

# Southern Peloncillo Mountain Water Development

## Coronado National Forest, Douglas Ranger District



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# Project Overview

Location

Concerns

Background

Current Conditions

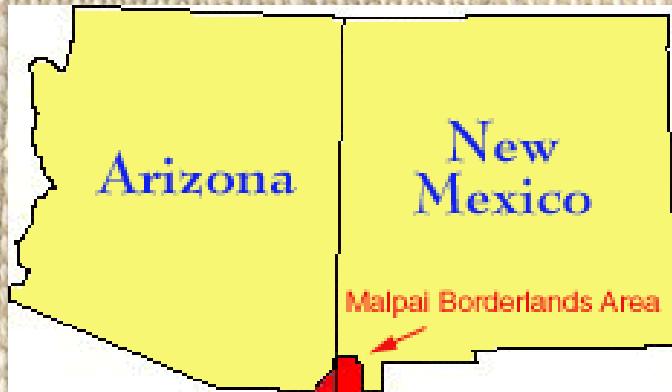
Proposed Actions

Wildlife and Landscape Benefits



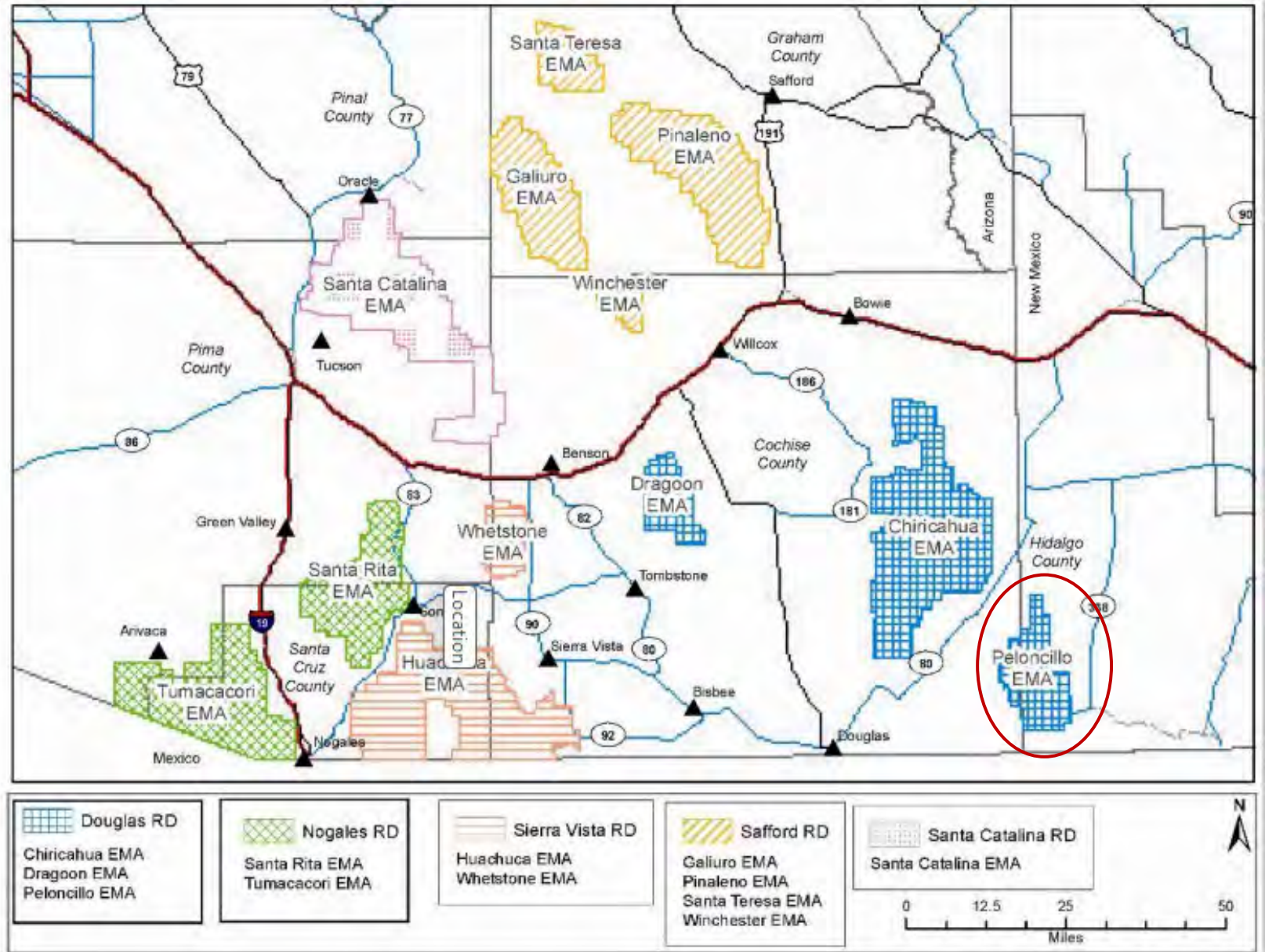
- Biologically and culturally diverse
- Rugged landscape
- Rural, extractive land uses
- 74,788 km<sup>2</sup> ecoregion
- 42,729 km<sup>2</sup> are Sky Islands
- 17 ranges in Mexico, 22 in USA

