

## **PRESIDENT SIGNS BILL PROMOTING SOUTHERN ARIZONA'S CULTURE & HERITAGE**

With Broad Bipartisan Support, Legislation Designates Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area,  
Promotes Heritage Tourism

*TUCSON, AZ* – After more than a decade of building a broad base of bipartisan support, the Santa Cruz Valley in Southern Arizona was designated as a National Heritage Area. The designation of the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area was included in Senate Bill 47, The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Title 6, Sec. 6001), which was passed by Congress on February 26, 2019 and signed by President Trump on March 12, 2019.

“Thanks to tireless work from advocates and allies, the Santa Cruz Valley is on its way to becoming a National Heritage Area,” said Representative Raul Grijalva (D, Arizona). “The passage of the bipartisan lands package in the House and Senate is a huge win for Americans, and I’m glad one of my first successes as Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee celebrates the history, culture, and traditions of Southern Arizona. We’ve fought for a decade to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of this land, and because of support from the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance, we succeeded.”

The Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area is a non-regulatory designation made by Congress to honor and celebrate the region’s contribution to America’s history, while also stimulating heritage-based economic development and geo-tourism in the region. It encompasses the watershed of the Santa Cruz River, from Nogales and Patagonia, to Marana and Oro Valley. The National Heritage Area designation does not impose any federal, state, or local land use restrictions or zoning and does not impact private property rights.

National Heritage Areas stimulate local heritage-based economic development by marketing regional heritage tourism, and promoting place-based foods, arts, crafts, and other traditional products. There are 55 National Heritage Areas in 32 states across country, with many of these areas seeing a significant increase in tourism following the designation.

Vanessa Bechtol, on behalf of the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance and Visit Tucson, explains, “The Heritage Area concept is about heritage-based economic development – promoting and celebrating our heritage assets to generate new jobs, business incomes, tax revenues, and investment opportunities.”

The Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area will partner with residents, government agencies, non-profit groups, and private businesses to collaboratively plan and implement locally-led programs and projects that celebrate the defining places, landscapes, and cultural traditions of the Santa Cruz Valley.

“With the rich diversity of cultural, historic, natural, and recreational resources available here in the Santa Cruz Valley, we have a tremendous opportunity to promote these resources and educate the community about our shared heritage,” Bechtol said. “In doing so, we can stimulate regional economic development by not only attracting tourists’ dollars to the region, but also by encouraging residents to visit these heritage destinations.”

“We applaud Congressman Grijalva for supporting this landmark bipartisan legislation that not only celebrates our rich cultural heritage, but also supports heritage-based economic development throughout the Santa Cruz Valley,” says Bechtol.

The Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area was endorsed by every local government in the region, as well as former Governor Napolitano, Visit Tucson, the Arizona Office of Tourism, Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities, Metropolitan Tucson Chamber of Commerce, Southern Arizona Home Builders Association, every federal and state park and land manager in the region, museums and historical societies, non-profit organizations, ranchers and farmers, and more.

For more information visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/index.htm> or contact:

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