



Testimony of Supervisor Randall Garrison
Before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on
Federal Lands
In Support of H.R. 6146
The Cottonwood Land Exchange Act
July 17, 2018

Chairman McClintock, Ranking House Member Hanabusa, Congressman Gosar, and Members of the Committee,

I am Randall Garrison, Vice Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Yavapai County, Arizona. I appreciate the invitation to testify in support of H.R. 6146, the “Cottonwood Land Exchange Act.” We appreciate Congressman Gosar’s efforts championing this legislation. The proposed legislation would create a mutually beneficial exchange of 369 acres of County property that is contiguous to Coconino National Forest Lands in exchange for 80 acres of Forest Service property located in the heart of the community of Cornville, which is surrounded by County and private land.

The selected National Forest land is 80 acres described as the S1/2SW, Section 15T. 15 N., R 4E., Gila-Salt River Meridian, Arizona. The land is adjacent to Yavapai County’s Windmill Park in the community of Cornville, Arizona. It is identified as base for exchange in the Coconino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1987); and is identified for park expansion and other public purposes in Cornville Community Plan (adopted by Yavapai County, May 6, 2005).

The offered land, owned by Yavapai County, includes 369 acres described as NW, W1/2NE, N1/2SW, N1/2SW, SWSW, NWSE, Section 36, T 16 N., R.3 E., Gila-Salt River Meridian, Arizona. The land is adjacent to Coconino National Forest land and was purchased by Yavapai County from the Arizona State Land Department in 2003 to mitigate impacts of County road expansion on the endangered Arizona Cliffrose.

For Yavapai County this exchange would allow us to expand the recreational development of our Windmill Park and meet Cornville community needs, while continuing to protect and preserve Oak Creek and associated riparian values. We would also be positioned to secure and preserve an archeological site that is an object of great public interest and currently receives no protection. And lastly, for Yavapai County, this

exchange would provide our citizens with a missing link for a Statewide trail system that currently has been stymied by public access over Oak Creek and other land locks.

In regard to Coconino National Forest, the benefit this exchange would provide is an increased level of protection for the endangered Arizona Cliffrose and important associated botanical areas. This land exchange is consistent with the Forest Service policies of land acquisition to improve threatened and endangered species habitat. The desired outcomes include greater manageability, preservation of areas of national significance, and resource protection. This is illustrated through the Forest Service goals of providing high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities on forests and grasslands, while sustaining natural resources, to meet the Nation's recreational demands; and improving public access to Forest Service land and water for outdoor health-enhancing activities.

In order to facilitate this exchange, and promote a timely completion, Yavapai County agrees to fulfill all NEPA policies for the land, pay for all required land surveys, appraisals, and cover any other costs that would be deemed necessary and prudent.

I would like to close by stating that the "Cottonwood Land Exchange Act" will support Yavapai County's goal in returning the use of public land back to those we serve, while also protecting our natural and archeological resources, which can only improve the lives of our residents, now and into the future.

The Yavapai County Board of Supervisors wishes to thank Congressman Gosar, who authored the Senate Bill, as well as the entire Arizona Delegation, for their leadership and pursuit of common sense and Public good will. On behalf of the Board of Supervisors and the residents of Yavapai County, I thank you for your time today. Your support is greatly appreciated.