

# Trump administration delays border wall work in Arizona preserves

- By Henry Brean Arizona Daily Star 8/15/19 [https://tucson.com/news/local/trump-administration-delays-border-wall-work-in-arizona-preserves/article\\_4e8db4b0-bee1-534d-a4ff-343857cfce9b.html](https://tucson.com/news/local/trump-administration-delays-border-wall-work-in-arizona-preserves/article_4e8db4b0-bee1-534d-a4ff-343857cfce9b.html)

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The Trump administration has agreed to delay border wall construction through three Arizona preserves as a federal court considers a legal challenge from conservation groups.

Construction of new barrier fencing was slated to begin this week in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and across the San Pedro River.

Instead, some of that work will be delayed until October, according to court records filed by the government late Tuesday.

"It's a small but important victory for public lands and wildlife," said Laiken Jordahl, borderlands campaigner for the Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity. "Every day the project is delayed is a good day."

The center, the Animal Legal Defense Fund and Defenders of Wildlife filed for an emergency injunction last week seeking to block the start of construction.

Jordahl said Tuesday's court filing amounted to a "de facto injunction" that will "give the judge a chance to rule on the merits of the case before irreparable harm is done."

In February, President Trump declared a national emergency at the southern border, where he said a growing security and humanitarian crisis required immediate action on his promised wall.

Since then, the center and other groups have sued the administration for waiving environmental laws and diverting Pentagon funds to rush wall construction through protected areas.

Arizona is slated to receive approximately 68 miles of new barrier, much of it so-called bollard-style fencing made from closely spaced metal poles up to 30 feet tall.

Tuesday's court filing details the government's plans, which include replacing roughly 45 miles of existing barriers with 30-foot-tall bollard fencing in parts of Organ Pipe and Cabeza Prieta.

Most of the work will be delayed for 45 days, though the government does plan to start replacing a 2-mile stretch of existing barrier next week on National Park Service land in Organ Pipe, near the Lukeville port of entry.

The government also plans to fill a gap in the existing border fence and build a bridge over the San Pedro River, though the designs and contract for that work have not been finished.

Construction there is not expected to start until early October or later, according to Tuesday's filing.

Jean Su, an attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, said such details about the government's plans were not made public until the center and other groups filed suit.

"It's ridiculous that it took legal action from us to get accurate information from the government about its plans to bulldoze the borderlands," Su said in a written statement Wednesday. "But this kind of secrecy is the disturbing result of waiving dozens of environmental laws, including those requiring public notice."