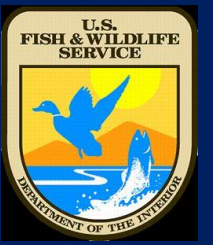




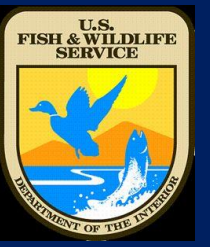
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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State of the Bioregion

INTERNATIONAL SONORAN DESERT ALLIANCE
ANNUAL MEETING

2023.02.25



Cabeza Prieta NWR

On the Horizon

PROSPECTS, PROPOSALS, AND PRIORITIES

- IMPROVE WILDERNESS CONDITION
- CHILDS MOUNTAIN COMMUNICATIONS SITE
- CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENTS
- WATER
- EROSION AND RESTORATION

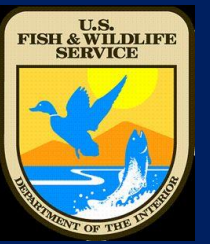


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Childs Mountain Discussion

Stay Tuned for Details



History: Ajo AFS Luke-Williams Range

- 1958: Ajo Airforce Station Cold War radar
- Manned by the 612th AC&W Squadron
- Ground-control intercept and early warning
- Infrastructure (\$7.4million) ca 100 structures, one of the most expensive!
- **Radar / Operations Area** included operations buildings, radar towers, backup generators.
- **GATR Site** – separate Ground to Air Transmitter/Receiver radio for intercept
- Cantonment area included enlisted barracks, bachelor officer's quarters, orderly room, dining hall, motor pool, swimming pool, bowling, BX etc.
- Family housing 27 units
- 1969: Abandoned and housing moved to Gila Bend, 1994 remaining torn down
- 1998: MOU with Luke and FAA
- 2000: turned over to FAA, Ajo Radar Site
- Current: LE Comms site and Joint Surveillance System by NORAD Western Air Defense BMGR-E



Arizona Daily Star (Tucson, Arizona) - 07 Sep 1958, Sun - Page 22
Airman install valuable radar equipment at the new site... her million dollars to build and includes everything from radar... The quarterly construction cost more than the cost of a...



2007 Comprehensive Conservation Plan

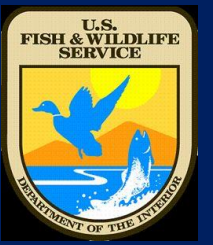
Objective 8: Childs Mountain

- Remove all non-essential installations, buildings and other equipment by 2018
- **BUT!** It's essential: **vital health and safety/national security function**
- **BUT!** It "degrades wilderness character" – non-LE "prominently visible... **doesn't serve a refuge purpose...**" (Is this statement true?)
- **SO...!:** Users "**explore alternative sites,**" 10 years prepare to remove

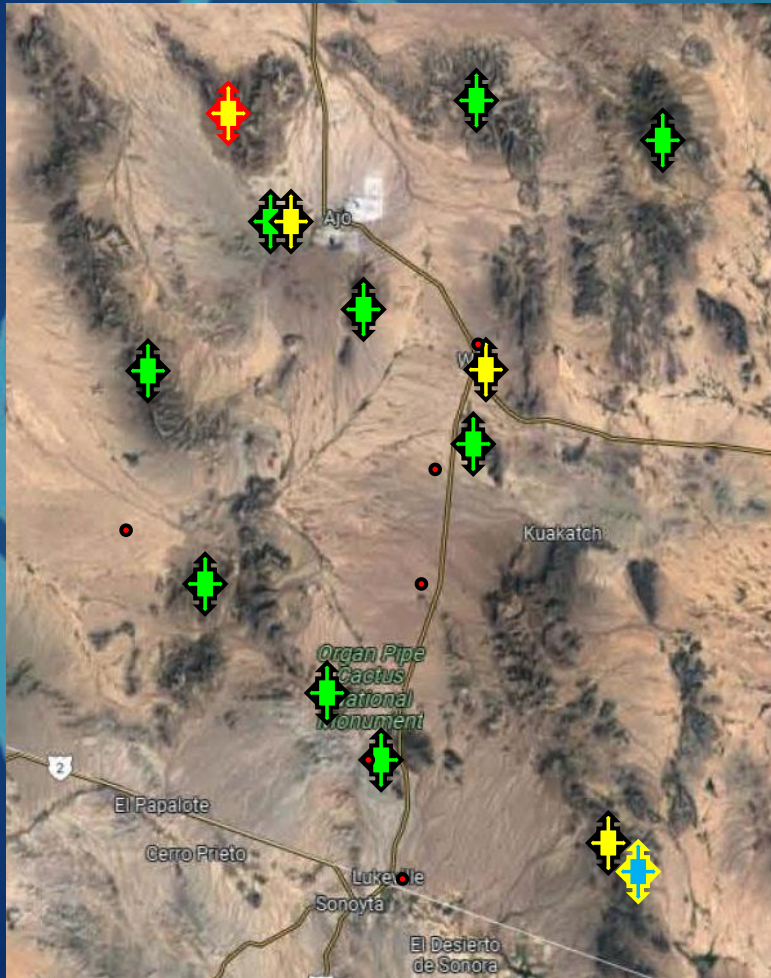
Primary Users

- DHS, DoD, and DPS with subs





“Explore Alternative Sites” Placement Options? Where?



