

The Gila National Forest requests reconsideration of its AWSA Tier 1 Stream Flow Stations project proposal based on the following comments:

1. Stream Monitoring Systems Meet Water Supply Demand in the same way that numerous other watershed restoration proposals meet this demand: streamflow monitoring systems support and are an integral component of those watershed restoration proposals. This includes the USFS Watershed Restoration Proposal that did pass the Tier 1 process. This was plainly stated in the USFS proposal in Attachment 14B.
2. Stream Monitoring Systems were proposed as a stand-alone USFS project because neither the number nor the full scope of various watershed restoration proposals was known, nor was it known which of those proposals would be approved. It is essential that an integrated approach be used to evaluate the effects of these various proposed projects. It is also obvious that a high quality set of monitoring systems is far superior to a scattershot approach which would occur if watershed restoration projects were funded piecemeal. This was plainly stated in the USFS proposal in Item (1) of the July 2011 Supplemental Responses to ISC Pre-Review Comments, in the "Mitigation Opportunity" section.
3. Stream Monitoring Systems Will be an Integral Part of the ISC's 10-Year Watershed Study. Because the "water-yielding" portions of any Gila Basin watershed study will be on National Forest lands, streamflow monitoring in support of this Watershed Study will be essential. Although funding for stream gages could occur under the ISC Watershed Study, 1) the scope of that study is not yet known, and 2) streamflow baseline monitoring is essential. Thus, separately-proposed stream gages systems could be installed in a more timely manner. They would also be installed in close consultation with the Watershed Study group and the information would then be available to the group. Nothing would preclude the Watershed Study group from recommending and funding additional gages. This was plainly stated in Item (2) of the July 2011 Supplemental Responses to ISC Pre-Review Comments.