

SEP 13 1983

STATEMENT OF ROBERT F. BURFORD, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND NATIONAL PARKS, COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON H.R. 2724, A BILL "TO DESIGNATE THE ARAVAIPA CANYON WILDERNESS IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA."

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the subcommittee this morning to discuss the Administration's views on H.R. 2724.

H.R. 2724 would designate approximately 6,670 acres of public lands in Graham and Pinal Counties, Arizona, as the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, and a component of the national wilderness preservation system. If the bill is enacted, the lands would be administered by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the wilderness management provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Prior to promulgation of rules and regulations providing for the administration of Aravaipa Canyon as a wilderness, the lands would be administered in accordance with the regulations of the Department of the Interior applicable to designated primitive areas to the extent these regulations are consistent with the provisions of H.R. 2724.

This bill was introduced after President Reagan and Secretary Watt recommended to the Congress that Aravaipa Canyon be designated as wilderness. This is the process spelled out in section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

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 free flowing stream that provides lush vegetation and

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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 both the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of the Interior -- approximately 4,000 acres of the now proposed wilderness were previously designated as the Aravaipa Canyon Primitive Area on January 6, 1969, and April 28, 1971.

A mineral study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines indicates that the proposed wilderness area contains no significant mineral deposits. We believe that designation of the Aravaipa Canyon area will result in no adverse impact on the Nation's security, mineral needs, or economic well being.

The Administration's recommendation that Aravaipa Canyon be designated as wilderness is a result of the wilderness study required by section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Public hearings were held in November 1979. In addition, all interested elected officials were notified of the proposed recommendation. There have been no major objections to the recommended action from any of those officials.

We heartily recommend that H.R. 2724 be enacted.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have on the bill.