Mitigation

To minimize impacts, the following mitigation measures apply to the alternatives as indicated. The mitigation measures described for the action alternative apply because the Camp Verde Sanitary District has affirmed that the District will implement them if the site is acquired.

To maintain hiking and horseback use of the existing trail access across the site, the buffer/setback area will use Forest Service specification fences and gates that provide for hiker and horseback use. This measure will provide continued access.

To minimize objectionable odors from the plant, odor control facilities would be installed at the new plant facilities. This measure almost always reduces impact.

With no action, the buffer area would remain national forest and trail access could be maintained.

To achieve visual management objectives, both alternatives will maintain the existing topographic screening on the northwest side of the plant. This measure will maintain the screening.

3. Alternative Description

A. No Action:

This alternative is required by NEPA as a baseline for comparison. There would be no sale of Coconino National Forest land to the Camp Verde Sanitary District. The Forest Service could reissue the special use permit for the existing 71.5-acre plant site and the access road with fees required. No improvements or plant capacity increases would occur.

B. Proposed Action:

The Forest Service would convey approximately 162 acres of national forest land at and adjacent to the existing plant to the Camp Verde Sanitary District under authorities contained in the Townsite Act, and issue a special use permit for the access road and new lines outside the acquisition area. The Sanitary District Board is committed to maintaining public foot and horseback trail access in the buffer/setback area to connected trails after their acquisition from the Forest Service for open space and recreation access.

Refer to Figure 3 for the location and type of improvements planned for the facility. These improvements would be constructed within the present 71.5 acres under permit, and when the first phase is completed, would increase the plant capacity from 278,000 GPD to an average inflow of 650,000 GPD. Future expansions would increase the capacity to an average inflow of 1.3 MGD. The existing duck ponds at the wastewater treatment plant will be retained along with the septage pretreatment facility. The designed improvements include an aerobic digester, oxidation ditches, clarifiers, filtration, UV disinfection, new force main along State Route 260 and the access road, and other pertinent structures such as an administration building, generator, and blower building. The Sanitary District does not anticipate the addition of aerated lagoons or additional duck ponds to the facility. The new force main will be beside the access road from State Route 260 on the opposite side of the existing force main. The buffer area and conservation easement will surround the 71.5-acre site. Continued trail access to the buffer area on existing locations would be maintained with the use of Forest Service specification barbed wire fences and gates.

Table 1. Comparison Of Alternatives For Selected Criteria

<u>Issues/Measures</u>	<u>Alternatives</u>	
	<u>A. No Action</u>	<u>B. Acquisition</u>
1. Ground and surface water contamination/ Does effluent meet APP/ADEQ standards?	No	Yes
2. Changes to the natural-appearing landscape/ Changes in scenic quality objectives.	No Change	No Change
3. Continued recreation use of national forest land/ Recreation Opportunity objectives and changes.	No Change	Slight Change with additional improvements

CHAPTER 3 – AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter shows the present condition (i.e., affected environment) within the analysis area and the changes that can be expected from implementing the proposed action alternative or taking no action at this time. The No Action alternative sets the environmental base line for comparing effects of the action alternative.

The major issues define the scope of environmental concern for this project. The environmental effects (changes from present base line condition) that are described in this chapter reflect the identified major issues. Issue numbers are shown in brackets after each subheading to cross reference issues with the effects discussions that follow.

A. Vegetation, Noxious Weeds

Affected Environment

This section describes the vegetation occurring on the area at the time of inventory. Threatened, endangered, and sensitive species are included in the description but are discussed and evaluated in Section 3-I of this document.

Much of the low-lying portion of the project site is dominated by dense, sometimes pure, stands of creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*). In openings within the creosote scrub, the most conspicuous associates are cat-claw acacia (*Acacia greggii*), little brownfoot (*Acourtia nana*), purple threeawn (*Aristida purpurea*), red barberry (*Berberis haematocarpa*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), black grama (*B. eriopoda*), blue grama (*B. gracilis*), allthorn (*Canotia holacantha*), Christmas cholla (*Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*), snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), Pima rhatany (*Krameria erecta*), winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), green sprangletop (*Leptochloa dubia*), brown-spined pricklypear (*Opuntia phaeacantha*), Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*), perennial bristlegrass (*Setaria macrostachya*), narrowleaf yucca (*Yucca angustissima*) and graythorn (*Ziziphus obtusifolia*).

The western portion of the study area is composed mainly of old river terraces. Although, the general plant community approximates disclimax tobosa grassland, there are areas where tobosa is absent. In one such area, curly mesquitegrass (*Hilaria belangeri*) is abundant. Conspicuous plant species within the low ridges of the river terraces include cat-claw acacia, purple threeawn, milkvetch (*Astragalus calycosus*), red barberry, black grama, staghorn cholla (*Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa*), Christmas cholla, pincushion cactus (*Coryphantha vivipara*), hairy tridens (*Erioneuron pilosum*), snakeweed, Coahuila juniper (*Juniperus coahuilensis*), Pima rhatany, creosotebush, blackfoot (*Melampodium leucanthum*), brown-spined pricklypear, velvet mesquite, desert senna (*Senna covesii*), shrubby coldenia (*Tiquilia canescens*), Parish goldeneye (*Viguiera parishii*), narrowleaf yucca, and graythorn. A single clone of the Forest Service Sensitive species Delamater agave (*Agave delamateri*) occurs just outside the project boundary to the southwest. The Verde Formation is exposed in some area along

the eastern edge of the terraces. The lanky wild-buckwheat (*Eriogonum microthecum*) is common here and the Forest Service Sensitive heatherleaf wild-buckwheat (*E.ericifolium* var. *ericifolium*) occurs as a small patch. The Verde Formation also occurs in the northeastern portion of the study area. Additional plant species within this area include fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), and common cliffrose (*Purshia stansburiana*). The yellow-flowered agave (*Agave chrysantha*) occurs just outside the project site boundaries with the Forest Service Sensitive Mearns Sage (*Salvia dorrii* ssp. *mearnsii*).

