



Office of Mayor Mark S. Nexsen

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April 20, 2016

Ms. Linda Miller  
Refuge Manager - Havasu NWR  
317 Mesquite Avenue  
Needles, California 92363

EMAIL: [linda\\_1\\_miller@fws.gov](mailto:linda_1_miller@fws.gov)

Re: Havasu National Wildlife Refuge

Dear Ms. Miller:

The lands and resources owned by the American people and managed as the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) are important, and the activities supported by this Refuge are integral to the regional economy. Lake Havasu City has enjoyed a positive working relationship with Refuge personnel since the early 1990s and we look forward to working with you and others on future initiatives to achieve mutual goals.

We agree with recent statements made by Refuge personnel that it is important to solicit input from the public whenever Refuge personnel entertain changes management. The restrictions on motorized boats being contemplated by your office will have detrimental effects on recreational boaters using Lake Havasu. Also, affected are the many businesses that depend on the river as a thoroughfare between Lake Havasu and all destinations to the north, and vice versa. Citizens of and visitors to Lake Havasu City will be most affected by the proposed management changes if adopted. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this dialog and we will be providing formal comments as part of your public process.

To truly benefit from public input, it is important to provide a more robust opportunity for involvement than what you currently propose. We strongly request the Fish and Wildlife Service grant an immediate 60 day extension for public comments and add an additional public meeting conducted in Lake Havasu City. We are eager to work with you to schedule a facility to accommodate the meeting.

We have seen virtually no documentation to date justifying additional restrictions on recreational boaters in the Refuge. Should these restrictions be approved, the citizens and visitors of our community will be adversely affected and our local economy will be damaged. Obviously, we want to be part of any solution that may need to be adopted to protect the public's safety and sensitive wildlife habitat but we need the time and opportunity to do so.

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The proposed Refuge management changes targeted a boating constituency that has been enjoying the Refuge for decades and have demonstrated that their preferred recreational activity is compatible with the Refuge and its mission. A valid study requires significant analysis of the socio-economic impact upon our region and recognized stakeholders. To our knowledge, this has not been done. What began as temporary holiday restrictions in April of 2015 has now grown into a plan for widespread closures and restrictions of areas commonly used for exploration, transportation, and overall enjoyment by our boating public.

These stakeholders to the Refuge, as do we, have several concerns and questions which must be addressed prior to management changes being finalized.

For example:

1. What is the reason for the permanent expanded closures?
2. What objective analysis, data, and statistics do you have to support proposed change?
3. What alternatives were considered? Partial, seasonal, or holiday closures?
4. If the result of your "decision" forces *alleged* unsafe boating practices to go elsewhere, what is the safety effect at that new location and how does that serve the public interest?
5. What calculations for economic harm to the surrounding communities were considered to balance against your call for "boating safety"?
6. If the true cause of the "Compatibility Determination Study" is to provide areas for alternative recreation uses to which power boats are inimical, were other lake areas south of Lake Havasu considered?
7. What is your record of consultation?

Some in our community feel that you are now using this "Compatibility Determination Study" to carry out closures that were once temporary but now are something else - almost an environmental ambush in its haste and low public profile. There is room for compromise and cooperation but we see little possibility, so far, to nurture that. The original cause for the April 2015 closure was human safety. Now, more pervasive than ever, the cause mutated, without discussion or analysis, into protection of the resource and a "preference" by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for other forms of recreation. When did this "preference" emerge in the process and how is it related to the establishment of the Refuge? It certainly received no discussion with us and other stakeholders and was not clearly indicated in the 2015 closures.

We agree that the river and the lake are unique and irreplaceable resources, especially to the human communities that live on their edges. Every small business and publicly funded effort in Lake Havasu City benefits from its relationship with the lake and with the government entities responsible for managing this amazing asset. For many years to come our residents will be repaying the hundreds of millions of dollars it took to install a new citywide sewer system installed to protect water quality in Lake Havasu and the Lower Colorado River. We are second to none in our concern for the resource, but we must have reasonable consultation with you before any change in your Refuge management plan which affects our citizens, the visiting public, and our local and regional economy.

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We hope that you will give positive consideration to our request for an extension to the public comment period along with our offer to work with you to accommodate a public meeting in Lake Havasu City. We believe these actions will help ensure that management decisions being made by Refuge officials will benefit from public input. Thanks again for this opportunity, and please contact me at 928-453-4152 or [nexsenm@lhcaz.gov](mailto:nexsenm@lhcaz.gov) if you have any questions regarding this correspondence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark S. Nexsen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark S. Nexsen  
Mayor, Lake Havasu City

cc: Senator John McCain  
Senator Jeff Flake  
Congressman Paul Gosar  
Dan Ashe; Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service