

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

5.1 Introduction

Coordination with federal, state, and local agencies was conducted to obtain information about the general Wickenburg area as well as the developed and undeveloped areas through which a bypass route would pass. Specific information was obtained to define the existing social, economic and environmental characteristics of the project area and assist the study team in identifying particular constraints that would preclude encroachment by the proposed bypass.

Based upon a review of the project area, there are no prime or unique farmlands, sole source aquifers, wetlands, wilderness areas, designated critical habitat, or wild and scenic rivers present that would be affected by the proposed Wickenburg Bypass. Road and utility construction and maintenance, trash dumping, and erosion have impacted portions of the project area associated with the Southwest, Far West, and Southern Loop Alternatives.

The following sections summarize this information and identify the level of concern or sensitivity for each environmental issue.

5.2 Biological Resources

The project area is primarily undeveloped, with the exception of the northern portions of Morristown in the vicinity of the US 60/SR 74 junction. The landscape in the bypass area is varied, ranging from bajada slopes and flats dissected by numerous washes to rolling hills and mountainous terrain. The vegetation is characteristic of the Sonoran Desertscrub, Arizona Upland Subdivision Biotic Community, in which the dominant species include creosotebush, mesquite, catclaw acacia, buckhorn cholla, paloverde, yucca, prickly pear, crucifixion thorn, bursage, barrel cactus, and saguaro.

Wildlife

a. Threatened/Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) list of endangered, threatened, candidate, and proposed species for Maricopa County includes the following wildlife species:

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	Listing Status
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Threatened
Brown pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	Endangered
Cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl	<i>Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum</i>	Endangered
Desert pupfish	<i>Cyprinodon macularius</i>	Endangered
Gila topminnow	<i>Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis</i>	Endangered
Lesser long-nosed bat	<i>Leptonycteris curasoae yerbabuena</i>	Endangered
Mexican spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	Threatened
Razorback sucker	<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	Endangered
Sonoran pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana sonoriensis</i>	Endangered
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	Endangered
Yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Candidate

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Listing Status</u>
Yuma clapper rail	<i>Rallus longirostris yumanensis</i>	Endangered

Designated critical habitat for the listed species does not occur in the project area.

This project would have no impact on the brown pelican, cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl, desert pupfish, Gila topminnow, razorback sucker, southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, or Yuma clapper rail. These species are associated with aquatic habitats, broadleaf riparian gallery forest, and/or perennial water sources. The only habitat suitable for these species in the vicinity of the study area is in the Hassayampa River Preserve. The ultimate bypass project would not affect this habitat area, which is located approximately three miles north of the proposed project area.

The bald eagle can occur anywhere in Arizona and individual birds may pass through the area of the proposed project. Potential foraging habitat and food sources for this species occur within the project area. However, it is highly unlikely that the proposed project would affect the species, should a bird occur in the project vicinity, because the project area does not contain nesting habitat or suitable roosting sites for this species.

The proposed project area is within the known range of the lesser long-nosed bat, although the project area does not contain suitable roosting or maternal sites for this species. Vegetation removal due to construction could result in the loss of food plants for this species; however, suitable foraging habitat for this species is abundant in the vicinity.

The Mexican spotted owl is found in forested highlands throughout Arizona at elevations of 5,000 to 9,000 feet. The proposed project would not affect this species because the proposed project area does not contain suitable habitat and is located outside the known range and elevations usually inhabited by this species.

b. Arizona Species of Concern

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's (AGFD) list of special status species for the project vicinity includes the following species classified as Sensitive (S) and Wildlife of Special Concern in Arizona (WSCA):

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Listing Status</u>
Arizona skink	<i>Eumeces gilberti arizonensis</i>	WSCA/S
Arizona toad	<i>Bufo microscaphus microscaphus</i>	S
Bonytail chub	<i>Gila elegans</i>	WSCA/S
California leaf-nosed bat	<i>Macrotus californicus</i>	WSCA*
Cave myotis	<i>Myotis velifer</i>	S
Gila topminnow	<i>Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis</i>	WSCA*
Longfin dace	<i>Agosia chrysogaster</i>	S
Lowland leopard frog	<i>Rana yavapaiensis</i>	WSCA/S
Razorback sucker	<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	WSCA*
Snowy egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	WSCA
Sonoran desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizi</i>	WSCA