# Location



**Coronado National Forest**  
 -Oversees a lot of the Sky Island Forest in Arizona, along with one Sky Island in New Mexico

**Peloncillo Ecosystem Management Area (EMA) within the Douglas Ranger District**  
 -81 percent of the EMA fall in New Mexico, located near the Mexico and Arizona borders



# Location

## Game Management Unit 27

All mule deer and white tail deer hunts in this unit are quality and/or high demand

Part of the draw unit for javelina

Popular quail and dove hunting location

Gould's turkey once in a lifetime draw tag

## Biodiverse hot spot for Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Sonoran mud turtle, Chiricahua leopard frog, Mexican Long-nosed bat, Lesser Long-nosed bat, various migratory birds, and many more



# Background

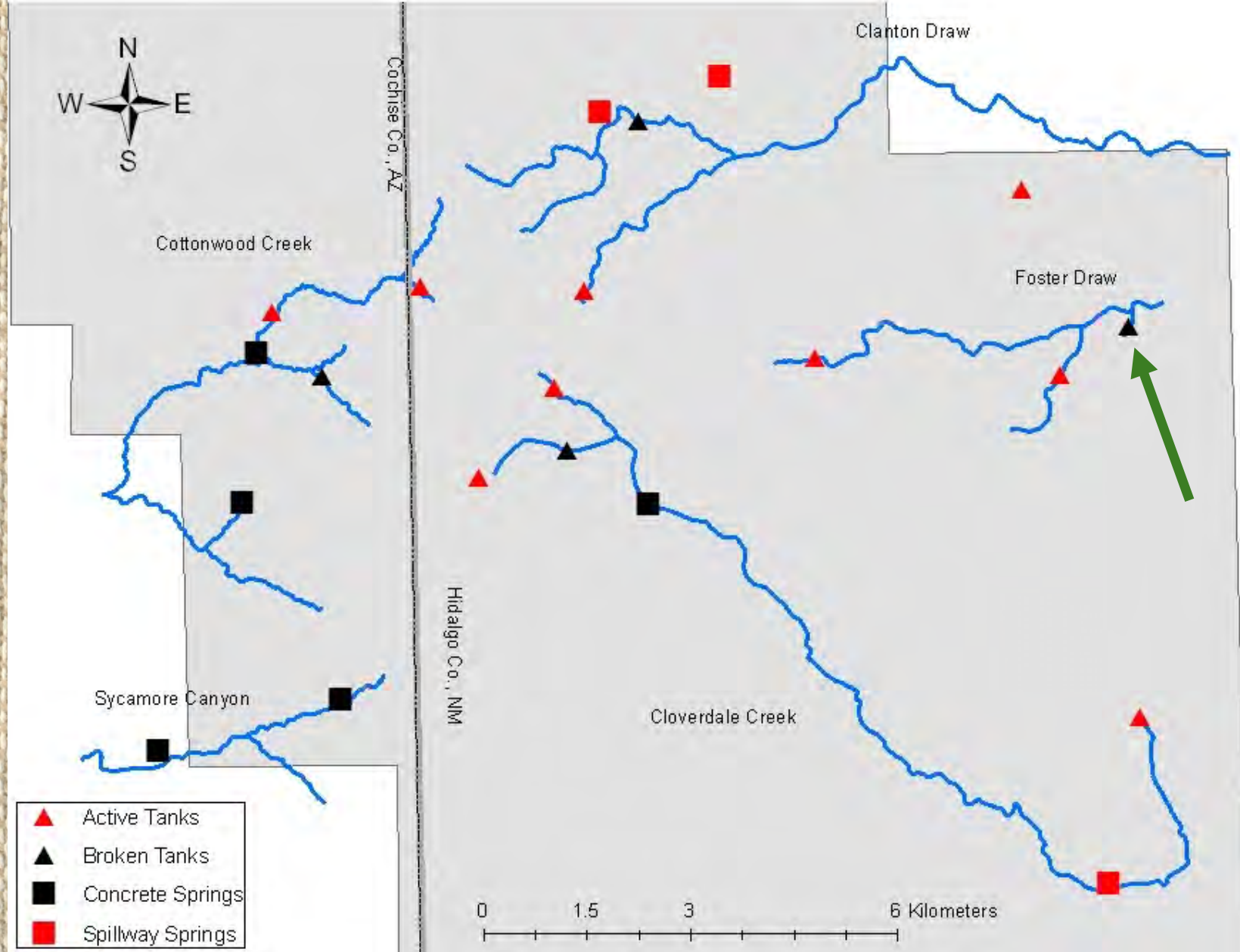
**Present Day Coronado National Forest was established in 1953**

