



#E1-7210  
DFW  
FD-34836

April 28, 2008

Environmental Assessments  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 East Street SW  
Washington DC 20423

Subject' Arizona Eastern Railway Safford Branch Project alignment, which includes a crossing of the Gila River near the San Strmon Wash in Graham County, Arizona Comments on behalf of Chris Claridge,

Attention Diana Wood

Having studied the documents provided and having assisted with design for structures in the Gila River nearby, I have several concerns. From my experience with the 1979 and 1983 floods on the Gila River, large trees and even telephone poles lodged against the bridge piers and caused backwater effect, which in turn caused the river to flow into the fields to the south. The bridge that caused backwater was removed. Now a railroad bridge is being proposed near (he same area. With the fifteen proposed bridge piers, trees and other debris could cause a backwater affect that will likely cause flooding of the fields and homes to the south. The cost of the flooding could be considerable, Therefore it is my recommendation that the bridge be put in a wider area of the river, such as one mile to the west where the river is wider and has more capacity (see figure on the following page) or make sure the piers are designed farther apart to avoid collecting debris and raising the flood elevation even in the wider area of the river.

The grade of the railroad trackbed south of the Gila River also gives us concern that should the Gila River come out of its banks and go across the fields, the railroad trackbed might contribute to drainage problems. Therefore, the grade of the trackbed must be reviewed to determine any detrimental floodwater effects to the farms.

The report also mentions that wells that would be in the 500 foot corridor will be capped according to the standards of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Capping the water production wells of the farms would render the farms useless since the irrigation water is provided by the wells. It is not a simple task to drill wells in new locations because the aquifer is not homogeneous. Therefore drilling a well nearby may not yield as much water supply and the water quality could be different. The wells need to be studied to determine if any can be capped. New wells will need to be drilled and in production before the other wells can be capped and abandoned

The farming operations will be impacted by the alignment of the railroad. Currently the proposed railroad track will divide the farm and cause a portion of the field to be less than 35 acres. This small piece of farm will need to have new concrete delivery ditches installed It makes it difficult to bring equipment in to work the field and causes more land to be in turnarounds and borders, so net farming area will be lost (see sheet 3) This creates a hardship on the farmer and loss of revenues.

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on Arizona Eastern Railway Safford Branch Project. Should you have any question, please feel free to call me (520-797-3235),

