



File Code: 2670; 2230
Date: February 9, 2023

Heather Whitlaw
Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arizona Ecological Services Office
9828 N. 31st Avenue, Suite C3
Phoenix, Arizona 85051

Dear Ms. Whitlaw:

In accordance with Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the Tonto National Forest (Tonto NF) requests initiation/re-initiation of consultation for the effects of ongoing grazing on all active allotments to all listed species and their critical habitats on the Tonto NF. On September 30, 2021, your office issued a Biological Opinion for ongoing grazing on all active allotments on the Coronado National Forest. We wish to follow the consultation approach that was recently used by your office and the Coronado National Forest for their grazing activities. Below are the listed species and associated critical habitat that occur on the Tonto NF and we are requesting verification of this list.

- Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) and its critical habitat
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) and its critical habitat
- Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) and its critical habitat
- Yuma Ridgway's rail (*Rallus obsoletus yumanensis*)
- Chiricahua leopard frog (*Lithobates chiricahuensis*) and its critical habitat
- Narrow-headed gartersnake (*Thamnophis rufipunctatus*) and its proposed critical habitat
- Northern Mexican gartersnake (*Thamnophis eques megalops*) and its critical habitat
- Gila topminnow (*Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis*)
- Gila trout (*Oncorhynchus gilae*)
- Gila chub (*Gila intermedia*) and its critical habitat
- Loach minnow (*Tiaroga cobitis*)
- Desert pupfish (*Cyprinodon macularius*)
- Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*)
- Razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*) and its critical habitat
- Spikedace (*Meda fulgida*) and its critical habitat
- Arizona cliffrose (*Purshia subintegra*)
- Arizona hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus triglochidiatus* var. *arizonicus*)
- Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)
- Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*)

We are organizing our staff around the task of preparation of a Biological Assessment (BA) to provide the information your office will need to prepare a Biological Opinion and/or concurrence letter. At this point in time, we estimate that a BA will be compiled and submitted to your office



within 18-24 months. We have enclosed a preliminary list of all active grazing allotments on the Tonto NF. Please note this is a preliminary list and is subject to change.

We would like to request early coordination with your staff to ensure an efficient consultation. If you have any questions regarding this request, please reach out to Chandler Mundy, Range Program Manager, at chandler.mundy@usda.gov or Drew Ullberg, Forest Biologist, at drew.ullberg@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

NEIL BOSWORTH
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: District Rangers