

January 24, 2022

Dear Members of the Nevada Delegation:

On behalf of millions of members and supporters in Nevada and across the nation, we wish to express our sincere appreciation for your leadership to protect the Desert National Wildlife Refuge in first session of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

As you know, President Biden signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (NDAA) into law earlier this month. Thank you for your work to ensure Desert Refuge remains a crown jewel in Nevada and the National Wildlife Refuge System. By passing a clean NDAA, you helped safeguard iconic wildlife species like the Desert bighorn sheep and Mojave Desert tortoise. Additionally, thousands of Nevadans and tourists from around the world can continue to reconnect with nature and explore the wild spaces within the refuge.

For several years, the Department of Defense has sought to expand jurisdiction and increase land disturbing training activities within the refuge boundaries. As the largest refuge in the contiguous United States, these changes would threaten Desert Refuge's unequalled cultural and biological resources and the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System as a whole. It is also important to note Nevadans overwhelmingly oppose this extreme land grab.<sup>1</sup>

The Southern Paiute or Nuwu people consider the mountains of Southern Nevada to be of the utmost cultural and religious significance; the imperiled bighorn sheep of the region are central to the people's traditional stories, culture, and beliefs. Notably, the Moapa Band of Paiutes, Las Vegas Band of Paiutes, and Chemehuevi Paiute Tribe, all passed resolutions opposing the expansion of the Nevada Test and Training Range, specifically citing their belief that the proposal will decrease their access and cause further damage to cultural sites.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service first recommended wilderness designation for approximately 1.4 million acres of the refuge in 1974 and has managed them as *de facto* wilderness ever since.<sup>3</sup> These remarkable, intact habitats retain their wilderness character today and provide a safe haven for bighorn sheep and other sensitive and imperiled species. These exceptional wildlands must be permanently protected for future generations.

Thank you for keeping the takeover of Desert Refuge lands out of NDAA this past year. We look forward to working with you and your staff to protect the refuge once again during 2022 and in the next NDAA cycle.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Nevada State Legislature, Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2 (2019) (passing by a vote of 58-3): "That the members of the 80th Session of the Nevada Legislature hereby urge Congress to reject any proposal by the United States Air Force to expand its use of land or exercise of jurisdiction within the Desert National Wildlife Refuge."

<sup>2</sup> Moapa Band of Paiutes, Tribal Resolution M-18-03-07, "Oppose Department of Defense Increased Use and Expansion of the Nevada Test and Training Range in the Desert National Wildlife Refuge" (2018).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *About Desert Refuge*, <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Desert/about.html>

Battle Born Progress  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn  
Friends of Nevada Wilderness  
National Wildlife Federation  
National Wildlife Refuge Association  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nevada Conservation League  
Nevada Wildlife Federation  
Nuwu Art  
The Sierra Club  
The Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter  
The Wilderness Society  
Wild Sheep Foundation