



## Development Services

520-432-9300  
developmentservices@cochise.az.gov  
www.cochise.az.gov  
1415 Melody Ln, Bdg F  
Bisbee, Arizona 85603

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Cochise County Planning and Zoning Commission  
**FROM:** Matthew Taylor, AICP, Planning Manager  
**FOR:** Sharon Gilman, County Administrator  
**THROUGH:** Christine McLachlan, AICP, Director  
**SUBJECT:** Docket RZ25-13 (Morris Ranch Road)  
**DATE:** October 7, 2025

### Docket RZ25-13 (Morris Ranch Road)

The applicants request rezoning APN 202-81-169 from SR-8 (Single-Household Residential District, one dwelling per 8,000 square feet) to RU-10 (Rural District, one dwelling per 10 acres). The property is located at 3123 E. Morris Ranch Road near Willcox.

### I. DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT PARCEL AND SURROUNDING USES

Applicant: Ryan and Desiree Gerth  
Location: 3123 Morris Ranch Road  
APN: 202-81-169  
Parcel Size: 39 acres  
Current Zoning: SR-8  
Proposed Zoning: RU-10  
Growth Area: D – Rural Areas  
Plan Designation: Rural  
Area Plan: None  
Existing Use: Residential  
Proposed Use: Residential

### Surrounding Zoning and Land Uses:

North	SR-8	Single Family Residence
South	SR-8	Single Family Residences
East	SR-8	Single Family Residences
West	SR-8	Single Family Residences

### II. PARCEL HISTORY

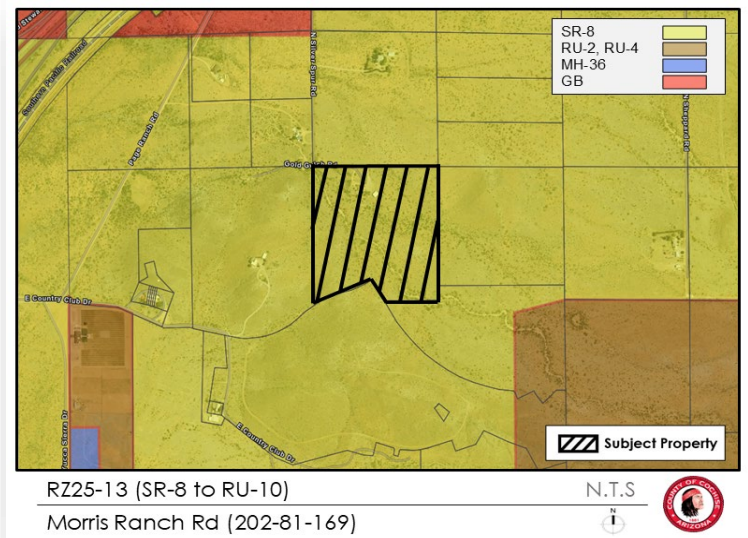
- 1980-1983: Single family residence, private well, septic system, and accessory structures
-

### III. NATURE OF REQUEST

The applicants request rezoning from SR-8 to RU-10 to preserve their property's existing rural landscape. Additionally, due to State licensing requirements, the applicant must rezone to a rural zoning district to store wine they produce at another location on-site within an existing 2,100 square foot accessory building.

### Mandatory Compliance

Section 2.63.080 of the zoning regulations requires zoning district boundaries be in accordance with Comprehensive Plan designations. In this case, the proposed rezone to RU-10 is consistent with rural land use designations.



### Compliance with Rezoning Criteria

Section 2.63.080 of the zoning regulations provides fifteen (15) criteria for evaluating rezoning requests:

#### **1. Adequate Land Use/Concept Plan: Complies**

The applicant provided a concept plan showing all existing structures. No new structures are proposed. The site currently has a primary dwelling, private well, septic system, small vineyard, and multiple accessory structures.

#### **2. Compliance with Applicable Site Development Standards: Complies**

The property totals about 39 acres and will be subject to site development standards found in Section 2.15 of the zoning regulations if rezoned to RU-10, including setbacks, height, distances between structures, and lot coverage. Development standards in RU zoning districts are less stringent than in SR districts, and all existing improvements on the property appear to comply with applicable standards in both zoning districts.

#### **3. Adjacent Districts Remain Capable of Development: Complies**

The requested downzone does not prevent surrounding properties, which range from 10 acres to more than 40 acres, from being developed in a manner consistent with their SR zoning district classifications.

#### **4. Limiting Creation of Nonconforming Uses: Complies**

Rezoning the property to RU-10 will not result in the creation of nonconforming uses.

