



THE STATE OF ARIZONA
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Robert Burns, Chairman – Joint Committee on Capital Review

CC: Representative Russell Pearce, Speaker Jim Weiers, President Tim Bee, Senators Paula Aboud, Amanda Aguirre, Marsha Arzberger, Karen S. Johnson, Thayer Verschoor, Jim Waring, Representatives Tom Boone, Trish Groe, John Kavanagh, Phil Lopes, David Lujan, David Schapira, Marcel Benberou, Richard Stavneak

FROM: Duane L. Shroufe, Director 

SUBJECT: 2007 Sunflower shooting Range Feasibility Study (budget footnote)

DATE: October 1, 2007

Laws 2007, Chapter 257, (House Bill 2783, Section 4) require the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of developing a shooting range in the Sunflower, Arizona area. AGFD is to report its findings to the joint committee on capital review by October 15, 2007.

Thank you for your concern regarding this issue. It is the Commission and Department intent to provide shooting ranges, where feasible, to facilitate shooting sports in Arizona. Please don't hesitate to contact the Department in the future with questions relating to shooting ranges or other Department subject matter.

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SUNFLOWER SHOOTING RANGE FEASIBILITY STUDY 2007

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I. Summary

Laws 2007, Chapter 257, (House Bill 2783, Section 4) requires the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of developing a shooting range in the Sunflower, Arizona area. AGFD is to report its findings to the joint committee on capital review by October 15, 2007.

In completing this feasibility study, AGFD identified several significant issues regarding the feasibility of developing a shooting range in the Sunflower area:

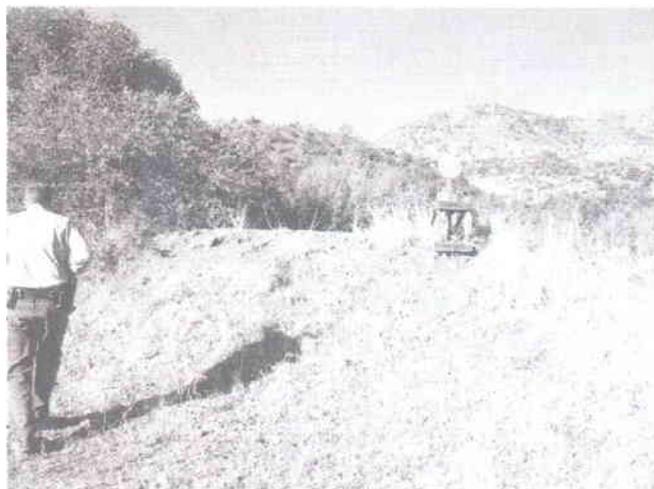
- Special Use permits from the Forest Service on the current site require reclamation and the removal of Department of Public Service (DPS) buildings at the end of the permit cycle.
- Environmental, riparian and wildlife habitat areas may be affected.
- Population centers proximity and commute time to the proposed site.
- Other recreational activities take place adjacent to this site.
- Roads and utility lines are adjacent to this site.
- The footprint of the proposed site would not provide adequate yardage for a range.

The AGFD would not recommend the Sunflower area as a shooting range.

II. Background

Region VI (Mesa) conducted a site-visit of the old Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) pistol range site situated on the former DPS/ADOT yard near Sunflower.

The location of this property is on the dead-end old alignment of the Beeline Highway, and adjacent to the eastern public access point to Forest Road 393 / power line road to Bartlett Dam (see map below). The site is about 100 yards from the mature riparian gallery along Sycamore Creek, and there is also a natural spring a few hundred yards to the west of the site. The property is south and adjacent to the Great Western Trail, a trailhead and parking area. The Tonto Forest's Sunflower Workstation, as well



DPS pistol range.

as the site of a planned riparian educational center, is just one mile down the road to the south, and the headquarters for the Cross-F Ranch is about ¼ mile up the road to the north.

This property was operated by DPS under a Special Use Permit with the Tonto National Forest (TNF). DPS vacated the property after the realignment and conversion of the Beeline Highway (State Route 87) into a divided highway was completed. DPS response time from Payson and Mesa was greatly improved, so the need for their personnel to live at Sunflower no longer existed. According to the TNF, when the DPS special use permit expires, DPS must remove the buildings and restore the site to its natural condition.

III. Areas of Concern



Pistol range with powerlines and FS Road 393 in background to west.