A significant wash runs through the southeastern portion of the study area where conspicuous plant species include whitethorn acacia (*Acacia constricta*), catclaw acacia, wormwood (*Artemisia ludoviciana*), desert-broom (*Baccharis sarothroides*), cane bluestem (*Bothriochloa barbinodis*), pachaba (*Brickellia californica*), netleaf hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*), snakeweed, Coahuila juniper, horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), wild tobacco (*Nicotiana trigonophylla*), velvet mesquite, common cliffrose, and lemonade-berry (*Rhus trilobata*). Scattered populations of the invasive exotic weeds Russian thistle (*Salsola Kali*) and puncture-vine (*Tribulus terrestris*) occur along the roadsides. In general, the site is dry and supports little perennial herbaceous vegetation. No native riparian vegetation exists on the site. ATVs use the area outside the fenced part of the land and are causing a small amount of damage to the vegetation.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, there would be no change from the present conditions and the present vegetation communities would persist. The Sanitary District would adopt and implement a program to control weeds both at the facility and along the access road to minimize the spread of weeds. Measures such as mowing, the use of selective herbicides, and biological controls would be used as appropriate.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, some loss of native desert vegetation would occur with construction of the new facilities. However, this vegetation association is widespread in the area and the small loss would not measurably reduce its viability. Increased water and aquatic vegetation would result with the increased treatment capacity. The buffer area would be fenced and exclude ATVs but proposed actions concerning ATV use in the future should eliminate cross country use by ATVs. The access road from State Route 260 to the treatment plant is also a part of this project. Invasive exotic weeds have been noted along this road. A new force main from the Town to the treatment plant would be located along the east side of this access road and managed under a special use permit where it crosses national forest lands. Soil disturbance accompanying this construction and construction of the new facilities would provide a good seedbed for propagation of weeds. The Sanitary District would adopt and implement a program to control weeds both at the facility and along the access road to minimize the spread of weeds. Measures such as mowing, the use of selective herbicides, and biological controls would be used as appropriate.

B. Soils

Affected Environment

The Coconino National Forest Terrestrial Ecosystem Survey characterizes the soils as occurring on valley plains/alluvial (water deposited) fans and hills. The valley plains/alluvial fans soils are deep fine sandy loams on 2 to 5 % slopes with large amounts of calcium carbonate in the subsoil. The erosion hazard is rated as slight. Test borings in the bottoms of the duck ponds indicate clay layers occur in the subsoils. Subsoil permeabilities are slow, in the order of 0.00004 centimeters/second. Revegetation potential is severely limited by the hot dry climate and large amounts of calcium carbonate from the Verde Formation. These soils present some limitations to construction because of the exacting soil moisture requirements for working the clay subsoil layers, for the occasional hard calcium carbonate layers in the subsoil, and buried metal must be protected from corrosion by the high concentration of calcium carbonate.

Soils on the hills are moderately deep extremely cobbly loams on 25 to 40 % slopes with large amounts of rounded cobbles. These soils are developing in old alluvium from the Verde River. The erosion hazard ranges from moderate to severe. Revegetation potential is low because of climate and significant quantities of calcium carbonate. They are poorly suited to construction because of slope and the concentration of calcium carbonate. No construction is planned for these soils.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, soil conditions would not change and would not limit operation of the existing treatment plant.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, all construction work is planned on the valley plains/alluvial fans soils. Temporary increased soil disturbance would occur with construction at the treatment plant and force main installation. However, soil movement would be minimized because of the gentle slopes and required construction mitigation measures to limit off-site soil movement. Soils in the bottoms of the duck ponds would not be affected and would continue to limit seepage of treated effluent. Quality control during construction would successfully manage working with the clay subsoils.

C. Ground Water Quality, Flooding Potential [1]

Affected Environment

A discussion of the hydrogeologic setting follows and serves as a base for understanding the movement of ground water in the various subsurface layers and how seepage from the duck ponds might affect those subsurface layers.

The subsurface layers are discussed separately to aid in understanding their significance. They are divided into terrace deposits, alluvial deposits and the Verde Formation (Fm).

East and southeast from the treatment plant, younger terrace deposits of silty gravel overlay the Verde Fm. The terrace deposits are generally above the water table and are not hydrologically significant.

Alluvial deposits of sand, silt, and gravel occur along the Verde River and are an important source of groundwater. Shallow wells in these deposits could be contaminated.

The Verde Fm., as much as 1,500 feet thick, underlies the entire Camp Verde area. The formation is comprised primarily of limestone and mudstone; the mudstone beds often contain evaporite (deposited by evaporation of a solution) minerals such as salt and gypsum. The wastewater treatment plant is located on outcrops of limestone and mudstone of the Verde Formation. Limestones in the Verde Fm. are also a major aquifer in the Camp Verde area. Static water levels in Verde Fm. wells located within one mile of the treatment plant are at an altitude of about 3,050 feet. Depth to water in these wells ranges from 50 to 150 feet, depending on the altitude of land surface. Driller's logs report that water rises in a hole from 8 to 50 feet above the level where water was first found, indicating artesian head, or pressure.

The direction of groundwater movement in the Verde Fm. is shown in Arizona Department of Water Resources Bulletin 3 to be directly to the southwest from the treatment plant. The indicated hydraulic gradient (slope of the water table) to the southwest is only 11 feet/mile, or 0.002 ft/ft. Data for more recent wells confirm both the direction of movement and gradient.

Rate of groundwater movement was calculated using an equation. The equation is in the Project Record. The calculated time for groundwater to move 1/2 mile (2,640') from the treatment plant in the Verde Fm. is more than 100 years. Because none of the values used in the equation are accurately known, it is best to assume that travel time would be a matter of decades.

Data on groundwater quality in the Verde Fm. were found for 8 domestic wells located within one mile of the treatment plant. Specific Conductance, a measure of salinity, there ranged from 588 to 1,500. Three of the eight wells also had analyses of common constituents. Arsenic concentrations in six of the wells ranged from 28 to 68 micrograms per liter (ug/l). Calculated or measured Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) ranged from 404 to about 1,000 milligrams per liter (mg/l). Only two of the eight wells had TDS of less than 500 mg/l; one of those was the monitoring well at the treatment plant which had a TDS of 409 mg/l in June, 2000.

The few current data available for domestic wells downgradient from the treatment plant are insufficient to establish present day water-quality conditions.

One of the expressed concerns about the proposed action is seepage from the two unlined storage ponds at the treatment plant. The larger pond has been dry most of the time in the past, and the water level in the smaller pond has generally been low. However, increased plant capacity is expected to maintain storage of treated effluent in the ponds at higher levels much of the time. With increased discharge to the ponds, it must be assumed that some seepage would occur. The seepage would either percolate downward toward the Verde Fm. aquifer, or migrate laterally in the thin, unconsolidated deposits above the Verde Fm.