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Listing Status</u>
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	WSCA*
Western red bat	<i>Lasiurus blossevillii</i>	WSCA
Western yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	WSCA/S

(* Also listed as endangered by the USFWS)

This project would have no impact on the Arizona skink, bonytail chub, desert pupfish, Gila topminnow, lowland leopard frog, razorback sucker, snowy egret, southwestern willow flycatcher, western red bat, or western yellow-billed cuckoo. These species are associated with aquatic habitats, broadleaf riparian gallery forest, and/or perennial water sources. The only habitat suitable for these species in the vicinity of the study area is in the Hassayampa River Preserve. The proposed project would not affect this habitat area, which is located approximately three miles north of the proposed project area.

The peregrine falcon can occur anywhere in Arizona during the spring and fall migration periods and individual birds may pass through the area of the proposed project. Potential foraging habitat and food sources for this species occur within the project area. However, it is highly unlikely that the proposed project would affect the species, should a bird occur in the project vicinity, because the project area does not contain nesting habitat or suitable roosting sites for this species.

The bypass project would traverse Sonoran desert tortoise habitat on the south and west sides of Wickenburg. The BLM land that would be traversed by the Southwest, Far West, or Southern Loop Alternative is classified as Category II habitat. The ASLD land immediately north of the BLM managed land is classified as Category III habitat. Specific measures will need to be developed, through coordination with AGFD and BLM when an Environmental Assessment is prepared, to mitigate the impacts to desert tortoise habitat.

c. BLM Raptor Protection Area

The BLM established the Vulture Mountains Raptor Protection Area (RPA) (Figure 5-1), encompassing the cliff areas of Vulture Peak and the Caballeros Peaks, southwest of Wickenburg in 1981 to protect the nesting habitat of four raptor species: prairie falcon, golden eagle, barn owl and great-horned owl. This designation was made within the current BLM Management Framework Plan (MFP) for the Big Horn RMA, which is located south and southwest of Wickenburg. The purpose of this action was to prevent the loss of reproductive success of these species by protecting the cliff habitat from disturbing human activities, particularly during the February 1 to May 1 breeding season each year. To accomplish this objective, BLM originally established a 2-mile buffer area around the cliffs to protect the raptor habitat from land disposal, excess fencing, building of structures, land clearing, intense recreational use or development, and roadway construction. BLM has proposed to reduce the RPA to a ½-mile buffer zone surrounding the prime-nesting habitat for these species in the Vulture Peak/Caballeros Peaks cliff areas due to increased knowledge of species requirements compared to when the MFP was developed. This would require BLM to prepare an amendment to the MFP and an Environmental Analysis and Public Involvement. No time frame has been established for this activity.

