UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
Tonto National Forest
102 South 28th Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85034

RECD
Tonto NF
JAN
Mesa PD
Action Inf

REPLY TO: 2260 - Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros

January 15, 1974

SUBJECT: Designation of 1971 Horse and Burro Territory

TO: Regional Forester, R-3

During the fall of 1973, we spent considerable time investigating horse use along the lower Salt and Verde Rivers on the Mesa District. A helicopter was used for part of the survey. The remainder was done by Forest Officers on foot or on horseback.

All of the horses we observed were branded with brands owned by Indian residents of the adjacent Salt River or Fort McDowell Indian Reservations. We contacted Indian stockmen of these two reservations. They confirmed the brands observed and also stated there were periods when Indian owned horses were on the Forest.

Heavy recreation use on and adjacent to the two rivers and periods of high water make it very difficult to maintain stock proof boundary fences between the Tonto and the two reservations. The dense riparian vegetation, particularly Salt Cedar, along the river makes it very difficult to roundup or even observe these animals.

As a result, there are periods when horses can and do move freely between the Tonto and the reservations. Since both reservations have sizeable horse populations, there are times during the year when a considerable number of Indian owned horses can be found along the two rivers, particularly the Salt. The number of animals fluctuates during the year.

We have previously reported horses using this area as being wild and free-roaming. Based on the above, this was in error. We have, therefore, not identified a 1971 Horse and Burro Territory in this area.

The attached map indicates a 1971 Horse and Burro Territory identified on the Mesa District. This is the only territory we have been able to identify on the Tonto.

1. We estimate there were 12 burros that occupied this territory in 1971.

2. 14 Burros were counted within this territory during the fall of 1973.

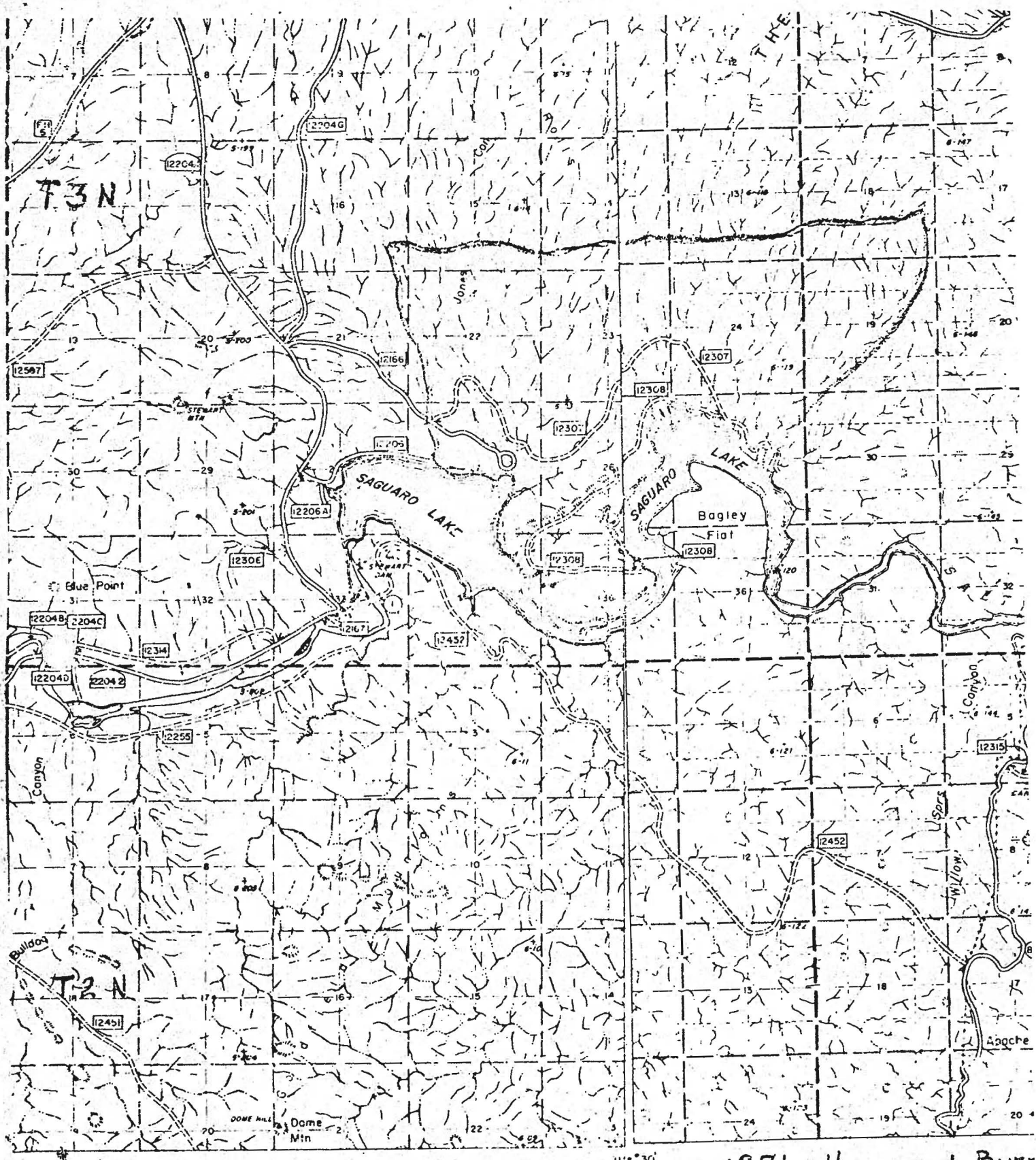
3. The burros do not depend upon other lands for habitat requirements. The area is all National Forest System Lands.

4. Since the territory is entirely a mixed browse annual grass type, fluctuations in annual grass production or a prolonged drought could cause burro numbers to fluctuate. The area has a sizeable predator population, particularly Mt. Lion, that could contribute to fluctuations of the burro population.

W. J. Fleishman

W. J. FLEISHMAN
Range and Wildlife
Staff Officer

Enclosure



R.8E.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
TRANSPORTATION PLAN MAP
TONTO NATIONAL FOREST
STATE OF ARIZONA 6-30-68

LEGEND USED 5610-19R (10/64)

1971 Horse and Burr
Territory Tonto N.F.
1/1

3

Territory Boundary

Acres - 4,180