

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Trump Administration Prepares to Open Ironwood Forest National Monument to Mining**

Tucson, Arizona— April 28, 2025— Last week we learned that the Trump Administration is preparing to shrink the size of multiple national monuments, including Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM). The monument, which recently had a public celebration for its 25th anniversary, has become increasingly popular and now sees well over 100,000 visitors a year.

"This is exactly what we've feared," said Tom Hannagan, President of Friends of Ironwood Forest. "This move would open the door to irreversible destruction of vital Sonoran Desert habitat that is beloved by both our local community and tens of thousands of visitors each year."

Ironwood Forest National Monument is part of a critical corridor for wildlife, connecting seven mountain ranges and serving as the core habitat for the region's last indigenous herd of desert bighorn sheep in the Waterman and Silverbell Mountains. The introduction of mining infrastructure—access roads, heavy machinery, and nonstop noise—would devastate native ecosystems and sever wildlife connectivity.

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, who was instrumental in the monument's creation in 2000, will be working with their 31 member groups to advocate for the continued protection of Ironwood Forest. "This monument is an integral part of federal, state, and local government plans to protect Sonoran Desert habitat and wildlife corridors for current and future generations," said Kate Hotten, co-executive director of the Coalition. "Fortunately, we know that removing protections for public lands, especially ones as scenic and appreciated as Ironwood Forest National Monument, is hugely unpopular."

In addition to its ecological importance, the Ironwood Forest holds profound cultural and historical value. It is home to archaeological sites dating back more than 10,000 years and forms part of the ancestral lands of the Tohono O'odham people.

"This action, should it be taken, is wholly unconscionable," said John R. Welch, Vice President for Preservation & Collaboration, Archaeology Southwest. "The boundaries of these national monuments have been well vetted and are working for the communities involved, including and especially Tribes. This would be a boldface rejection of years of good-faith policy negotiations."

Tom Hannagan sums up the next steps this way, “Let’s be clear, we will be calling on our community and our elected officials to make it clear to the administration that any change to the monument would not only be unpopular and unwelcomed, but illegal.”

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#### About Friends of Ironwood Forest

Friends of Ironwood Forest works for the permanent protection of the biological, geological, archeological and historical resources for which the Ironwood Forest National Monument was established through education, community outreach and advocacy.

#### About Archaeology Southwest

Founded in 1989, Archaeology Southwest is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, on the homelands of the Tohono O’odham Nation and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. We are privileged to work across the US Southwest and into northwestern Mexico on the Lands and Territories of many Indigenous Tribes and descendant communities.

#### About Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection is a 31-member non-profit focused on Southern Arizona. Through advocacy, education, and collaboration, they protect and reconnect Sonoran Desert ecosystems and defend against threats from short-sighted development.