



Department of Energy
Western Area Power Administration
Desert Southwest Customer Service Region
P.O. Box 6457
Phoenix, AZ 85005-6457

AUG 27 2015

Dear Interested Party:

This letter invites you to be involved in and provide input on Western Area Power Administration's (Western's) environmental review process for proposed herbicide use at three substations on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed land. The proposed action would take place at Senator Wash, Sonora, and Spook Hill substations (Figure 1). Senator Wash and Sonora substations are both located in the Yuma, Arizona area and Spook Hill substation is located in Mesa, Arizona.

The BLM and Western share a common goal of proactive hazardous vegetation control, including controlling noxious weed and invasive plant infestations. Furthermore, federal agencies are required to control these plants by Executive Order 13112 and resulting agency policies. While the BLM manages 12.2 million acres within the state of Arizona, Western's Desert Southwest Region is responsible for maintaining approximately 3,100 miles of transmission line and 90 substations across Arizona, southern California, and southern Nevada. Western's transmission lines and substations occur on land managed by Native American tribes, numerous federal entities, state and local governments, and private landowners. In order to address the control of vegetation within three Western substations on BLM-managed land, an environmental assessment (EA) is being prepared. The EA will address issues related to the use of herbicides for treatment of undesirable vegetation within the three substations.

The BLM completed the *Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (PEIS) in 2007. The PEIS analyzed the effects of using herbicides for treating vegetation on public lands in the western U.S. and identified impacts on the natural and human environment associated with herbicide use and known public concerns and issues. The Record of Decision (September 27, 2007) for this PEIS approved the herbicide active ingredients assessed under the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B) in the PEIS for use on public lands administered by the BLM in 17 western states. It also approved the protocol for consideration of the use or non-use of herbicides by the BLM. The PEIS provides a broad, comprehensive background source of information from which any necessary subsequent environmental analyses can be tiered. Tiering allows local offices to prepare more specific environmental documents without duplicating relevant portions of the PEIS. In general, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is implemented at multiple scales depending on the scope of the proposal. The EA for Western's proposed action will tier off the BLM PEIS and will define the parameters for use of herbicides within the three Western substations on BLM-managed lands.

The BLM proposes to authorize Western to conduct herbicide treatment programs to contain, control, or eradicate undesirable vegetation within and up to ten feet outside of the fenceline of Senator Wash, Sonora, and Spook Hill substations. The herbicide applications would be consistent with the methods analyzed for use in the BLM PEIS (BLM 2007).

The proposed action would be implemented in accordance with the PEIS by using herbicides to treat substations to reduce the incidence and spread of undesirable vegetation. Although the proposed action is externally generated by Western, it is considered to be supportive of BLM goals regarding undesirable vegetation on public lands. It is expected that the proposed action would, over time, benefit public lands by reducing hazardous fuels and improving ecosystem health by controlling weeds and invasive species. The BLM and Western will serve as joint Lead Federal Agencies in the preparation of an EA for this project.

The purpose of the proposed action is to authorize Western to use selected herbicides for the treatment of undesirable vegetation within three existing substations on federal lands. The need for the proposed action is to control vegetation which may create unwanted or unsafe site conditions, including but not limited to the following:

- Increased fire risk due to vegetation encroaching on electrical components
- Increased fire risk due to vegetation as a fuel source
- Power outages caused by vegetation interfering with electrical components
- Security risk (e.g., unauthorized entry and theft) due to vegetation obscuring fences
- Corrosion of steel equipment
- Increased risk of tripping and slipping
- Interference with equipment access and safety inspections
- Interference with equipment due to birds, rodents, ants, termites, and other pests using vegetation for food or shelter
- Degraded appearance of site

We would like to know of any concerns and suggestions you may have regarding the project. Your comments will help define issues and alternatives for consideration in the environmental review process. Comments can be provided in writing, by phone, or via email.

Please submit your comments by September 30, 2015.
Mail: Western Area Power Administration
ATTN: Sean Heath, Environmental Protection Specialist
Desert Southwest Region
615 S. 43rd Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85009
Email: DSW-environment@wapa.gov
Phone: (602) 605-2592

We look forward to receiving your comments on this project.

