

By: Marquez

H.R. No. 306

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The Castner Range in El Paso is one of the most
2 rugged and pristine landscapes in Texas, encompassing 7,000 acres
3 of undeveloped desert and foothills; and

4 WHEREAS, The land was previously known as the Castner Range
5 Complex at Fort Bliss and was used as a United States Army artillery
6 range, but the Department of Defense ceased operations there in
7 1971; unexploded ordnance remained behind, rendering the land
8 unsuitable for development, and under the stewardship of the army,
9 it has been allowed to rest in its natural state; and

10 WHEREAS, Since 1995, the army has been clearing old artillery
11 rounds from the surface of the land; surface clearance, as opposed
12 to subsurface clearance, was found to offer the best
13 risk-reduction-to-cost ratio and is most compatible with a
14 minimal-disturbance future land use, such as passive recreation on
15 protected parkland; and

16 WHEREAS, Although the Castner Range is off-limits to the
17 public, El Pasoans have long cherished the area for its surpassing
18 beauty; bordering Franklin Mountains State Park on the west, the
19 range contains some of the most geologically complex and visually
20 striking parts of the Franklins and is prized for its Mexican gold
21 poppy, which carpets the lower slopes in brilliant color in the
22 spring; and

23 WHEREAS, Also remarkable for its biodiversity, Castner Range
24 provides a number of distinctive animal habitats, and its unique

1 soils and location combine to make this the only known site in Texas
2 where several rare plants can be found; moreover, the range holds
3 the greatest concentration of springs in the Franklins, supporting
4 unexpectedly lush pockets of vegetation; and

5 WHEREAS, Castner Range is further distinguished by military
6 history and archaeological sites, among them the Fusselman Canyon
7 Petroglyph Site and the White Rock Shelter; and

8 WHEREAS, In 1981, the Texas Legislature provided for the
9 adjustment of the boundaries of Franklin Mountains State Park in
10 anticipation of the future addition of Castner Range lands, an idea
11 strongly favored by area residents; both the El Paso City Council
12 and the El Paso County Commissioners Court unanimously passed
13 resolutions in recent years advocating that the Castner Range be
14 left undeveloped and be conserved for recreational use;
15 furthermore, the Franklin Mountains State Park management plan
16 takes the range into account, envisioning a network of trails in the
17 canyons and lower elevations, and the U.S. Department of Defense
18 recently made a \$300,000 grant to the Frontera Land Alliance to
19 collect data concerning a conservation conveyance for the area; and

20 WHEREAS, The Castner Range is one of the Lone Star State's
21 unequalled treasures, and its conservation will provide enormous
22 benefits to future generations of Texans; now, therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas
24 Legislature hereby express its support for the conservation of
25 Castner Range; and, be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the chief clerk of the Texas House of
27 Representatives forward official copies of this resolution to the

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1 president of the United States, to the commanding general of Fort
2 Bliss, to the secretary of the U.S. Department of Defense, to the
3 president of the Senate and the speaker of the House of
4 Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the
5 members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that
6 this resolution be entered in the Congressional Record as a
7 memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.