

# Protecting America's Borderlands



## ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AND BORDER ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES THREATEN LANDS AND WILDLIFE

**Border Security Includes Borderland conservation.** America's border with Mexico includes national parks, forests, monuments, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas and other environmentally sensitive areas. Nearly one-quarter of the 1,950 mile U.S.-Mexico border lies within public lands. This includes hundreds of miles within the National Park system alone, running through such national treasures as Big Bend National Park and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Many imperiled species depend upon borderland habitat for their continued existence. In Arizona alone, the Border Patrol estimates that 39 species protected or proposed to be protected under the Endangered Species Act are already being affected by its operations. Much of this country's most spectacular wildlife, including jaguars, wolves, and hundreds of bird species, depend upon protected public lands along the border for migration corridors between countries.

Illegal border crossings and enforcement activities along the border are placing a tremendous burden on federal land management agencies and causing long-term damage to natural and cultural resources. And, the recently enacted Secure Fence Act would require the construction of a double-layer, reinforced wall along large sections of the southern border, stretching from just outside San Diego all the way to Brownsville, Texas, less than 30 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. One piece of the wall would cover almost 350 miles, virtually the entire length of the California-Arizona border with Mexico. The effects of large scale border wall construction on wildlife, clean water, clean air, and human health and safety could be serious and lasting.

Defenders advocates a new approach to secure the border and protect the Borderlands, including initiatives to:

- Provide experts at the Homeland Security Department the ability to decide whether walls, vehicle barriers, or virtual fences would be most effective in securing the border.
- Give land management agencies and local, state, and tribal officials a voice in border construction and decision-making.
- Require compliance with federal, state, and local laws meant to protect the air, water, wildlife, culture, and health and safety of people in Borderland communities.
- Alleviate budget pressure on federal land management agencies by enacting cross-cutting budget initiatives that help mitigate damage to Borderland resources.



Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## Public Lands and the Border Fence in the American Southwest

