

## One View: Proposed military base expansion threatens 800K acres

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(Photo: Provided to the RGJ)

The military already controls and restricts access to over three million acres of land in Nevada, and now they are proposing to close access to 800,000 more acres of public land in the state. These public lands are currently open to everyone for uses including camping, hunting, OHV recreation and wildlife viewing. Under new proposals, the lands would be closed to the public and used for live-fire military training.

The current proposals are from the Fallon Naval Air Base, which wants to close off 604,789 acres of public land and purchase 65,160 acres of private land. The Nellis Test and Training Range, near Beatty, proposes to take over to 301,507 acres of public land, including 278,000 acres of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. At both bases, the “withdrawn” land would be closed to the public and used for live-fire training, including bombing from

fighter jets and drone missile strikes.

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The current proposals are from the Fallon Naval Air Base, which wants to close off 604,789 acres of public land and purchase 65,160 acres of private land. (Photo: Marilyn Newton)

Once public access is taken away, the military will not give it back any time soon. Unexploded ordinance and cleanup could prevent lands from opening back up for decades or longer, even if the bases closed in the distant future. Closing off access to our public lands is a bad idea, whether you value public lands for recreation and hunting, or you simply dislike government overreach in Nevada.

The base expansions will also be bad for wildlife. The Desert National Wildlife Refuge was created to protect desert bighorn sheep. About 600 bighorn sheep currently live in the refuge — one of the healthiest populations anywhere in the world. Desert bighorns also were successfully reintroduced to the Stillwater Range and the Clan Alpine Mountains Wilderness Study Areas, part of the proposed Fallon base expansion. Bighorns are known to be extremely sensitive to human disturbance — how will the bighorns fare with the disturbance from drone strikes' exploding missiles?

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A herd of desert bighorn sheep stand near Sand Springs, just east of Fallon, in the summer of 2011. (Photo: Tim Torell/Special to the RGJ)

The bases say they need to expand onto our public lands, so they can use more space for training. The Fallon base argues it has the right to expand because it has not done so since the 1990s. This implies we will forever be expected to give up more and more of our hunting areas, our wildlife refuges and our wildlands to the military. If the current three million acres in Nevada controlled by the military aren't enough, what will be?

Whatever your opinion about this issue, I urge you to express it during upcoming public comment periods and public scoping meetings that will be held in 2017. More information on the Fallon base expansion is at <https://frtmodernization.com/> (<https://frtmodernization.com/>) and the Nellis base expansion at <http://www.ntrleis.com/index.aspx> (<http://www.ntrleis.com/index.aspx>).

I, for one, will be recommending our public lands continue to be public, accessible and wild.

*Ryan Carle was born and raised in the eastern sierra and is a long-time supporter of our public lands.*

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