

## U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

### ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Within the spirit and intent of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record and determined that the following proposed action is categorically excluded from NEPA documentation requirements consistent with 40 CFR 1508.4, 43 CFR 46.210 and 516 DM 8.5.

#### Purpose and Need:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) proposes to upgrade and replace the existing Land-Mobile Radio (LMR) tower at their Desert Grip Camp Detail (Camp Grip) located along the El Camino del Diablo in Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (CPNWR) (See Map 1 and 2).

The existing LMR tower is considered unsafe and can no longer adequately support CBP radio communication equipment. Safer and more secure radio communication will improve CBP operational efficiencies and sustainability of the Camp, help CBP secure the border, help "prevent potential threats to public safety", and reduce habitat and wilderness degradation caused by illegal border crossers.

The success of CBP in meeting their mission goals of securing the U.S. Border is also critical to the success of the CPNWR long-term management of refuge trust resources. It is anticipated that with the completion of CBP's currently planned "integrated fixed tower" installations and other infrastructure along the Arizona border with Mexico over the next few years, CPNWR will be even more vulnerable as it will be one of the few remaining border segments in Arizona without a hi-tech surveillance system. This fact alone makes it even more critical that CBP maintain an operational presence near the border.

CBP will remove the existing LMR tower and equipment (i.e. generator, tower trailer, and equipment trailer) from its current location northeast of the modular living quarters, which is in designated wilderness, and place it with a new LMR tower with auxiliary equipment east of the modular living quarters and outside of designated wilderness (See Map 2). The existing LMR tower is 106 ft. tall, sits on a portable trailer (See Photo 1), and is supported by guide wires attached to the ground (See Photo 2). It also can no longer safely and adequately support CBP radio communication equipment. A hydrogen generator providing power to the tower will also be relocated to the proposed location outside of wilderness. The existing 6' X 11' building containing radio communication equipment (See Photo 3) will be removed and replaced with a new prefabricated building

#### Proposed Action and Alternatives. .

##### I. NO ACTION:

The no action alternative to continue to use the existing LMR tower located in the CPNWR designated wilderness area is unacceptable as the tower is considered by CBP to be unsafe and therefore continued use unacceptable.

##### II. REPLACE EXISTING TOWER IN PLACE

This proposal was originally proposed by CBP and would replace the existing tower and auxiliary equipment with a new more robust tower and equipment at the same location as the current system is located. This alternative was dropped as it would leave communications equipment (tower and auxiliary equipment) unnecessarily in designated wilderness. Because there was an alternative site at the Camp Grip facilities to

locate the new equipment outside designated wilderness, this alternative was dropped from further consideration.

### III. PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposed action is to remove the existing radio communication equipment and facilities (tower, generator, radio equipment) that currently lies within designated wilderness at Camp Grip within CPNWR. The equipment and facilities will be relocated from northeast of the modular living quarters to east of the modular living quarters outside of wilderness (See Site Drawings). The facilities and equipment which will be installed are:

1. A new 100 ft. tall by 64 sq. ft. base LMR tower on 2 ft. concrete blocks for a total base area of 441 sq. ft. east of Camp Grip approximately 40 feet from the centerline of the El Camino del Diablo.
2. A new 80 sq. ft. prefabricated building to contain radio and communication equipment. The prefabricated building will sit on and be anchored to the ground at each building corner.
3. An existing hydrogen fuel generator to provide backup power to radio and communication equipment. The generator will sit inside a 36 sq. ft. trailer and connect to the tower and communication building via above ground cables.

### I. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

**The proposed action was selected.** The proposed action was selected over the no action alternative because it will provide a sturdier and safer platform for CBP radio communication equipment and reduce impacts to wilderness resources by moving the equipment and facilities into non-wilderness.

Categorical Exclusion(s). This action does not trigger an Exception to the Categorical Exclusions at 40 CFR 46.215 (as shown on attached Checklist) and is consistent with: **516 DM 8.5 B(3): "The construction of new, or the addition of, small structures or improvements, including structures and improvements for the restoration of wetland, riparian, instream, or native habitats, which result in no or only minor changes in the use of the affected local area",** and:

**516 DM 8.5 C(8): "Actions where the Service has concurrence or coapproval with another agency and the action is a categorical exclusion for that agency. This would normally involve one Federal action or connected actions where the Service is a cooperating agency."**

### Permits/Approvals.

1. The proposed action will result in a **"not likely to adversely affect"** on the Sonoran pronghorn and a "no effect" on other threatened or endangered species. The LMR tower, tower platform, prefabricated building, and hydrogen powered generator and trailer will all be located immediately adjacent to the exiting Camp Grip facilities and essentially replace existing equipment thus not resulting in significant additional impacts.
2. A cultural survey for surface cultural resources was completed on January 8, 2016 by a certified archaeologist. At that time, no surface cultural resources were found. See survey Map 3 and January 8, 2016 e-mail to Sid Slone, Refuge Manager. Based on this survey, the proposed action will result in no adverse effect on cultural resources under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.
3. Though Camp Grip is located along the El Camino del Diablo road, it lies three miles east of the El Camino del Diablo National Register Historic District. Therefore the proposed action will result in no

adverse effect of National Register properties under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended in 1992.