Seepage characteristics of the storage ponds are unknown. Some of the yellow clay beds found in the present monitoring well were observed in the bottoms of the ponds in January, 2001, as well as limestones of the Verde Formation. Possible shallow lateral seepage is indicated by reeds and rushes growing near the fence on the west side of the smaller pond. However, the analysis of water from the treatment plant monitoring well (A-13-5) 4bba, in the Verde Fm., shows no indication of seepage from the lined treatment ponds located about 50 and 150 feet north from the well, nor from the unlined storage pond located about 200 feet east.

An unnamed wash, with a drainage area of about 2 square miles, passes close to the southeast portion of the treatment plant property. This wash now terminates in a retention pond near Highway 260. The drainage channel is entrenched and berms protect the duck ponds.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, the existing conditions as described for the treatment plant area would not change and the quality of treated effluent would not meet APP/ADEQ standards. Increased construction in the Camp Verde area would result in more septic systems with the potential to adversely affect ground and surface water in the area. Because the channel is entrenched near the treatment plant property, and because of the berms protecting the duck ponds, no flooding problems are anticipated.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, a new wastewater treatment plant would be constructed and more residences and businesses within the Sanitary District would be provided sanitary sewer service. Effluent would meet APP/ADEQ standards for reuse and human contact.

The terrace deposits are not hydrologically significant and are not expected to be affected.

The alluvial aquifer is not expected to be at risk because the nearest well producing from the alluvium is 3/4 mile distant from the treatment plant, the alluvial deposits downgradient from the treatment plant are generally very thin and could transport little seepage. Any seepage transported by alluvial deposits along the wash south of the treatment plant would be captured by the retention pond near State Route 260.

The amount of seepage, if any, entering the retention pond would determine the need for further action.

It is possible, but unlikely, that seepage from the duck ponds will reach the saturated zones in the Verde Fm. Seepage water probably would not penetrate the 70-80 feet of “medium hard white limestone” noted in the driller’s log of the existing monitoring well, (A-13-5) 4bba. However, a fractured zone that caused loss of drilling water was noted in the driller’s log of that well at a depth of 89 feet (about 80 feet below the bottoms of the duck ponds). Because the depths and locations of fractured zones in the Verde Fm. cannot be predicted, it will be necessary to monitor possible seepage to the Verde Fm.

It is likely that most seepage would move laterally to the south and southwest, on top of clay and limestone beds, 10 to 20 feet below land surface. Seepage would possibly follow the channel of the wash that terminates in a new retention pond near State Route 260. Shallow (40-50 feet deep) domestic wells are common at distances of more than one mile from the treatment plant. Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) records do not identify any shallow wells in unconsolidated deposits within 3/4 mile of the treatment plant. Poorly protected wells in the Verde Fm. 1.5 to 2.0 miles southwest of the area of the proposal, however, could be affected by shallow seepage, if seepage from the duck ponds reaches their locations. Aquifer Protection Permit requirements would determine the need for additional monitoring. Because it is difficult to determine if downgradient wells would be affected by future activities at the treatment plant, it is recommended that water from wells in the NE and SE 1/4s, Sec. 5, T13 N, R 5 E, be sampled and analyzed for at least chloride, orthophosphate, ammonia, NO₂ + NO₃, total Kjeldahl nitrogen, and Specific Conductance. Those data would provide a baseline for later reference. Because the channel is entrenched near the treatment plant property, and because of the berms protecting the duck ponds, no flooding problems are anticipated.

D. Wildlife, Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Management Indicator Species

Affected Environment

Wildlife

This section describes the wildlife or habitat occurring on the area at the time of inventory.

The present wastewater ponds are an attractant for waterfowl and provide water for small mammals and birds. They also currently attract elk, which are jumping the fence and using the duck ponds for water and, perhaps, green forage.

The relatively monotypic creosote bush flat has a low diversity of wildlife species. The few mesquites and acacias provide limited nesting sites for shrub-nesting species; herbaceous forage is limited, and, with the exception of the duck ponds, free water is non-existent.

The area undoubtedly supports small game species such as Gambel's quail (*Lophortyx gambelii*), black-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*), and cottontails (*Sylvilagus sp.*). Rodents in the general area include *Peromyscus eremicus*, *Ammospermophilus harrisi*, *Dipodomys ordii*, *D. merriami*, and *Reithrodontomys megalotis*.

Predators using the area include coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), and gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*). Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) will be attracted to the duck ponds, as will collared peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*).

Raptors such as northern harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), sharp-shinned hawks (*Accipiter striatus*) and red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) may use the area for foraging. Other potential species for the general area include Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanis ludovicianus*), Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii*), virden (*Auriparus flaviceps*), brown towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*), Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), and black-throated sparrow (*aimophila bilineata*).

At the time the site was inventoried for this assessment (October 13, 2000) an unknown number of elk were jumping the fence into the present waste water ponds to reach water. This was during an extremely dry period, hence may not be a permanent condition. Nonetheless, the attraction of elk and, perhaps, mule deer may be a recurring problem. The fence around the present ponds is constructed of 6-foot woven wire, with two strands of barbed wire above it. Elk can easily jump a fence of this height, but the barbed wire strands constitute a serious hazard and could result in animals hanging up their legs as they jump the fence. Future construction should avoid similar fence construction and should provide water sources outside of these existing fences to discourage elk and deer from jumping into the currently fenced area around the ponds.

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species

An inventory of the lands proposed for acquisition by the Camp Verde Sanitary District was conducted to determine if suitable occupied or unoccupied habitat exists for both plant and animal species using a species list obtained from the Coconino National Forest. A biological assessment and evaluation was prepared. There is suitable habitat for the Arizona night lizard within the project area. There is adequate foraging habitat for the bald eagle. No individuals of Arizona cliffrose were found within or near to the project area. Although suitable habitat occurs in the project area, no individuals of Ripley buckwheat were observed within the project area. A single small population of heatherleaf wild-buckwheat was located just within the present fence boundaries and adjacent to an existing roadway. The one population could be affected if it is not protected. Habitat for the Hualapai milkwort occurs within the inventory area but no individuals were observed.

While the treatment plant is within the geographic range of the Southwestern river otter, it is too far from the Verde River to be of value as habitat. The site is considered to be within wintering habitat for the Threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). At present it has no potential roosts but does provide eagle foraging habitat.

The ponds attract eagle prey, including waterfowl and small mammals. Overhead power lines surrounding the treatment plant could be a hazard to eagles pursuing prey.