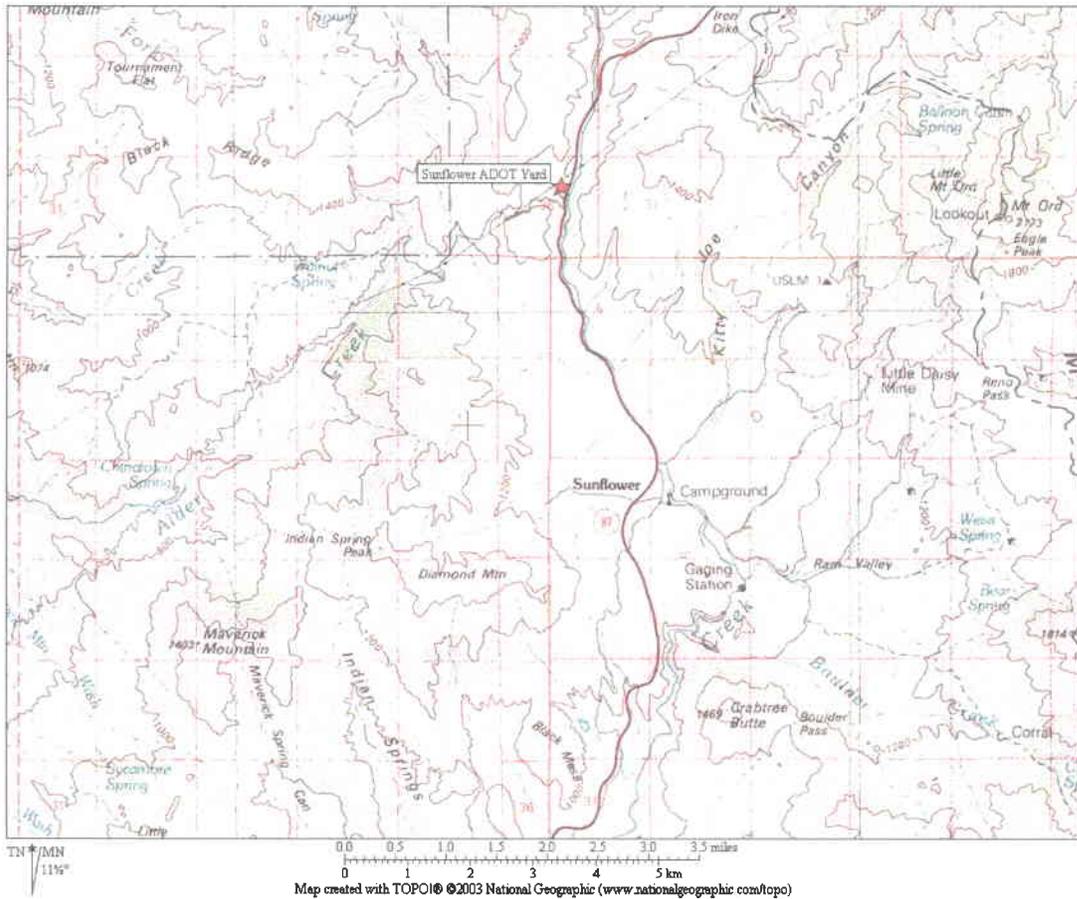
This site has been suggested as a possible location for development or use as a public shooting range since DPS used it for firearms practice. A small range with dirt berm does occur on the site. However, the area behind the old range does not have an adequate backstop to stop bullets downrange from impacting a large power line. In addition, Forest Road 393 is upslope a couple hundred yards from behind the shooting berm (see attached photo's), and also proximate to the site are a couple of popular hiking trails. Improvements to the existing pistol

berms would still not adequately protect these features from down range or wayward bullets. Leaking diesel underground storage tanks on site would complicate the reclamation of this property and any further expansion or development of a shooting range at this specific location would also result in adverse impacts to sensitive species and riparian habitat, and not be compatible with other recreational uses the TNF has planned / designated for this area.

The site traditionally used by DPS, for a range, was 75 yards by 125 yards. While this may be useful for a pistol range, rifle ranges usually require as much as 500 - 1000 yards with most individuals sighting in their rifles at 200+ yards.

Payson, Fountain Hills, Apache Junction and Mesa are the closest population centers to this site. In studies the AGFD has found that the amount of time a person is willing to travel to a shooting range must remain under 25 minutes. This site does not meet this minimum standard. As such, for the reasons listed above, we would not recommend this site for a public shooting range.

Map of Sunflower, Arizona area



IV. Supplemental Information

The following information details the site and the potential problems with placing a shooting range in this area.

1. Shooting berm at Sunflower ADOT/DPS Yard with power lines in the background. Not visible is FS 393 on the hill to the left. Crossing behind the range is a hiking trail that is part of the Arizona Trail system.



2. View looking west with berm on the left and generator shed in the background. This area was cleared to remediate a leaking underground diesel storage tank.



3. View looking south across monitoring wells for leaking underground storage tank toward one of the houses on the site.



4. One of the residences at the site.



5. View looking northeast across the site. Sycamore Creek and the old Beeline Highway is in the background at the base of the hill.



6. View looking east from the top of the shooting berm toward the two residences on the site.



7. Another view of the shooting berm.



8. Arizona Trail trailhead sign across from the ADOT/DPS yard.



9. View from Google Earth showing the Sunflower ADOT yard before remediation was done for the leaking diesel tank. The day this image was taken there was a thin cloud cover.