4. Should sub-surface cultural resources be located during the removal of existing LMR equipment or installation of the new LMR equipment and facilities; all ground disturbance will cease and the refuge manager will be notified.
5. A Minimum Requirements Decision Guide (MRDG) will be completed to determine the least intrusive tool necessary to remove the tower and facilities from wilderness (FWS 610 FW 1).

Public Involvement/Interagency Coordination.

Public input on the proposed action was solicited by posting the Environmental Action Statement on the refuge website at [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Cabeza\\_Prieta/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Cabeza_Prieta/) . Public comment can be submitted in writing to Sid Slone, Refuge Manager, CPNWR 1611 N. Second Ave, Ajo, Arizona 85321 or Sid\_Slone@fws.gov.

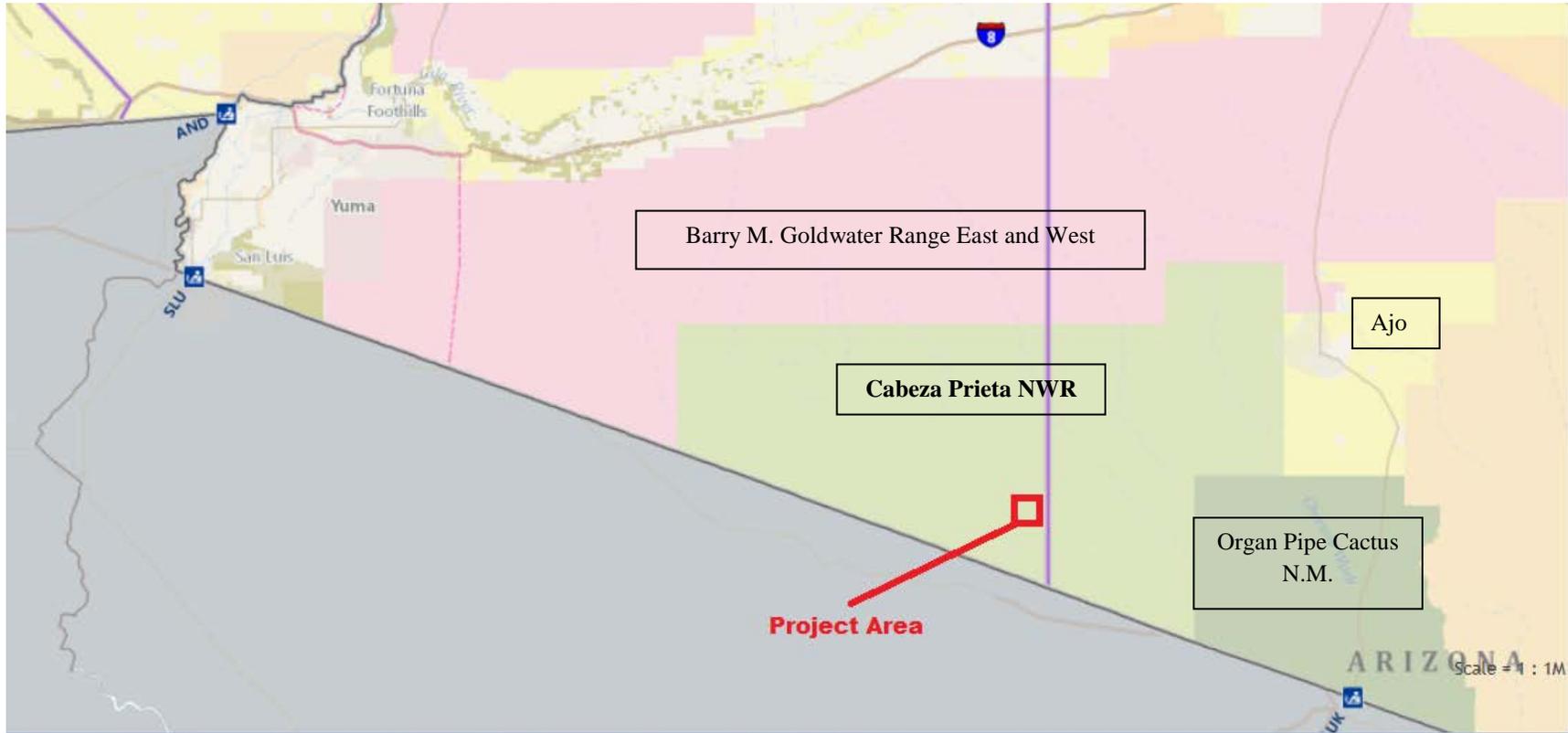
Supporting Documents. Supporting documents for this determination include relevant office file material and the following key references:

1. NEPA Compliance Checklist
2. Map 1 – Proposed Action Location
3. Map 2 – Aerial Photo of Proposed Action Location
4. Map 3 – Cultural Survey Boundary
5. January 8, 2016 Cultural Survey E-mail
6. Site Drawings.

