

## **Rep. Ciscomani Remarks on H.R. 4293**

*As prepared for delivery:*

Thank you, Chairwoman Hageman, Ranking Member Hoyle, and subcommittee members for allowing me to testify today on my bill, H.R. 4293.

This legislation would amend the Sikes Act, providing our military installations with additional flexibility to conserve natural resources while safeguarding our national security.

The Sikes Act has served our nation well for over six decades, promoting cooperation between the Departments of Defense and Interior, as well as state wildlife agencies, to conserve endangered species on military lands. But as we've seen in recent years, including in my home district in Southern Arizona, the current framework does not always provide the certainty or flexibility needed to manage off-installation natural resources critical to military readiness.

Fort Huachuca—home to the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence and a key national security asset—has long been involved in water management efforts in the San Pedro River Basin. Yet, despite the base's voluntary conservation work and a good-faith easement to mitigate groundwater impacts, it was dragged into years of costly litigation, ultimately resulting in a Ninth Circuit decision that threatens to undermine both conservation efforts and the base's ability to operate effectively.

That's where H.R. 4293 comes in.

My bill would amend the Sikes Act to give military installations greater flexibility to enter into cooperative and interagency agreements for land management beyond the limits of the military installation. This change will allow installations, like Ft. Huachuca to proactively work with partners—local governments, non-profits, landowners, and agencies—to conserve listed species and their habitats *before* conflicts arise.

This is not about circumventing environmental protections. It's about creating a legal framework that encourages collaboration instead of litigation, and ensures that conservation goals can be met without compromising our national defense missions.

Simply put, we should be enabling our military to be good stewards of the environment while still maintaining the readiness our nation depends on.

I appreciate the subcommittee's consideration of this crucial legislation, and I urge its swift passage so that installations like Fort Huachuca—and others across the country—can continue to lead in both conservation and combat readiness.