

AZER Post EA  
Appendix D  
Correspondence from NRCS

---

JAN 10 2008

John Cook AICP, Senior Associate  
135 Main Street, Suite 1600  
San Francisco, California 94105

Dear Mr. Cook:

This response is in regard to your email dated December 11, 2007, requesting information regarding the presence of prime and unique land status for the proposed freight railroad to spur from an existing Arizona Eastern Railroad near Safford and Solomon in Graham County, Arizona.

We reviewed the information provided, including the NRCS-CPA-106, and completed our portion of the form. It is enclosed with this response. The following is noted:

- 1- The project proposal contains 24.63 acres of land that meets the definition of prime farmland. However, the sum of the assessment criteria in Part VI and the Land Evaluation relative value in Part V is 138. Sum values less than 160 are considered as land already committed to urban uses. Therefore, the proposed new project, if implemented as planned, is exempt from the requirements of the FPPA and no further mitigation activities are required. A summary report of the soils for your defined corridor has been provided for your analysis and later use, if need be. The report includes a discussion of the soil types and their relative agricultural productivity.
- 2- We do not see any immediate concerns or impacts that would directly affect wetland areas associated with agriculture.

We recommend that any future development projects receive a prime farmland determination prior to any construction activities. Should you have questions, please feel free contact Steve Smarik, Environmental Coordinator, at 602.280.8785 or at the address shown above.

Thank you again for the chance to review the proposed project.

Sincerely,



ERIC BANKS  
Assistant State Conservationist (P-FA)

Enclosure

cc:

Jennifer Varin, DC, Safford, Arizona  
Steve Smarik, Environmental Coordinator, NRCS, Phoenix, AZ.

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING  
FOR CORRIDOR TYPE PROJECTS

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		3. Date of Land Evaluation Request DECEMBER 11, 2007	4. Sheet 1 of 1
1. Name of Project ARIZONA EASTERN RAILROAD		5. Federal Agency Involved SUNBELT TRANSPORTATION BOARD	
2. Type of Project RAILROAD CONSTRUCTION/RECONSTRUCTION		6. County and State GILCHRIST COUNTY ARIZONA	
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)		1. Date Request Received by NRCS 12/11/07	2. Person Completing Form S. SMAROK
3. Does the corridor contain prime, unique statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - Do not complete additional parts of this form)		4. Acres Irrigated   Average Farm Size 24.63   475 acres	
5. Major Crop(s) Cotton alfalfa wheat		7. Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: not known %	
6. Farmable Land in Government Jurisdiction Acres: 96,982 % 3.3		10. Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS	
8. Name of Land Evaluation System Used		9. Name of Local Site Assessment System	

PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Alternative Corridor For Segment <u>PROPOSED RAIL</u>			
	Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly	24.63	0		
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly, Or To Receive Services	24.63	0		
C. Total Acres In Corridor	24.63	0	0	0

PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information	
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland	24.63
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland	
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted	.037%
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value	25.9%

PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information Criterion Relative value of Farmland to Be Serviced or Converted (Scale of 0 - 100 Points)	83
---	----

PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Corridor Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(c))		Maximum Points			
1. Area in Nonurban Use	15	15			
2. Perimeter in Nonurban Use	10	10			
3. Percent Of Corridor Being Farmed	20	5			
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government	20	0			
5. Size of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average	10	10			
6. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland	25	0			
7. Availability Of Farm Support Services	5	5			
8. On-Farm Investments	20	10			
9. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services	25	0			
10. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use	10	0			
<b>TOTAL CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT POINTS</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100	83			
Total Corridor Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160	55	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

1. Corridor Selected: A	2. Total Acres of Farmlands to be Converted by Project: 24.63	3. Date Of Selection: February 2007	4. Was A Local Site Assessment Used? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
----------------------------	--	--	---

5. Reason For Selection:

Signature of Person Completing this Part: John Cook DATE: 12/11/2007

NOTE: Complete a form for each segment with more than one Alternate Corridor