

Public Law 101-578
101st Congress

An Act

Nov. 15, 1990
[H.R. 5796]

To conduct certain studies in the State of New Mexico.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Natural
resources.
Public lands.

TITLE I—ENCHANTED NATIONAL FOREST INFORMATION
AND EDUCATION STUDY

SEC. 101. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

- (1) environmental education is fundamental to expanding our understanding of the environment;
- (2) the natural resources found on national forests in New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment, can contribute to environmental education programs;
- (3) the Forest Service plays a vital role in the environmental education of all Americans;
- (4) a center to provide information on the national forests in New Mexico would increase public awareness of their national forests, increase participation in management decisions, and improve the public's appreciation of their national forests;
- (5) there is not a central facility dedicated to providing information on the national forests in New Mexico to residents and out-of-State visitors; and
- (6) in light of the opportunities provided by national forests and the importance of environmental education, it is necessary to identify, through a comprehensive study, the opportunities that are available to provide information to the public on the national forests of New Mexico and to expand the environmental education program for those forests.

SEC. 102. STUDY AND REPORT BY THE FOREST SERVICE.

(a) **STUDY.**—The Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, shall conduct a study of the opportunities to establish a center to provide information on the national forests in New Mexico and to expand the environmental education program for those forests.

(b) **REPORT.**—Not later than 1 year after the date that funds are made available for the study referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of Agriculture shall transmit the Study to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives.

(c) **CONTENTS OF STUDY.**—The study referred to in subsection (a) shall develop alternative means for the national forests in New Mexico to provide information that improves public awareness and participation in management of their national forests and to expand the environmental education program for those forests. Alternatives shall include an information and education center located in or near

Albuquerque, New Mexico, and an expanded education outreach program.

SEC. 103. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this title.

TITLE II—CAVE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

SEC. 201. FINDINGS.

16 USC 4310
note.

The Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The World's most exposed fossil reef, Capitan Reef, in southern New Mexico that includes Carlsbad Caverns, contains over 300 caves, including 75 identified caves in Carlsbad Caverns National Park and 22 caves in Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

(2) Recent explorations of Lechuguilla Cave at Carlsbad Caverns National Park have provided much new information about the wonders of this cave including the fact that it is the second deepest cave in the United States and contains outstanding world-class cave features such as gypsum crystal chandeliers and gypsum flowers.

(3) The Lechuguilla Cave has been described by cave researchers as possibly the finest cave in America.

(4) The interest and excitement of cave researchers throughout the world have been focused on Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

(5) Cave researchers could use this research institute as an operational base for study of caves in other regions and as a focal point for storage of data on cave geology and speleology.

(6) The Congress, with the passage of Public Law 100-691, the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988, recognized the significance of cave resources on Federal lands and established the policy that Federal lands be managed in a manner which protects and maintains, to the extent practicable, significant cave resources.

SEC. 202. ESTABLISHMENT OF CAVE RESEARCH PROGRAM.

16 USC 4310.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—In order to provide for needed research relating to cave resources on certain lands in the United States, the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service shall establish and administer a Cave Research Program (hereinafter in this title referred to as the "Program"). The Program shall include the orderly and scholarly collection, analysis, and dissemination of research material related to caves in lands managed by the National Park Service including, but not limited to, Carlsbad Caverns National Park and the Capitan Reef area.

(b) **FUNCTIONS.**—The Program shall produce educational and interpretive information and materials vital to public understanding of cave geology, assist students and researchers, and provide for a comprehensive evaluation of cave resources and measures needed for their protection.

(c) **EMPHASIS.**—The program shall be directed primarily toward lands managed by the National Park Service, but the Secretary of the Interior may enter into cooperative agreements with other agencies or entities as may be appropriate to carry out the purposes of this title.

16 USC 4310
note.

SEC. 203. CAVE RESEARCH INSTITUTE STUDY.

Not later than one year after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior shall prepare and transmit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States House of Representatives a study on the feasibility of establishing a Cave Research Institute. The Study shall include the need for such a facility, its costs, its purposes, what the facility should include and where it should be located. An analysis of potential sites for the Institute should include, but not be limited to, Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

16 USC 4310
note.

SEC. 204. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this title.

TITLE III—PREHISTORIC TRACKWAYS STUDY

SEC. 301. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) **FINDINGS.**—The Congress finds that—

- (1) fossils are important for scientific studies of prehistoric life on earth;
- (2) lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the Robledo Mountains in New Mexico contain one of the most important fossil discoveries of the 20th century;
- (3) discoveries have included prehistoric tracks of amphibians, reptiles, arthropods and insects, extensive plant fossils, and clues to the weather and climate of the period;
- (4) fossil footprints that form trackways help scientists recreate the environment and habitat that supported prehistoric life;
- (5) nearly one hundred trackways from the Permian Age have been uncovered in the Robledo Mountains;
- (6) the trackways are over 280 million years old and they document the emergence of life from water to land;
- (7) the trackways are unique in length and represent most taxonomic groups, including many prints of previously unknown animals;
- (8) the trackways and other fossils are being lost for scientific study through unsupervised collecting, and commercial quarrying; and
- (9) the trackways and fossils found in the Robledo Mountains and surrounding areas should be evaluated for their potential protection and value for scientific interpretation and education.

(b) **PURPOSES.**—The purposes of this title are to—

- (1) require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to consider appropriate means to protect the discoveries and identify the scientific, interpretive, and public education values associated with the trackways and fossils located in the Robledo Mountains in southeastern New Mexico; and
- (2) provide for interim protection of such trackways and fossils.

SEC. 302. INTERIM WITHDRAWAL.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The area consisting of approximately 736 acres, as generally depicted on the map entitled "Prehistoric Trackways Study Area", numbered NM 030-01 and dated September, 1990 (hereafter referred to as the "study area"), is hereby withdrawn,

subject to valid existing rights, from all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws, from location, entry, or patent under the mining laws, but not from operation under the mineral leasing laws. Such withdrawal shall terminate on the date 2 years after the date the study referred to in section 303 is transmitted to Congress.

(b) MAP.—The map referred to in subsection (a) shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior.

SEC. 303. STUDY.

(a) STUDY.—(1) The Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with State and local governments, and institutions of higher education, shall conduct a study of the alternatives for the protection and interpretation of the fossil resources within the study area.

Inter-
governmental
relations.

(2) The study shall include an analysis of the importance of the discoveries at the site and an evaluation of the feasibility of developing a facility in New Mexico to evaluate, curate, display, and interpret the fossil resources located within the study area.

(3) The study shall recommend the preferred administrative designation for the area, including but not limited to potential designation as a unit of the National Park System, and the appropriate management agency.

(b) TRANSMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1 year after the date that funds are made available for the study required in subsection (a), the Secretary shall transmit such study to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States House of Representatives.

SEC. 304. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this title.

Approved November 15, 1990.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 5796:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 101-878 (Comm. on Interior and Insular Affairs).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 136 (1990):
Oct. 15, considered and passed House.
Oct. 26, considered and passed Senate.