



Arizona
Zoological
Society

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June 16, 2009

Attn: David Brooks and Frank Gladics
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Washington DC 20510

RE: S409 "Southeast Arizona Land Exchange and Conservation Act of 2009"

Dear Mr. Brooks & Mr. Gladics:

I am Jeff Williamson, President of the Arizona Zoological Society. We operate the Phoenix Zoo, engage in and support a wide variety of regional conservation initiatives, and conduct community based conservation education in part through the organization of Be Outdoors Arizona, which includes federal, state, and local agencies, academic institutions, and other N.G.O.'s involved in positive youth development and community stewardship. In addition, we have been intimately involved in landscape and watershed level conservation planning working with the Cienega Watershed Partnership and Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership in southeastern Arizona for 15 years.

I am writing to endorse and support the observations and concerns expressed by my colleagues affiliated with the Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Defenders of Wildlife regarding S.409. I will avoid redundancy; suffice it to say their concerns are shared by many who have been engaged in this region for decades.

I do want to emphasize the need for a thorough NEPA process, a detailed and peer reviewed Environmental Impact Study; and the underlying mining plan of operation that includes sufficient detail to evaluate cost, values, and risk to all affected ecologies.

It is not evident why this bill and related transactions should move forward without full disclosure, to include specific plans and insurances that mitigate for any and all public impacts that result for any exchanges or privileged use of public lands or assets.

The lands and the ecosystems they support are being stressed by rapid change in both the natural and human systems. In that context and with witness to the outcomes from this kind of activity, it seems obvious that public policy should be designed and implemented in ways that assess risk now and into the future insuring that no harm is done and no values are lost that may compromise a viable future and the quality of life. Those values are inclusive of social/cultural, economic, as well as environmental. Given our obligation to insure future generations have an equal opportunity to a quality of life, and given that those opportunities are founded in healthy and productive landscape, sufficient water, productive soils, and clean air, it seems as if rigorous evaluation and assessment founded in the best science possible is an obligation prior to any action being taken on S. 409.

I appreciate your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Williamson".

Jeff Williamson, President
Arizona Zoological Society

JW/an