

Written Testimony of Carol Cullen, Executive Director of the Tubac Chamber of Commerce, for the House Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands legislative hearing on H.R. 3287, the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Act of 2007, on Tuesday, November 13, 2007.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee: good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to be heard today on this important matter before you.

My name is Carol Cullen, and I am a resident of Tubac, Arizona. My family has been in Arizona for 5 generations. In fact, at the turn of the last century, my grandfather, Jack McVey, homesteaded Las Jarillas Ranch in Southern Arizona--just south of Arivaca and just west of the Tumacacori Highlands.

Today, I have the privilege of speaking to you as the Executive Director of the Tubac Chamber of Commerce. I am happy to be here today to tell you a little about the wonderful town of Tubac, and to ask you to support HR3287, the Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness Bill of 2007.

Tubac is a small town in southern Arizona, about an hour south of Tucson, in Santa Cruz County, named for the Santa Cruz River. Tubac began as a Spanish presidio, or fort, in the wilderness, in 1752, when its population was 41 souls. By 1848, Tubac had grown to 250 people as a frontier and mining town. By 1859, shortly after becoming part of the United States of America with the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, Tubac was home to 800 people--one-sixth the population of Arizona. When soldiers were withdrawn from the Fort to fight in the Civil War, raids by Apaches dramatically decreased the population of Tubac and Santa Cruz County. In 1871, the publication "Arizona Miner" reported the population of Tubac to be 1. In 1908, there are reports that Tubac was deserted--victim of frontier hardships, the bust cycle of mining's boom-and-bust economy, and the movement of people to the city of Tucson.

I'm telling you this history because today Tubac is a thriving village of over 1500 souls. Over 100 businesses line our meandering streets--almost every one locally-owned and operated. An Artists' School opened in 1948, and since that time Tubac has become a center of art and history. In fact, part of the original town site has been placed in the National Register of Historic Places. The first Tubac Festival of the Arts was held in 1959--it continues to be a large annual celebration today. The Tubac Presidio State Historic Park was established in the same year, 1959, and the Museum in 1964. Our Tubac Center for the Arts opened in 1972. Today we host new residents and visitors from around Arizona and other states for festivals, getaways, and cultural, historical and artistic events year-round.

Tubac has developed into a thriving, successful 21st century western town. This is due in large part because we are blessed with a beautiful and healthy natural landscape. We have jewels of the Coronado National Forest on both sides: the Mount Wrightson Wilderness to the east, and the proposed Tumacacori Highlands Wilderness to the west. Indeed, many residents of Tubac are fortunate to see both of these magnificent wilderness mountain ranges from their kitchen window or front porch every single day.

It's why many of us came to Tubac in the first place and remain there today. We enjoy; we appreciate; we need the rural character of Tubac and Santa Cruz County in our daily lives. When we can get away from the obligations of running our businesses, many of us enjoy a walk or a hike in the Tumacacori Highlands, or showing off the area to visiting friends and family on a drive down the historic and rustic Ruby Road.

Having the enduring resource of beautiful landscapes nearby is very valuable to us. It provides places for family outings. It affords opportunities for spiritual reflection and renewal. It puts "quality" in quality-of-life.

And it's good for business. Protected healthy landscapes--Wilderness areas--are a competitive advantage for small towns like Tubac, and our neighbors in Rio Rico, Arivaca, Green Valley, Nogales, Sahuarita, and Tucson. The West is changing--today's model of economic prosperity is based on attracting and retaining educated, entrepreneurial people who create value and wealth through nondestructive enterprises. Examples of this include software engineering, financial services, artist galleries and workshops, cultural and historic tourism, providing hospitality for tourists coming to enjoy wild Arizona--to hike, to camp, to hunt, to take photographs, to look for birds.

"To look for birds." It may sound silly to some, but it is one of the fastest-growing hobbies in America. In fact, wildlife watching provides a significant and sustainable source of revenue for local communities. The Arizona Game and Fish Department reports that in 2001 the total economic effect from watchable wildlife activities in Arizona was \$1.5 billion.[1] A University of Arizona study found that in Santa Cruz County alone, visitors to natural areas spent between \$10 million and \$16 million in one year just on associated travel and accommodations in the area.

Most everyone understands that tourists spend money in the local communities they visit, whether it is in a restaurant, a hotel or bed-and-breakfast, a sporting goods store, or an art gallery. But there is more to the story.

Recent economic research studies have highlighted the connection between protected open space and wildlands and the economic prosperity of rural communities in the West.

