

## Designation Effect: Ironwood Forest National Monument, Arizona

Notes from a private property owner

The below excerpts are from a private property owner (rancher) whose lands are within Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) outside of Tucson, Arizona.

Comments are focused on how designation of the monument has affected the biological health of the rangeland. Prior to designation the area was managed with a de facto plan that followed a “no action” alternative.

The main benefit of the IFNM is in the proclamation itself and it has had a huge benefit to the land. In the last ten years, the area within a 50-mile radius has seen massive population increases. Due to IFNM status, those impacts do not affect the lands of IFNM. Impacts to rangeland health in IFNM since June 2000 (date of designation):

1.) Off-road motorized travel, both commercial (smuggling) and recreational.

Recreational off-roading is not so much related to the fact that this is a national monument, but due almost to urban expansion, what had been a thriving economy, and the increased sales of OHVs. Additionally, smugglers carved most of the original wildcat roads that now recreationists simply follow, thinking that's ok. If anything, IFNM status has served to stem this abuse. IFNM status has given way to increased law enforcement presence, increased public participation in stewardship of the monument, and the willingness of other entities such as AZ Game and Fish and nonprofit organizations to engage in stewardship efforts, public education through added signage, and perpetual efforts to close and conceal wildcat roads.

National Monument status also encouraged local Congressman and others to earmark for the BLM millions of dollars of funding that has been spent cleaning up after the illegal migrants specifically in IFNM. Ranchers outside these protected areas must deal with a tremendous impact of this migration with virtually no federal funding.

2.) Litter, both recreational and from illegal migration

The IFNM status has made a great contribution to curbing this. From 1995 to 2000, the area was atrociously carpeted with litter constantly. After 2000, it seemed more people came out who were interested in stewarding the land.

3.) Non-native plant invasion

Clearly, the IFNM status has tempered this invasion significantly, with funding that might not be available without the monument status.

4.) Grazing management

IFNM status clearly could benefit the land if well-designed range management studies arise from it. The monument status could also become an impetus for easier funding for improvements of all types than without the status.

In conclusion, the existing management due to the Monument status is very effective and the creation of IFNM has greatly benefitted the rangeland health.