Developed Sites

- **Childs, FWS**
- A-Mountain <elev
- Ajo Mountain LE, NPS
- Why, Town <elev

Undeveloped “Options”

- Batamote, BLM
- Cardigans, BLM
- Saucedas, BLM
- Black, BLM
- Growlers, FWS-DW
- Gunsights, BLM
- Bates-Kino, NPS-DW
- Pinkley, NPS-DW
- Twin Pks, NPS
- Tohono O'odham

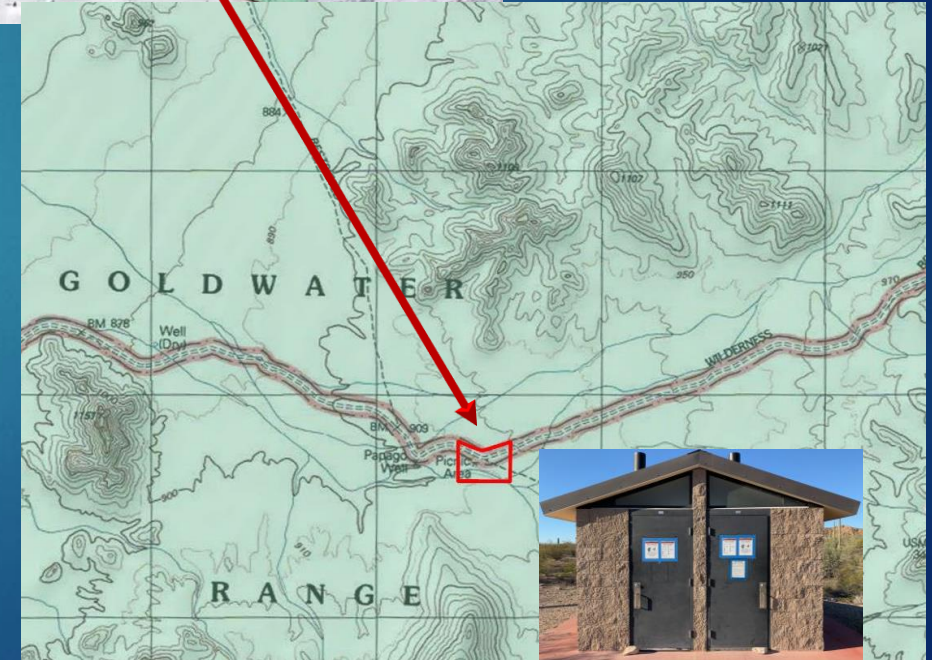
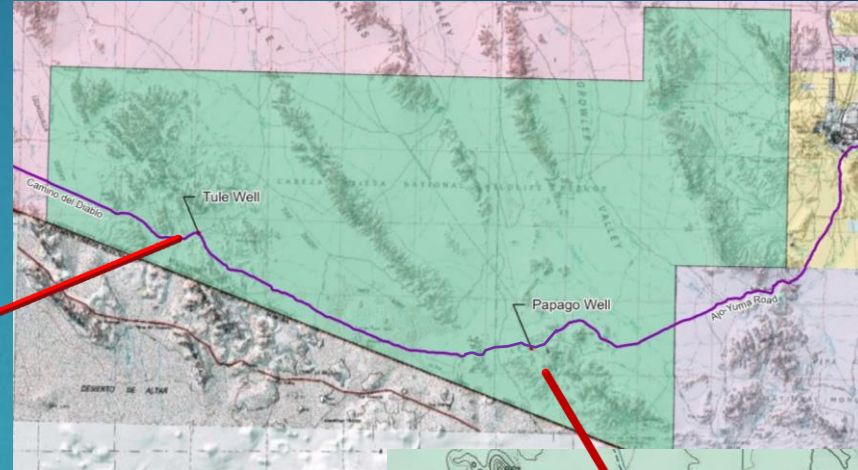
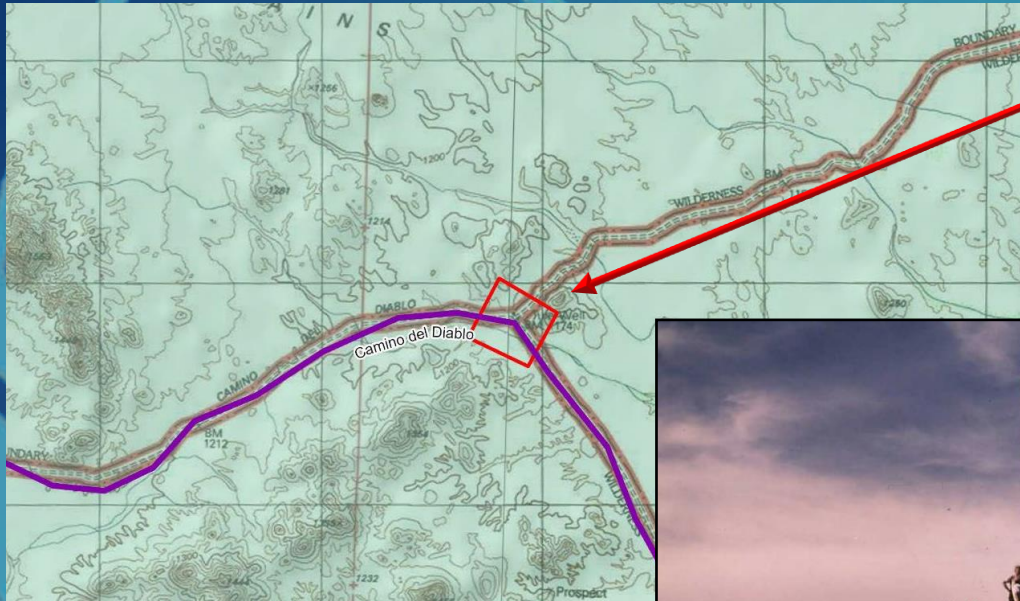
Issues and Considerations

