



February 29, 2012

Maria Baier, Land Commissioner
State Land Department
1616 W. Adams Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

RE: Support for the reclassification of state trust lands at Fort Tuthill as suitable for conservation purposes

Dear Commissioner Baier,

On behalf of the Grand Canyon Trust, I am writing to encourage you to approve Coconino County's request to reclassify state trust lands at Fort Tuthill as suitable for conservation purposes under the Arizona Preserve Initiative Petition 35-116166.

The Grand Canyon Trust has been involved in many aspects of protecting Fort Tuthill. We helped draft the Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan, which designated Fort Tuthill as a high priority open space target. We also participated in the Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan, which again highlighted the importance of Fort Tuthill as open space. The Trust also helped pass the Coconino Parks and Open Space ballot measure in 2002, which created a funding mechanism for open space acquisitions.

The Fort Tuthill Expansion acquisition will ensure the protection of scenic values, the integrity of the Fort Tuthill Historic District's cultural landscape, and the conservation of open lands to maintain critical wildlife corridors. All of these significant attributes are very important to the public and the quality of life that we enjoy in Coconino County.

The state trust lands at Fort Tuthill also provide linkages between the Rio de Flag-Sinclair Wash Corridor and the northern reach of the Oak Creek Canyon Corridor. These corridors support habitat and safe movement for deer, elk, bear, mountain lion, and other native wildlife between the San Francisco Peaks to habitats along the Mogollon Rim above Oak Creek.

The fact that the majority of Coconino County voters overwhelmingly approved the Coconino Parks and Open Space ballot measure to secure acquisition funds for the Fort

Tuthill Expansion Project is a testament to our community's vision to protect open space for future generations.

The Grand Canyon Trust urges you to share our commitment to open space in Coconino County with the reclassification of the state trust lands at Fort Tuthill as suitable for conservation purposes.

Sincerely,

Nikolai Lash
Program Director
Grand Canyon Trust