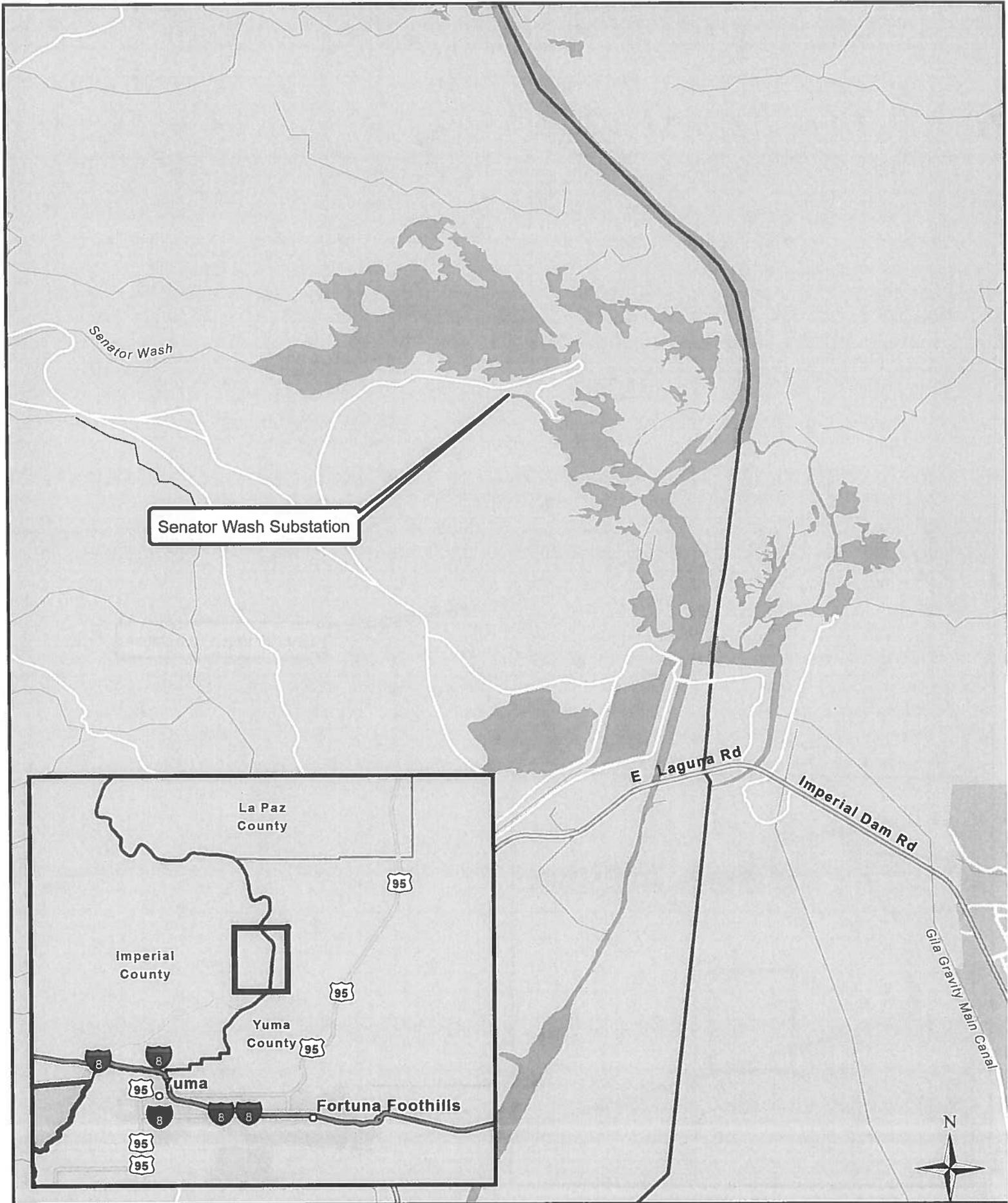
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Marianito". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "L".

