



Cochise County Board of Supervisors

Public Programs...Personal Service
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November 3, 2015

Mr. Mark A. Rose,
Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division
Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, DC 20013-2890

Re: Letter of Support for Arizona Land and Water Trust's 2016 Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Application (Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Conservation RCPP Proposal)

Dear Mr. Rose,

Cochise County would like to provide this letter of support for the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Conservation RCPP proposal. The proposal focuses on conserving and restoring key private, working lands near the U.S. Army's Fort Huachuca in southeastern Arizona. Since Fort Huachuca has been designated a Sentinel Landscape through a partnership between the Departments of Defense, Agriculture and Interior, we believe RCPP funding will further advance implementation of various conservation efforts in a collaborative fashion with key partners in this important region.

The primary focus of this RCPP is to bring together partners in the region, enhancing the individual projects and efforts overall impact on the larger landscape scale, seeking to restore and conserve key agricultural lands. The proposed project area contains significant working landscapes and natural resources, including the San Pedro River and its tributaries, with a focus on the Babocomari River, native grasslands, and the Chihuahuan and Sonoran deserts. This area is important for its open space, agriculture, historic working ranches, and its contribution to our western heritage.

This proactive land and water protection project will significantly contribute to maintaining an unrestricted mission environment at Fort Huachuca ("Fort"). The Fort is a critical military asset, home to, among others: U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, which trains Army intelligence personnel; the largest Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) training center in the world; and the Army's Buffalo Soldier Electronic Testing Range (ETR). The mission of Fort Huachuca cannot be replicated elsewhere. Conserving land within Fort's restricted airspace and ETR helps support the continuation of over 100,000 annual military flight operations and reduces electronic interference.

Arizona is one of the fastest growing states in the country and growth of residential and commercial development is rapidly increasing around Fort Huachuca. This growth limits the use of airfields and training areas and threatens the continued viability of missions at the installation. Because Fort Huachuca is a significant contributor to the southeastern Arizona economy, enhancing Fort Huachuca's ability to sustain its missions can only improve the economic outlook of this region. The conservation and restoration of working lands within the ETR will help sustain one of Arizona major economic drivers.

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For the aforementioned reasons Cochise County supports the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Conservation RCPP. Fort Huachuca and the historic working ranches that will benefit from this proposal are important to the economy as well as the people and culture of Southern Arizona.

Sincerely,

Richard Searle, Chairman
Cochise County Board of Supervisors