The site does have suitable habitat for some invertebrate species of concern listed by the U.S. Forest Service. Habitat for the early elfin is present within the project area but out of the areas proposed for construction. Generally speaking, the project area contains habitat for the Comstock's hairstreak. The general habitat type for the Freeman's agave borer occurs within the project area, but no agave individuals occur within areas of proposed activities. Although general habitat type for the Aryxna giant skipper occurs within the project area, no agave individuals occur within areas of proposed activities. The Freeman agave borer is specifically associated with Palmer agave (*Agave palmeri*). Palmer agave was not noted on the site. The early elfin requires common cliff rose (*Purshia stansburiana*). The site does have suitable habitat for this species in a general way. Comstock's hairstreak (*Callyphrys comstocki*) occurs at higher elevations and rocky hillsides and canyons. The site is below normal elevations for the species but is considered to provide habitat in a general way because the host plant genus *Eriogonum* (buckwheat) occurs abundantly on the Verde Formation. The spotted skipperling inhabits cool, moist canyons and moist cliffsides, moist meadows and streamsides and there is no suitable habitat for the species. Neumogen's Giant Skipper (*Agathymus neumogeni*) is associated with Parry agave (*Agave parryi*), which does not occur on the site. Similarly, the Aryxna Giant Skipper is obligate to Parry agave.

The site does provide suitable habitat for the Arizona night lizard (*Xantusia vigilis arizonae*) because of the presence of yucca and suitable areas for burrowing.

Management Indicator Species, Pronghorn

The available habitat is too small to support a viable population. The pronghorn habitat guidelines consider anything under 100 square miles as too small to consider as long-term habitat. Considering the rough terrain to the north of the treatment plant and the urban areas surrounding it on other sides, the habitat size is rated unsuitable.

Terrain: While the immediate area may be in level terrain, the available open lands to the north are too rough for pronghorn and therefore unsuitable.

Vegetation Classes: Bare ground is greater than 50 percent, an open desert-like of low density xeric shrubs and succulents, grasses are not a prominent feature, and there are less than 5 species of shrubs. Vegetation rates low in quality.

Development/disturbance: Human disturbances occur on a daily basis with high use gravel or paved roads nearby. The area rates poor in quality for this factor.

Fencing: Barbed-wire fences lack a smooth bottom strand. Pastures are less than 0.5 square mile. As a result, pronghorn movements are likely to be severely restricted.

Water Class: The treatment plant provides good water. This would be the only attractant for pronghorn and this factor rates high in quality. Fencing of water may be a problem, however.

Juxtaposition: The small project area is a badly fragmented habitat due to roads, terrain, and urbanization, and it no longer connects with larger expanses of good habitat. The area ranks low here.

Based on these criteria, the area rates very low to unsuitable for pronghorn and does not support a viable population.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, the existing conditions for wildlife, threatened, endangered, sensitive, and management indicator species are not expected to change. Existing habitats would be maintained. If the wastewater treatment plant continues to operate in its present form, the problem of elk and, possibly, deer jumping the existing fence should be addressed. This might be resolved by making treated water available to wildlife outside of the fence, although also raising the fence would be preferable.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, some wildlife habitat disturbance would occur with the new construction. However, increased water levels in the duck ponds would increase potential waterfowl habitat. Properly planned, the project can also provide a safe watering place for other bird and mammal species. Increased water availability and green forage associated with duck ponds would improve the area as habitat for these species that are prey for bald eagle and other hunting birds. If the treatment plant expands, suitable watering sites outside of the present fenced area should be incorporated into the plan as discussed above.

For threatened, endangered and sensitive species, the single population of heatherleaf wild-buckwheat would be fenced with a buffer to maintain the population. Suitable habitat for the Arizona night lizard, early elfin, Comstock's hairstreak, Arizona cliff rose, Ripley's buckwheat, heatherleaf wild buckwheat, and Hualapai milkwort that occurs within the project area may be modified by treatment plant activities. Habitat for other species such as prey for the bald eagle and other hunting birds would be increased because of the increase in water and aquatic vegetation.

For the management indicator species, pronghorn, existing habitat characteristics would not improve and the area would continue to not support a viable population.

E. Air Quality And Odor

Affected Environment

Air quality as measured at Montezuma Castle National Monument is within attainment of standards according to the *2000 Air Quality Report* published by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. The closest Class 1 Airshed is the Pine Mountain Wilderness, approximately 14 miles to the south.

Nearby residents have noted objectionable odors emanating from the existing treatment plant. According to plant personnel, this occurred because of improper plant operation. The existing operation is according to specification and odors have been minimized. However, an occasional odor is still noticeable if winds are strong enough and in the correct direction.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, air quality would remain in attainment of standards and odors would be minimized by proper plant operation. However, an occasional odor would still be noticeable if winds are strong enough and in the correct direction.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, air quality is expected to remain in attainment of standards. Construction would create an increase in dust temporarily but is not expected to violate air quality standards because Federal contract standards would apply and the Town of Camp Verde requires that excavation and grading work be watered to minimize dust.

The proposed treatment plant design is better than the existing. Odor producing components will be contained inside buildings that include odor collection and scrubber features. Objectionable odors are not expected to be noticeable.

F. Scenic Quality [2]

Affected Environment

This section provides an analysis of the existing scenic quality and of the expected effects on the scenic quality of national forest lands resulting from no action or from the sale of approximately 162 acres of Coconino National Forest land to the Camp Verde Sanitary District. Sale of the 162 acres would allow for the improvement of and the expansion of wastewater treatment and disposal and additional space for ADEQ required setbacks.

The scenic quality analysis area includes an approximately 1 mile portion of State Highway 260 south of the subject property, the 162 acre site, and the national forest, and State Trust lands bordering the site within ½ mile.

The subject 162 acre property includes the existing Camp Verde Wastewater Treatment facility which is located approximately 1 ½ miles southeast of Camp Verde on State Highway 260. The existing plant facilities lie approximately 1/3 mile north of Hwy. 260 on national forest lands and is accessed by an all weather gravel road.

The 162 acre parcel proposed for sale is composed of the existing 71.5 acre plant site and an additional 90.5 acres of buffer for a total of 162 acres. The property, at an average elevation of 3200 ft., lies within the Verde Valley. Vegetation consists of scattered individual Utah Juniper and Pinon Pine trees, Creosote Bush, Crucifixion Thorn and other less predominant native woody shrubs and forbs. Local grasses consist of Tabosa, Black Gramma and Side Oats Gramma.

