

**United States Department of the Interior**

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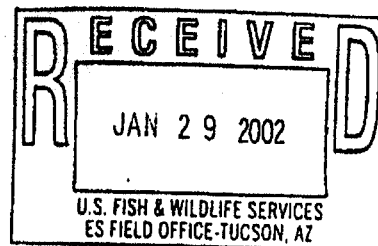


In Reply Refer To:

AESO/SE
2-21-98-F-266

January 25, 2002

Mr. John A. Ruble
Director, Installation Support
Army Intelligence Center and Fort Huachuca
Fort Huachuca, Arizona 85613-6000



Dear Mr. Ruble:

This letter is in response to your December 7, 2001, request for written concurrence from the Service regarding credits for reduction in water use with the purchase of a conservation easement. The purchase of conservation easements as a way to reduce water use in the Upper San Pedro River Basin has been discussed by our agencies.

We concur that the purchase of a conservation easement on the Clinton Ranch, and its subsequent management by the Bureau of Land Management, should lead to 630.8 acre-feet of water savings annually. We also concur with the method you used to determine the water savings and credit. The purchase of conservation easements to reduce water use is consistent with the mitigation measures in the Programmatic biological opinion (refer to pages 60-62). Purchase of the easements is also consistent with the purposes, general and specific obligations, and Appendix B of the 1999 Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army and the Service regarding water resources in the Sierra Vista subwatershed. It should be noted that this water use reduction cannot be used to mitigate future projects and the water use that may occur with those projects.

To adequately address the overdraft of groundwater in the Upper San Pedro Basin and insure the health of the San Pedro River and the species that depend on it, some current uses of water must cease and additional water conservation must occur. Various modeling efforts have shown that reducing water used for agriculture, particularly in the southern part of the basin, can inordinately benefit the base flow of the San Pedro River when compared to other reductions downstream.

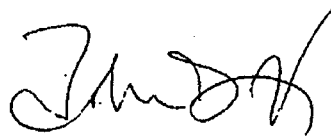
The Fort has been and continues to be a leader in addressing water resource issues in the Upper San Pedro Basin and the Sierra Vista subwatershed. We hope the combined efforts of Fort Huachuca, The Nature Conservancy, and the Bureau of Land Management will lead to the acquisition of additional conservation easements and reductions in water use in the Upper San Pedro Basin. Not only do the easements reduce water use, they maintain open space and the rural character of the landscape and maintain connectivity and a corridor between the San Pedro River and the Huachuca Mountains.

John A. Ruble

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We look forward to continued cooperation with Fort Huachuca on reducing water use in the Upper San Pedro River Basin and the conservation and recovery of listed species. If we can be of further assistance in this matter, please contact Doug Duncan (520) 670-4860 or Sherry Barrett (520) 670-4617.

Sincerely,



for David L. Harlow
Field Supervisor

cc: Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM (ARD-ES)
Office Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Sierra Vista, AZ
Andy Laurenzi, The Nature Conservancy, Tucson, AZ
Holly Richter, The Nature Conservancy, Hereford, AZ
Bob Strain, Chairman, Upper San Pedro Partnership Advisory Commission

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