



## **ARIZONA WILDLIFE FEDERATION**

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August 2004

Arizona Wildlife Federation

Position Statement on Northern Arizona Land Exchange Act of 2003

The Arizona Wildlife Federation opposes passage of S849 (Yavapai Ranch Land Exchange Act, Northern Arizona Land Exchange Act of 2003) for the reasons set forth below.

Historically, land exchanges done by legislative process have not met “equal value” provisions, resulting in the loss of large amounts of money to taxpayers and the federal government. Much of the private land proposed for exchange in S849 is low dollar value land, with corresponding low ecological values, which would result in gross inequity in value of land lost relative to land acquired.

Provisions made in S849 regarding retention of water rights and access for the current land owner on what will become Forest Service lands are contrary to standard Forest Service Manual procedures.

Planned development on post-exchange lands gained by the current landowner would have severe negative impacts on the Verde River Watershed with its dependent wildlife habitats.

Positive aspects of S849 would be the consolidation of checkerboard land patterns on post-exchange lands, which simplifies administration for the Forest Service and encourages public-use activities. Consolidation would also ensure contiguous habitat for wildlife on the Yavapai Ranch exchange lands traded to the Forest Service, with opportunities for habitat improvement projects. Lack of development activities on those lands would benefit wildlife and habitat.

As Arizona’s oldest and largest nonprofit conservation organization, the Arizona Wildlife Federation is dedicated to the conservation and improvement of wildlife and wildlife habitat in Arizona. While recognizing some positive aspects for wildlife and wildlife habitat with regard to the Yavapai Ranch Land Exchange, the AWF finds the severe negative impacts of exchange outweigh any positive aspects. The Arizona Wildlife Federation therefore opposes passage of S849 (Yavapai Ranch Land Exchange Act, Northern Arizona Land Exchange Act of 2003).