The character of the landscape within the immediate area consists of an open area comprised of gently sloped lands with infrequent low land forms of hills and mesas, the most predominant of these being the limestone White Hills to the north. Encompassing the site, in the background are the larger more predominant landforms of the Mogollon Rim to the north - north east, the distant Mazatzal mountains to the east - south east and Mingus mountain and foothills to the south. These distant landscape elements represent the major predominant features within the view of the observer from the subject site. The native vegetation is sparse and of little visual interest.

Although portions of the 162 acre site are visible from an approximate 500 ft. portion of State Highway 260, the existing treatment plant facilities are not visible from the highway because natural landforms and native vegetation create sufficient visual screening between the highway and plant facilities.

There are two non-designated, unmarked and unimproved trail routes located west and north of the proposed plant site that receive approximately 10 hikers and equestrians per month. These routes provide access from State Highway 260 south of the site to the White Hills north of the site. One route is located approximately 500 ft. west of the existing plant and one route is located approximately 50 ft north of the existing plant.

A 200 acre parcel of undeveloped Arizona State Trust Land is situated in Section 13 adjacent to the northwest side of the subject parcel. The future of this State Trust Land is not known but one possibility is that it may be transferred to private ownership by sale or trade. If this change to private ownership occurs a reasonably foreseeable scenario is that the property would be developed for residential homesites.

Coconino National Forest personnel have visually surveyed, classified, and mapped the scenic values and Visual Quality Objectives (VQO) of national forest lands around Camp Verde including the lands on and around the treatment plant. The resultant VQO survey and map was prepared utilizing the Forest Service Visual Management System on the basis of the view from State Highway 260. The resultant classification of scenic values and VQO of the subject site are outlined below.

ADJACENT HWY. 260 (BOTH SIDES) As viewed from the State Highway.

VQO CLASSIFICATION: FG1C
PR

INTERPRETATION OF VQO CLASSIFICATIONS:

FG classifies the Distance Zone as “foreground” i.e. the detailed landscape found within - ¼ - ½ mile of the highway.

1 classifies the Sensitivity Level as “1” i.e. the highest of three levels as a measure of viewers interest or concern in the scenic qualities of the forest landscape, in this case, within the “foreground” distance zone.

C classifies the Variety Class, or level of visual variety or diversity of the landscape character as C, “minimal” i.e. a landscape with little or no variety, with little changes in the form, color and line of the landscape.

PR defines the Quality Objective as “Partial Retention”, a zone within which man’s activity within the described area may be evident but must remain subordinant to the characteristic landscape area on and immediately around the subject site as viewed from the highway.

NORTH OF HIGHWAY 260 AND NORTH OF THE FOREGROUND ZONE

VQO CLASSIFICATION: MG1B
PR

INTERPRETATION OF VQO CLASSIFICATIONS:

MG - classifies the Distance Zone as “middleground”, i.e., the detailed landscape found within ¼ - ½ to 3-5 miles from the viewer.

1 – the highest sensitivity level.

B - classifies the Variety Class or level of visual variety or diversity of the landscape character as B, “common”, i.e., a landscape character that is “not outstanding”.

PR - refer to previous interpretation.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, the subject property would not be sold and the Sanitary District would not make any improvements. Since the analysis area presently meets the inventoried VQOs, continued use of the site with no major

improvements would not change the scenic quality and the existing VQOs would be maintained.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, the subject property would be sold to the Sanitary District to allow expansion and modernization of the existing wastewater treatment and disposal facilities. Improvements include an operations center building, a belt press facility, two clarifier tanks, expanded access drives and a 13 space parking area.

The highest structures, operations center building and belt press facility, would not exceed 14' in height, would be constructed from metal and / or masonry, and would be painted tan or green to blend with the natural colors of the site. The clarifier tanks would not exceed 4' in height and would be painted tan or green. Information pertaining to the height, material, and color of the proposed improvements was provided verbally from the Sanitary District Board Chairperson. This information was not available from the design engineer at the time this analysis was prepared. All improvements would be designed to contain odors. The septage pretreatment lagoon and the flow equalization lagoon would be retired and returned to a natural condition. The access road from the highway to the site will remain in its current location and will not be widened although a new force main would be buried on the east side of the road.

The two duck ponds will remain as they currently exist. The Sanitary District, in conjunction with the Arizona Game and Fish Dept., would manage the duck ponds as a viewable wildlife habitat area with the long term objective of developing a viewable wildlife and educational resource.

The majority of existing plant site lies within a landscape Variety Class designated as "B", or common with a Quality Objective of "PR", or Partial Retention which states "mans activity may be evident but must remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape".

The proposed purchase site and new plant facilities would continue to meet the PR objective for trail users because the proposed structures would be visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. The two proposed structures would be painted to blend with the natural landscape and would not exceed 14 ft. in height. The three low profile tanks, 3 ft - 4 ft high, would be painted the same color as the buildings. Access drives and the 14 space parking area will be surfaced with gravel consisting of natural earth colors, grays, browns and tans. The limited size, the variety of structural forms and natural colors would allow the improvements to remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

For travelers along State Highway 260, the existing 71.5 acre site is only visible to north west bound traffic and only then from an approximately 500 ft. section of highway which occurs approximately ¾ miles away from the existing plant. The only existing visibly detectable feature on the site is a metal building the approximate size of a double garage and painted dark green. It is very difficult to see this building from a vehicle traveling

north west on State Highway 260 and impossible to see while traveling southeast on the same highway. The proposed improvements, as part of the plant expansion described earlier will be located 550' to the north of the existing building, therefore 550' farther away from the highway than the existing building which would be removed. Additionally these proposed improvements will be located behind and below the berm enclosing the northerly duck pond, all of which would make them difficult, if not impossible to see from State Highway 260. It should also be noted that there are no other major travelways from which the proposed 162 acre site can be seen. The minimal visual impact to travelers on State Highway 260 would not be sufficient to alter the existing VQO classifications or management objectives and they would be maintained.

Concerning the State Trust Lands, existing vegetation and landforms between the proposed plant site and those lands provide natural visual barriers between those lands and the plant site preventing the site from being seen from the State Trust Lands. As a result, there would be no visual impact to those lands.

