

**Statement for the Record  
Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands**

***H.R. 4377, To amend the Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1999 with respect to extensions, additions, and revisions to the Barry M. Goldwater Range in Arizona***

**July 13, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this Statement for the Record on H.R. 4377, which would amend the Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-65) to extend an existing military withdrawal and reservation for the Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR) in southwestern Arizona until October 5, 2049.

The bill would also expand BMGR by authorizing the Gila Bend Addition, which would add 2,366 acres of BLM-managed public lands in Maricopa County, Arizona (referred to as the Gila Bend Addition) to the range. Lastly, the bill would provide clarifying language for the status of the remaining Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1986 lands along the BMGR perimeter, revoke legacy World War II-era military withdrawals, and provide for the transfer of a 21-acre parcel managed by the United States Air Force (USAF) and located within the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and Cabeza Prieta Wilderness Area to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The Department supports H.R. 4377, as the bill's provisions match the proposed withdrawal and expansion jointly developed by USAF and the United States Marine Corps (USMC), with the BLM participating as a cooperating agency. The Department defers to USAF and USMC regarding the military interests and assets under their jurisdiction.

**Background**

The BMGR, located in southwestern Arizona, was first established to train U.S. pilots during World War II, and continues to serve as a military training range today. Spanning 1.7 million acres, the BMGR is comprised of one range jointly managed by USAF and USMC. The BMGR is the nation's fourth largest land-based military range, and the largest range at which tactical aviation training is the predominant mission. The existing land withdrawal and reservation for the BMGR provided by the Military Land Withdrawal Act of 1999 is due to expire on October 4, 2024.

**H.R. 4377**

H.R. 4377 provides for the extension of the military withdrawal of the BMGR until 2049, an expansion of the range through the withdrawal of the 2,366-acres of BLM-managed lands identified as the Gila Bend Addition for inclusion in the BMGR, among other provisions.

In addition to extending the withdrawal for the BMGR, the bill would expand the range by withdrawing approximately 2,366 acres of BLM-managed land, referred to as the Gila Bend

Addition, and add it to the existing BMGR to enhance the safety and security of flight operations and allow USAF to control use and access of this area under restricted airspace. USAF and USMC jointly prepared a Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS) for the requested withdrawal extension and expansion. The BLM notes that the Gila Bend Addition is a remote area used sporadically for dispersed recreation and contains one active grazing allotment that has not been grazed since 1989. The BLM participated in and contributed to the development of the LEIS as a cooperating agency, and the Department supports this provision.

H.R. 4377 also addresses outdated and redundant land records and statuses, as recommended by the BLM and accepted by the lead agencies during the development of the LEIS for the withdrawal extension and expansion. This includes the revocation of outdated legacy World War II-era Public Land Orders and Executive Orders that withdrew and reserved land for the BMGR, but are redundant in light of the existing withdrawal. The bill also clarifies the withdrawal status of certain lands along the BMGR perimeter withdrawn by the Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1986. The Department supports these provisions, which provide important clarity regarding land status for all involved parties.

Additionally, H.R. 4377 directs the transfer of the 20.66-acre Legal Tender Mine from the Secretary of the Air Force to the Secretary of the Interior at no cost and in as-is condition for inclusion in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. This transfer would ensure the continued protection of the mine's natural and cultural resources and advance the National Wildlife Refuge System's conservation mission. Further, the designation of this property as part of the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness would facilitate seamless management of the site with the surrounding refuge lands, 93% of which are Designated Wilderness.

### **Conclusion**

The Department appreciates the importance of military ranges and the space needed for military training to secure our nation and support the multiple missions of our Armed Forces. We are proud to coordinate with the Department of Defense to facilitate responsible use of public lands to support military readiness, training, and testing. Throughout the country, the Department has established productive partnerships with the military to support these goals. The Department supports H.R. 4377 and looks forward to working with the Subcommittee and our military partners as this legislation progresses through Congress.