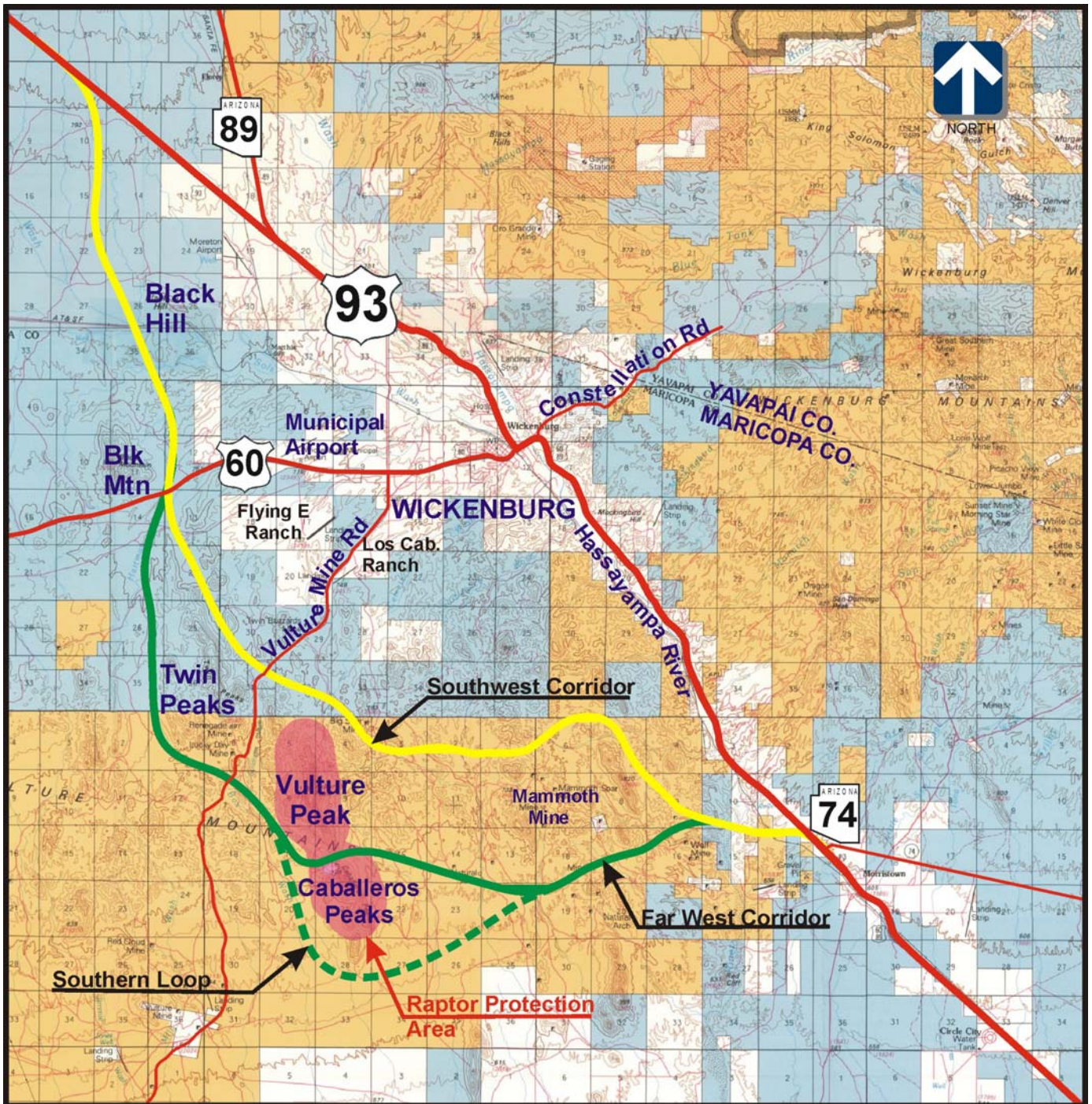


Figure 5-1 Raptor Protection Area

The Southwest Alternative would intersect the northeastern corner of the RPA, but it would avoid the proposed ½-mile cliff buffer zone. The Far West Alternative would pass through the middle of the RPA and the ½-mile buffer zone. As a result, 5 to 10 percent of the cliffs associated with Vulture Peak and 30 percent of the cliffs associated with Caballeros Peak would be within ½-mile of the new roadway alignment following construction. The Southwest Alternative would avoid this impact. However, the Southwest Alternative would affect up to 6 percent, and the Far West Alternative would impact up to 8 percent of the available raptor foraging habitat within BLM lands in the vicinity. The Southern Loop Alternative would avoid the RPA, but would impact up to 8 percent of available raptor foraging habitat.

An aerial biological survey was conducted on May 11, 2001 within the RPA (ADOT 2001). The purpose of the survey was to determine the presence of the MFP protected raptors in proximity to the Southwest and Far West Alternatives. The survey confirmed the presence of nesting pairs of prairie falcon and red-tailed hawk. Specifically, existing nests were discovered within ½-mile of the Far West corridor. No great-horned owls, barn owls or golden eagles were observed in the course of the survey.

