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Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 (grazing guidelines)

HOUSE REPORT NO. 101-405
February 21, 1990
[To accompany H.R. 2570]

The Arizona grazing guidelines have been the model for most wilderness legislation in Nevada since 1990.

The Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 2570) to provide for the designation of certain public lands as wilderness in the State of Arizona, having considered the same report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Page 1, line 3, strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following in lieu thereof:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990".

APPENDIX A. - GRAZING GUIDELINES

Section 4(d)(4)(2) of the Wilderness Act states: "the grazing of livestock, where established prior to the effective date of this Act, shall be permitted to continue subject to such reasonable regulations as are deemed necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture".

The legislative history of this language is very clear in its intent that livestock grazing, and activities and the necessary facilities to support a livestock grazing program, will be permitted to continue in National Forest wilderness areas, when such grazing was established prior to classification of an area as wilderness.

Including those areas designated in 1964 by the Wilderness Act, Congress has designated a large number of wilderness areas, including areas which are managed the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management. A number of these areas contain active grazing program, which are conducted pursuant to existing authorities. In all such cases, when enacting legislation classifying an area as wilderness, it has been the intent of the Congress that the cited language of the Wilderness Act would apply to grazing within wilderness areas administered by all Federal agencies.

To avoid any possible confusion, however, the Committee believes it would appropriate to reiterate the guidelines and policies (which have been set out previously in the Committee's Report on H.R. 5487 of the 96th Congress, House Report N. 96-617) that are to be utilized

by BLM in implementing the relevant provisions of the Wilderness Act with respect to livestock grazing in the wilderness areas designated by this bill. It is the intention of the Committee that these guidelines and policies be considered in the overall context of the purposes and direction of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and this bill, and that they be promptly, fully, and diligently implemented and made available to Bureau of Land Management personnel at all levels and to all holders of permits for grazing in the wilderness areas designated by this bill.

The guidelines and policies are as follows:

1. There shall be no curtailments of grazing in wilderness areas simply because an area is, or has been designated as wilderness, nor should wilderness designations be used as an excuse by administrators to slowly "phase out" grazing. Any adjustments in the numbers of livestock permitted to graze in wilderness areas should be made as a result of revisions in the normal grazing and land management planning and policy setting process, giving consideration to legal mandates, range condition, and the protection of the range resource from deterioration.

It is anticipated that the number of livestock permitted to graze in wilderness would remain at the approximate levels at the time an area enters the wilderness system. If land management plans reveal conclusively that increased livestock numbers or animal unit months (AUMs) could be made available with no adverse impact on wilderness values such as plant communities, primitive recreation, and wildlife populations or habitat, some increases in AUMs may be permissible. This is not to imply, however, that wilderness lends itself to AUM or livestock increases and construction of substantial new facilities that might be appropriate for intensive grazing management in non-wilderness areas.

2. The maintenance of supporting facilities, existing in an area prior to its classification as wilderness (including fences, line cabins, water wells and lines, stock tanks, etc.), is permissible in wilderness. Where practical alternatives do not exist, maintenance or other activities may be accomplished through the occasional use of motorized equipment. This may include, for example, the use of backhoes to maintain stock ponds, pickup trucks for major fence repairs, or specialized equipment to repair stock watering facilities. Such occasional use of motorized equipment should be expressly authorized in the grazing permits for the area involved. The use of motorized equipment should be based on a rule of practical necessity and reasonableness. For example, motorized equipment need not be allowed for the placement of small quantities of salt or other activities where such activities can reasonably and practically be accomplished on horseback or foot. On the other hand, it may be appropriate to permit the occasional use of motorized equipment to haul large quantities of salt to distribution points. Moreover, under the rule of reasonableness, occasional use of motorized equipment should be permitted where practical alternatives are not available and such use would not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment. Such motorized equipment uses will normally only be permitted in those portions of a wilderness area where they had occurred prior to the area's designation as wilderness or are established by prior agreement.

3. The replacement or reconstruction of deteriorated facilities or improvements should not be required to be accomplished using "natural materials", unless the material and labor costs of using natural materials are such that their use would not impose unreasonable additional costs on grazing permittees.

4. The construction or new improvements or replacement of deteriorated facilities in wilderness is permissible if in accordance with these guidelines and management plans governing the area involved. However, the construction of new improvements should be

primarily for the purpose of resource protection and the more effective management of these resources rather than to accommodate increased numbers of livestock.

5. The use of motorized equipment for emergency purposes such as rescuing sick animals or the placement of feed in emergency situations is also permissible. This privilege is to be exercised only in true emergencies, and should not be abused by permittees.

In summary, subject to the conditions and policies outlined in this report, the general rule of thumb on grazing management in wilderness should be that activities or facilities established prior to the date of an area's designation as wilderness should be allowed to remain in place and may be replaced when necessary for the permittee to properly administer the grazing program. Thus, if livestock grazing activities and facilities were established in an area at the time Congress determined that the area was suitable for wilderness and placed the specific area in the wilderness system, they should be allowed to continue. With respect to areas designated as wilderness prior to the date of this Act, these guidelines shall not be considered as a direction to reestablish uses where such uses have been discontinued.