



**Western
Watersheds
Project**

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Working to protect and restore Western Watersheds

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LAWSUIT TELLS THE BLM IT HAS WAITED LONG ENOUGH TO PROTECT THE SONORAN DESERT NATIONAL MONUMENT FROM LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Tucson, Arizona – Responding to the Bureau of Land Management’s seven and a half year delay in protecting the Sonoran Desert National Monument, Western Watersheds Project filed a lawsuit today against the agency over ongoing livestock grazing. The monument, west of Casa Grande, continues to be harmed by the agency’s neglect, despite the special status designation.

“Grazing has gone on too long in this unique place,” said Greta Anderson, Arizona Director of Western Watersheds Project. “The BLM knows that livestock are harming these hot, dry desert lands, but they continue to authorize cows year after year. They are failing to follow the letter and spirit of the designation every time they renew a permit or allow cows to be turned out.”

The Presidential Proclamation directed the BLM to continue grazing *only* if the agency determined that it was compatible with protecting the objects the monument was designated to protect, including, “An extraordinary array of biological, scientific, and historic resources” that provide for a “spectacular diversity of plant and animal species,” including imperiled species such as desert bighorn sheep, Sonoran pronghorn, Sonoran desert tortoise, and many other birds, reptiles, and plants. The BLM knows that livestock are degrading soils, reducing plant diversity, increasing weeds and non-native plants, and damaging wildlife habitat, but it continues to allow cows on the monument. In fact, it renewed some grazing permits until 2015 even though it hasn’t produced the required compatibility determination.

“When it comes to protecting the rare and irreplaceable resources on this national monument, the BLM should be taking a precautionary approach,” said Anderson.

The lawsuit alleges that the BLM has unduly delayed reaching a compatibility determination and has failed to act upon what it knows to be true already- that livestock are having a detrimental effect on the monument resources. The lawsuit also claims that the BLM has improperly reauthorized grazing without having first determined compatibility, which is contrary to the direction of the Proclamation.

More information about the detrimental impacts of livestock grazing can be found on our website and at www.westernwatersheds.org/wwpinfo/az/SDNM/sdnm.shtml

Western Watersheds Project is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to restoring and protecting our western public lands. www.westernwatersheds.org