Economic research has uncovered a "new paradigm for economic development in the West: protection of the wild and scenic character of the landscape and the quality of life in local communities serves as a magnet to attract and retain local people and their businesses." [2]

Indeed, through the 1990s, research shows that areas in the West with high levels of natural amenities correlate with rising income levels.[2] There have been more than a dozen studies quantifying the economic value of wilderness recreation and the other economic benefits that wilderness provides society.[3]

Many of these studies reach similar conclusions: that economic development models that ignore the role of environmental amenities, ties to the land, sense of place, commitment to a landscape and culture may well misdirect public policy in ineffective ways. [4]. That "an informed rural

economic development strategy should have as one important element the protection of the natural environment." [2] That "keeping a high-quality wild environment is a development strategy." [3]

The Tucson-based Sonoran Institute published a 2005 study demonstrating that protected, wild public lands--environmental amenities--such as the Tumacacori Highlands draw people who want to live and work in rural areas, which leads to vibrant economies, higher paying jobs, and better quality of life for everyone.

What economists call "environmental amenities", in Tubac we call "the land," or "the mountains," or "the Tumacacori Highlands," or "wilderness."

In Tubac, we know first-hand the truth of these studies. We're the people these studies are talking about. We've moved to or remained in Tubac because of the surrounding environment and rural character of the area. And we brought with us or created through entrepreneurial effort the means to thrive and contribute to our community.

The Tubac Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit business league engaged in all activities relating to the perpetuation, preservation, and promotion of Tubac, and its businesses; with particular attention given to the economic, civic, commercial, artistic, cultural, and historical interests of the area. It is our responsibility to advocate for public policies that will benefit the Village of Tubac, Santa Cruz County, and Southern Arizona.

The Tubac Chamber of Commerce endorses the wilderness proposal because protecting our open space and wild places like the Tumacacori Highlands contributes directly to a high quality-of-life and is a key component in drawing local business patrons and tourists' dollars to the area. Many of the residents of Tubac are also business owners and Chamber members. We live in Tubac because it's naturally beautiful and our businesses are dependent on the tourism drawn by this beauty; we want to preserve that beauty and the natural rural character of the area.

In 2005, the Tubac Chamber of Commerce unanimously adopted a Resolution of Support for Federal Legislation to Protect the Tumacacori Highlands as Wilderness. When the Chamber was considering the wilderness proposal, we saw that a large majority of our Member businesses had already expressed their support as individual business owners. As the elected leaders in the business community, that spoke to us.

The Tubac Chamber of Commerce and its member businesses understand the values that protected open space and a healthy natural environment provide to residents, visitors, and businesses alike. We recognize the connection between desirable and sustainable economic development and a high-quality natural environment. We see environmental conservation--protecting the special rural character of the valley and surrounding areas--as an economic and business concern for Tubac.

And protect it we must. I would like to make this clear. Arizona is growing rapidly; Southern Arizona and the Santa Cruz River Valley are growing rapidly. In fact, we have the dubious honor of being neck-and-neck with Phoenix and Las Vegas as the fastest-growing, fastest-urbanizing

part of the country. We're experiencing growing pains. The rapidly increasing urbanization pressures threaten the natural wild character and environment that makes the area special. Even on federal land, the actions of irresponsible or uninformed recreational users threaten the integrity of the land. Where we still have intact and healthy landscapes like the Tumacacori Highlands, we must take action to give them the additional protections that Wilderness designation provides.

On behalf of the Tubac Chamber of Commerce, and as an Arizonan myself, I ask that you help us with this effort. I ask that you pass HR 3287 and designate the Tumacacori Highlands as Wilderness. It's good for the land; it's good for business; it's good for Arizona.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

references:

1. "Economic Impact Analysis of Nonconsumptive Wildlife-Related Recreation in Arizona." Conducted for the Arizona Game and Fish Department by Southwick Associates, May 2003.
2. Rasker, R. and Hansen, A. 2000. Natural Amenities and Population Growth in the Greater Yellowstone Region. Human Ecology Review, Vol. 7, No. 2.
3. Loomis, John B. Economic Values of Wilderness Recreation and Passive Use: What We Think We Know at the Beginning of the 21st Century. USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-15-VOL-2. 2000.
4. Rudzitis, Gundars. 2000. The Impact of Wilderness and Other Wildlands on Local Economies and regional Development Trends. USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-15-VOL-2. 2000.

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