

Las Vegas Paiute Tribe



Chris Spotted Eagle
Tribal Chairman

Nevada State Senate

Re: Las Vegas Paiute Tribe Comment Letter

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this correspondence as comments from the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe ("LVPT") in support of the Nevada State Senate Joint Resolution 3(SJR3), a resolution by the state of Nevada opposing the US Air Force Expansion of the Nevada Test and Training Range into the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. In commenting, please note that LVPT ancestors, for close to a millenium, have lived, traveled, hunted, worshiped, and otherwise used the land which the Air Force now wants to use for flight training, munitions testing, and simulated ground combat. LVPT is deeply concerned about these proposed uses of the land.

As you can appreciate, western expansion by Europeans and others greatly reduced the ability of Southern Paiutes to use the expansive lands they considered their homeland. The creation of reservations reduced even more the Tribes' ability to use the land for travel and food. The LVPT's initial reservation was created in what is now close to downtown Las Vegas, and the acreage taken into trust for the Tribe in 1983 lies in the Las Vegas Valley, with no Tribal rights to the mountains they so often used for sustenance and respite from the brutal Las Vegas summers. LVPT considers the Southern Nevada mountains as sacred. Tribal members stay connected to their culture, religion, and sense of who they are by accessing public lands outside of their existing reservation. Reduction of that access through the Air Force's proposed use greatly affects sacred landscapes.

Already, the Tribe's quiet enjoyment of its land is affected by flyovers and munitions training. This is especially true during the "Red Flag" training that occurs annually. During these flyovers and trainings, Tribal members are subjected to constant loud noise and disturbance. The Tribe fears that increasing the already existing impacts will damage the Tribe further.

Additionally, the Air Force's preferred alternative for the Nevada Test and Training Range, if approved by Congress, would eliminate wilderness protections from nearly 1 million acres of land within the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, which would increase the threats to the survival of the Desert Bighorn Sheep, desert tortoise and other imperiled wildlife, further restrict access

to areas of historical, cultural, spiritual and recreational significance to not only LVPT, but other Tribes that regard this area as culturally significant. In addition, this expansion would degrade the ability of future Congresses to exercise meaningful oversight of the Air Force's discharge of its environmental responsibilities within the Refuge.

Further, an additional 227,000 acres that the United States Air Force also proposes to add to the Nevada Test and Training Range, and whose incorporation it designates as "Alternative 3C," includes portions of the Sheep Range, which the Nevada Department of Wildlife describes as the "heart of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge" whose importance to "wildlife resources and public access cannot be overstated."

The Nevada Department of Wildlife states the Desert National Wildlife Refuge protects irreplaceable habitat for one of the largest populations of desert bighorn sheep in Nevada. The expansion would also reduce their seasonal migration routes that are dependent upon cross valley movements from one mountain range to the other. Other wildlife that will be impacted include: 320 bird species (including the Golden Eagle, Roadrunner, and Pygmy Owl) 53 mammal species (including the desert bighorn sheep and kit fox) 35 reptile species (including the desert tortoise) 4 amphibian species, and nearly 500 plant species.

Accordingly, LVPT rejects any proposal by the United States Air Force to expand its use of land or exercise of jurisdiction within the Desert National Wildlife Refuge beyond that which it currently possesses and to limit any proposal to extend the Air Force's authority over the Nevada Test and Training Range to not more than 20 years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Spotted Eagle". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "S".

Chris Spotted Eagle
Tribal Chairman