**Early 1900s, the Civilian Conservation Corps completed a lot of work in the what is now the Coronado National Forest, including various water holding tanks**

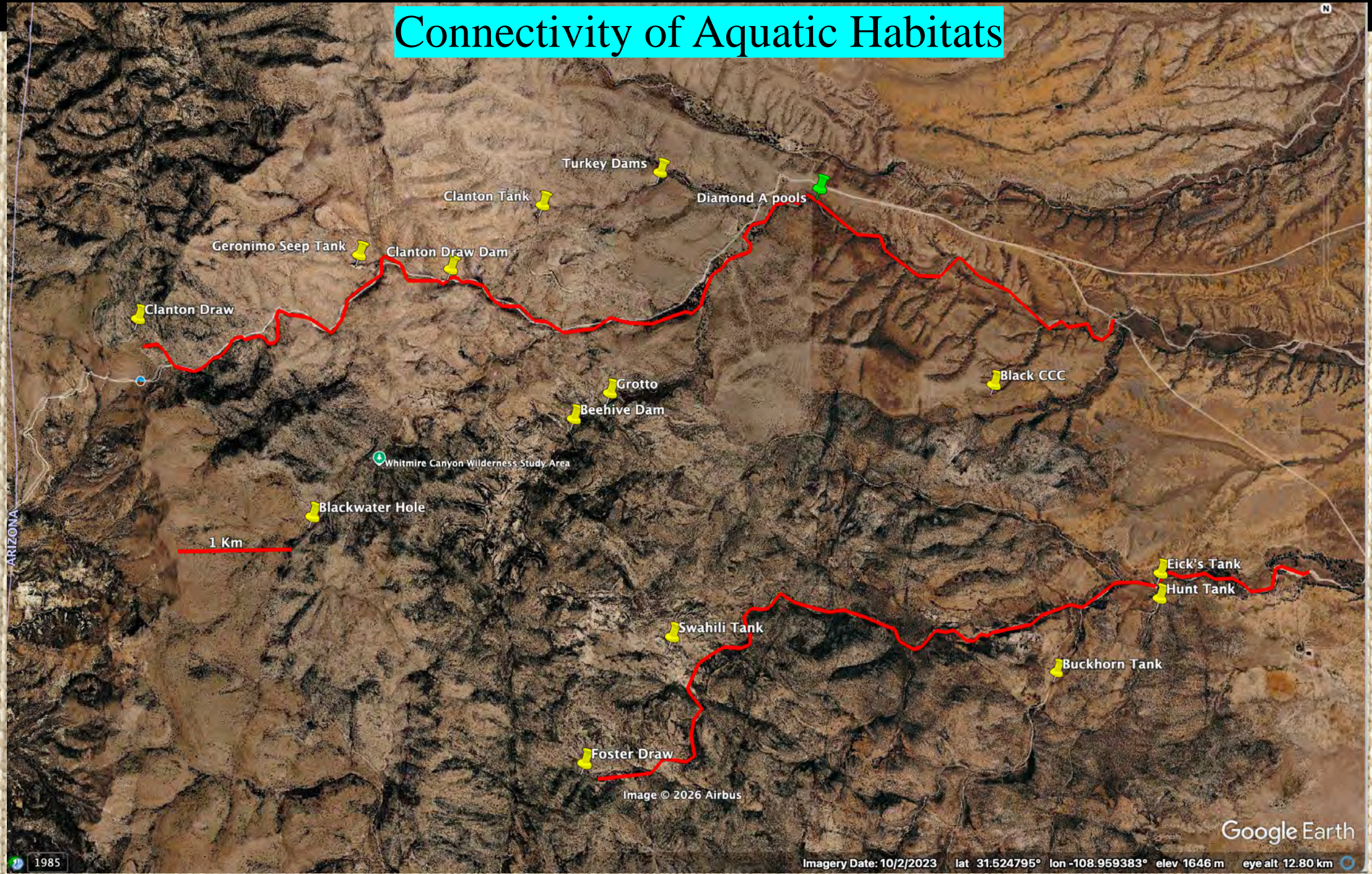
**Map to the right shows an inventory completed in the last few years regarding water sources in the Peloncillo EMA**

