

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE APACHE LEAP SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOREST SERVICE, TONTO NATIONAL FOREST

The Tonto National Forest (TNF) is preparing a management plan for the Apache Leap Special Management Area (SMA) as directed by the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2015.

The plan will establish desired conditions, objectives and standards to guide future management of the area. The management plan will be prepared in consultation with affected tribes, the Town of Superior in Pinal County, Arizona, Resolution Copper, and interested members of the public.

The Apache Leap SMA currently includes lands under federal and private ownership. Upon completion of the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange (also included in the NDAA), the Apache Leap SMA will include only federal lands. The NDAA directs the exchange of the 110-acre Apache Leap parcel presently owned by Resolution Copper – the operating company and project proponent for a proposed underground copper mine near Superior -- to the TNF. This parcel will be added to an existing 697-acre area of TNF to form the approximately 807-acre Apache Leap SMA, which encompasses the Apache Leap escarpment, east of Superior.

The purpose of the Apache Leap SMA, as set forth in the NDAA, is as follows: (1) to preserve the natural character of Apache Leap, (2) to allow for traditional uses of the area by Native American people, and (3) to protect and conserve the cultural and archaeological resources of the area.

To assist with the management plan's development, a public workshop will be held on October 20, 2016, in the Superior High School multi-purpose room located at 100 Mary Drive, Superior, Arizona. The purpose of the workshop is to inform the public about the SMA plan development process and to receive input from the public on development of the plan. The meeting will take place from 5 to 8 p.m. A presentation by a TNF representative will begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by an interactive public workshop.

In addition to the public workshop, the TNF is inviting public input into the SMA plan development process. Submit inputs to the TNF by mail at Apache Leap SMA, P.O. Box 34468, Phoenix, AZ 85067-4468. Further information concerning the development of the management plan can be found online at www.ApacheLeapSMA.us. Public input will be most useful if received by November 21, 2016.

Upon completion of the management plan, the TNF will conduct a National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Assessment (EA) of the plan. There will be opportunities for public comment on the proposed management plan during the EA process in early 2017.

For additional information regarding the project, contact TNF's Mary Rasmussen at (602) 225- 5200 or email her at mcrasmussen@fs.fed.us.

Comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses of those who comment will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

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