



New Mexico Audubon Council

Representing Four Local Chapters of the National Audubon Society in New Mexico, Conserving and restoring natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity

January 3, 2020

Holloman Airspace EIS
501 Butler Farm Rd, Suite H
Hampton, VA 23666

Submitted electronically through:

<http://www.hollomanafbairspaceeis.com/Comments.aspx>

The New Mexico Audubon Council, represents over 6,000 members in New Mexico and is very concerned about the future of natural habitats in New Mexico. Our members birdwatch and recreate in many of the natural areas of New Mexico, including the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas, the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument and adjacent National Forest and BLM areas. We are particularly concerned about the habitat these areas provide for birds and other wildlife.

We are writing to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Holloman Air Force Base proposal to expand F-16 training airspace over southern New Mexico.

The role that Holloman Air Force base plays in our national security cannot be understated. The men and women stationed at Holloman are some of the nation's most courageous, and they are deserving of our respect. However, Holloman's proposed airspace expansion would unnecessarily threaten some of New Mexico's most cherished public lands and wild places.

We oppose Alternatives 2 and 3 because of their potential to damage our quality of life, health and local economies. These alternatives threaten our quality of life, health and local economies by putting our communities, public lands, watersheds and wildlife at risk from extreme noise, wildfire and environmental contamination.

Extreme noise from training operations will disturb the peace and quiet of rural communities and national forests, monuments, and wilderness areas, affecting our retiree, tourism and outdoor recreation economies. Extreme noise has also been shown to disrupt breeding behavior in many species of migratory birds, including a number of threatened and endangered species that are found in the proposed expansion area. Noise from over-flights will also startle non-avian wildlife disrupting breeding and feeding behaviors.

Dropping of flares will increase wildfire risk in an area that's already vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire and lacks adequate resources and access for firefighting. The use of chaff will pollute our environment and potentially affect public health.

The future of Holloman Air Force Base is not at risk, since the DEIS itself states that the current airspace is already adequate. We must not sacrifice the historically rich, culturally important and exceptionally beautiful Gila Wilderness — the first wilderness area ever designated in the

United States — or any other tranquil places in southwestern New Mexico that are critical to state and local economies.

The Air Force acknowledges that Alternative 1 (expansion and reconfiguration of the Talon military operation area east of Alamogordo) meets its future training needs with the fewest risks and impacts. We urge you to select Alternative 1.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proposal. Please keep us informed of future opportunities to review and comment of the process as it goes forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas Jarvis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a vertical stroke at the end.

Thomas Jarvis, Ph.D., President
New Mexico Audubon Council
109 Daybreak
Santa Fe, NM 87507
Jervidae@cybermesa.com
505-988-1708