

# Tonto National Forest: A historical perspective

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Editor

From 1892 to 1907, 25 forest reserves and four national forests were proclaimed in the Southwest territory under the provisions of the General Land Law Revision Act of 1891, commonly called the Creative Act of 1891. This Act provided for setting aside of forest reserves. The Tonto Reserve was created on Oct. 3, 1905.

On Jan. 13, 1908, the Tonto Forest more than doubled its size from 1,115,200 to 2,449,280 acres with the addition of sections of the Verde National Forest. This included the western slopes of the Mazatzal Range, the Queen

Creek Drainage, the Superstition Mountains and Pinal Mountain Forest Reserve. Because most of the new "forest" contained few trees and was mostly desert vegetation, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Forest Service were virtually united in managing what would become the second largest water production forest in the Southwest region. Average precipitation is 16.5 inches annually.

In 1909, that watershed increased with the addition of portions of the Verde and Tonto Creek watersheds. With this change the Mogollon Rim became the Tonto's northern border. Also that year, more

area along the Salt River was added to the Tonto forest. In 1910 the Tonto National Forest completely enclosed the Roosevelt Reservoir. It was during the years 1905 to 1911 that the Bureau of Reclamation's first reclamation project - Theodore Roosevelt Dam - was completed.

Urban expansion for the towns of Globe and Miami removed acreage from the forest in 1917 and again in 1921. The town of Superior was given forest land for expansion in 1921, 1929, 1930 and 1931. Payson received about 85 acres in 1928.

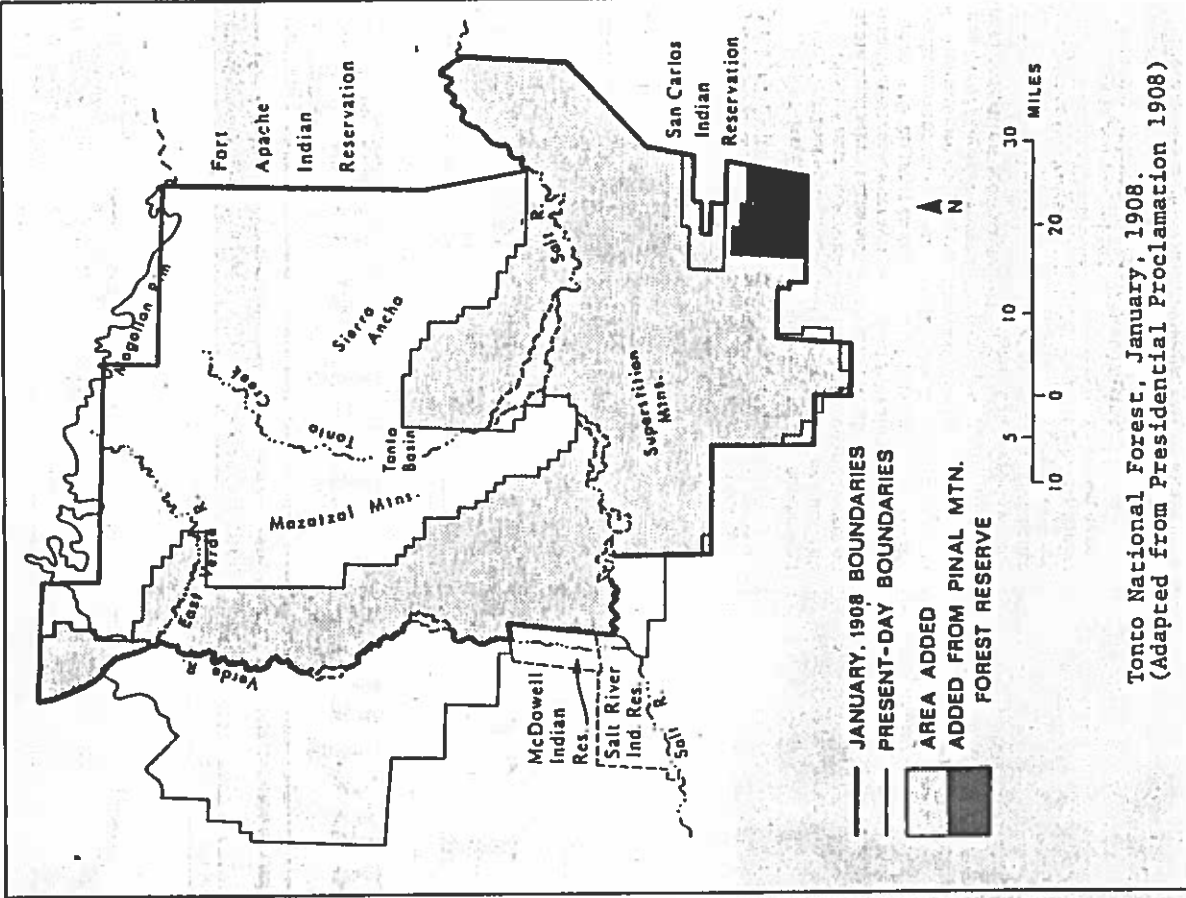
In 1934 the Bloody Basin area (151,285 acres) was transferred from the Prescott National Forest to the Tonto. It represented a distinct drainage divide.

The last addition of lands to the Tonto came in 1953 when Crook National Forest was abolished and made a part of Tonto National Forest. Today there are 2,969,514 gross acres in the Tonto National Forest.

Along with water production, the Tonto also has several prehistoric and historic archaeological sites. Because the Apache, Yavapai and Pima Indian reservations abut the forest, a close association is maintained with those tribes.

The Four Peaks at the southern tip and Mt. Ord, in the middle of the Mazatzal Mountain Range now are the sites for some of the most sophisticated radio, television and telephone communications links for Arizona.

As stated before, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Forest Service have formed a union of sorts because of the watershed and subsequent dams constructed to control flooding and regulate water flow to the Phoenix metropolitan water users. The BOR is spending well over \$200 million on Roosevelt Lake improvements and additions to Roosevelt Dam under Plan 6, fulfillment of



Tonto National Forest, January, 1908.  
(Adapted from Presidential Proclamation 1908)

Included as part of this perspective are two tables containing facts about Tonto National Forest and other national forests in Arizona. In future articles we will cover the views of the forest users, forest officials and our elected representatives, both in Congress and in the state legislature. They will be asked for their opinion about the campaign to move the forest headquarters to Payson.

## Tonto National Forest Fact Sheet

RANGER DISTRICTS	
Cave Creek	573,103 acres
Globe	450,863 acres
Mesa	439,363 acres
Payson	452,672 acres
Pleasant Valley	426,799 acres
Tonto Basin	530,494 acres
<b>GROSS ACRES</b>	<b>2,969,514 Acres</b>
<b>NET ACRES</b>	<b>2,873,294 Acres</b>
<b>ROADS</b>	<b>4,000 Miles</b>
<b>TRAILS (Inventoried System)</b>	<b>875 Miles</b>
WILDERNESS	
<b>FOUR PEAKS</b>	<b>60,743 Acres</b>
<b>HELLSGATE</b>	<b>37,440 Acres</b>
<b>MAZATZAL</b>	<b>250,517 Acres</b>
<b>PINE MOUNTAIN*</b>	<b>11,450 Acres</b>
<b>SALOME</b>	<b>18,531 Acres</b>
<b>SALT</b>	<b>32,100 Acres</b>
<b>SIERRA ANCHA</b>	<b>20,850 Acres</b>
<b>SUPERSTITION</b>	<b>160,258 Acres</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>585,990 Acres</b>

\*An additional 8,611 acres of this Wilderness is administered by the Verde Ranger District of the Prescott National Forest.