

City of Flagstaff
211 West Aspen Ave.
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

January 2025

State Historic Preservation Office representative,

Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve (Grant: 231202 - Picture Canyon – 2012) features 700 petroglyphs and associated habitation and resource features, a waterfall fed by the Rio de Flag/reclaimed water, and an array of native plants and wildlife. Formal Don Weaver and Tom Moody Trails support hiking, horseback riding, cycling, educational trips, birding, etc. A section of the Arizona Trail traverses Picture Canyon. The Preserve is part of the riparian area of the Rio de Flag, the primary drainage for the San Francisco Peaks and the Flagstaff community.

In 2022, the Picture Canyon Working Group, a citizen advocacy group for the preservation and management of Picture Canyon Preserve, raised \$2,025 to support the creation of a new trail concept to realign the Don Weaver trail along a more scenic and diverse route. The following project is a direct result of their efforts, and is updated from our August 2023 letter to SHPO. In partnership with the Working Group, the City of Flagstaff Open Space Section asks SHPO to review and comment on the final proposed trail, the Don Weaver Canyon Route.

Project Title:

Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve: New Proposed Trail - Don Weaver Trail Canyon Route

Project Need:

The El Paso Natural Gas Pipeline (now known as Kinder Morgan, Inc.) was constructed through the Picture Canyon during the 1950s. The pumping station is located on adjacent private land, which visually intrudes into the SW corner of the Preserve. The pipeline and authorized access road travels NE across the Preserve. Currently, the Don Weaver Trail alignment follows the gas pipeline road. To improve the experience for visitors in a way that is shaded from the hot sun and is more scenic; a new alignment is needed. Also, visitors



Current Don Weaver Trail alignment along pipeline access road looking west at El Paso Natural Gas in background.



...and looking east, with the canyon on the right

hear the waterfall and cut down on unauthorized trails from the pipeline trail; a new alignment will bring visitors closer to the canyon where they can see the waterfall, formalizing a section of social trail, but also reducing the impact from unsanctioned social trails.

Implementation Proposal:

This project would construct a new trail that parallels the canyon on the north side, following the contours of the land, and in some sections, formalizing existing social trail. Although the new proposed alignment enters the identified archaeological polygon, #AZ I-14-346 (ASM), it does not have a direct effect on archaeology; it runs parallel with the existing pipeline road and:

- North of Locus B petroglyph panel (an existing spur off of the Don Weaver Trail)
- North of the excavated pit house
- Although several feet closer to petroglyphs near the Petroglyph Overlook (Locus A), the trail does not bring visitors to those petroglyphs. Most of those petroglyphs are either hidden, or they face south, so that visitors would not see them. We have not had issues with graffiti or other destruction to those petroglyphs accessed via social trails (now being re-naturalized), and do not anticipate anything different with the new proposed trail.
- The nearest petroglyph to it is #A-103, but that petroglyph is hidden and not particularly visible, and we do not anticipate any additional impact to it.

All project work would be done with hand tools, thus minimizing indirect impacts to property, resources, and vegetation. The new trail will be two feet wide, mainly permitting hiking experiences. While biking is permitted at Picture Canyon, the proposed trail may not be ideal for mountain biking due to terrain, so we do not expect significant impacts from biking on this trail. The project area would be accessed from the main trailhead and along the Tom Moody Trail, and the staging area would be on the north side of the pipeline road.

The realignment of the Don Weaver Trail will not negatively impact the archaeological elements protected under the historic preservation designation of Picture Canyon. In fact, the realignment enhances the hiking experience for visitors while safeguarding these archaeological features from unauthorized access. Currently, visitors often stray onto visually appealing but unsanctioned areas along the proposed realignment route. By realigning the trail, we can guide visitors along the north rim of the canyon, offering views while reducing the risk to sensitive archaeological sites located on the canyon slopes below. This effort builds on our commitment to closing and maintaining closure of damaging, unauthorized social trails.

We have presented this proposal to the City of Flagstaff **Heritage Preservation Commission** and the Open Spaces Commission, both of which expressed support for this project proposal. We also intend to consult with the Navajo Nation, The Hopi, Hualapai, Havasupai, and Yavapai Apache tribes about this proposed realignment.

Project Funding:

The City of Flagstaff Open Space Section has not secured funding for this project. If SHPO believes that this project is feasible, given archaeological resources, staff will investigate funding opportunities for project implementation. City guidelines for obtaining service quotes will be followed.