G. Recreation Opportunity [3]

Affected Environment

This section provides an analysis of the expected effects on outdoor recreation opportunities on adjacent national forest lands resulting from the sale of approximately 162 acres of Coconino National Forest land to the Camp Verde (Arizona) Sanitary District. The analysis discusses existing national forest recreational opportunities on and around the 162 acres and the expected effects on these opportunities, if any, that may result from the sale of the 162 acres.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) analysis area is the same as that for scenic quality.

The Forest Service ROS management objectives for the analysis area are designated as: SPM - Semi-Primitive Motorized, SPNM - Semi Primitive Non Motorized, R – Rural, and RN - Roaded Natural. The analysis area currently meets these objectives as a result of meeting the following conditions for the four classifications.

ROS - SETTING

SPM - Semi-Primitive Motorized

- Moderate probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, tranquillity. High degree of self-reliance, challenge and risk in using motorized equipment.
- Predominantly natural appearing environment.
- Low concentration of users but often evidence of others on trails.
- Minimum on site controls and restrictions present but subtle.
- Vegetative alterations very small in size and number widely dispersed and visually subordinate.

SPNM - Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized

- High probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, tranquillity, self-reliance, challenge and risk.
- Natural appearing environment.
- Low interaction between users.
- Some evidence of other users..
- Minimum of subtle on site controls.
- Access and travel is non-motorized on trails, some primitive roads or cross country.
- Vegetative alterations: sanitation salvage to very small units in size and number, widely dispersed and not evident.

R - Rural

- Opportunity to observe and affiliate with other users is important as is convenience of facilities. Self-reliance on outdoor skills of little importance. Little challenge and risk except for activities such as downhill skiing.
- Natural environment is culturally modified yet attractive (i.e. pastoral farmlands). Backdrop may range from alterations not obvious to dominant.
- Interactions between users may be high as is evidence of other users.
- Obvious and prevalent on site controls.
- Access and travel facilities are for individual intensified motorized use.

RN - Roaded Natural

- Opportunity to affiliate with other users in developed sites but with some chance for privacy. Self-reliance on outdoor skill of only moderate importance. Little challenge and risk.
- Mostly natural appearing environment as viewed from sensitive roads and trails.
- Interaction between users at camp sites is of moderate importance.
- Some obvious on site controls of users.
- Access and travel is conventional motorized including sedan, trailers, RVs and some motor homes.
- Vegetative alterations done to maintain desired visual and recreational characteristics.

ROS - ACTIVITIES & FACILITIES

SPM - Semi-Primitive Motorized

- Access for people with disabilities is “DIFFICULT” and challenging.
- Rustic and rudimentary facilities primarily for site protection. No evidence of synthetic materials. Use undimensioned native materials.
- Interpretation through very limited on site facilities. Use of maps, brochures and guidebooks.

SPNM - Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized

- Access for people with disabilities is “DIFFICULT” and challenging.
- Rustic and rudimentary facilities primarily for site protection. No evidence of synthetic materials. Use undimensioned native materials.
- Interpretation through self-discovery. Some use of maps, brochures, and guidebooks. No on site facilities.

R - Rural

- Access for people with disabilities is “EASY” and meets ADAAG standards.
- Some facilities designed primarily for user comfort and convenience. Some synthetic but harmonious materials may be incorporated. Design may be more complex and refined.
- Moderate to heavy site modification.
- Interpretation through more complex wayside exhibits including small lighted structures. Interpretive facilities such as kiosks and portals may be staffed part-time.

RN - Roded Natural

- Access for people with disabilities is of only “MODERATE” challenge.
- Rustic facilities providing some comfort for the user as well as site protection. Use native materials but with more refinement in design. Synthetic materials should not be evident.
- Moderate site modification for facilities.
- Interpretation through simple wayside exhibits. Use native-like materials with some refinement in design. Some casual interpretation by forest staff.

The Forest Service management objective is to continue to maintain the four ROS objectives as described which will continue to define the character of the area as meeting the stated objectives.

Existing analysis area recreation uses, and / or opportunities are limited. There are no improved forest recreation facilities, i.e., campgrounds, picnic sites, designated trails or trailheads, scenic viewpoints or interpretive sites near the treatment plant. Hunting is not allowed because most of the analysis area lies within one mile of State Highway 260 and the discharge of firearms within one mile of a roadway is illegal.

The recreation activities near the treatment plant include driving for pleasure / scenic opportunities and hiking and equestrian uses along two non-designated, unmarked and unimproved trail routes located west and north of the proposed plant site. A segment of these trails provides access for equestrians from State Highway 260 south of the treatment plant to the White Hills north of the treatment plant.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, the treatment plant would remain national forest and no improvements would be made by the Sanitary District.

Although there are several possible future scenarios, the existing 71.5 acre site currently under lease, along with the plant operation, would probably remain until such time that a new site, resulting from expansion needs, would be acquired and developed. At that time, existing improvements would be removed and mitigation actions would be taken to restore the site to its natural condition. In the meantime, continued operation of the plant, and the associated use of the site, would occur. Since the area presently meets the requirements of the ROS objectives, continued use of the 71.5 acre site with no new major improvements would not affect the ability of the site to continue meeting the requirements of the stated ROS management objectives.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, there would be no limitations to hikers and equestrians who use the non-designated trails outside the existing fenced area because the new fences enclosing the buffer area would use Forest Service specifications with gates that provide access for those uses. For travelers along State Highway 260 who are driving for pleasure and enjoying a natural appearing landscape, that experience in the Roded Natural setting would continue because the proposed improvements, as part of the plant expansion described earlier, would be located 550' to the north of the existing building, therefore 550' farther away from the highway than the existing building. Additionally these proposed improvements would be located behind and below the berm enclosing the northerly duck pond, all of which will make them difficult, if not impossible to see from Highway 260. As a result, the Roded Natural ROS objective would continue to be met.

H. Noise

Affected Environment

Electric motors driving the floating aerators at the existing treatment plant do emit noise that can occasionally be heard by residents in the area if wind currents are favorable.

The proposed new treatment plant facilities would have noise-producing components including an influent pump station, small blowers for the digester facilities and the aerated grit chambers, and a generator as backup during power failures.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, existing conditions of occasional noise in nearby residences would continue.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, although specific noise levels are not available from design plans, noise levels in nearby residential areas are expected to be similar to or lower than those that exist now because most motors and pumps would be either submerged or located in buildings.

