

WALNUT CANYON STUDY ACT, H.R. 5751

The Honorable Ed Pastor

**Hearing before the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National
Parks, Forests, and Public Lands**

July 10, 2008

This bill simply authorizes a study by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture on the most effective uses and methods of protection for approximately 31,000 acres adjacent to the Walnut Canyon National Monument in Coconino County, Arizona.

The Walnut Canyon National Monument was established in 1915 by President Wilson, and was expanded in 1938 and 1996 to about 3,600 acres.

The 20 mile long and 400 feet deep Walnut Canyon was carved by the Walnut Creek over a period of 60 million years.

The area was inhabited by permanent dwellers, the Sinagua peoples, beginning in 600 A.D. During the 1100s, many of the inhabitants constructed cliff dwellings below the Canyon's rim, and these dwellings remain today.

The Monument now covers six miles of the Canyon's length and is visited by thousands of people annually, both for archeological study, and plant and wildlife observation.

For several years, the local communities have debated the most effective methods for protecting the Monument's surrounding lands from development. Both the Coconino County Board of Supervisors and the Flagstaff City Council have passed resolutions calling for a Federal study for determining an appropriate management strategy of the lands.

This legislation was first introduced by our Arizona colleagues Senator McCain and Congressman Renzi in the 108th Congress. I cosponsored similar legislation in the 109th Congress, and at the request of Coconino County Supervisor Liz Archuleta, introduced, along with the Chairman, H.R. 5751 this year.

The legislation offers several guidelines for the Secretaries to include in the study, including designating part of the study area as an addition to the Walnut Canyon National Monument; continued management of the lands by the Forest Service; or any other designation or management strategy for the "protection of resources...and continued access to, and use of, the study area by the public."

CBO has estimated that the cost of the study would be less than \$500,000, and of course, it is subject to appropriation.