



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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January 19, 1982

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am pleased to recommend designation of the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, consisting of public lands in Graham and Pinal Counties, Arizona, as a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Aravaipa Canyon is an outstanding natural area of many contrasts. A gem of the southwestern desert, the canyon landscape consists of high mesa-like cliffs through which courses a freeflowing stream that provides lush vegetation and a habitat for birds and animals that are seldom seen in the surrounding desert. Opportunities abound for scientific study, wildlife observation, photography and primitive recreation. These values have long been recognized by the Bureau of Land Management, and approximately 4,044 acres of the proposed wilderness area were previously designated as the Aravaipa Canyon Primitive Area on January 6, 1969, and April 28, 1971.

Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA, 43 U.S.C. 1782) directs the Secretary of the Interior to review those areas of the public lands which the Secretary had, prior to November 1, 1975, formally identified as natural or primitive areas, and to report his recommendations to the President as to the suitability or unsuitability of those areas for preservation as wilderness. This Department has recently completed its review of the Aravaipa Canyon Primitive Area and contiguous roadless public lands. Based on this review, I recommend wilderness designation of approximately 6,670 acres. Wilderness designation would not conflict significantly with any existing or potential uses of the area.

Mineral surveys conducted by the Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines indicate that the proposed wilderness area probably contains no significant mineral deposits. While these are surveys rather than exploration programs -- and as such are based primarily on reviews of available data and literature, and on various geologic, geochemical and other investigations -- they do suggest that wilderness designation of the Aravaipa Canyon area should result in no adverse impacts on the Nation's security, mineral needs or economic well-being. The mineral survey report is enclosed.

I concur with the BLM's recommendation that continuation of the limited use of motor vehicles and a motorized pump, as necessary for livestock grazing, be recognized as a permissible temporary use until an alternative source of water has been developed outside the wilderness boundary. This is discussed further in the wilderness suitability report and is provided for in the enclosed draft bill.

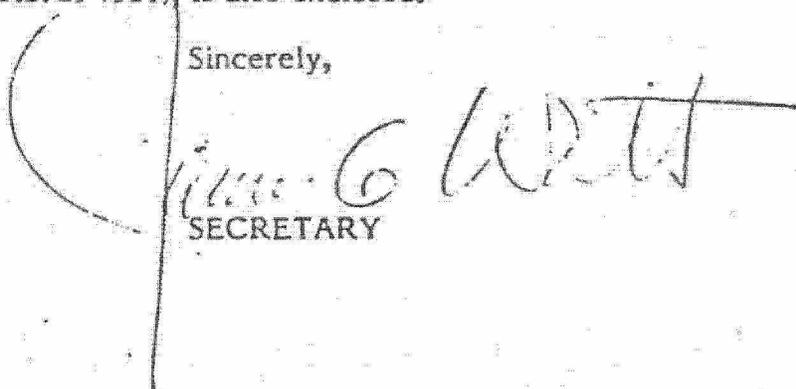
In accordance with the requirements of the Wilderness Act of 1964, a public notice was issued on September 27, 1979, on the proposed wilderness recommendation, and public hearings were held in Arizona at Safford, Tucson and Phoenix on November 5, 6 and 7 of that year. The hearing record was held open until December 6, 1979, to allow additional opportunity for written expressions by interested citizens. The statements presented at the public hearings and the written expressions received are summarized in the enclosed summary and analysis of comments.

Governor Bruce Babbitt, the Graham and Pinal County boards of supervisors, and all interested elected officials, as well as Federal and State agencies, were notified of the proposed recommendation, in accordance with the requirements of the Wilderness Act. Their views are also included in the enclosed summary and analysis of comments.

A complete record has been compiled, including written statements and oral testimony, in response to our announcement of public hearings. This record, of course, is available for inspection.

Aravaipa Canyon is eminently qualified for designation as wilderness, and I recommend submission to the Congress of the enclosed draft legislation to incorporate 6,670 acres into the National Wilderness Preservation System. A final environmental impact statement, as required by section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321), is also enclosed.

Sincerely,

  
SECRETARY

Enclosures