



AZSFWC Resolution of Support for Recreational Shooting on the Sonoran Desert National Monument

Whereas, Article II, Section 26, Constitution of Arizona, recognizes the right of citizens to bear arms by stating that "the right of the individual citizen to bear arms in defense of himself for the State shall not be impaired." Likewise, the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution safeguards the "right of the people to keep and bear arms"; and

Whereas, in order for the citizens of this State to exercise a meaningful constitutional right to arms guaranteed by their state and federal constitutions, they must have readily available venues to practice and hone their shooting skills, as they have since territorial days; and

Whereas, more than seventy per cent of all land in Arizona is now managed by either the federal government or tribal nations, with seventeen per cent directly controlled by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); and

Whereas; The U.S. District Court in Arizona has ordered the BLM to temporarily close 10,599 acres of the Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM) to recreational target shooting; and

Whereas; due to a ruling from the U.S. District Court issued in March 2015, the BLM will develop new management actions to address recreational target shooting in the SDNM Resource Management Plan; and

Whereas, BLM lands have traditionally been intended to accommodate multiple uses, including recreational shooting, plinking, hunting, hiking, biking, rock climbing, bird watching, off-road vehicle travel and camping, without jeopardizing the public safety; and

Whereas, hunters, who are essential to maintaining the strength of the State's economy and conservation efforts, currently use BLM lands as areas to safely and responsibly sight-in their firearms and engage in the practice of their hunting skills, ensuring the safe and humane harvest of game animals; and

Whereas, Arizona is home to more than 269,000 hunters who spend \$341,668,000 annually pursuing outdoor activities and support 5,700 jobs; and

Whereas, the sale of sporting arms and ammunition generates vital funding for conservation efforts in Arizona and the United States through the Pittman-Robertson Act, a fundamental component of the American System of Conservation Funding; and

Whereas; monument designation does not prohibit recreational shooting; and

Whereas; the SDNM Draft Resource Management Plan recognizes that much of the land in Arizona is in federal ownership, and states that demand for places to shoot is being shifted to

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public lands managed by the BLM, and that continued changes in Arizona are straining the limits of where and how recreational target shooting can be accommodated; and

Whereas, the availability of the SDNM is of particular importance because of its proximity to a major population center; and

Whereas, the availability of recreational shooting opportunities is key to the recruitment and retention of recreational shooters and the shooting tradition; and

Whereas, formal shooting ranges do not replicate the experience of dispersed recreational shooting on public lands and are often too difficult and costly for average Arizonans to travel to on a regular basis; and

Whereas, the vast majority of recreational shooters respect the natural resources found on public lands and endeavor to leave public lands in the same condition as when they arrived; and

Whereas; the BLM has committed to engage public and private stakeholders in discussions of collaborative options and acceptable solutions; and

Whereas; the BLM has received letters of comment from non-governmental organizations representing sportsmen and women engaged in hunting and recreational shooting, wildlife conservation organizations, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council – all of whom support keeping the SDNM open to recreational shooting and opposed the draft final SDNM Resource Management Plan that would have closed the entire monument to this traditional recreational use of the planning area; and

Whereas; the letters of comment recognized and appreciated the values and objects that the monument was created to protect, and understood the necessity of finding a balance between protecting the SDNM's resources and providing for recreational opportunities; and

Whereas; in its environmental analysis, the BLM's Draft Resource Management Plan made a strong case for keeping some number of shooting sites open, and that urban encroachment on private lands and population growth in Phoenix has driven recreational shooters to increasingly use the SDNM because citizens are finding it difficult to find places to target shoot; and

Whereas; the BLM has numerous partners who have already offered assistance and expertise in identifying existing or new sites that provide safe shooting recreation in the SDNM, while protecting its resources; and therefore

Be it resolved that Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) urges the BLM to consider the economic and social benefits inherent to recreational shooting in Arizona and across the United States; and

Be it resolved that opportunities for recreational shooting are being increasingly threatened by urbanization, and that the availability of federal lands is vital to the continuation of the shooting tradition; and

Be it finally resolved that Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation strongly urges the Bureau of Land Management to take steps to maintain access to public recreational shooting opportunities on the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

**Adopted and approved by 23 Member Organizations represented on the
AZSFWC Board on March 16, 2016.**

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**AZSFWC Member Organizations supporting the Resolution on
Recreational Shooting on the Sonoran Desert National Monument**

Anglers United
AZ Antelope Foundation
AZ Bass Federation Nation
AZ Big Game Super Raffle
AZ Bowhunters Association
AZ Catfish Conservation Association
AZ Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation
AZ Chapter Safari Club International
AZ Council of Trout Unlimited
AZ Deer Association
AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Society
AZ Elk Society
AZ Houndsmen
AZ Outdoor Sports
Coconino Sportsmen
Mohave Sportsman Club
Outdoor Experience 4 All
South Eastern AZ Sportsmen Club
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
SRT Outdoors
The BASS Federation
Xtreme Predator Callers
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