

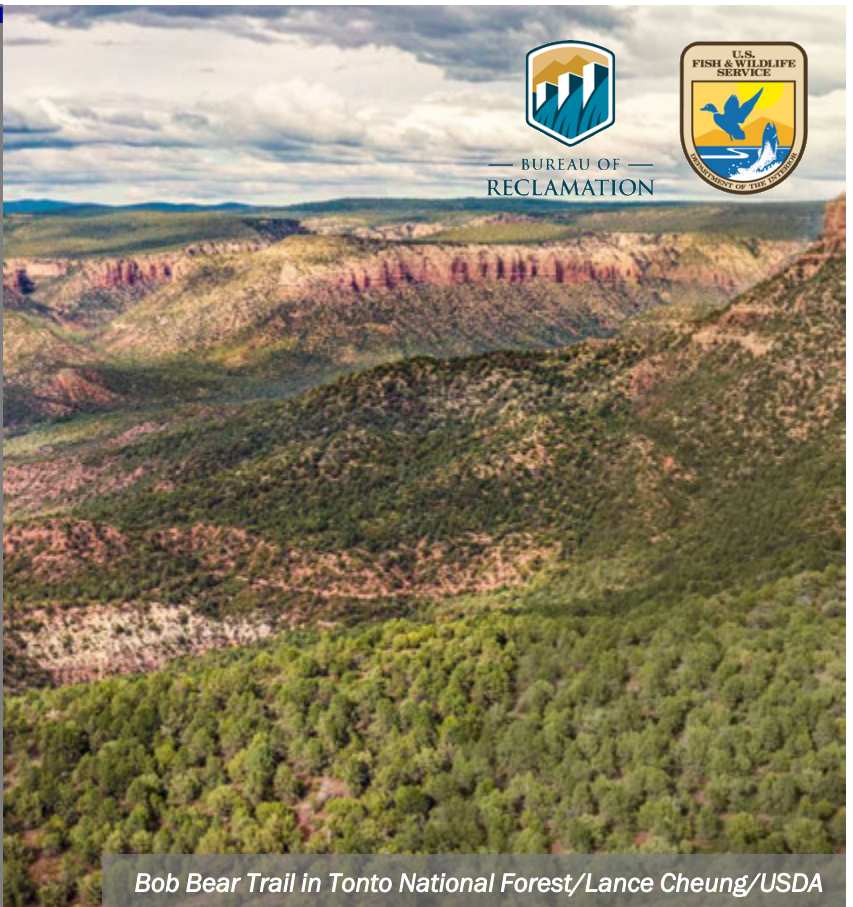
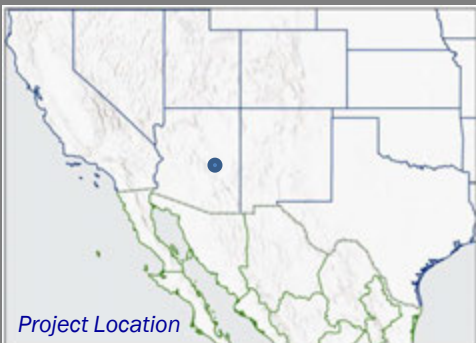
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Collaborative Drought Planning for Livestock Grazing on Southwestern National Forests



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Cooperative Extension

Federally managed public lands in the western U.S. must balance competing uses, such as recreation, wildlife habitat, and livestock grazing. Federal land managers and ranchers may struggle to collaboratively prepare for and manage drought because of drought's variable nature, seemingly divergent land management goals, and the policy constraints associated with public lands administration. As drought continues to increase in severity, streamlined planning is of high importance among managers and users. As a result, Arizona's Tonto National Forest (TNF), the Gila County Cattle Growers Association, and University of Arizona researchers engaged U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff and local ranchers in a series of workshops to inform a drought preparation guide. The Guide facilitates co-development of drought preparation plans in Southwest national forests.



Bob Bear Trail in Tonto National Forest/Lance Cheung/USDA

KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

In 2002, the USFS instructed permittees to remove all livestock from TNF lands due to drought. This decision did not reflect that drought is highly variable and that some allotments may have been less affected by drought. For some ranchers, working relationships with the USFS became tense as trust was lost. Evaluation of allotments on a case-by-case basis would have allowed for a more flexible response to drought that better suited individual permittees. The USFS decision also highlighted the lack of drought preparation in the TNF. Had formal drought planning occurred previously, the parties could have outlined mutually-agreeable responses to different possible drought scenarios and started the approval procedures through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to solidify those responses as real options.

PROJECT GOALS

- Host collaborative workshops to brainstorm potential preparations and responses to different drought scenarios
- Produce a written guide for co-developing strategic drought preparations
- Cultivate trust between ranchers and TNF staff to improve working relationships



SPRINKLE RANCH ALLOTMENT

The Sprinkle Ranch Allotment is a hypothetical ranch characteristic of the Southwest used in the workshop and drought preparation guide to demonstrate how drought plans can be co-developed.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project originally sought to increase drought preparedness in the TNF and develop a written guide to improve and direct future collaboration between TNF staff and ranchers during drought planning efforts. Importantly, the workshops that led to the guide's creation proved valuable as well. The first workshop took the form of an information session and left little room for engagement between TNF staff and ranchers. Workshop facilitators adopted a more participatory approach in the second workshop by using the Sprinkle Ranch scenario. This allowed for workshop attendees to identify drought mitigation strategies independent of the stress of a real-world drought situation. The collaboration and discussion during the scenario planning offered a start to repairing what had previously been a challenging working relationship for both TNF staff and ranchers. This set the tone for the third and final workshop which dove into the intricacies of NEPA administration, a topic which can be controversial.

NEXT STEPS

- Create a similar guide for ranchers and land managers in the Pacific Northwest
- Interview individuals who have used the Southwest guide to inform guide revisions and determine usability and usefulness
- Interview Northwest agency staff and ranchers to characterize unique context of public lands grazing in the Pacific Northwest
- Incorporate this work into the update and expansion of the NDMC's Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch resource

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Workshops: Three workshops enabled TNF staff and ranchers to begin building a more effective working relationship by collaboratively planning for drought and understanding the nuances of rancher needs and TNF regulatory requirements.

Scenario Planning: Using scenarios, or realistic event(s) that provide the context for training activities or planning discussions, allowed agency staff and ranchers to evaluate the flexibility of the current drought management regime and explore potential preparations and responses for the future.

Building Trust: Surveys conducted before and after the series of workshops revealed increased levels of trust between parties, highlighting the perceived value of relationship building through the workshops.

Southwest Drought Planning Guide: Based on insight gained from the workshops, a drought preparation guide, "Guide to Co-Developing Drought Preparation Plans for Livestock Grazing on Southwest National Forests," was designed to help the USFS and ranchers co-develop and implement long-term plans to improve drought preparation.

Collaborators

- University of Arizona, Cooperative Extension
- Gila County Cattle Growers Association
- The National Drought Mitigation Center
- Tonto National Forest

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See the drought planning guide: <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1764-2018.pdf>