Linda Marianito
Environmental Manager

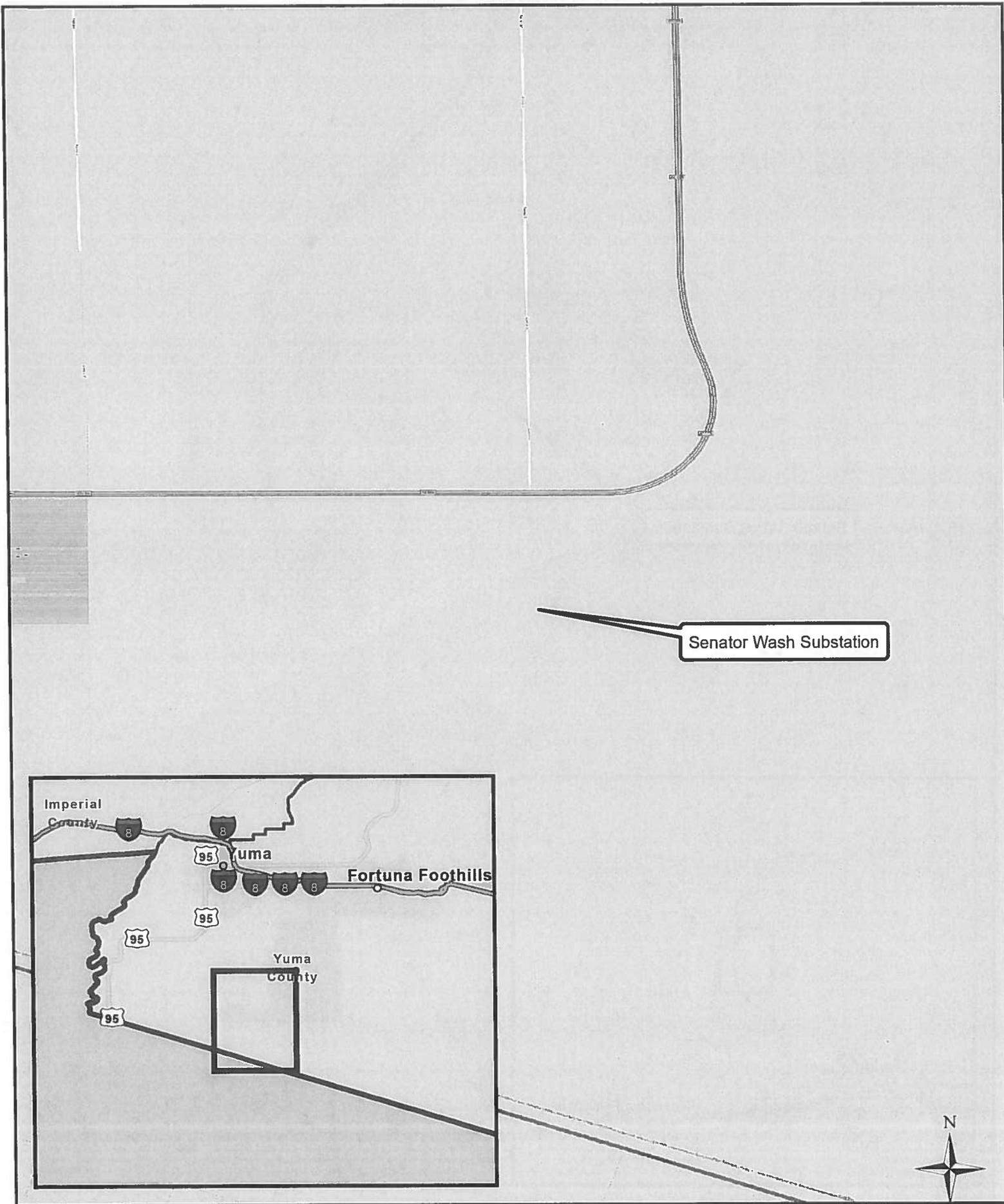
Enclosure:
Map

Senator Wash Substation

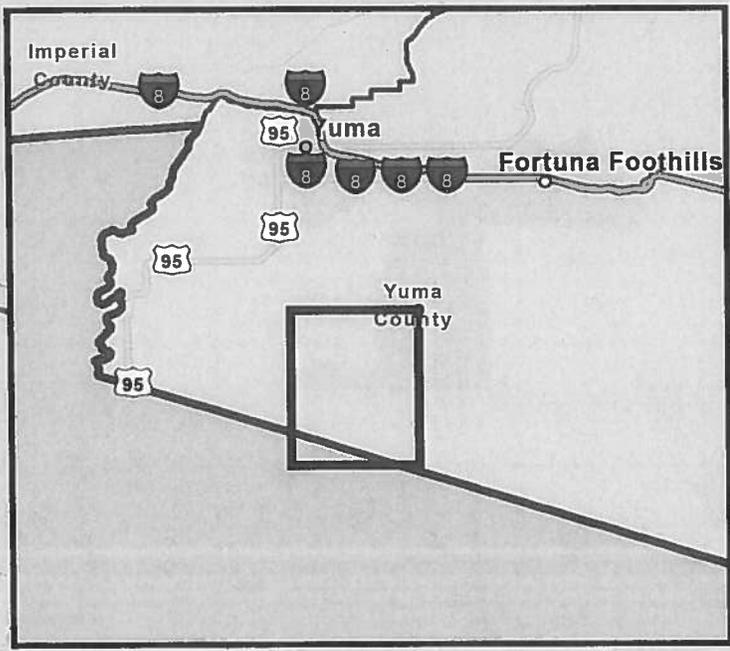


0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Sonora Substation