Project Activities:

Cultural Resource Protection:

Staff will be responsible for ensuring that work is completed within all guidelines. All archaeological sites have been identified and mapped. (See Attachment: Cultural Survey). The project area does enter into the identified archaeological polygon, #AZ I-14-346 (ASM).

Project Access:

The project location can be accessed from the existing Kinder Morgan gas line easement. All vehicles or machinery used will stay on these designated routes or within the identified project zone. The project area will be marked with flagging.

Groundbreaking:

Groundbreaking will be required and will consist of trail building at 24" width. This would be accomplished with a hand crew.

Machinery/tools used:

Trail-building hand tools would be used.

Staging areas/stockpiling material:

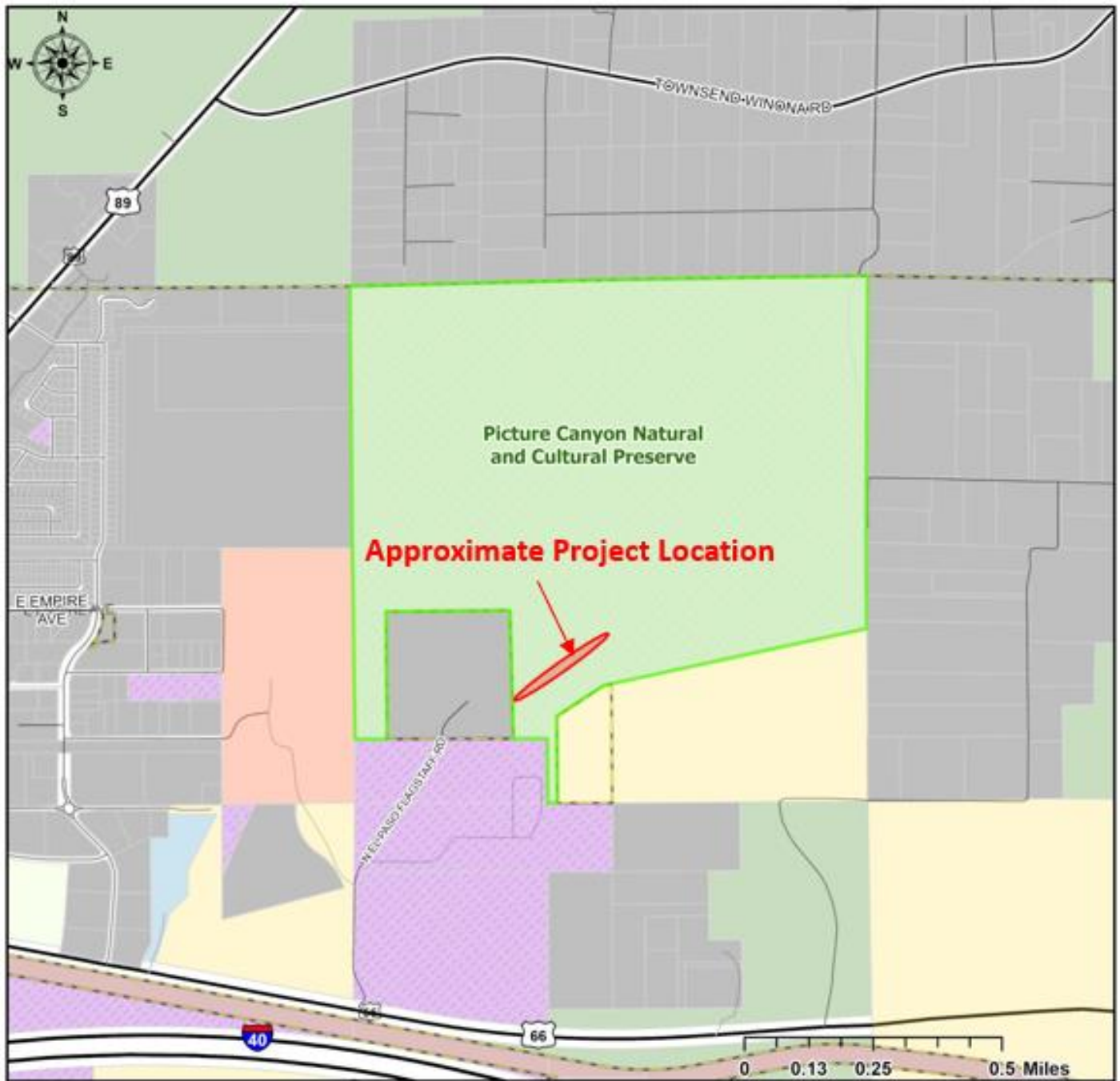
No building materials or tools will be staged or stockpiled on site.

