



Arizona
Association of
Conservation
Districts

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Senator Jeff Flake
Senate Russell Office Building 413
Washington D.C. 20510

Re: Support for S. 437 and S.1416

The Arizona Association of Conservation Districts welcomes the opportunity to endorse S. 437 and S. 1416 sponsored by Senator Flake. Both bills are severely needed to curb the overreach of both party's Presidential monument declarations.

Arizona is home to 32 Natural Resource Conservation Districts organized under state statute and 10 tribal districts organized under federal statute. All are recognized by the Arizona Legislature as having "special expertise of natural resources within their districts."

Arizona Revised Statute Title 37, Chapter 6, 37-1001 Declaration of policy states:
"It is the declared policy of the legislature to provide for the restoration and conservation of lands and soil resources of the state, the preservation of water rights and the control and prevention of soil erosion, and thereby to conserve natural resources, conserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands and protect and restore the state's rivers and streams and associated riparian habitats, including fish and wildlife resources that are dependent on those habitats, and in such a manner to protect and promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the people".

For seventy five years Arizona's local conservation districts have been working with and coordinating local conservation efforts to address local conservation problems. This model has proven to be the most effective means to join federal, state and local funds and talent to maintain and enhance Arizona's varied and unique landscapes while keeping them productive for our people and our nation.

The Arizona Association of Conservation Districts has vigorously opposed the designation of the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument for the following reasons:

The proposed designation, if enacted, removes the ability of our local Conservation Districts to address the watershed health, leaves no opportunity to address erosion (wind or water), and no opportunity to address noxious or invasive species; neither plant nor animal, by our locally elected people who live and work on these lands and understand it

because they are tied to it through their intimate lifelong and sometimes generational knowledge.

The proposed designation, if enacted, prevents local stewardship of wildlife; creates an area of no management of numbers of wildlife or maintenance of water catchments.

By creating the proposed National Monument, local management is eliminated and replaced by a form of non-management directed from Washington D.C.

These reasons also apply to past and future monument designations.

Our local conservation districts are now leading a massive multi-partner effort to eradicate invasive brush from large landscapes across Arizona to return it to its pre-fire suppression grassland state, including much of the lands within the proposed Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument designation. This effort will be eliminated from those lands under the Monument proposal. Is that what Arizona and the nation really want? This project coordinated locally will literally create new groundwater for our cities and towns by increasing penetration of the precious rain that falls on Arizona's rangelands and forests. How will that be achieved? A closed canopy caused by heavy brush infestation prevents 80% of the moisture that falls from reaching the ground; under a closed canopy there is no ground cover under that brush to prevent water erosion when large amounts of moisture do reach the ground. As we remove this brush, perennial grasses will return to the landscape catching and slowing the runoff of that water so it will soak in and more will reach our groundwater. It will also replenish our streams and rivers.

Under Monument designations the ability to identify and address watershed health issues will not be an option. Under Monument designations, active management will be eliminated and replaced by a form of non-management which can only be characterized as benign neglect directed from Washington D.C.

Under Monument designations there is no recognition of the lessons learned from Arizona's Schultz Pass Fire, Rodeo – Chediski Fire, or the Slide Fire to name a few.

Under the monument designations, the ability to treat the results of a wildfire are removed; again because of non-management. We know this from experience. Despite assurances otherwise, past Monument designations have reduced or eliminated grazing, strong armed private inholders in order to get them to sell out and either removed water improvements or just let them deteriorate until they no longer function.

Because we value locally led conservation above conservation directed from Washington D.C. the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts request that all efforts be made to stop the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument designation and this body pass Senate bills 437 and 1416.

Bill Dunn
President, Arizona Association of Conservation Districts