#### **5. Compatibility with Existing Development: Complies**

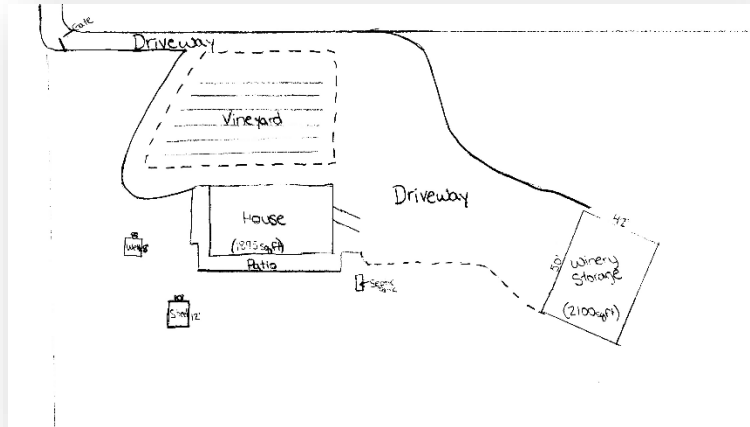
The area is rural residential in character with sporadic single family residences on parcels consisting of 10 or more acres.

#### **6. Rezoning to More Intense Districts: Not Applicable**

The applicant is not requesting a rezone to a more intense zoning district. The rezone is a downzone that reduces allowed residential density from one dwelling per 8,000 square feet to one dwelling per 10 acres.

**7. Adequate Services and Infrastructure: Complies**

The property has legal access via Morris Ranch Road aka Gold Gulch Road. The site is served by a private well and septic system with power provided by Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative (SSVEC). The applicants are not proposed any new or additional principal uses.



**8. Traffic Circulation: Complies**

The property takes access from Morris Ranch Road aka Gold Gulch Road, an unimproved road not in county maintenance, and does not propose any new driveways.

**9. Development Along Major Streets: Not Applicable**

The parcel does not have frontage along any major streets. The nearest road in county maintenance is Page Ranch Road, a Rural Local road located more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile north of the subject property. The closest major improved roadway is Haskell Avenue about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west of the subject property which is designated as a Rural Major Collector. A county right-of-way (ROW) permit is not required as no new driveways are proposed.

**10. Infill Compatibility: Not Applicable**

This factor applies to rezoning requests to General Business (GB), Light Industry (LI), or Heavy Industry (HI) zoning districts.

**11. Unique Topographic Features: Not Applicable**

This factor applies to rezoning requests to more intense business or industrial zoning districts.

**12. Water Conservation: Not Applicable**

County-wide water conservation requirements identified in Section 2.51.170 of the zoning regulations apply to non-residential uses and properties. This proposed downzone from high density residential to rural does not involve mandatory conservation improvements to reduce anticipated water consumption although the property is located within the Douglas Active Management Area (AMA).

**13. Public Input: Complies**

Applications to downzone property are not subject to Citizen Review requirements identified in the zoning regulations. Staff posted the property, mailed notification letters, and published legal notice August 15-20, 2025.

**14. Hazardous Materials: Not Applicable**

The applicant proposes a continuation of rural residential land uses. The use of hazardous materials is not

proposed.

### **15. Planning Policies: Complies**

Downzoning to RU-10 is consistent with Comprehensive Plan designations. The county generally supports downzones to less intense zoning districts that reduce residential densities and impacts to limited infrastructure or services. Given the topography and natural features in the area, residential development in accordance with SR-8 zoning is highly unlikely. Downzones to residential or rural districts with site area requirements of 4 or more acres would be appropriate and encouraged.



### **IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The applicants request a downzone of their property to RU-10 to preserve its existing rural character and large parcel size. There is an existing accessory structure on the property the applicants intend to use for storage of wine produced off-site (State licensing prohibits wine storage on residentially zoned parcels), and they wish to expand agricultural operations on their property in the future.

#### **Factors in Favor of Approval**

1. Complies with all nine applicable factors used to evaluate rezoning requests.
2. Proposed use is compatible with established rural residential growth pattern.
3. Downzone reduces allowed residential density.
4. No opposition from nearby property owners.

#### **Factors Against Approval**

None identified.

### **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the factors in favor of approval, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval of Docket RZ25-13 without special conditions (8-0) during its regular meeting on September 10, 2025.

Staff also recommends approval of Docket RZ25-13 without special conditions.

#### **Sample Motion**

I move to approve Docket RZ25-13 without special conditions, rezoning tax parcel 202-81-169 from SR-8 to RU-10, the factors in favor of approval constituting the findings of fact.