I. Minerals

Affected Environment

Evaporite minerals, chiefly gypsum and halite, are common in the mudstone facies (local differences within rock formations) of the Verde Fm. Gypsum and halite have been mined in the area south of the treatment plant. The presence of the NaSO₄ (sodium sulfate) minerals thenardite, mirabilite, and glauberite have also been reported near the old salt mine.

The treatment plant is located primarily in the limestone facies of the Verde Fm., as indicated by the driller's log for the existing monitoring well. No indication of evaporite minerals appears in any driller's log for wells within 3/4 mile of the treatment plant. The relatively low TDS (409 mg/l) in the treatment plant monitoring well also indicates no nearby evaporite minerals.

A 1,225 feet deep hole was drilled as an "oil test" at or near the treatment plant sometime prior to 1960. The reported water level in this hole was 135 feet, similar to the 139 feet original water level in the treatment plant monitoring well. All deep sedimentary rocks in this area are believed to transmit fresh groundwater from recharge areas on the Mogollon Rim, making the prospect of oil-bearing strata highly unlikely.

The likelihood of finding economic minerals on the site of the proposed action is negligible.

A minerals potential report was prepared for the lands the Camp Verde Sanitary District proposes to acquire. This report is a part of the Process Record.

Environmental Consequences

If either the **No Action** or the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, there would be no effect on mineral resources because of the lack of occurrence.

J. Archaeological Resources

Affected Environment

A cultural resources survey was completed for the lands proposed for acquisition in November 2000 in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, 36 CFR 800. One previously identified site that is potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places was located. Effects are determined using criteria from Section 106 of the Act. These resources are non-renewable.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan direction would promote maintenance of those resources. Federal protection of these heritage resources under Sec. 106, the Antiquities Act, ARPA, 36 CFR 261 would be maintained and would limit the risk of loss or damage from unregulated development and vandalism.

If the **Proposed Action** were implemented, the effect on heritage properties is that the transfer from Federal ownership removes them from Federal protection. This in turn places the properties at risk of loss or damage through unregulated development and vandalism in situations where the aforementioned laws and regulations do not apply. Loss or damage to a heritage property, especially when such properties have the potential to contain human remains, is an adverse effect. Therefore, placing them at risk of damage or loss would also constitute an effect. Whether that would be adverse or not would depend on the final evaluation of the National Register eligibility of the properties and consultations with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). If the properties are determined to be eligible, Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan direction requires the completion of appropriate mitigation or resolution of adverse effects prior to conveyance of the land. Such resolution could include testing, data recovery, curation, and documentation. Resolution of any identified adverse effects would be accomplished through consultation with SHPO and the affected Tribes. Identification of exactly what will be required will not be known until the archaeological testing is completed. Forest Plan direction would be complied with.

K. Floodplains, Wetlands, Water Rights

Affected Environment

The lands of this evaluation are located adjacent to an unnamed first order intermittent tributary of the Verde River. It is approximately 2 square miles in size. The drainage has been channelized to protect the existing facility and is in poor condition. There is no floodplain associated with it. Livestock grazing and recreation on horseback and ATV are the common uses in the area.

The lands are outside the 100-year floodplain of the Verde River as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and there are no wetlands as defined by the *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual, Technical Report Y-87-1*.

There are no water rights in the Verde River Basin because the general adjudication of the Gila River of which the Verde is a tributary has not been completed. However, there are water claims with priority dates. A search of available data about the proposed acquisition site indicates that none of the reports or surveys consulted identifies any irrigated land on or near the subject property and no claims exist for use of surface waters.

There is one well on the subject property, registration number 55-507399, registered to the Camp Verde Sanitary District. No evidence was found that a Statement of Claimant was filed for this well in response to the General Adjudication of the Gila River System.

Based on a recent ruling by the Arizona State Supreme Court, it is possible this well could be considered appropriable water and therefore subject to the adjudication.

Environmental Consequences

If either the **No Action** or the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, there would be no effect on either floodplains or wetlands. Also, there would be no effect on claims for water.

A floodplain evaluation was conducted and a report was prepared for this project. It is a part of the Process Record. A search for water claims was made and a Historic Water Use Report was prepared for this analysis. It is contained in the Process Record.

L. Hazardous Materials

Affected Environment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment inventory was conducted and a report was prepared to document the findings and suggest further action. A number of areas at the present treatment plant will need additional investigation and testing. Those results will determine whether remediation is necessary. The inventory is in the Process Record.

Environmental Consequences

If the **No Action** alternative were implemented, the treatment plant would continue to function as it has in the past. Additional testing would be scheduled as needed to address concerns for the reissuance of a special use permit.

If the **Proposed Action** alternative were implemented, the exact nature of testing and remediation if needed is not known at this time. However, all work needed to achieve clearance on the property will be completed prior to conveying the land.

M. National Forest Management Act Compliance

The action described in the **Proposed Action** alternative is consistent with the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The proposed acquisition of Coconino National Forest Land by the Camp Verde Sanitary District will further the long term goals and objectives as stated in the LRMP which include maintenance and improvement of water quality. The proposed acquisition is consistent with Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines of helping to meet the needs of expanding communities.

The **Proposed Action** alternative does not involve timber harvest nor is it located on suitable timberland. Accordingly, other NFMA findings do not need to be addressed.

N. Environmental Justice

Federal Agency Responsibilities for Federal Programs

Each Federal Agency shall conduct its programs, policies, and activities that substantially affect human health or the environment in a manner that insures that such programs, policies, and activities do not have the effect of excluding persons (including populations) from participation in, denying persons (including populations) the benefits of, or subjecting persons (including populations) to discrimination under such programs, policies, and activities because of their race, color, or national origin.

Research, Data Collection, and Analysis

The Camp Verde Sanitary District serves a population that is approximately 150 Hispanic or Latino and 3504 not Hispanic or Latino - 264 American Indian and 34 Black or African American and 3224 White. The racial and gender of the participants and the number of employees are in proportion to the population percentages, and all interested individuals are permitted to file applications written or otherwise for participation. All applications are retained on file.

Sanitary sewer service hookup is required for all residents and businesses as soon as the service is available. Availability of funding for expansion determines when service becomes available. All participants are required to pay the same fees, assessments and charges per unit for use of the facilities. User Fees in the monthly sewer billings cover the operation and maintenance of the Sanitary District facilities and property assessments cover the debt retirement. Normal community bulletin boards, local newspapers, radio and the Sanitary District Newsletter are used to inform the community of the availability of services or benefits of the facility. These methods reach the minority group population equally with the rest of the community. Appropriate Equal Opportunity posters are conspicuously displayed and written materials have a nondiscrimination statement and/or EO statement. The District Minutes of the District Board Meetings are a complete resource in verifying the Sanitary District's past civil rights compliance history. The operation has been found to be compliant with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The location of the wastewater treatment facility is not normally visited by the public because of safety and health concerns but its use does not have the effect of denying access to any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. This location does not create a higher impact to low income or minority populations than other sites.

Determination

If the **Proposed Action** alternative of acquisition of Coconino National Forest land by the Camp Verde Sanitary District were implemented, it would be fully compliant with requirements of Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations because all persons within the Sanitary District are required to hook up to the system when service is available and all users pay fees according to standardized rates.

O. Cumulative Effects

Water Quality

Both ground and surface water quality is a concern within the Verde Valley. A number of new municipal treatment plants and upgrades have been constructed in the valley. They include a new plant for the City of Cottonwood and a new plant for the City of Sedona. Waste water treatment plant upgrades are planned for the Town of Jerome and are in progress for the Village of Oak Creek. A future new treatment plant is planned for the Town of Clarkdale. The proposed Camp Verde Sanitary District treatment plant upgrade will contribute to the efforts to improve surface and to maintain ground water quality.

Erosion and Sedimentation

Completed or planned activities that contribute to soil disturbance and potential erosion and sedimentation include the ADOT detention/flood control basin along State Route 260, widening of State Route 260, development of private land, and possible development of the Verde Ranger Station/Administration Site when it is sold. Construction of the new force main along State Route 260 and the treatment plant access road, closure of some of the existing facilities, and construction of the plant improvements would also contribute to soil disturbance. This would be temporary and the effects are expected to be small because of erosion control measures, sediment retention devices and revegetation requirements commonly required for construction activities.

Species Habitat and Biological Resources

Construction of a new treatment plant at the Camp Verde Sanitary District site would not increase the impact on habitat because the construction would take place at the existing facilities. Improved habitat for bald eagle and other hunting birds could result because of the increased water in the duck ponds. However, increasing urbanization in the vicinity of the treatment plant will shift the habitat suitability from mainly native plants and animals to plants and animals that prefer increased water with irrigated lawns and ornamentals. An increase in song birds would be expected in these settings.

Visual Character

Increasing urbanization in the area would change the character from a natural appearing and natural appearing with roads landscape to more of a rural or urban setting. Except for high vantage points, the proposed facilities at the treatment plant site would not be visible from State Route 260 or most of the surrounding landscape. As a result, this proposal would not accelerate the changes in the visual character.

CHAPTER 4 - LIST OF PREPARERS

A. List Of Preparers

SEC, Inc.:

Ray Wrobley	Principal-In-Charge/Water Rights
Dick Thompson	Team Leader/NEPA Process/ Writer-Editor/Soils
Christie Cemper	Project Coordinator
Marc Baker	Botany/TES Plants and Animals
Harley Shaw	Wildlife/Management Indicator Species
Ed McGavock	Hydrogeology/Flooding
Clark Arnold	Minerals
Don Weaver Jr.	Cultural Resources
Ron Johnson	Engineering
Richard Hubbell	Scenic Quality/Recreation Opportunity
Scot Journell	Phase I ESA (HAZMAT)

B. Other Contributors

Coconino National Forest:

Judy Adams, Lands Staff	Sedona/Beaver Creek Ranger Districts, Analysis Guidance and Instructions, Draft Review
Janie Agyagos, Biologist	Sedona/Beaver Creek Ranger Districts, BA&E Review
Jim Beard, Landscape Architect	Supervisor's Office, Scenic Integrity and Recreation Data

Rory Steinke, Soil Scientist

Supervisor's Office, Review
Of Floodplain/Wetlands Report

Alan Anderson, Engineer

Supervisor's Office, Phase I ESA
Report Review

Peter Pilles, Archaeologist

Supervisor's Office, Cultural
Resources Inventory and Testing
Plan Review

Prescott National Forest:

Tom Bonomo, District Ranger

Verde Ranger District, Analysis
Guidance and Instructions, Draft
Review

Camp Verde Sanitary District

Suzy Burnside, Board Chairperson

District History, Environmental
Assessment Review, Legal
Descriptions, Maps, Copy Of The
Aquifer Protection Permit
Application, Appearance Of The
New Plant

John Ullinsky, Design Engineer

HDR Engineering, Inc., Treatment
Plant Design

CHAPTER 5 – CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS

Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer

Cultural Resources Testing Plan
Review

APPENDIX A

COMMENT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

CAMP VERDE SANITARY DISTRICT PROPOSAL

TO ACQUIRE 162 ACRES OF COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST LAND

Significant issues raised by the public through the scoping process will be addressed in an environmental analysis. Those issues deemed to be not significant will be listed in the EA and reason given for not carrying them forward through the analysis process.

COMMENT

DISPOSITION

- | | |
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| 1. District expansion may cut off horse trail use in the area. | Issue – trail access will be maintained because the perimeter fence will be constructed to Forest Service specifications that provide for foot and horse access. |
| 2. Historic trails and Indian ruins could be gone forever. | Issue – a cultural resources survey has been completed and appropriate mitigation will be implemented to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act. |
| 3. Concern about access to the proposed community park equestrian facilities. | Issue – similar to No.1, the same mitigation applies. |
| 4. Odor of sewage is objectionable. | Issue – mitigated by proper plant operation. |
| 5. Concern about ground water quality. | Issue – describe potential effects qualitatively for each alternative. |
| 6. Concern that effluent will drain directly into Pioneer Acres Unit 2 residential area. | Issue – describe the potential for surface runoff for each alternative. |

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| 7. Why does the Sanitary District need 160 acres when only a small part of the 71.5 acres they now have is used? | Issue – addressed by alternative design. The District has stated that the size is needed to include a required buffer/setback. |
| 8. Pumps at the plant are noisy and can be heard at least half - mile away. | Issue - pumps do emit a small amount of sound. Estimated effects will be disclosed using design data. |
| 9. Improvements on the northwest portion are undesirable because they would be seen from homes above the area. | Issue – describe proposed location and height of facilities in relation to topographic features and residences. Describe mitigation effectiveness. |
| 10. Concern regarding neighborhood wells and the “stench” that comes from the plant now. | Issue – same as No. 5 and No. 4 respectively. Addressed by analysis and mitigation. |