

[GROUPS]

November XX, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Senator,

On behalf of millions of supporters and members around the country, we are writing to express our strong support of the inclusion of the following three important public lands protections in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. First, we ask that you fully protect the Desert National Wildlife Refuge by not expanding the Air Force's Nevada Test and Training Range. Second, we ask that you protect irreplaceable public lands like Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge and ancestral tribal lands in central Nevada by not expanding the Navy's Fallon Range Training Complex. Finally, we request that you include the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act (H.R. 1373). The protection of these outstanding and irreplaceable areas will further the goal of protecting 30 percent of our lands by 2030, a critical strategy in averting both the climate crisis and extinction crisis.

Nevada Test and Training Range and the Desert National Wildlife Refuge

We oppose the United States Air Force's expansion of the Nevada Test and Training Range, which would give control of approximately 850,000 acres of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge to the Air Force. The Desert National Wildlife Refuge is the largest wildlife refuge in the contiguous United States. The refuge's 1.6 million acres provide important Mojave Desert habitat for the iconic desert bighorn sheep and hundreds of other bird, mammal, reptile, and fish species.

In addition, the Nevada state legislature overwhelmingly passed a resolution opposing any Air Force takeover of the Refuge —as did the Moapa Band of Paiutes and the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada.

We support Representative Horsford's amendment to the NDAA and the clean 20 or 25-year renewal for the existing Nevada Test and Training Range, as is currently found in the Senate and House passed NDAA.

Fallon Range Training Complex and the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge

We oppose the United States Navy's proposed expansion of the Fallon Range Training Complex. The Navy has requested full or partial control of over 600,000 acres of public land in order to expand the bombing ranges and extend their capabilities across a huge swath of the central Great Basin Desert. This expansion of military activities would be accompanied by a lowering of the supersonic flight floor to 11,000 feet – approximately one-third of the current elevation, increasing the disturbance of these uses of airspace on both people and wildlife, including the

Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, as the expanded bombing range would be right next to the Refuge boundary.

In addition, on October 7, 2020, the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe issued the following statement:

The Tribe has long opposed expansion, because it would allow bombing on our ancestral lands and deprive the Tribe of access to areas that are essential to its culture and way of life... [W]e have the most to lose from expansion and remain deeply concerned that any benefits of the proposal come at the Tribe's expense. This is fundamentally unjust.

We stand with the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe and we support a clean 20 or 25-year renewal for the existing Fallon Range Training Complex, as is currently found in the Senate and House passed NDAA.

Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act

Included in the House NDAA via an amendment, the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act (H.R. 1373) would protect approximately one million acres of public lands around Grand Canyon National Park by making permanent the current 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal, which protects the watershed from new mining. Tribal nations—including the Havasupai Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, and Hopi Tribe, and the Navajo Nation—business owners, recreationalists, local government leaders, conservation organizations, and sportsmen's groups, proudly stand together to oppose uranium mining in the region.

With regards to the economic and national security perspective of uranium mining, the U.S. has access to enough already-mined uranium to meet its defense needs, supply its electrical grid, and insulate itself from disruptions in the supply chain. The Grand Canyon holds less than one percent of known, unmined uranium reserves in the country. And lastly, the mining contamination would risk the thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars that the Grand Canyon brings to gateway communities.

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We ask that the NDAA transition away from unnecessarily expanding military bases onto our public lands and towards recognizing that protecting 30 percent of our lands by 2030, will actually result in more global stability by protecting life on our planet. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to oppose military base expansion in Nevada and to protect the lands around Grand Canyon National Park.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity