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In Reply Refer To:
AESO/SE
02-21-03-I-0232

July 8, 2005

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon, Arizona

From: Field Supervisor

Subject: Addendum to the Biological Opinion for Prescribed Fire in Grand Canyon National Park

Thank you for your June 13, 2005, letter regarding the subject biological opinion which was finalized and issued on August 22, 2003 (AESO file number 02-21-03-I-0232). During an annual follow-up meeting on the Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA) prescribed fire program covered by the biological opinion, your staff brought up an issue concerning timing of preparation work for prescribed fire burn units and Mexican spotted owl (MSO) survey requirements. Your June 13 letter requested our concurrence with your need to allow preparation work to occur prior to completion of MSO surveys.

The description of the project, as consulted on, included implementation of fire line preparation work only after completion of MSO surveys in a given area. However, GRCA would like to have the flexibility to complete fire line preparation work while crews are available in the summer immediately prior to ignition of burn units in the fall.

The necessary preparation work is conducted with hand tools and chainsaws and varies according to existing condition of the fire line, vegetation type, and fuel loading in the area. You included a general description in your June 13 letter.

We agree that modification of the project description to allow such preparation work prior to completion of scheduled MSO surveys is reasonable and within the scope of the August 22, 2003 biological opinion for the following reasons:

- The preparation work was included in the original project description and adverse effects were considered during the formal consultation.
- All North Rim critical habitat has been surveyed at least once for MSO.
- A given burn unit will be surveyed to protocol (year one of two) the previous year.

- MSO survey requirements would be met before the actual burn occurred.
- Fire personnel will consult with a GRCA wildlife biologist prior to initiating any preparation work in areas with incomplete MSO surveys. If the biologist anticipates noise disturbance to areas where MSO are known or expected to be roosting or foraging, the preparation work will not be completed until after the breeding season.
- All preparation work conducted prior to completion of MSO surveys, and the results of the subsequent surveys, will be recorded and included in annual reports required under the biological opinion.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Bill Austin (x102) or Brenda Smith (x101) at (928) 226-0614.

/s/ Steven L. Spangle

cc: Director, Science Center, Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon, AZ
Field Supervisor, Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM
Chief, Habitat Branch, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, AZ

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