

**INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 EVALUATION FORM
CONSULTATION/CONFERENCE/CONCURRENCE**

Originating Person: Laura Thompson-Olais

Date: 3-04-98

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1. **Region:** 2
2. **Service activity:** Removing vegetation around refuge charcos
3. **Listed, Proposed or Candidate Species and Critical Habitat**
 - A. Within the action area
Listed: Sonoran pronghorn
Lesser long-nosed bat
 - B. Adjacent to the action area:

Listed: Sonoran pronghorn
Lesser long-nosed bat
4. **Geographic Area or Station Name and Action:** Jose Juan and Redtail charcos on Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge; thick mesquite will be removed by hand saws or chain saws on two sides of each charco. Charcos will then be monitored for about two years using remote cameras to collect any evidence of use of the water by Sonoran pronghorns. This activity is planned for March 1998 for Jose Juan charco. If time and manpower are available, then work on Redtail will be done also. Setup at both of these charcos is similar.
5. **Location (Map attached):**
 - a. Pima County, Arizona
 - b. T. 13 S. - T. 15 S., R.8 W - R 9 W.
 - c. Ajo, Arizona
6. **Action Objectives:**
 - a. Need for proposed action:

Sonoran pronghorns were declared an endangered species in 1967. Redtail and Jose Juan charcos were constructed for Sonoran pronghorns in the 1950's under the assumption that these pronghorns needed free-standing water to survive and persist. It was not until 1995 that 13 pronghorns were video taped and photographed drinking free standing water in a crater at HE hill on South Tactical Range on Barry M. Goldwater Range that sufficient proof was available to show the utilization of free standing water.

Jose Juan and Redtail charcos have not been monitored since their construction for use by Sonoran pronghorns. The refuge obtained baseline data regarding flora and fauna at these charcos with the initial study: *Final Report: Wildlife Use of Jose Juan Tank and Redtail Tank, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Southwestern Arizona* by T.L. Cutler, M.L. Morrison and D.J.Griffin 1996.

The Core Working Group (CWG) (Recovery Team) continues to investigate the charcos pending funding. Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument has Sonoran pronghorn recovery funding to clear vegetation and use remote cameras to monitor use at the charcos. If after a sufficient time period, no use of the waters by Sonoran pronghorn is found, Cabeza, along with the CWG, will evaluate and consider removing the water holding capacity of the two charcos as they are unnatural artificial sites in this desert environment. There is a question that these artificial water sites among others on the refuge serve as predator sinks, supporting higher numbers of predators that would otherwise be kept in check by the general process of natural selection in a desert ecosystem.

It is believed that from years of accumulated telemetry locations that both these charcos would not be utilized by Sonoran pronghorns when they need water most - from May through July, because at that time they move to the bajadas and away from the hottest part of their habitat - the creosote bursage flats which is where both these charcos are located (see attached maps).

b. Description of the proposed action

Thick mesquite vegetation will be removed by hand saws or chain saws on the north and south side of each charco for approximately 120 ft. wide swath (see attached sketch). The mesquite will be left on site or eventually be removed from the area. The Cutler study did not find any threatened or endangered species that inhabited the charco areas.

Remote cameras will monitor the sites and personnel will change the film about every week to ten days. Film changing will be planned at times during the day to try to avoid encountering possible pronghorns. If pronghorns are observed when approaching the charcos, observations will be documented. Attempts will be made to gather observations from a distance to not disturb the pronghorns.

Minimum tool will be used as these sites are in wilderness. Personnel will walk to the site from the public use road unless unusually hot weather occurs. The wood will be removed by vehicle in the summer when pronghorns are generally not frequenting this area or by helicopter sling load preferably to decrease impacts on wilderness areas. The wood will only be removed if it can be donated to a good cause effectively; if not it will be scattered at the sites.

c. Objectives of the proposed action

The objective of this action is to create a more open environment at the charcos and monitor if pronghorns would utilize these particular free-standing water sites. If after a feasible number of monitoring years have been evaluated and no use has been documented, the charcos will be breached to eliminate the water holding capacity and they will be allowed to disintegrate.

7. Explanation of Impacts of the Action

If no use of the free standing water is documented by Sonoran pronghorns, they should not be impacted by actions proposed here. If use by Sonoran pronghorn is documented, then the charcos will be further evaluated to best provide water. The eventual disintegration of the charcos will potentially decrease artificially created habitats for other wildlife species, but it is expected they will relocate to other habitats nearby.