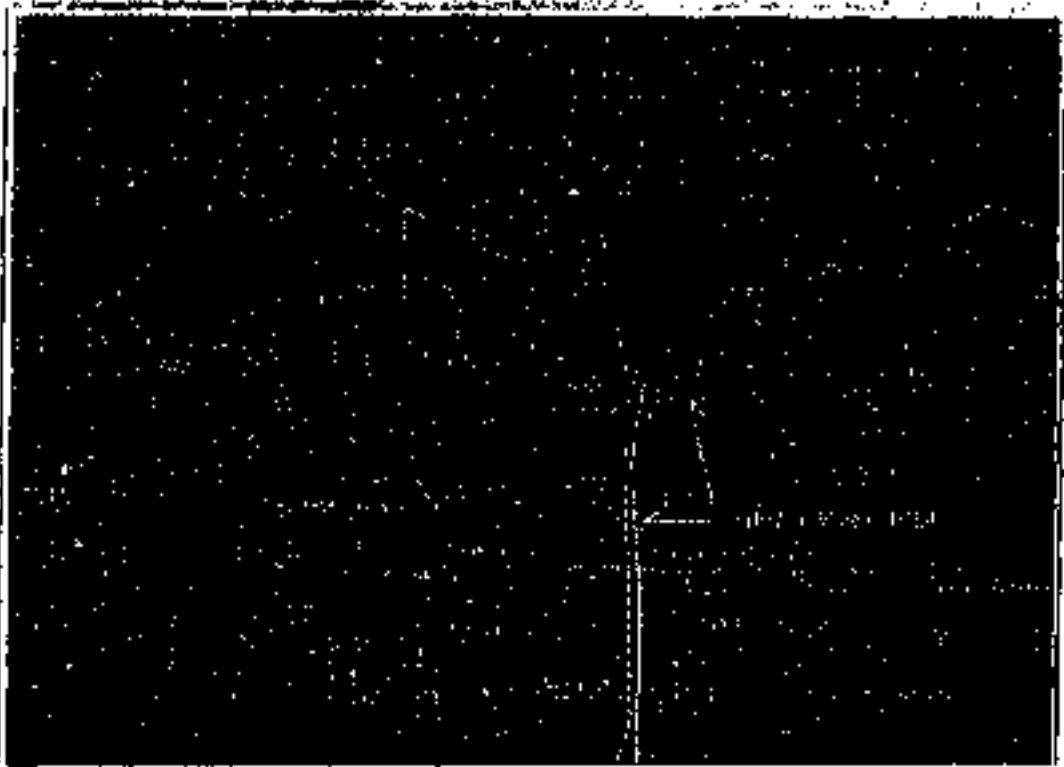
Sincerely,

Scott Marvin Larson

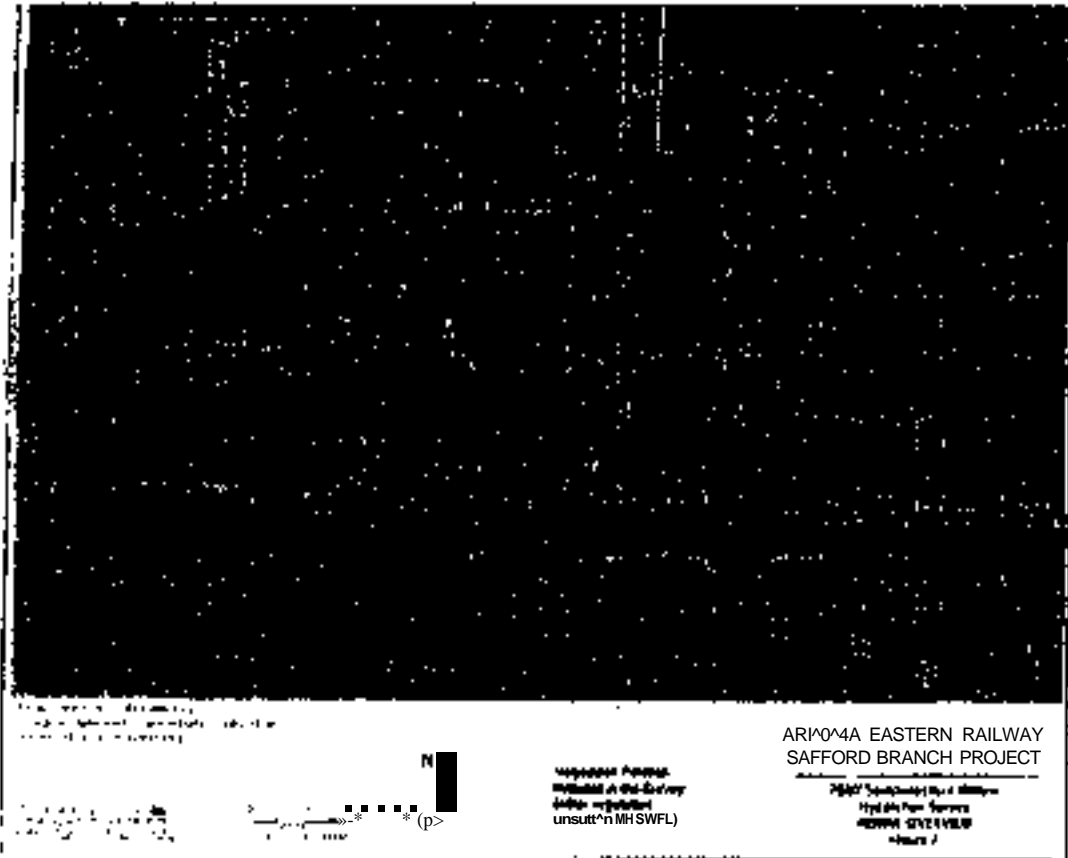


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Suggested possible route. (Base map from Arizona Eastern Railway Safford Branch Project report)



Problem of tract splitting field, (Base map from Arizona Eastern Railway Safford Branch Project report)