Plants

a. Threatened/Endangered Species

The USFWS's list of endangered, threatened, candidate, and proposed species for Maricopa County includes the following plant species:

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Listing Status</u>
Arizona agave	<i>Agave arizonica</i>	Endangered
Arizona cliffrose	<i>Purshia subintegra</i>	Endangered

The Arizona agave occurs at elevations of approximately 3,000 to 6,000 feet and is associated with oak-juniper and chaparral vegetation. The range of the Arizona cliffrose is limited to areas of limestone deposits. The proposed project would have no impact on the listed plant species because the proposed project area does not meet the habitat criteria for either species.

b. Arizona Native Plant Law Species

The following protected native plant was included in the AGFD's list of species of concern for the project:

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Listing Status</u>
Hohokam agave	<i>Agave murpheyi</i>	Highly Safeguarded

The nearest known location for the Hohokam agave is approximately 80 miles east of the proposed project area north of Lake Pleasant. The species' range is primarily to the east and south of that population. Thus, it is unlikely that this species is present in the project area.

Protected native plants within the construction limits would be impacted by the proposed project; therefore, the ADOT Roadside Development Section would notify the Arizona Department of

Agriculture at least 60 days prior to the start of construction to afford commercial salvagers the opportunity to remove and salvage these plants.

Riparian Habitat

Riparian habitat, which is classified as Sonoran riparian desertscrub habitat, is present along the Hassayampa River. Vegetation in the area immediately adjacent to the river channel is dominated by tamarisk with occasional cottonwood, willow, and mesquite trees.

All three bypass alternatives would cross the Hassayampa River south of the Hassayampa Preserve. Wildlife in this area includes mule deer, coyotes, javelina, small mammals, lizards, and snakes, as well as migratory birds. The foraging and movement patterns of resident wildlife species would be temporarily altered during construction due to bridge construction and the removal of vegetation within the project area. However, these species would eventually adapt to the changed condition and resume regular behavioral patterns. The temporary impact would be minor due to the presence of available habitat upstream and downstream of the project.

Mitigation for impacts to riparian areas would likely include replacing cottonwood and willow trees removed as a result of construction of the project. The details of the tree replacement would be determined during the project's final design phase.

Invasive Species

Under Executive Order 13112 dated February 3, 1999, projects that occur on federal lands or are federally funded must: "subject to the availability of appropriation, and within Administration budgetary limits, use relevant programs and authorities to: i) prevent the introduction of invasive species; ii) detect and respond rapidly to, and control, populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner; iii) monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; and iv) provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded."

In accordance with Executive Order 13112, the project area will need to be surveyed by a qualified invasive species authority to determine if listed invasive species are present within the project boundaries. This survey should occur during the preparation of the project's environmental documentation. If invasive species are identified, appropriate mitigation measures will need to be identified and documented in the environmental documentation.

5.3 Cultural Resources

Following an extensive literature search and a spot field survey, an intensive archaeological survey was conducted within an area extending approximately 135 feet to each side of the corridor centerline of the Southwest and Far West Bypass Alternatives. The survey identified 22 sites (3 prehistoric, 19 historic) and 120 isolated occurrences. The survey and its findings have been documented in *A Cultural Resources Assessment of the Arizona Department of Transportation's Wickenburg-to-Santa Maria River Bypass Alternatives, Maricopa County, Arizona* (Punzmann 2002).

Eleven sites (1 prehistoric, 10 historic) were located within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) of the Far West Alternative. None of these sites is recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) because they are surface sites with little or no possibility of subsurface deposits. Mapping and field documentation have exhausted the information potential for these sites, and further archaeological work is unnecessary.

Seven sites (2 prehistoric, 5 historic) were located within the APE of the Southwest Alternative. The 5 historic sites are not recommended as NRHP-eligible because they are surface sites with little or no possibility of subsurface deposits. Similar to the sites along the Far West Alternative, current mapping and field documentation have exhausted the information potential for these sites, and further archaeological work is unnecessary. Although the two prehistoric sites contained diverse concentrations of artifacts, both sites have the potential to contain intact subsurface deposits. Thus, the eligibility of these sites cannot be determined at this time. If the sites cannot be avoided, subsurface testing is recommended to determine the presence and condition of the cultural deposits.

