



FRIENDS of NEVADA WILDERNESS

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Friends of Nevada Wilderness Responds to Introduction of DNWR and NTTR Withdrawal and Management Act

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December 20, 2019 – “We are so grateful for Senator Catherine Cortez Masto’s leadership in introducing a bill that pushes back on the military’s proposal to take over huge chunks of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge,” said Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director of Friends of Nevada Wilderness.

“Much of the Desert Refuge has been proposed as Wilderness since the 1970’s and this bill would make that designation formal,” Netherton continued. “We believe that Wilderness designation, the highest land protection in our country, will keep the military from making future grabs of the Refuge. This wildlife refuge has given enough for national defense.

While we would have preferred to see no additional lands within the Desert Refuge given to the military, we understand that Senator Cortez Masto is working to solve a complicated and difficult issue pitting a National Wildlife Refuge with national defense. We look forward to continue working with the Senator on language that strengthens wildlife conservation on the Desert Refuge. The fact that Senator Jacky Rosen is a cosponsor and our Nevada delegation is supportive tells us that Nevadans’ voices were clearly heard on this issue. We thank our representatives in the House and the Senate for supporting protection of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and pushing back against the military overreach into this wild landscape.”

Many groups and individuals, nationally, regionally and locally came together in recent years to protect the Desert National Wildlife Refuge from military take-over. Hundreds of concerned Nevadans spoke up at public meetings against the expansion and nearly 30,000 public comments were submitted in opposition to the military’s proposal. Earlier this year, the Nevada Legislature in a bipartisan vote sent Congress a resolution (AJR2) strongly opposing the military’s proposed expansion. The battle extended beyond the state’s borders as national organizations recognized the tremendous threat to nationally significant wildlife habitat posed by a military take-over. *(See the attached quote sheet.)*

Overall, the Act would grant the U.S. Air Force less than one third of the public land they had asked to take over to expand the Nellis Test and Training Range north of Las Vegas and would ensure continued public access to recreation along the Alamo Road and in the entirety of the Sheep Range. It would deny the military its request for primary jurisdiction over all of the Refuge they currently co-manage with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, provide for greater transparency and public input on management issues, and would require that Congress review the military operation on public lands in 20 years rather than the permanent withdrawal the military had requested.

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Additional quotes and contacts:

"We are grateful that Senator Cortez Masto has taken a stand to protect this magnificent landscape. The Desert National Wildlife Refuge is a treasure that should be preserved for generations to come. It's simply too important to be turned into a bombing range." – Paul Spitler, Director of Wilderness Policy, The Wilderness Society/The Wilderness Society Action Fund
Contact: paul_spitler@twsw.org

"We applaud Senator Cortez Masto for leading the way to permanently protect Nevada's Desert National Wildlife Refuge from overreaching and extreme proposed military expansion. This agreement will preserve public access to the Refuge, conserve the ecosystem upon which critical species like the bighorn sheep thrive, and honor the connection Paiute communities have with this land -- all the while balancing our national security needs. Senator Cortez Masto has once again demonstrated that Nevadans can count on her to champion our public lands and environment. We're excited to work with our partners and key stakeholders to move this bill through Congress and cement the Refuge's protection for years to come." - Andy Maggi, Executive Director, Nevada Conservation League
Contact: andymaggi@nevadaconservationleague.org

We appreciate Senator Cortez Masto for listening to the majority of Nevadans — from Native American Tribes to rural counties, sportsmen to wildlife enthusiasts. The people have been clear in their desire to see Desert National Wildlife Refuge protected, not bombed. By stopping military overreach, maintaining the Fish & Wildlife Service's authority, while designating the largest wilderness in Nevada history, this bill does just that. We look forward to working with Nevada's congressional delegation and other stakeholders to ensure this bill makes the protection of wildlife, their habitats, and the area's cultural heritage the primary focus of all Desert Refuge lands." ~ Brian Beffort, Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter Director.
Contact: brian.beffort@sierraclub.org

"The bill introduced today by Senator Cortez Masto is the largest Wilderness bill in Nevada history. We want to thank Senator Cortez Masto for her leadership, and look forward to working with her on making this the largest conservation bill ever passed in Nevada." – Brian Sybert, Conservation Lands Foundation
Contact: Jocelyn Torres at jocelyn@conservationlands.org

"As a military veteran who served in Iraq, I have witnessed first-hand the devastation the military can afflict on communities. The last thing I want to see is our common lands plundered and our public lands torn apart to use them for bombs and missile training. The military's expansive appetite for land and resources is unparalleled and surpasses our next 7 allied countries combined, and should be noted, already has access to millions of acres in Nevada. I am glad to see that this bill restricts military expansion, protects the vital wildlife habitat of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, archeological sites, and important cultural history of the Refuge and is a bold step forward in safeguarding our country's natural heritage." - Garrett Reppenhagen, Executive Director of Veterans For Peace, US Army Iraq veteran.
Contact: reppenhagen@veteransforpeace.org

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“The Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition is excited to lend our support to this Act and thank Senator Cortez Masto for taking the lead and working with the entire Nevada Delegation to craft this legislation. This Act is a demonstration of bipartisan support for the Refuge and it addresses many major concerns the outdoor recreation industry had with the original plan proposed by the Air Force.” – Tom Clark, member, Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition

Contact: tom@tomclarksolutions.com

“This bold step taken by Senator Cortez Masto to protect the Desert National Wildlife Refuge ensures that one of Nevada’s most incredible natural wonders will be protected for now and for future generations. Residents and visitors alike can continue to enjoy the vast wildlife habitat, unique landscapes and important cultural history of the Refuge. Connecting more people to the Refuge is good for our community and good for the businesses that support Nevada’s amazing outdoor experiences.” - Mauricia Baca, Executive Director, Get Outdoors Nevada
Contact: mbaca@getoutdoorsnevada.org

DNWR Background

The Desert National Wildlife Refuge, on the northern boundary of the Las Vegas Valley, is the largest in the lower 48 states. President Franklin Roosevelt established the 2.25 million acre Desert Game Range (now the Refuge) in 1936 to provide habitat for wildlife species, particularly the desert bighorn sheep. In 1974, as part of a Wilderness review required by the Wilderness Act of 1964, 1.4 million acres of the Refuge were proposed as Wilderness by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These acres have been managed as Wilderness since that time. The Act would grant permanent Wilderness designation on 1.32 million acres. In the 1940's, the military gained joint administration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the western half of the Refuge.

About Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Founded in 1984, Friends of Nevada Wilderness has helped protect over 3.4 million acres of Nevada’s wild lands by leading efforts in the expansion or designation of all 70 Wilderness areas in the state. Over the past twenty years, the Wilderness Stewardship Volunteer Program has generated over \$2 million of in-kind services to benefit Nevada’s public lands. For more information, visit <http://www.nevadawilderness.org/>.

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The Desert National Wildlife Refuge in southern Nevada
Photo by Kurt Kuznicki



The Desert National Wildlife Refuge in southern Nevada
Photo by Jose Witt