

Public Law 103-169  
103d Congress

An Act

To protect Lechuguilla Cave and other resources and values in and adjacent to Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

Dec. 2, 1993  
[H.R. 698]

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

Lechuguilla  
Cave  
Protection  
Act of  
1993.  
16 USC 4301  
note.  
16 USC 4301  
note.

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the "Lechuguilla Cave Protection Act of 1993".

**SEC. 2. FINDING.**

Congress finds that Lechuguilla Cave and adjacent public lands have internationally significant scientific, environmental, and other values, and should be retained in public ownership and protected against adverse effects of mineral exploration and development and other activities presenting threats to the areas.

**SEC. 3. LAND WITHDRAWAL.**

16 USC 4301  
note.

(a) **WITHDRAWAL.**—Subject to valid existing rights, all Federal lands within the boundaries of the cave protection area described in subsection (b) are hereby withdrawn from all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws; from location, entry, and patent under the United States mining laws; and from disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing, and all amendments thereto.

(b) **LAND DESCRIPTION.**—The cave protection area referred to in subsection (a) shall consist of approximately 6,280 acres of lands in New Mexico as generally depicted on the map entitled "Lechuguilla Cave Protection Area" numbered 130/80,055 and dated April 1993.

(c) **PUBLICATION, FILING, CORRECTION, AND INSPECTION.**—(1) As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter referred to as the "Secretary") shall publish in the Federal Register the legal description of the lands withdrawn under subsection (a) and shall file such legal description and a detailed map with the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the United States House of Representatives.

Federal  
Register,  
publication.

(2) Such map and legal description shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act except that the Secretary may correct clerical and typographical errors.

(3) Copies of such map and legal description shall be available for inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

16 USC 4301  
note.

**SEC. 4. MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING LEASES.**

(a) **SUSPENSION.**—The Secretary shall not permit any new drilling on or involving any Federal mineral or geothermal lease within the cave protection area referred to in section 3(a) until the effective date of the Record of Decision for the Dark Canyon Environmental Impact Statement, or for 12 months after the date of enactment of this Act, whichever occurs first.

(b) **AUTHORITY TO CANCEL EXISTING MINERAL OR GEOTHERMAL LEASES.**—Upon the effective date of the Record of Decision for the Dark Canyon Environmental Impact Statement and in order to protect Lechuguilla Cave or other cave resources, the Secretary is authorized to—

(1) cancel any Federal mineral or geothermal lease in the cave protection area referred to in section 3(a); or

(2) enter into negotiations with the holder of a Federal mineral or geothermal lease in the cave protection area referred to in section 3(a) to determine appropriate compensation, if any, for the complete or partial termination of such lease.

16 USC 4301  
note.

**SEC. 5. ADDITIONAL PROTECTION AND RELATION TO OTHER LAWS.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—In order to protect Lechuguilla Cave or Federal lands within the cave protection area, the Secretary, subject to valid existing rights, may limit or prohibit access to or across lands owned by the United States or prohibit the removal from such lands of any mineral, geological, or cave resources: *Provided*, That existing access to private lands within the cave protection area shall not be affected by this subsection.

(b) **NO EFFECT ON PIPELINES.**—Nothing in this title shall have the effect of terminating any validly issued right-of-way, or customary operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement activities in such right-of-way; prohibiting the upgrading of and construction on existing facilities in such right-of-way for the purpose of increasing capacity of the existing pipeline; or prohibiting the renewal of such right-of-way within the cave protection area referred to in section 3(a).

(c) **RELATION TO OTHER LAWS.**—Nothing in this Act shall be construed as increasing or diminishing the ability of any party to seek compensation pursuant to other applicable law, including but not limited to the Tucker Act (28 U.S.C. 1491), or as precluding any defenses or claims otherwise available to the United States in connection with any action seeking such compensation from the United States.

**SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**16 USC 4301  
note.

There is hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this Act: *Provided*, That no funds shall be made available except to the extent, or in such amounts as are provided in advance in appropriation Acts.

Approved December 2, 1993.

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**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 698:****HOUSE REPORTS:** No. 103-86 (Comm. on Natural Resources).**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD**, Vol. 139 (1993):

May 11, considered and passed House.

Nov. 18, considered and passed Senate, amended.

Nov. 21, House concurred in Senate amendment.