



Natural Resources Conservation Service
230 N. First Avenue, Suite 509
Phoenix, AZ 85003-1706

Mr. Scott Steinwert
CirclePoint
135 Main Street, Suite 1600
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Mr. Steinwert,

This letter is in response to your letter to Jennifer Varin, District Conservationist, Safford Field Office. You requested comments on the Arizona Eastern Railway Project.

If this project involves the action of a federal agency and will result in the irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses, it will be subject to the Farmland Protection Policy Act. The Act is implemented by regulations that can be found in Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 658.

The maps that were sent in your inquiry do indicate that some prime farmland may be affected. Federal agency responsibilities are briefly described in 7 CFR § 658.1:

As required by section 1541(b) of the Act, 7 U.S.C. 4202(b), Federal agencies are (a) to use the criteria to identify and take into account the adverse effects of their programs on the preservation of farmland, (b) to consider alternative actions, as appropriate, that could lessen adverse effects, and (c) to ensure that their programs, to the extent practicable, are compatible with State and units of local government and private programs and policies to protect farmland.

Enclosed is form NRCS-CPA-106 used to evaluate corridor project effects on prime and unique farmlands, as well as the instructions for completing the form. You can find electronic versions of the form at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/fppa/>. If any farmland will be converted to nonagricultural uses, we can assist you in determining the amount if you provide more detailed maps on the footprint of the project in the cropland areas.

Thank you for your interest in the proper administration of the Farmland Protection Policy Act. If you have any other questions and/or needs regarding the FPPA, please contact Steve Smarik, Environmental Specialist, at 602-280-8785.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Banks".

ERIC BANKS
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs-Financial Assistance)

Cc:
Jennifer Varin, DC, Safford, AZ
Steve Smarik, Environmental Coordinator, Phoenix, AZ

**FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING
FOR CORRIDOR TYPE PROJECTS**

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		3. Date of Land Evaluation Request	4. Sheet 1 of _____
1. Name of Project		5. Federal Agency Involved	
2. Type of Project		6. County and State	

PART II (To be completed by NRCS)		1. Date Request Received by NRCS	2. Person Completing Form
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)		YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	4. Acres Irrigated Average Farm Size
5. Major Crop(s)	6. Farmable Land in Government Jurisdiction Acres: _____ % _____	7. Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: _____ % _____	
8. Name Of Land Evaluation System Used	9. Name of Local Site Assessment System	10. Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS	

PART-III (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Alternative Corridor For Segment			
	Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly				
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly, Or To Receive Services				
C. Total Acres In Corridor	0	0	0	0

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

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)

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

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Maximum Points	Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100				
Total Corridor Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160	0	0	0	0
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260	0	0	0	0

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

Signature of Person Completing this Part: _____ DATE _____

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

The Federal agency involved in the proposed project will make a determination as to whether the proposed conversion is consistent with the FPPA and the agency's internal policies.

Step 8

Once the Federal agency has made a final decision on the project, the Federal Agency should submit a copy of the AD-1006 to the NRCS field office. The form should indicate the final decision of the agency.

COMPLETING THE AD-1006

Part I

In completing the "County and State" questions list all the local governments that are responsible for local land controls where the site(s) are to be evaluated.

Part III

In completing item B (Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly), include the following:

1. Acres not being converted but that would no longer be capable of being farmed after the conversion, because the conversion would restrict access.
2. Acres planned to receive services from an infrastructure project as indicated in the project justification (e.g. highways, utilities) that will cause a direct conversion.

Part VI

1. Do not complete Part VI if a local site assessment is used.
2. Assign the maximum points for each site assessment criterion as shown in 7 CFR Part 658.59(b). In cases of corridor-type projects such as transportation, power line and flood control, criteria #5 and #6 will not apply and will be weighed zero, however, criterion #8 will be weighed a maximum of 25 points and criterion #11a maximum of 25 points.
3. Individual Federal agencies at the national level, may assign relative weights among the 12 site assessment criteria other than those shown in the FPPA rule. In all cases where other weights are assigned, relative adjustments must be made to maintain the maximum total weight points at 160.
4. In rating alternative sites, Federal agencies shall consider each of the criteria and assign points within the limits established in the FPPA rule. Sites most suitable for protection under these criteria will receive the highest total scores, and sites least suitable, the lowest scores.

Part VII

1. In computing the "Total Site Assessment Points", where a State or local site assessment is used and the total maximum number of points is other than 160. Example: If Site Assessment maximum is 200 points; and alternative Site "A" is rated 180 points:

2. Total points assigned Site A = $180 \times 160 = 144$ point for Site "A"
3. Maximum points possible 200The AD-1006 , "Farmland Conversion Impact Rating" is the form used by Federal agencies who wish to convert farmland to nonagricultural uses.