8. Effect determination and response requested.

A. Listed species/critical/essential habitat:

<u>Determination</u>	<u>Response requested</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> will not affect	<input type="checkbox"/> concurrence
<input type="checkbox"/> beneficial effect	<input type="checkbox"/> concurrence
	<input type="checkbox"/> formal consultation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is not likely to adversely affect	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> concurrence
<input type="checkbox"/> is likely to adversely affect	<input type="checkbox"/> formal concurrence

Remarks: The Core Working Group is considering an experimental temporary water site elsewhere on the refuge; the objective will be to provide free standing water in the areas Sonoran pronghorn frequent in the dry season. The

refuge is attempting to maintain itself and integrate regionally as a desert ecosystem environment that will also best serve recovery efforts for Sonoran pronghorn.

9. Reviewing office evaluation.

A. Concur X
B. Comments:

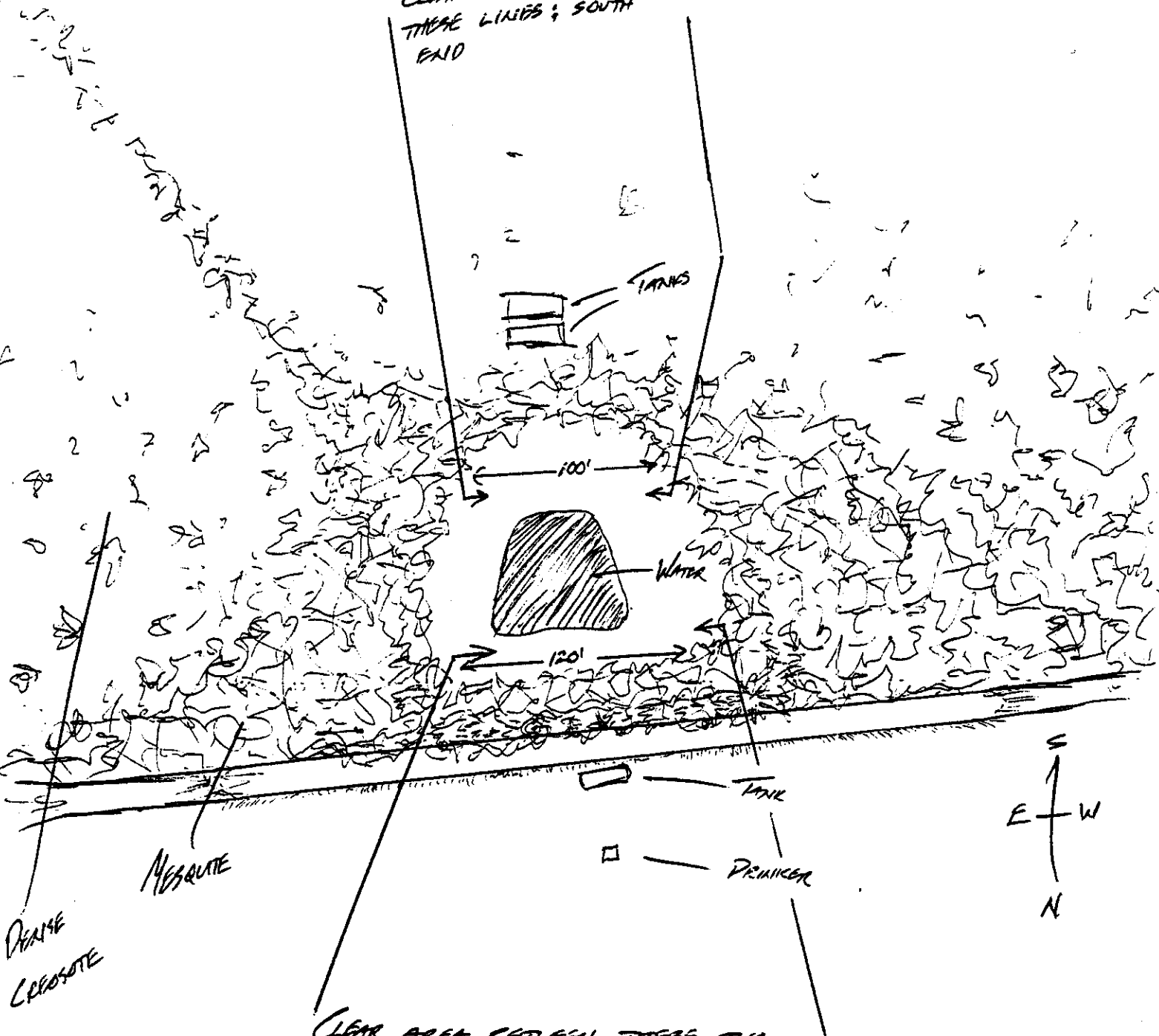
Nonconcurrency _____

Joseph M. Baucum

Signature

Acting Field Supervisor

CLEAR MESQUITES FROM BETWEEN
THESE LINES; SOUTH
END



CLEAR AREA BETWEEN THESE TWO
LINES; MESQUITES AT NORTH SIDE
(ON DAM)

Juan Charco, CPNWR