

REFERENCE TITLE: administratively recommended wilderness; urging Congress

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-second Legislature
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2016

SCM 1014

Introduced by
Senator Griffin

A CONCURRENT MEMORIAL

URGING THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES TO ACT TO PROHIBIT FEDERAL AGENCIES FROM RECOMMENDING AND IDENTIFYING ARIZONA'S PUBLIC LANDS AS WILDERNESS AREAS WITHOUT EXPRESS CONGRESSIONAL CONSENT.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 To the Congress of the United States of America:

2 Your memorialist respectfully represents:

3 Whereas, through federal land management planning and associated
4 guidelines, federal agencies are recommending and identifying Arizona's
5 public lands as wilderness areas; and

6 Whereas, these administratively recommended wilderness areas circumvent
7 congressional intent and lack full and appropriate National Environmental
8 Policy Act (NEPA) analyses; and

9 Whereas, the identification of these de facto wilderness areas has
10 resulted in significant restrictions on public access and recreation,
11 paralyzing restrictions on the Arizona Game and Fish Department's ability to
12 manage wildlife and potentially catastrophic restrictions on vegetation and
13 habitat improvement projects, including fire management activities; and

14 Whereas, the conservation of wildlife resources is the trust
15 responsibility of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, and this
16 responsibility extends to all lands within Arizona to ensure abundant
17 wildlife resources for current and future generations; and

18 Whereas, the designation of Arizona's public lands as wilderness areas
19 has resulted in the erosion of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's ability
20 to comply with its federal mandate to proactively recover threatened and
21 endangered species; and

22 Whereas, according to federal land management agency guidelines, an
23 administratively recommended wilderness area must be managed to "protect and
24 maintain the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for
25 wilderness recommendation" in perpetuity or until Congress takes action to
26 formally designate the area as a wilderness area; and

27 Whereas, allowable activities within administratively recommended
28 wilderness areas will be left to the discretion of federal staff and deciding
29 officers, resulting in even greater restrictions and limitations than those
30 formally vetted and designated by Congress; and

31 Whereas, congressionally designated wilderness provides clearer
32 guidance for management and coordination with this state, specific processes
33 for wildlife management exemptions and direction for collaboration via
34 existing state agreements and guidelines; and

35 Whereas, administratively recommended wilderness areas circumvent the
36 spirit of NEPA and congressional intent and lack transparency; and

37 Whereas, with the implementation of federal land management plans,
38 recommended wilderness areas constitute a significant and immediate change in
39 management without a fully disclosed impact analysis required by NEPA; and

40 Whereas, the federal land management plans lack full NEPA disclosure of
41 potential impacts to this state and the public, assurances protecting this
42 state's ability to proactively manage wildlife and fulfill its public trust
43 responsibility, including specific management activities, and analyses of the
44 cumulative impacts of further loss of public lands that provide for

1 multiple-use and wildlife-related recreational and economic opportunities;
2 and

3 Whereas, the areas being recommended as wilderness were not included
4 within the original wilderness designations with purposeful intent by
5 Congress; and

6 Whereas, the subsequent expansion of previously designated wilderness
7 is an overreach of the federal agencies and disingenuous to the public,
8 subverting original collaboration, coordination, negotiation and agreements;
9 and

10 Whereas, the federal agency planning documents suggest that no
11 significant management action or recommendation to Congress will take place
12 before further NEPA analyses are completed. Within the recently released
13 Prescott and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest recommended wildernesses, the
14 United States Forest Service indicates that these areas are simply
15 preliminary administrative recommendations and that further NEPA analyses
16 are necessary. However, in transmittal letters, the United States Forest
17 Service states that "the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the . . .
18 Forest's Revised Resource Management Plan contains the NEPA analysis
19 necessary to support a legislative proposal." This is an egregious lack of
20 transparency.

21 Wherefore your memorialist, the Senate of the State of Arizona, the House of
22 Representatives concurring, prays:

23 1. That the Congress of the United States act to prohibit federal
24 agencies from recommending and identifying Arizona's public lands as
25 wilderness areas without express congressional consent.

26 2. That the Secretary of State of the State of Arizona transmit copies
27 of this Memorial to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of
28 the United States House of Representatives and each Member of Congress from
29 the State of Arizona.