

## Comments in response to the Navy's final EIS on Fallon expansion

- The Navy has ignored the overwhelming opposition to their expansion expressed in the form of public comments on the draft EIS. They have shrugged off the many valid concerns we have about the environmental impacts of tripling the size of the training range. The so-called mitigation the Navy has offered doesn't come anywhere close to making the public whole. I hope our Congressional delegation listens much more intently to our concerns than the Navy did.
- Instead of trying to eliminate 74,700 acres of high-quality wilderness study areas or WSAs the military should recommend that all of the WSAs surrounding their proposed expansions be fully designated as Wilderness. These Wilderness areas would serve as excellent development buffers for the military while still allowing for protecting wildlife habitat and recreation.
- The entire Stillwater Range, from Highway 50 to the Pershing County line, including the Wilderness Study Areas, has been identified as having extremely important cultural resources, wildlife habitat and recreational value and needs to be protected. Fox Peak in particular is rich in cultural, historic, religious and scenic values important to Native Americans, dating back 12,000 years to ancient Lake Lahontan. The Stillwater Range is a popular year-round hiking area and provides for scenic backcountry touring. For all of these reasons, Congress should help to preserve, not destroy, this whole area.
- Together, the landscapes targeted by the military's expansion make up an ecologically rich and vast complex of public lands for wildlife and outdoor recreation. The expansion could irreparably destroy wilderness qualities in the Dixie Valley training area. It would shut off public access to huge chunks of land to the south near Gabbs currently used for all sorts of recreation, including hiking, hunting, camping, rockhounding, academic research and much more. The expansion will harm wildlife habitat. Congress should come up with a more reasonable proposal that preserves the resources we value in Nevada.
- The Navy has said that it will avoid bombing or otherwise destroying ancient cultural resources and sensitive wildlife habitat "to the greatest extent possible" while still meeting their training objectives. We all know what that means and it is simply not good enough. I hope that Congress will make sure the Navy does much better than "to the greatest extent possible."

- The military's plan could threaten the geologic and archeologic resources from the ancient days of Lake Lahontan dating back to the Pleistocene period. Pluvial formations can still be found as well as fossil evidence of the wildlife and plant life unique to the Great Basin from that period. The interconnectivity of the marshlands and mountain ranges is a natural resource rich in habitat, cultural and scenic values.
- The Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge is such a special place and a critically important stop for migratory birds. If you've ever been there during migration season, you can't help but be awestruck at the sheer number and variety of birds. Their different calls and the sound of their wings are sounds you just don't get to hear anywhere else. That experience will change dramatically if the Navy gets everything they want. I hope our members of Congress will come up with a more reasonable proposal that protects this amazing place and the unique experience of visiting it.
- The military should not expand into the Fallon National Wildlife Refuge. They are proposing to eliminate 3,200 acres of the refuge and close it to the public. This is not acceptable.
- It's hard to imagine the impacts of losing another 600,000 acres of our public land to a military facility. According to news accounts, that's more than 1,000 square miles, an area half the size of Delaware. Yes, we have a lot of public land in Nevada – PUBLIC land. No one would argue that our military shouldn't be well-trained, but this is a tremendous over-reach on the part of the military. A thousand square miles that would no longer be accessible to all of us like it is now. It's just too much. I hope our elected representatives recognize the military's plan goes too far. There has to be a better way.
- The Navy says that parts of the expansion into the Dixie Valley Training Area would remain open to the public for SOME uses and FOR NOW. There is no guarantee that this beautiful area popular for its scenic and recreational values will remain open. Congress should make sure that it does.
- The Navy wants the public to believe that taking another 600,000 acres of public land for their bombing and training range will have no significant environmental impact. That defies logic. At the very least, it will impact the high quality sage grouse habitat in the area. The Navy says they'll "study" that but does anybody really believe that the Navy will change what it does. We have a responsibility to protect Nevada's amazing wildlife and their habitat. I hope we'll take that responsibility seriously.
- Desert Bighorn sheep were successfully reintroduced in the Stillwater Range about 35 years ago at public expense. They were native to the area but had been wiped

out by poaching and diseases spread by domestic sheep. They're sensitive to their environment. If they don't thrive, they're in danger of decline and elimination once again. It's hard to imagine that any of our precious wildlife will thrive under Navy control and the constant bombardment of sonic booms, simulated warfare, and other highly invasive training activities.

- Given how easily wildfires have started with a warming climate, we are very concerned with military operations starting fires that could sweep through our homes, ranches and public lands. We know from tragic experience how fast and furious a wildfire can destroy an entire landscape, especially in such a dry place as Nevada. This threat becomes even more frightening if the military gets another thousand square miles of our public land. Congress does not adequately fund wildfire prevention. They have to rob the fund to pay for fighting fires. This only make a very bad problem much worse. The Navy needs to take full responsibility for all the resources needed to fight wildfire.
- The military is proposing to move Highway 361 to Gabbs to the east of its current location, taking a safe, relatively flat highway through the valley and pushing it up into the mountains creating a very expensive and potentially more dangerous highway for truck and passenger travel. That seems unnecessary and a big expense to the taxpayers. Highway construction would negatively impact wildlife habitat.
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