Four additional historic sites were located in areas common to both alternatives. One of the common sites is historic US 60, which has been recommended as potentially eligible for the NRHP under criteria a and/or d. However, the two segments identified in the survey are presently in use, are in relatively good condition, and to some degree retain integrity of location, design, and workmanship. However, their materials, associations, setting, and feeling have been altered so that they no longer convey original historic character and are recommended as noncontributing elements to the road's overall eligibility. The three remaining historic sites are not recommended as NRHP-eligible for the same reasons stated previously regarding similar sites within the APE of the Southwest and Far West Alternatives.

Although a similar field survey along the Southern Loop Route Corridor was not conducted, it is anticipated that there is a high potential for finding similar cultural resource sites within the APE of this alternative. Such a survey will need to be conducted, and the results coordinated with the SHPO, as part of the NEPA documentation and Section 106 processes prior to project implementation.

When the bypass project is advanced beyond the project feasibility stage, coordination with interested Native American tribes should be initiated relative to potential impacts upon traditional cultural properties.

5.4 Floodplains

All bypass alternatives will cross the 100-year floodplain of the Hassayampa River, west of the existing US 60/SR 74 intersection. An evaluation of other possible encroachments into floodplains will need to be performed during the preparation of the NEPA document, in accordance with FHWA procedures.

5.5 Water Quality

A jurisdictional determination regarding waters of the U.S. will need to be conducted for the preferred bypass alternative by delineating the ordinary high water mark for the Hassayampa

River and other washes in the project area. The proposed bypass would cross the Hassayampa River, which is considered to be a water of the U.S. per the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) 1987 Delineation Manual. Based upon a preliminary review of the project area, Section 404 permits and Section 401 Water Quality Certifications will be required. During final design, the project plans would be reviewed to verify the extent of impacts to jurisdictional waters of the U.S. As appropriate, permits required under Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act would be acquired by ADOT or its final design consultant prior to construction in these areas.

In order to reduce erosion, minimize sedimentation, and eliminate non-storm water pollutants that may be discharged into waters of the U.S., the project would comply with the *Arizona Department of Transportation Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction* (2000 edition), Section 104.09 "Prevention of Landscape Defacement: Protection of Streams, Lakes and Reservoirs." In addition, all disturbed soils that would not be landscaped or otherwise permanently stabilized would be seeded with species native to the project vicinity.

All discarded waste (including but not limited to human waste, trash, debris, oil drums, fuel, ashes, equipment, concrete, and chemicals) generated during construction activities would be removed and/or disposed according to federal and state regulations. Waste material would not be discharged into perennial or intermittent streams or washes, or other waters of the U.S., unless the contractor has obtained the appropriate Section 401 and 404 permits in accordance with applicable federal and state regulations. Contractor staging areas and material stockpiles (including aggregates, fill materials, petroleum, and other chemical products) would be located outside existing floodways and protected so that sediment and/or spills would not enter stream channels or affect groundwater.

Because one or more acres of land would be disturbed, an Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit would be required. The ADOT Roadside Development Section would need to determine who would prepare the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan during final design of the preferred alternative. The District Construction Office and contractor would submit the Notice of Intent and the Notice of Termination to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and distribute copies to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ).

5.6 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act of 1970 and associated amendments in 1977 and 1990 established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and lead (Pb). These laws also gave to EPA the authority to designate nonattainment areas where pollutant levels do not meet the NAAQS and require the development of State Implementation Plans (SIP) outlining the actions that would be taken to achieve compliance with the NAAQS. Projects in designated nonattainment areas must demonstrate conformance with the SIP and the local Transportation Improvement Program. The proposed project would be in an area that complies with all NAAQS. Therefore, the federal conformity procedures do not apply to this project. The bypass would have a positive effect on the air quality in Wickenburg and a general beneficial effect on the region because the bypass would reroute the congested regional/through-traffic out of downtown Wickenburg to a free-flow condition on the controlled access Bypass. Emissions from Bypass traffic would be newly introduced into the natural character of the undeveloped BLM and ASLD

land crossed by the Bypass, and these emissions would be additive to those emitted from OHV vehicles operated by recreationists in the area. However, this small increase would be minimal and would occur in an area without any sensitive receptors.