Project Area Exhibits:

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Overview

Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve



- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Picture Canyon Boundary | Coconino County |
| City Boundary | Coconino National Forest |
| ADOT | Private Ownership |
| BNSF | State Trust |
| City of Flagstaff Management | State of Arizona |

4/22/2020

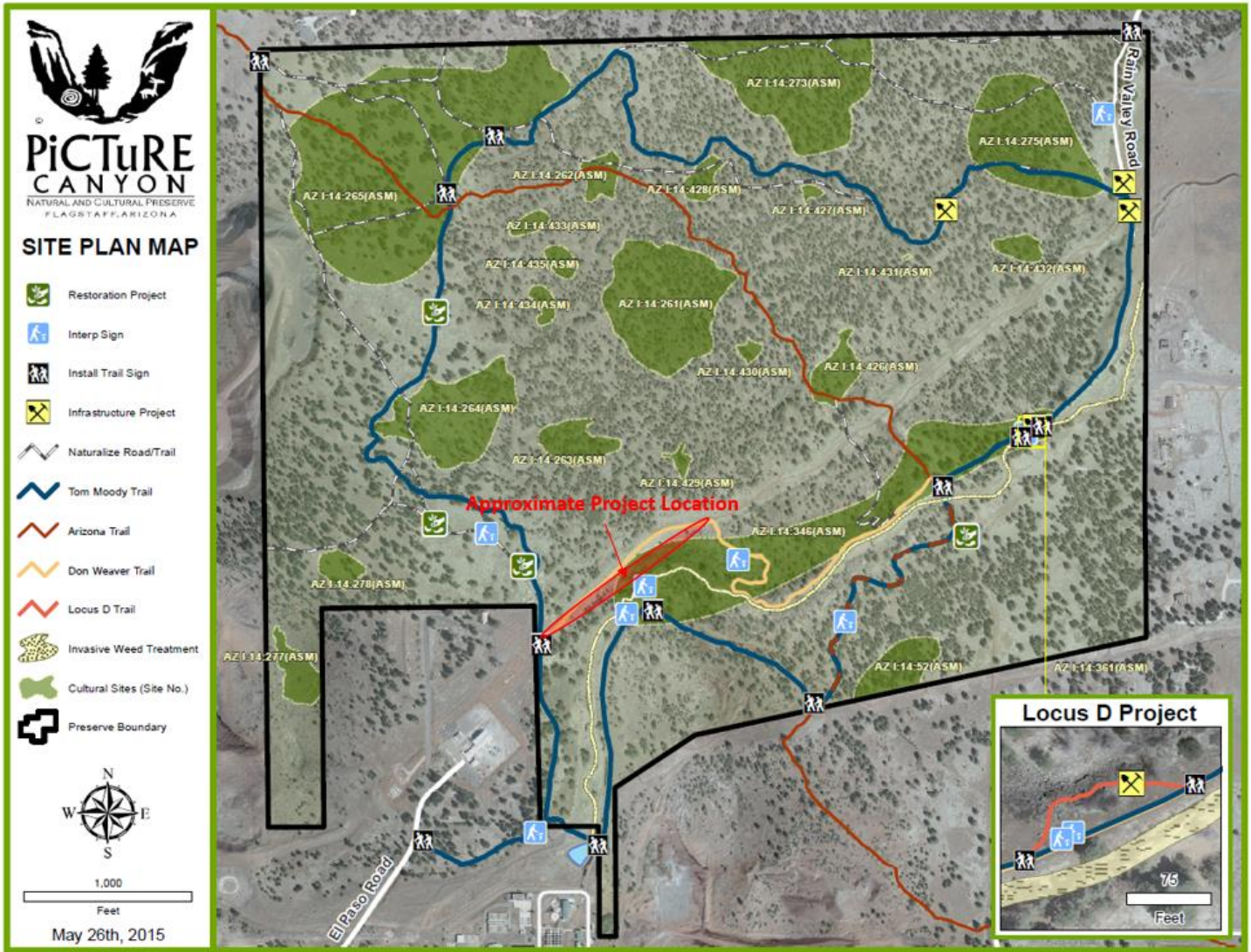


Exhibit C - Approximate Project Location on Archaeological Site Polygon Map

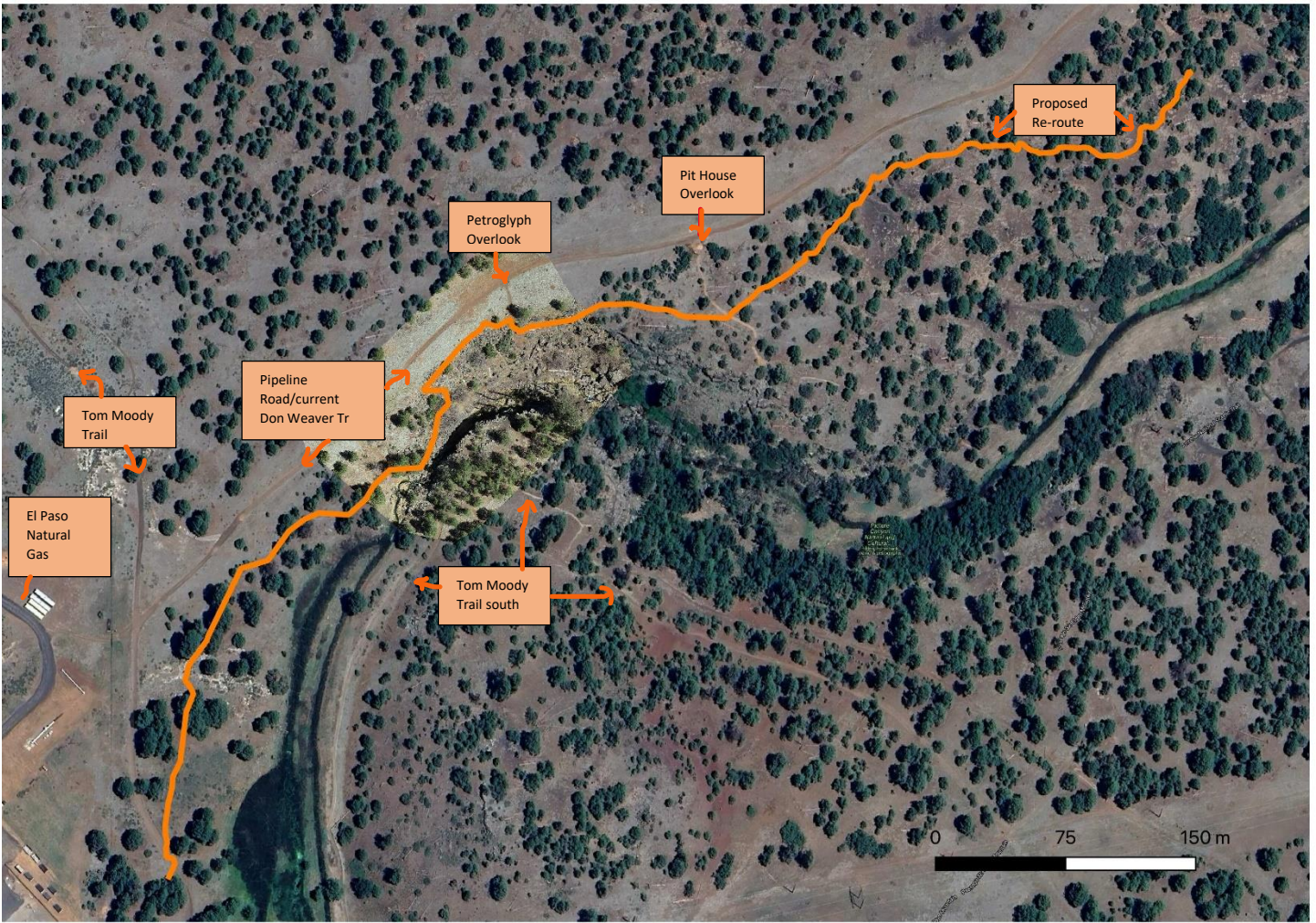


Exhibit D - New Proposed Trail – Revised Don Weaver Trail Canyon Route Concept



Exhibit E – Picture along the Approximate New Proposed Trail - Don Weaver Trail Canyon Route

Thank you for reviewing our project; we appreciate your support.

Kind Regards,



Robert Wallace | Open Space Supervisor
City of Flagstaff Parks, Recreation, Open Space, & Events
Robert.Wallace@flagstaffaz.gov | 928.213.2327

Attachments Included:

- Proposed Trail Alignment Concept
- Proposed Trail Alignment Shapefile
- Picture Canyon Cultural Survey
- Arizona State Parks and Trails - Conservation Easement
- SWCA Environmentalist Consultant Recommendation for the Proposed Don Weaver Trail Realignment at Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve, Flagstaff, Coconino County, Arizona

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