

For Immediate Release
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Wildlife Conservation Group Endorses Wilderness Proposal for the Tumacacori Highlands

Phoenix, AZ—The Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF) has endorsed a proposal to bestow federal wilderness protection on the Tumacacori Highlands, a spectacular swath of verdant hills and canyons 40 miles south of Tucson in the Coronado National Forest, providing that all legal roads within the area are not included in the lands designated as wilderness.

The AWF is a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of wildlife and our natural resources, the protection of the rights of Arizona outdoorsmen, and the improvement of outdoor recreation. With this important backing, wilderness proponents will take their proposal before the AZ Game and Fish Commission on March 13.

“The Federation’s endorsement of wilderness comes at a critical time in our collaborative efforts,” says Birdie Stabel, a resident of Tubac and member of the grassroots group Friends of the Tumacacori Highlands (FOTH). Stabel noted the upcoming March 13th meeting of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission where the wilderness proposal is expected to be discussed. The Friends group worked with local interests to create the wilderness concept for the Highlands. “With a dwindling amount of road-free places in Arizona, wilderness areas not only foster exceptional wildlife habitat, but also provide areas with unrivaled recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing. Wilderness is an important part of the multiple uses offered on public lands.”

The formal wilderness proposal, announced in early January by Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-District 7), would safeguard nearly 85,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat and recreational terrain for hunters, hikers, birdwatchers, fishermen, campers, horseback riders, and those seeking solitude.

“we believe that wilderness designation, while preserving public access, best meets the needs of wildlife and the protection of this area’s unique resources”, said Mke Perkinson, president of the AWF.

The Tumacacori Highlands are one of the most biologically-rich areas in the United States and contain plants and animals found nowhere else in the nation. Situated in the Sky Islands region of Arizona, the area is one of the most diverse in the country for mammals, with some 90 different native species. Southeastern Arizona as a whole boasts the highest concentration of jaguar sightings in the nation and offers birding enthusiasts one of the most species-rich habitats in the world.

Rated “excellent” by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Highlands are an exceptional whitetail deer hunting ground. The primitive nature and backcountry areas of the Tumacacori Highlands also offer hunters an increasingly rare and traditional outdoor experience in Arizona.

The wilderness proposal preserves more than 20 separate access roads that will allow visitors to reach a wide variety of areas on every side of the Highlands wilderness. Opportunities for motorized recreation will remain ample on those and other roads surrounding the area.

The Friends of the Tumacacori Highlands is a growing coalition of more than 60 organizations and businesses and hundreds of individuals supporting the federal protection for this area. The Arizona Wildlife Federation is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, inspiring, and assisting individuals and organizations to value, conserve, enhance, manage, and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat. The organization is the state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.