Some deterioration of air quality would be expected due to the operation of construction equipment and the slower traffic speeds associated with a construction zone. However, this localized condition would be discontinued when the project is completed. Fugitive dust generated from construction activities would be controlled in accordance with the *Arizona Department of Transportation Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction*, Section 104.08 (2000 Edition), special provisions, and local rules or ordinances.

5.7 Noise Impacts

The proposed bypass would be a new four-lane divided roadway on new alignment to the south and west of Wickenburg. The only area of sensitive receptors, which would be affected by any of the bypass alternatives under consideration, would be the residential community at the northern portion of Morristown that is located west of the existing US 60/SR 74 intersection. Noise levels in this area would increase substantially with the passage of a four-lane divided highway through a quiet residential community along the Hassayampa River. Therefore, a noise analysis would need to be conducted in accordance with FHWA's requirements contained in 23 CFR 772, *Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic and Construction Noise*, and ADOT's *Noise Abatement Policy*, March 21, 2000, during the preparation of the NEPA document for the bypass project.

With the Southwest Alternative, the bypass would be audible from Vulture Mine Road and the back country/recreational areas on the north side of Vulture Peak. With either the Far West Alternative or the Southern Loop Route Alternative, the new highway would be audible from the Vulture Peak trailhead, the trail itself, the upper trailhead, and the top of Vulture Peak.

5.8 Hazardous Materials

Based upon a preliminary review of the project area, it does not appear that there will be much potential for encountering environmental contamination from hazardous materials due to previous and/or existing activities in the proposed R/W for any of the alternatives. The majority of the land along the Southwest, Far West, and Southern Loop Route Alternatives is undeveloped and is unlikely to contain hazardous materials. The only developed segment of any of these bypass routes is a residential area in the northern sector of Morristown, located west of the US 60/SR 74 intersection that does not appear to contain facilities with any potential for contamination.

A Preliminary Initial Site Assessment and field reconnaissance for hazardous materials will need to be conducted during the preparation of the draft NEPA document to determine the potential for hazardous material contamination. In addition, a review of available ADEQ and EPA records will be conducted at that time.

5.9 Environmental Justice/Title VI

The project has been evaluated with regard to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice.

The project area includes the unincorporated community of Morrystown, the Town of Wickenburg, and residential areas outside the Wickenburg town limits. As shown in Tables 4-1 and 4-2, all three areas have lower percentages of non-whites and persons classified as Hispanic or Latino than the average for Maricopa County. The project vicinity has a larger proportion of persons over age 60 than Maricopa County, but this percentage is lower than the averages for Morrystown and Wickenburg. In addition, the project area has a lower percentage of residents living below the poverty line than Morrystown, Wickenburg, and Maricopa County. The percentage of residents with a disability is higher in Morrystown than the general project area, Wickenburg, and Maricopa County.

Although minorities are present within the project area, no distinct minority or low-income groups were identified because the percentage of these populations does not vary substantially from that of the general population of Morrystown, Wickenburg or Maricopa County. Therefore, the proposed project would not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effect on minority and low-income populations.

Table 5-1. 2000 Census Data Summary

Demographic Characteristic	Project Vicinity	Wickenburg	Maricopa County
Total population	486	5,082	3,072,149
Gender:			
Male	48.8%	47.1%	50.0%
Female	51.2%	52.9%	50.0%
Race:			
White alone	84.6%	91.8%	77.4%
Black or African-American alone	1.0%	0.3%	3.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native alone	1.2%	1.2%	1.8%
Asian alone	0.6%	0.4%	2.2%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander alone	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Some other race alone	10.1%	4.5%	11.9%
Two or more races	2.6%	1.8%	2.9%
Hispanic or Latino	16.3%	11.0%	24.8%
Age 60 years and over	25.5%	35.3%	15.2%
Disabled ¹	7.1%	7.0%	4.2%
Below poverty level ²	10.3%	15.3%	12.1%

¹ 1990 Census data; defined as persons with a mobility limitation, self-care limitation, or mobility and self-care limitation.

² 1990 Census data.