- New disturbance in undisturbed lands
- Access and infrastructure
- **Designated Wilderness (DW)**-unviable
- NEPA, NHPA §106-new visual-develop
- Enough altitude? Connectivity?
- Stated purpose achieved or just push the problem elsewhere?
- Not on “my” land ... but we “need” it!

Key points: Childs is developed, at 20' has line of sight to Gila Bend. South, there are connection issues, but there are also solutions in previously disturbed areas that would result in minimal additional impacts (mainly solar panels and sheds).



Improvements to Tule and P'...ago Campgrounds



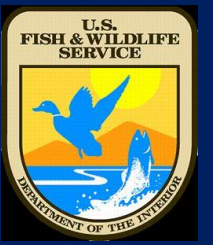


Improvements to P'...ago and Tule Campgrounds



- Delineate wilderness boundary – 100'
- Vault toilet and ADA parking
- Shade structures
- Work with O'odham to rename P'...ago to a more suitable name





Tule Campground Site Map

Tule Casita is not historic, not contributing, not NR eligible, and will be removed and replaced with a vault toilet.



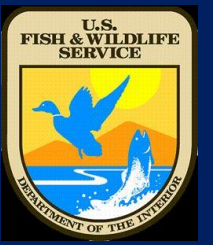
Remove existing campground from designated wilderness. 

Campsite shade structure 

Vault Toilet & ADA Parking 

Access Road 

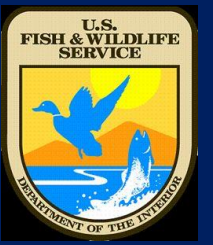
Wilderness Boundary 



P'...ago Campground Site Map



- Campsite shade structure 
- Vault Toilet & ADA Parking 
- Access Road 
- Wilderness Boundary 



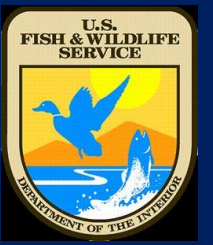
Las Playas, A Thirsty Ice Age Relict And Hydrological Challenge



*Response to UNESCO and Mexico to mitigate effects of border infrastructure.

*Work with CBP-BP to re-establish flow + Camp Grip-Water Quality.

* Tribal Cultural Place-Intaglio and Las Playas



Las Playas Hydrology

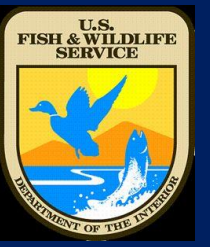


* Work with Mexico and Pinacate NP/WHS to re-establish flow.

* Ensure the Camino doesn't inhibit sheetflow.

* Tribal Cultural Place



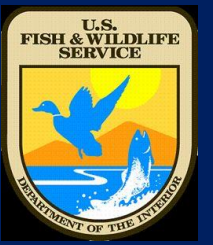


Desertification



Causes: Cumulative and Unsustainable

- Cattle ranching – 650,000 head late 19th into mid 20th centuries
- Minimal vegetative response and lost groundcover/cryptobiotics
- Sustained droughts
- Flood events strip paleosols
- Colonization and spread of non-natives esp buffelgrass, Sahara mustard etc
- Modern impacts due to cross-border violations and interdiction responses



Places to Enhance Infiltration and Vegetative Response



Results and Effects

- Roads incise, become arroyos
- Border response complicates
- Stream/sheetflow diverted
- Erosion unabated
- Hydrology altered
- Aquifer recharge reduced
- Subsidence/desiccation cracks

Restoration

- Waterbars
- Grassland restoration-soils
- Check dams
- Seedbank





Father Eusebio Kino ca 1698

*...the area is favorable
for browse with grasses to
the horse's bridles...*



Where to start? Is some restoration possible?

- Near roads
- Outside wilderness
- Feed plots—seed bank
- Road erosion
- Learn from the O'odham—Ak Chin
- Capture water
- Infiltration = > growth
- Groundwater recharge



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Questions?