**Arrow points to the location of the work proposed in Foster Draw (Hunt Tank)**

**Foster Draw drains into Animas Valley, New Mexico**



# Connectivity of Aquatic Habitats



# Concerns

**Current Day issues according to the 2018 [Coronado National Forest Land And Resource Management Plan](#)**

- **Temperature increases of 5 to 8 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**
- **Increase in the number of hot days per year**
- **Reduced snowpack due to warmer winters**
  - **A later monsoonal season**
  - **10 percent drop in annual precipitation**
  - **Increase in more extreme disturbance events**

# Hotter and Drier



# Background



**Photos at Hunt Tank in July 2024**



# Current Conditions

**Two CCC concrete tanks are failing to hold water**

- **Hunt tank**
- **Eick's tank**

**Hunt Tank – upstream of Eick's, steel plate on dam has opened up, a lot of sediment release**

**Eick's Tank – downstream, filling up with released sediment**

**Year-round water is essential to life in the Coronado National Forest for a variety of wildlife, and it is getting hotter and drier. Monsoons are sporadic.**



# Current Conditions



Photos taken July 2025

# Proposed Actions

- **Install a new steel plate on Hunt Tank**
- **Clean out both Hunt and Eick's tank to increase water holding capabilities**
- **Work with the USFS on a design that is suitable for everyone**
- **Compliance is complete, except for cultural but they are putting it on their high priority programmatic for the year**



# Benefits

- **Water catchment for wildlife**
  - **Creates a wetland effect – absorb, store, and slowly release water for wildlife benefit**
  - **More nutrient dense wetland vegetation will grow**
  - **Ground water increase, allowing non-wetland vegetation to have access to water longer term**
  - **Cooler temperatures around the wetlands**
  - **Wetland dependent wildlife will move in, part of the food chain**
  
- **Many species depend on water year-round, rainstorms and springs are not dependable anymore**







State Line Tank

# Project Summary

**Diverse partnerships in this area and for this project:**

**Contributing funds and resources for this project and surrounding area-**

**BCI: \$17,000**

**SGCN: \$50,000**

**ARC: staff time helping USFS with NEPA and consulting**

**ARC, Volunteers: AZ Game and Fish, USFWS, OK State University**

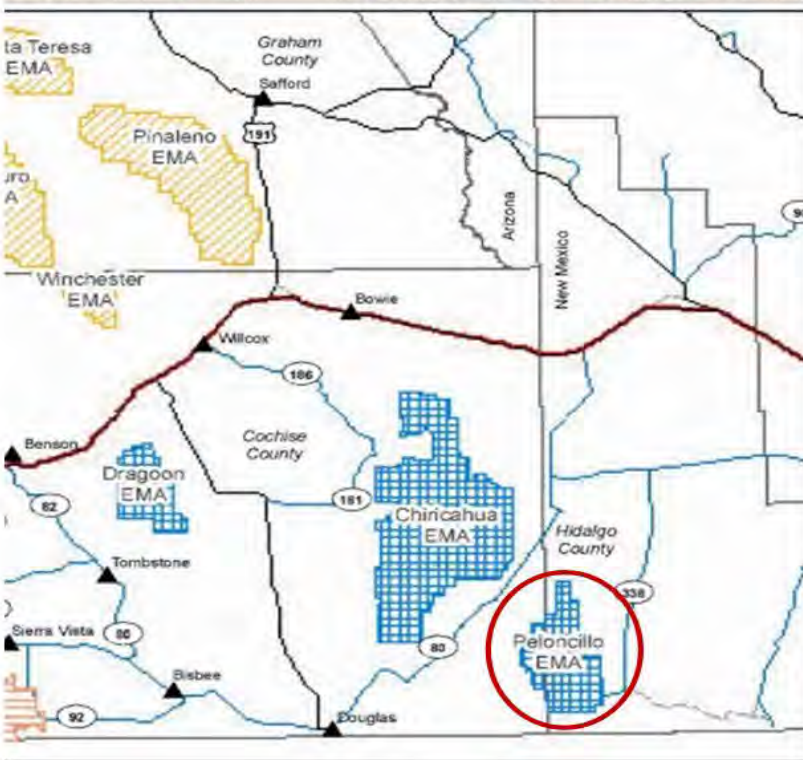
**All compliance is complete except for cultural, high priority project for USFS though.**