5.10 Socioeconomic Considerations

An economic study was conducted in 1999 to determine what effect, if any, a bypass would have on the economy of the Town of Wickenburg. Several surveys were conducted to determine what

percentage of business was attributed to visitors and pass-through traffic as well as what changes in patronage might occur if a bypass was constructed. The surveys revealed that 45 percent of the trips on US 93/US 60 either began or ended in Wickenburg, 25 percent of the regional travelers stopped in Wickenburg, and 30 percent of the travelers passed through Wickenburg without stopping. Of the 25 percent pass-through traffic that typically stops in Wickenburg, nearly 60 percent indicated they would still visit Wickenburg even if it took an extra 20 minutes to exit the Bypass for the stop. Local businesses, visitors, and pass-through travelers were also interviewed to determine the volume of business coming from the highway. The result of the economic study showed that business income losses would only range from 3 to 4 percent of total revenues, and revenue losses to the Town would range from 4.6 to 5.5 percent of total annual revenues.

The Southwest, Far West, and Southern Loop Bypass Routes would each require the displacement of some residences in the northern area of Morristown, west of the US 60/SR 74 interchange. The

**Table 5-2. 2000 Census Data Summary for Morristown
(based on 85342 zip code)**

Demographic Characteristic	Morristown	Maricopa County	Arizona
Total population	1,660	3,072,149	5,130,632
Gender:			
Male	48.4%	50.0%	49.9%
Female	51.6%	50.0%	50.1%
Race:			
White alone	92.0%	77.4%	75.5%
Black or African-American alone	0.5%	3.7%	3.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native alone	1.5%	1.8%	5.0%
Asian alone	0.4%	2.2%	1.8%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander alone	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Some other race alone	2.3%	11.9%	11.6%
Two or more races	3.1%	2.9%	2.9%
Hispanic or Latino	9.9%	24.8%	25.3%
Age 60 years and over	29.6%	15.2%	17.0%
Disabled	25.4%	15.2%	14.9%
Below poverty level	12.8%	11.8%	13.9%

specific number of displacements would be dependent upon which of the Morristown interchange alternatives would be implemented. In addition, the alignment of the Far West, Southwest and Southern Loop bypass alternatives would divide this residential area and disrupt neighborhood continuity. The Morristown South Bypass would not have this impact. The actual location and number of potential displacements would need to be determined during the development of an Initial DCR and Draft EA.

Any necessary business or residential relocations would occur in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (“The Uniform Act”). The Uniform Act provides minimum real property acquisition policies and requires uniform and equitable treatment of persons displaced as a result of a federally assisted program or project. The

stated purpose of the Uniform Act is to ensure that affected persons shall not suffer disproportionate injuries as a result of programs and projects designed for the benefit of the public as a whole and to minimize the hardship of displacement on such persons. The Uniform Act also requires that displaced persons receive uniform and consistent services and payments regardless of race, color, sex, or national origin.

The bypass alternatives would not affect existing police, fire, or emergency services in the area. In addition, the bypass alternatives would have no effect upon social services or schools in the area because they are located outside the recognized limits of the Morristown and Wickenburg communities.

5.11 Visual Resources

The visual impact of the bypass alternatives does not differ substantially on BLM land. The Far West alternative would have less visual impact due to lesser cuts and fills and there are more opportunities to provide a greater median separation to retain vegetation and landform.

5.12 Recreational Resources

The Southwest, Far West, and Southern Loop Alternatives would traverse different areas within the BLM's Vulture Mountains Special RMA that is located south of Wickenburg. This area is managed to emphasize diverse recreational opportunities including trails, natural and historic interpretation, camping, and OHV and special recreational vehicle use areas. BLM's management plan objectives for this Special RMA include improving visitor safety and recreational opportunities and developing single-use and multiple-use trails to meet the demand for hiking, equestrian, and mountain biking opportunities. Currently, there are a number of trails that crisscross the area that is used by OHV enthusiasts, hikers, campers, and birdwatchers.

The ASLD land located south and west of Wickenburg is also used for a variety of recreational purposes but not with the same intensity as occurs on BLM-managed land. This area experiences seasonal use by equestrian groups associated with local guest ranches and equestrian clubs.

REFERENCES

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