

Chair Grijalva
Statement on H.R. 7098 – Saguaro Expansion
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing
July 13, 2020

- **Thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this hearing and the opportunity to testify.**
- **I know from my time as Chair and Ranking Member of this subcommittee, that there are a lot of locally specific measures to process, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk about my bill and learn about the others on today's schedule.**
- **My bill to expand the boundaries of Saguaro National Park is something I have been working on for several years, and this latest version is a critical conservation gain with widespread community support.**
- **I am back home in Tucson and thought about testifying from one of the proposed additions to the park as a backdrop, but it is 110 degrees today, so I am logging in from the comfort of my district office.**

- I'd welcome any of my colleagues to come for a visit when the weather is cooler and once public health concerns have abated.
- Putting the heat aside, being surrounded by the Sonoran Desert and the protected corridors of Saguaro National Park is what makes Southern Arizona such a special place to live.
- For those who have never visited, the City of Tucson is fortunate to be encompassed by the national park – the Tucson Mountain District in the west and the Rincon Mountain District in the east.
- It draws visitors to our humble corner of the country and is a refuge and place of solace for residents.
- H.R. 7098 would modify the boundaries of Saguaro National Park and authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land adjacent to and near the park's two districts.

- **Incorporating these parcels into the park will preserve important wildlife habitat and ensure quality recreation opportunities for the greater Tucson region.**
- **One important highlight is that the expansion will create a critical linkage connecting Saguaro National Park and Pima County's Sweetwater Preserve.**
- **Altogether, the proposed additions will protect biodiverse riparian areas, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and important archaeological sites.**
- **By increasing habitat connectivity and recreational trail linkages in the area, this expansion bill is a win-win for both nature and people.**
- **That's why I have been supporting this project for so long, but I cannot by any means take all the credit – we have had strong community partners like Pima County, the Tucson Mountain Association, and the National Parks Conservation Association.**

- **I'd like to welcome Kevin Dahl (Doll), the Arizona State Director of N-P-C-A, to the hearing, and thank him for taking the time to visit with us today.**
- **He has put a tremendous amount of energy into this project, and I look forward to hearing his perspective on how the bill came together and about the broad support for this proposal in Tucson.**
- **With that, I will yield the rest of my time, and once again thank the Chair and all the witnesses for visiting with us today.**