

**REPORT TO THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
ON  
IMPACTS CAUSED BY UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS<sup>1</sup>  
CROSSING FEDERAL LANDS IN SOUTHEAST ARIZONA**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Immigration and Naturalization Service through the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have prepared this report in response to requests by the House Committee on Appropriations to develop a coordinated plan to mitigate the environmental damage caused by illegal immigrant crossings through Federal lands in southeast Arizona and to report back to the Committee by October 1, 2001. This report is being submitted late due to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the resulting need to review border issues with respect to homeland security. The coordinated plan for southeast Arizona is incorporated in this report as Appendix B.

The purpose of this report is to identify resources and actions necessary to mitigate and prevent environmental damage caused by illegal immigration through Federal lands in southeast Arizona and to restore safe public use and management of these lands through a multi-agency, coordinated effort. The detailed goals, objectives, and actions are stated in Appendix B. It does not address the social, economic or political factors that may be causing illegal immigration, the impacts on non-Federal jurisdictions (although most impacts are similar); and many other issues related to illegal immigration.

Southeast Arizona, as described in this report, has a total area of approximately 14,000 square miles (9 million acres). Approximately 37% of this area is administered by the Federal government and is the subject of this report. Southeast Arizona has 156 miles of border common with Mexico. This represents only 8% of the entire 1,952 miles of international border between the United States and Mexico. However, the environmental and other impacts caused by undocumented aliens crossing Federal lands in southeast Arizona are much greater than this small percentage indicates.

The natural and cultural resources in southeast Arizona have regional, national and international importance. There are four National Park Service units; three National Wildlife Refuges; 12 separate and uniquely distinct mountain ranges, "sky islands," in the Coronado National Forest;

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Report language uses the term "illegal immigrants," a term that is commonly used interchangeably with the term "undocumented aliens." However, the term "illegal immigrants" has been defined narrowly by the courts (see Glossary). This report uses the term "undocumented aliens," which has a broader meaning and which includes all persons coming into the United States illegally (proven or unproven).

all or part of three National Conservation Areas, one National Monument, and other public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); two military installations; and land held in trust for the Tohono O'odham Nation (San Xavier del Bac Mission) and the Pasqua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona. Additionally, Southeast Arizona includes 19 areas (three in National Parks, eight in National Forests, and eight on lands administered by BLM) designated as wilderness by the United States Congress and four wilderness study areas.

Southeast Arizona is a major international tourist destination due largely to its historical significance and the abundance and uniqueness of its natural and cultural resources. Recreation and tourism opportunities bring millions of visitors to the area each year. It is nationally and internationally recognized for its extraordinary bird watching opportunities, with over 400 species of birds recorded.

As a direct result of an unusual variety of climate and geology, there is a wide variety of vegetation and wildlife species in southeast Arizona, including a large number of species designated as threatened or endangered under provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

There are numerous prehistoric and historic sites and important cultural landscapes in southeast Arizona. Additionally, more than 100 properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Because Federal lands in southeast Arizona are, for the most part, remote and isolated areas adjacent or in close proximity to the Mexican border, they have become major arteries for smuggling humans and controlled substances into the United States. As a result, the extremely valuable, and many times irreplaceable, natural and cultural resources mentioned above are in jeopardy.

Undocumented aliens crossing Federal land in southeast Arizona not only cause damage to natural and cultural resources; they impact Federal land visitors, public services, Federal employees working in the area, and residents and businesses located on Federal and reservation lands. Furthermore, undocumented aliens themselves are impacted as they cross Federal lands due to the remoteness of many of these lands and the unexpected harsh conditions that they encounter there.

Certain Federal lands in southeast Arizona can no longer be used safely by the public or Federal employees due to the significance of smuggling undocumented aliens and controlled substances into the United States. The mere number of undocumented aliens traveling in the border area intimidates legitimate visitors and creates a reluctance by some of the public to use public lands. The volume of undocumented aliens also impacts Federal and other government employees' ability to feel safe while doing their job in the field. Staff exposure while conducting resource management activities in certain areas along the border is a serious safety concern.

Ranchers, farmers, miners and other legitimate users of Federal lands are heavily impacted financially by smuggling operations that cut fences, breakdown or leave gates open, damage water supplies, steal or damage equipment, and disrupt grazing and irrigation schedules.

Breaking and entering and burglaries along the border are common and include historic and government structures, employee and private residences, and businesses.