**USFWS and USFS are very supportive of this project.**

**Spring 2027 is the expected start date for implementation.**

**Cost estimate from HSP: \$60,000**

**[Project Location Google Map Link](#)**



# Southern Peloncillo Water Development Project

## Background Information

- Coronado National Forest, USFWS and multiple non-profits have made it a priority to help water storage and wetland vegetation thrive in the southern Peloncillo Mountains.
- There are two old Civilian Conservation Corps concrete dams of particular interest to everyone. One dam is upstream of another in the same drainage, the upstream dam, Hunt Tank, has a steel plate that has failed and is releasing sediment into the downstream dam, Eick’s tank. Hunt Tank does not hold water anymore, and Eick’s tank holds minimal water due to sediment build up.
- USFS and the Department want to fix Hunt Tank’s steel plate, and clean out both Hunt Tank and Eick’s Tank to create mini wetlands in the southern Peloncillo Mountains. Holding water throughout the hottest months, and allowing vegetation to grow in and around these oases.
- This is all in GMU 27, which is popular and high demand hunting area.

## Proposed Management Action

- NMDGF habitat staff, along with the Coronado NF—Douglals Ranger District staff, will develop a design that works for both parties. Prioritizing water storage and wetland habitat.
- Budget Estimate for HSP: \$60,000
- ⇒ SGCN funds are \$50,000 in Foster Draw, BCI funds are \$17,000 agave planting

## Project Contacts

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**Project Name:** Southern Peloncillo Water Development Project

**Project relation to CAC advice or priorities:**

This project benefits a variety of wildlife, such as mule deer, coes deer, javelina, quail and a variety of SGCN species in a high demand, high quality game management unit (GMU 27). Water storage is a drought prone area of the state, allowing water to be slowed down and held in the watershed will allow for oases to form for wildlife that is full of wetland vegetation and cooler temperatures.

**Project Specific Details:**

This project will be fixing an old Civilian Conservation Corps concrete dam (Hunt Tank) that has failed, along with removing sediment from the failed dam and the downstream tank (Eick's Tank). By holding the water in the watershed we will create a mini wetland effect, allowing wetland vegetation to grow, storing water in the ground to be released slowly downstream which will allow the water the infiltrate downstream more effectively lessening erosion and providing water for wildlife and vegetation alike.

**Historical Data:**

GMU 27 has been a high quality, high demand hunt area for many years now. However, there use to be much more water in the area due to consistent monsoons, winter rains, natural springs. That is all slowly down, the climate trend for this area is hotter and drier - the monsoons come later and are no longer uniform across the landscape, natural springs are drying up, winter rains and snows are not consistent anymore. Yet this area remains to be one of the most bio-diverse area in the state, where many different eco-regions met and all species depend on water in the area for survival.

**Itemized Use of Funds:**

Removing and transferring sediment: \$30,000  
Fixing Hunt Tank: \$20,000  
Mobilization - \$10,000  
Total: \$60,000

**Grazing Management Plan:**

This allotment has been resting/ungrazed for the last three years. Cattle will be re-introduced to the landscape this year and it is expected they will be in this pasture for about one month out of the year.

**Comprehensive Project Analysis:**

The scientific literature has demonstrated that New Mexico, and southern New Mexico in particular, is only going to get hotter and drier. Monsoonal rains are inconsistent, winter snow is lessening, and more distributive weather events such as giant storms or wildfires will become more frequent. By holding water in the watershed, we are able to mitigate some of these issues.

**Monitoring Plan/ Strategy:**

The Coronado National Forest, along with Bat Conservation International and Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy, are dedicated to continue monitoring and working in the area. BCI is putting \$17,000 on the ground for habitat improvement around Hunt Tank and Eick's Tank. ARC is continuing to partner with the USFS to assist with other local projects and monitoring the success of this project.

**Project Emphasis Species:**

Mule Deer, Coes Deer, Gould's Turkey, Javelina, Quail, and multiple SGCN species