



Friends of Saguaro National Park

Providing financial and volunteer support for Saguaro National Park



June 3, 2020

Congressman Raul Grijalva
1511 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Grijalva:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for Friends of Saguaro National Park, I **want to urge your support of the Great American Outdoors Act (S.3422)**. This legislation will fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and establish the National Park and Public Lands Legacy Fund. This targeted solution will help to preserve, protect and enhance the fragile environment and unique cultural heritage of the Sonoran Desert at Saguaro National Park and invest in the recovery of the tourism industry in southern Arizona.

The **Land and Water Conservation Fund** was established by Congress in 1965 and is the nation's most important tool for conservation and public recreation access. Full funding for this program will protect parks and public lands from the threat of development inside their borders; connect landscapes for wildlife and fire management; preserve water quantity and quality; sustain working landscapes and rural economies and; increase access for recreation for all Americans regardless of where they live. This legislation would insure that all non-taxpayer funds that are deposited into the Land and Water Conservation Fund – including \$900 million in annual offshore energy receipts that routinely have been diverted from the fund for decades – to be spent only and fully on their intended purpose.

The Land and Water Conservation fund has been used to acquire and protect additional land at Saguaro National Park many times. Most recently, the fund was used to acquire property along Rincon Creek in the Rincon Mountain District (East) and property that connects the Sweetwater Preserve to the Tucson Mountain District (West).

The **National Park and Public Lands Legacy Fund** will address the \$20 billion deferred maintenance backlog at national parks and other public lands. This legislation would direct up to \$9.5 billion over five years in non-tax payer funds from mineral receipts to address the maintenance backlog.

The Public Lands Legacy Fund could be used to address the current \$23 million maintenance backlog at Saguaro National Park. This backlog consists mostly of deferred trail and road maintenance.

The **Great American Outdoors Act** will also be an investment in the recovery of the national park and public lands tourism industry. These lands are major economic engines for gateway communities. The nationwide outdoor recreation economy supports more than 7.6 million jobs and contributes over \$887 billion in annual economic output. For every dollar invested in national parks the national economy receives a \$10 return.

Saguaro National Park set a record for visitation in 2019, with over 1 million visitors. Those visitors spent \$65 million in southern Arizona. That spending supported 900 local jobs, \$35 million in labor income and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$100 million.

Please support the Great American Outdoors Act (S. 3422) and its inclusion in the next COVID package. This legislation will help to preserve, protect and enhance the fragile environment and unique cultural heritage of the Sonoran Desert at Saguaro National Park and invest in the recovery of the vital tourism industry in southern Arizona.

Thank you,

Fred Stula
Executive Director

Friends of Saguaro National Park (FOSNP) is an official not-for-profit fundraising partner of the National Park Service, created to help preserve, protect and enhance the fragile environment and unique cultural heritage of the Sonoran Desert at Saguaro National Park. We help protect natural and cultural resources, preserve native landscapes, promote environmental education, improve recreational trails, enhance visitor experiences, strengthen community partnerships, and build environmental stewardship for Saguaro National Park through philanthropy, education, volunteerism, and public awareness. www.friendsofsaguaro.org