

**STATEMENT OF DONALD W. MURPHY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 588, A BILL TO AMEND THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR AND THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TO JOINTLY CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING THE ARIZONA TRAIL AS A NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL OR A NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL.**

**JUNE 28, 2005**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 588, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to jointly conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Arizona Trail as a national scenic trail or a national historic trail.

The Department supports S. 588 with an amendment regarding the appropriations language in the bill and an amendment which would require the map described in subparagraph (A) to also be made available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the U.S. Forest Service. However, while the Department supports the authorization of this study, we also believe that any funding requested should be directed toward completing previously authorized studies. Currently, 30 studies are in progress, and we hope to complete and transmit 15 to Congress by the end of 2005. We estimate the total cost of this study to be approximately \$300,000, and recommend that paragraph D on Page 3 of the bill be amended to change the authorization to \$300,000 with \$150,000 made available to each Secretary.

S. 588 directs the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to jointly conduct a study of the Arizona Trail which connects Arizona's north and south borders across mountain ranges and deserts for approximately 790 miles. The study would determine whether or not the trail would be eligible to be designated as a scenic or historic trail, joining the current system of 24 nationally designated scenic and historic trails created by the National Trails System Act of 1968.

These trails provide for outdoor recreation needs, promote the enjoyment, appreciation, and preservation of open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources, and encourage public access and citizen involvement. If the feasibility study recommends designation as a national scenic or historic trail, an act of Congress adding the trail to the National Trails System may follow. If the Arizona Trail were recommended for national trail designation, the study would also recommend the most effective and efficient management of the trail.

National scenic trails are continuous, primarily non-motorized routes of outstanding recreational opportunity. Although the National Trails System Act does not include specific criteria for assessing proposed national scenic trails, we suggest that the study team use the following five criteria in making their determination:

*Significance:* There should be nationally significant cultural, historic, natural, recreational, or scenic features along the trail.

*Length:* The trail should be at least 100 miles long and continuous.

*Accessibility:* The trail should complement other trails and recreation areas, and provide access where possible to nearby urban areas.

*Desirability:* There should be an anticipated need for the trail, and it should be capable of attracting visitors from across the nation. It should offer an outstanding scenic and enjoyable outdoor recreational experience. There should be extensive local and regional support for the project.

*Trail Use:* National Scenic Trails should be designated for hiking and other compatible non-motorized uses.

National historic trails commemorate historic and prehistoric routes of travel that are of significance to the entire Nation. There are three criteria that must be met to be recommended as a national historic trail. The trail or route must be established by an historic use or determined to be historically significant as a result of that use; it must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history and have had a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture; and it must have significant potential for public recreational use or historic interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. From what we know of its characteristics, the Arizona Trail is more likely to meet the criteria for a scenic trail rather than an historic trail.

If designated by Congress either as an historic or scenic trail, we suggest that an independent non-profit trail partner organization be created to partner with the federal agency chosen to administer the trail.

The Arizona Trail was conceived in 1985 as a continuous, 790-mile non-motorized trail from Mexico to Utah. Approximately 85% of the trail crosses federal land, 10% crosses State lands, and the remainder of the trail crosses private, municipal or county lands. The Trail was established as a primitive long-distance hiking, horseback, and mountain biking

trail that links all of Arizona's major physiographic zones (the mountains, canyons, deserts, forests, historic sites, and mesas) to local communities and Arizona's major metropolitan areas. The Arizona Trail's significance is found in the diversity of resources, landscapes and recreational opportunities that it represents.

In 1993, the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Arizona State Parks developed a cooperative agreement to work together to develop this non-motorized trail. Since then more than 710 miles of trail have been opened to the public, maps and trail resource information have been developed, and routine trail maintenance has been carried out, while efforts continue to open the remaining 80 miles of trail. In 1994, the non-profit Arizona Trail Association (ATA) was founded "to coordinate the planning, development, management, and promotion of the Arizona Trail for the recreational and educational experiences of non-motorized trail users."

The ATA has worked on a variety of issues and serves as the focal point for trail advocacy, preservation, planning and development. ATA volunteers do trail maintenance, fund-raising and planning. In all of their efforts, they work closely with landowners and local governments to assure that private property owners are aware of trail activities, and trail users respect property rights. The ATA has quickly proven to be a vibrant, creative, resourceful, and dynamic group of 500 members coordinating more than 40,000 hours of volunteer labor per year, in recent years.

An important characteristic of all National Trails is the partnerships they generate. The Arizona Trail already has strong regional, state and local advocates, all of whom have worked hard at creating and maintaining a trail featuring the incredible natural and cultural diversity of the State of Arizona. The ATA has worked hard to raise funds and involve local communities, governments and businesses as they have worked to develop the trail.

With all these efforts already underway, we believe that conducting a feasibility study for national designation is a next, logical step in the management and protection of this important resource corridor across Arizona. Although limited to one State, the Arizona Trail has already proven its recreational value to the nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present the Department's views on S. 588. That completes my remarks and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.