

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN TRENT FRANKS,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 8TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
CONCERNING THE PROPOSED GRAND CANYON WATERSHED NATIONAL
MONUMENT, FOR A PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION WITH CONGRESSMAN PAUL
GOSAR, KINGMAN, ARIZONA, MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2016

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Good Morning. My name is Shari Farrington and I work for Representative Trent Franks. The Congressman sends his warm regards but unfortunately his busy schedule prevents him from being here in person. Rep. Franks prepared the following remarks.

“I would like to thank Representative Gosar for holding this important hearing today on a matter of great importance to the State of Arizona. I would also like to thank everyone else in attendance today; your testimony and involvement on this issue are absolutely critical to preventing federal overreach into our state, communities, and daily lives.

Arizona is blessed with some of the most beautiful and unique landscapes on Earth. From the Saguaro studded hills of the Sonoran Desert to the snowcapped ridges of the San Francisco Peaks or the awe-inspiring chasms of the Grand Canyon.

Arizona’s diverse landscapes are deeply integrated into the culture and daily lives of residents and visitors across the state. For generations, Arizonans have enjoyed responsible, multiple-use recreation on public lands.

Our state has more national parks and national monuments than any other state in the country. In fact, between these parks and monuments, land owned and managed by the federal government, and land held in trust for Indian tribes, less than 20% of the land in Arizona is private land. With so little property in the private domain and a heavy federal footprint, Arizona’s economic and cultural success has depended on the flexibility of multiple-use designations on public land and a respectful federal-state partnership in land management.

Unfortunately, a small group of special interest lobbyists and their Washington, D.C. bureaucrats want to use the stroke of the president’s pen to unilaterally dismantle the collaborative land management model Arizona has carefully developed for its public lands. Environmental extremists have proposed the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument – a charming name for an ambiguous scheme to lock up 1.7 million acres and overturn decades of successful multiple-use management cooperation between federal and state land agencies.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department is entrusted with the responsibility to coordinate and oversee conservation of wildlife resources across the state. This agency has a trust responsibility to ensure that abundant wildlife resources thrive in the state for current and future generations.

The arbitrary conversion of millions of acres of land from responsible multiple-use designations to restrictive special-use, such as is proposed in the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument, causes systematic loss of recreational opportunities and severely erodes the Arizona Game and Fish Department's ability to fulfil their public-trust responsibility to comprehensively manage and preserve wildlife and multiple-use resources for all land in Arizona.

Arizona's wildlife and other outdoor recreational resources are best managed by the state agencies who know them best and are directly accountable to the local citizens they serve. When state priorities are folded into the federal bureaucracy, they are inevitably lost in the growing heap of the federal to-do list. The National Park Service is currently operating with a deferred maintenance backlog of \$11.9 billion, dismally unable to keep up with pressing needs such as road maintenance and basic visitor safety improvements. The Grand Canyon itself is saddled with \$329 million in deferred maintenance. To dump another 1.7 million acres of public land into an unfunded pit of IOU's would be a gross abdication of the public-trust responsibility to preserve multiple-use wildlife resources for current and future generations.

Because of the integral role public lands play in the everyday life of Arizonans, I strongly oppose any conversion of such lands from multiple-use to restrictive use designations that would reduce the public's access to natural resources or wildlife related recreational opportunities. Such conversions are particularly egregious when made unilaterally as a National Monument designation devoid of any public input process or consultation with related state level agencies.

The ability of the Arizonans to enjoy the responsible use of their public land must be respected, as must the primacy of state agencies to manage the land under their authority. A unilateral designation of the Grand Canyon Watershed as a National Monument would erode the extensive work that federal and state land agencies have done to successfully manage this land. I urge the Obama administration to respect and support the successful multiple-use conservation of this land as currently executed by the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

I would like to thank the many local, county and state leaders for their work on this issue and Congressman Gosar for his leadership in pushing back against federal overreach in our state. And with that, I yield back the balance of my time."