Federal law enforcement officers assigned to land management agencies and tribal police often face situations where they are at personal risk and must deal with overwhelming odds. Due to the remoteness of many Federal lands, timely assistance from other law enforcement agencies is not always possible. This leaves Federal land management law enforcement officers in difficult situations for extended periods of time because no back-up law enforcement officers are available from other cooperating agencies.

Literally hundreds, if not thousands of new trails and roads have been created on Federal lands in southeastern Arizona by undocumented alien crossings. This proliferation of trails and roads damages and destroys cactus and other sensitive vegetation, disrupts or prohibits revegetation, disturbs wildlife and their cover and travel routes, causes soil compaction and erosion, impacts stream bank stability, and often times confuses legitimate users of trails and roads on Federal lands.

Large numbers of vehicles are abandoned by smugglers and undocumented aliens. Such vehicles are difficult and costly for agencies to remove.

The character of Congressionally designated wilderness areas has been reduced by the creation of unwanted trails and roads, damage to existing trails, and large amounts of trash. Encounters with large groups of undocumented aliens reduces the quality of the wilderness experience for many visitors. Law enforcement operations and enforcement related aircraft flights in wilderness areas reduce the quality of the wilderness experience.

The international border fence is repeatedly cut or torn down in many locations forcing Federal agency staff and grazing permittees to constantly make repairs. Horses and cows from Mexico trespassing on Federal lands in the United States are a significant and reoccurring problem.

Gates are rammed, security locks are cut, signs are driven over and heavy damage or destruction of water developments and other improvements by undocumented aliens traveling through Federal lands and seeking drinking water in remote locations occur regularly. Recreational, cultural and administrative sites are repeatedly vandalized and damaged. All of this adds significantly to the cost of maintaining Federal improvements.

Tons of trash and high concentrations of human waste are left behind by undocumented aliens. This impacts wildlife, vegetation and water quality in the uplands, in washes and along rivers and streams. This also detracts from scenic qualities and can effect human and animal health from spread of bacteria and disease.

Warming and cooking fires built and abandoned by undocumented aliens have caused wildfires that have destroyed valuable natural and cultural resources. The fires pose a threat to visitors, residents and Federal and local firefighters as well as to the undocumented aliens camping in or migrating through the area.

State, county and local governments and private property owners experience most of the same problems caused by undocumented aliens crossing their land as mentioned herein. Additionally, there is a significant increased workload on Federal and local court systems and increased costs to medical providers caring for the sick and injured. Healthcare providers especially are heavily impacted.

A number of actions have taken place within the past year that respond to the concerns expressed by Congress regarding the impacts caused by undocumented aliens crossing Federal lands in southeastern Arizona (and elsewhere along the border). These include a memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Border Patrol, Department of the Interior bureaus, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service covering activities in Arizona and New Mexico; the coordinated plan provided herein as Appendix B; and a Department of the Interior Southwest Border Law Enforcement Strategy.

A firm commitment by local Federal land managers has been made to address the environmental damage and other impacts on Federal lands caused by undocumented aliens in southeast Arizona. As indicated in the *Southeast Arizona Coordinated Plan to Mitigate and Prevent Environmental and Other Impacts Caused by Undocumented Aliens Crossing Federal Land* (Appendix B), numerous efforts will be initiated and accomplished using available resources. This plan identifies estimates of additional resources to accomplish the goals set out by federal land managers. The resource needs identified in this report will be evaluated for consideration in future budgets.

This report identifies estimates of additional funding and personnel to clean up, monitor biological impacts, remove vehicles, rebuild and repair fences and other damaged facilities, restore damaged habitats, and protect water management improvements; additional law enforcement personnel to provide public safety and security for staff, equipment, and facilities, and to deter undocumented aliens from accessing Federal lands; vehicle barriers along the border that will not impact wildlife migration, upgraded all-weather roads along the border with cattle guards, towers and cameras at key locations, signs to warn visitors of potential dangers, and signs to notify undocumented aliens of the risks and hazards they face.

First year estimates are 93.3 additional Full Time Equivalent (FTE) and \$23.5 million. To fully implement the five-year plan, is estimated to cost \$62.9 million. Table 4 is a summary of the additional resources identified by agencies to implement the first and subsequent years of the coordinated plan for southeast Arizona. A detailed estimate for each agency in southeast Arizona can be found in Appendix K.

NOTE: U.S. Border Patrol estimated needs are in the process of being submitted to Congress in House Report 106-680, Joint Plan to Protect Natural and Human Resources and Provide Increased Border Protection Throughout the Southwest, and therefore are not included here. This has been done to avoid confusion and duplication.