Senator Wash Substation



0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles



Spook Hill Substation

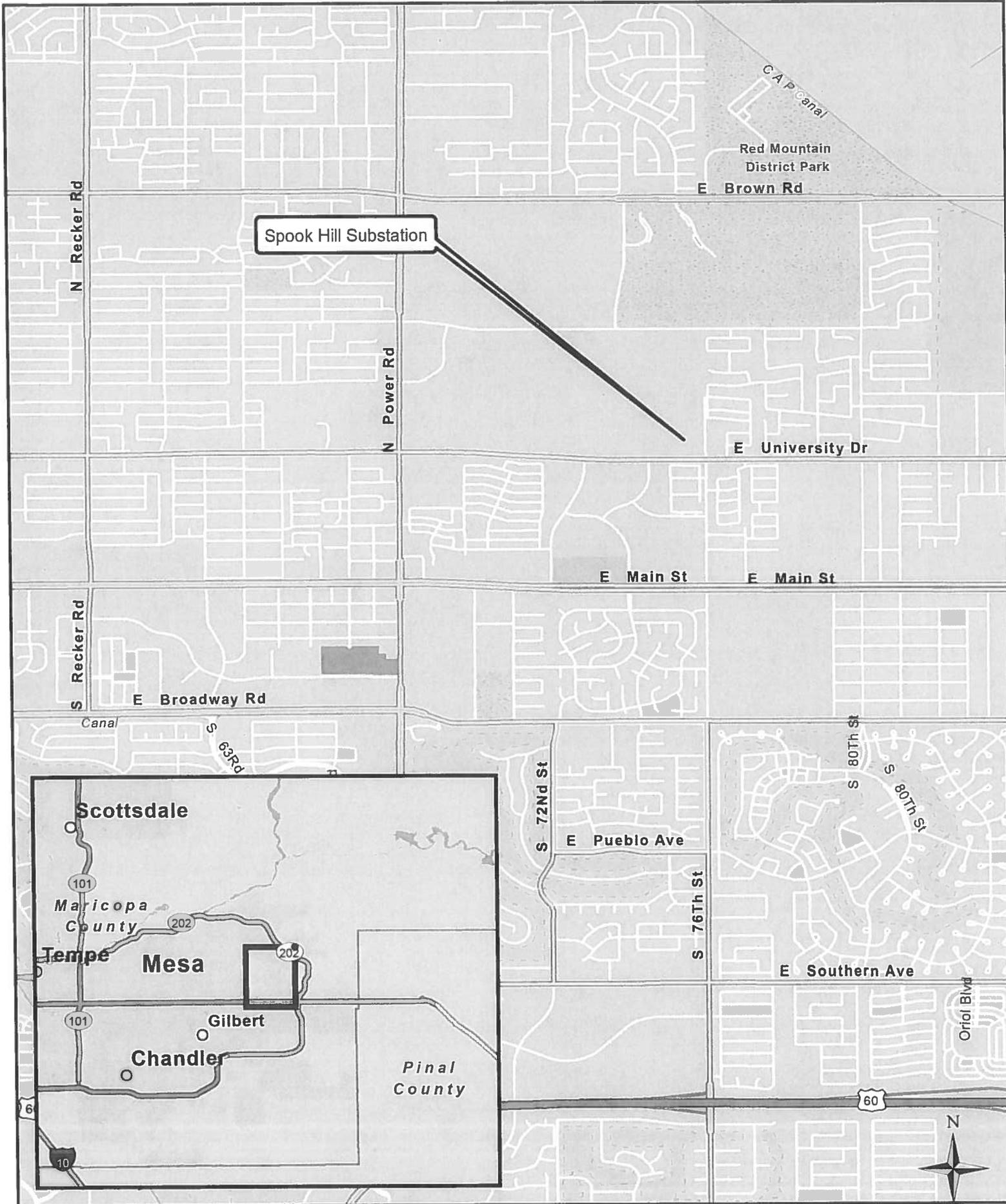


Figure 4-2 Spook Hill Location