Project Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Map 1: Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and Surrounding and Project Area.



Map 2: Aerial image showing location of existing and proposed LMR tower and facilities locations at CBP Camp Grip, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.

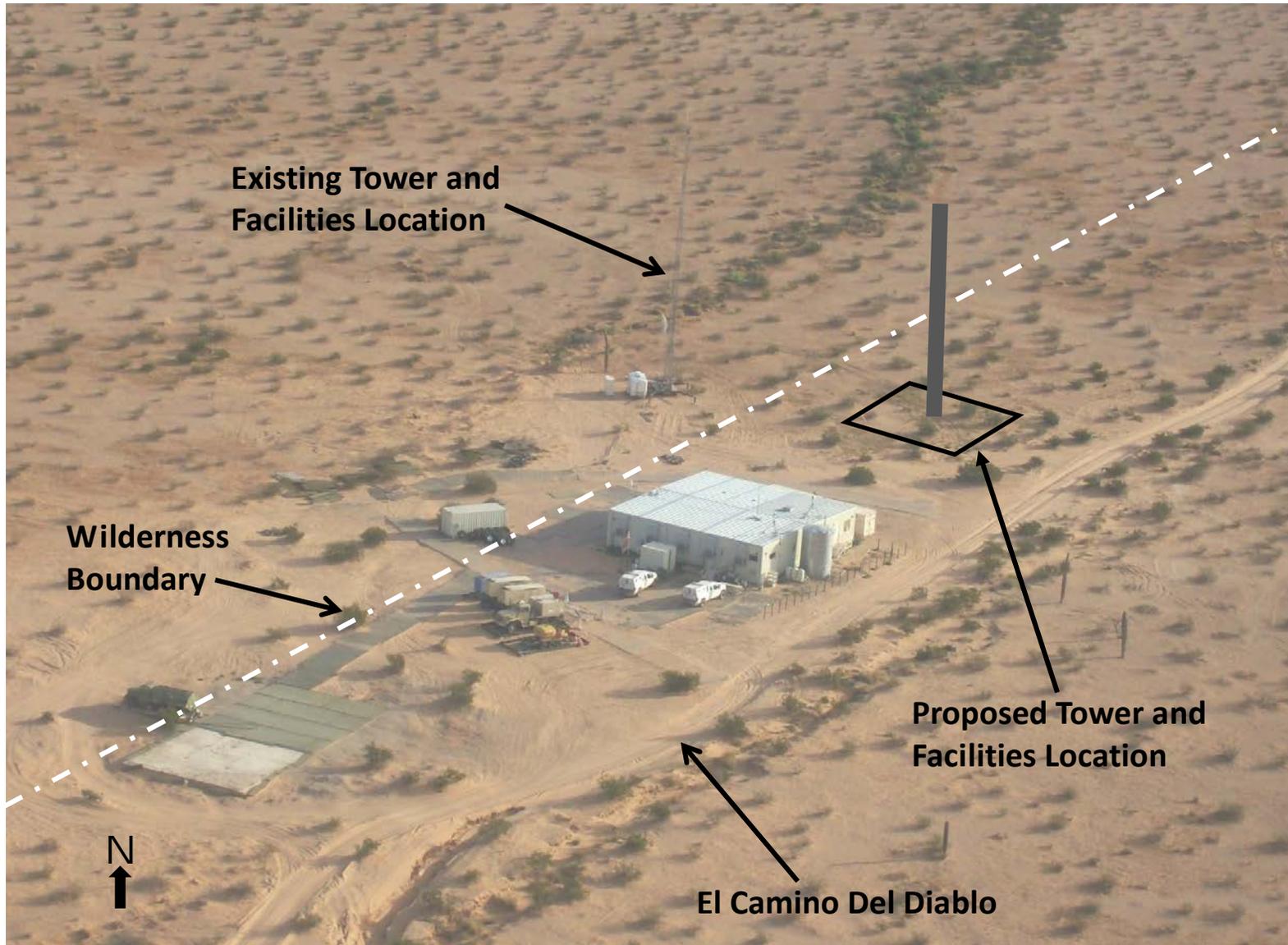


Photo 1. Existing CPB-USBP LMR tower and trailer at FOB Camp Grip.



Photo 2. Existing Guy wires supporting CBP LMR tower at FOB Camp Grip.



Photo 3. Existing CBP radio communication equipment shelter and trailer at FOB Camp Grip.



4/2014

Map 3. January 8, 2016 cultural resource survey boundary, FOB Camp Grip, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.



4/2014

January 8, 2016

Sid Slone

Refuge Manager

Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

Dear Sid,

The attached aerial photo depicts the limits of an archaeological survey conducted on 1/6/2016. The area, which was systematically surveyed at 10m spaced transects, extends 100m east and west of the proposed locations for a well and a tower. No cultural remains were discovered.

Sincerely,

Rick Martynec