



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Washington, D.C. 20240

<http://www.blm.gov>



**MAR 16 2007**

The Honorable John McCain  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

Thank you for your letter of February 20, 2007, on behalf of your constituent, Mr. Jon Fugate of the Yuma Valley Rod & Gun Club (YVRGC), regarding the boundary and acreage of the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness. On behalf of the YVRGC, Mr. Fugate pointed out the difference between the wilderness acreage figures in the designating legislation and in some Bureau of Land Management (BLM) documents. The YVRGC believes that the wilderness boundary as marked and mapped today is not what Congress intended.

The Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 (1990 Act) (P.L. 101-628) ". . . designated as wilderness . . . certain lands in LaPaz, Yuma, and Maricopa Counties, Arizona, which comprise approximately 89,000 acres, as generally depicted on a map entitled 'Eagletail Mountains Wilderness' and dated February 1990 . . ." The YVRGC references the 1987 Lower Gila South Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that identified the Proposed Action for Eagletail Mountains as 78,020 acres suitable for wilderness designation and the 2006 Yuma Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Draft EIS that states the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness is 98,600 acres.

The boundary of the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness remains the same as when Congress designated the area. The Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 references a map dated February 1990 to show this Wilderness Area's boundary. That boundary has not changed in the last 17 years. What has changed during that time is the way the BLM calculates an area's acreage.

New methods of measurement allow the BLM to calculate acreage more accurately. For example, a survey of the wilderness boundary filed in 2001 yielded 98,675 acres in the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness. Use of the Geographic Information System gave the BLM a slightly different figure (98,583 acres). Both of these methods provide a more accurate measurement of the area. In preparing the Yuma Draft RMP, BLM staff chose to use a rounded figure of 98,600 acres for the Wilderness Area.

Unrelated to these technological innovations, a separate factor accounts for the change in acreage from the BLM's 1987 Wilderness Proposed Action to the figure included in the 1990 Act. In

developing the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990, Congress added the Cemetery Ridge area to the proposed wilderness.

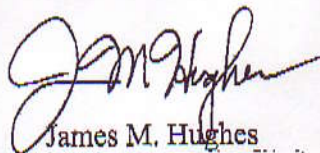
Adding the Cemetery Ridge area (10,980 acres) to the BLM's initial proposal of 78,929 acres increased the acreage of the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness to the approximately 89,000 acres that appear in the 1990 law. The inclusion of the Cemetery Ridge area is documented in the House Report that accompanies this law (excerpt enclosed). In addition, the enclosed annotated map, dated October 1989, which shows the calculated acreage of the Cemetery Ridge area, is also part of the record.

The map referenced in the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 depicts the intent of Congress, and the BLM has followed the boundary on that map in managing the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness.

With respect to differences in reported acreage figures for other wilderness areas mentioned in Mr. Fugate's letter, similar reasons apply. For the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, the wilderness was designated under two separate congressional acts. The Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984 first designated a wilderness of approximately 6,670 acres. The Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990 designated the Aravaipa Wilderness Additions as wilderness, expanding the wilderness by 12,711 acres. In total, the two acts designated an Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness of approximately 19,381 acres. This is the figure generally reported in BLM documents.

Your interest in public lands and BLM natural resource management is appreciated. If you have further questions, please contact Ken Mahoney, BLM Arizona State Office Wilderness Specialist, at (602) 417-9200.

Sincerely,



James M. Hughes  
Acting Director

Enclosures