

Mesilla Valley Audubon Society
12/12/2019

To: Tom Jervis, president, NM Audubon Council

From: Sid Webb, Mesilla Valley Audubon board member o/b/o the MVAS board

Date: December 12, 2019

Re: **Time sensitive:** F-16 training missions out of Holloman Air Force Base (Alamogordo)

The U.S. Air Force held a public hearing in Las Cruces (among other towns) on proposals regarding changes in flight training for F-16 aircraft at Holloman AFB. They plan to expand the airspace used for training new pilots.

They proposed three options, which would expand the airspace to include much of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness area to the west and/or expand airspace currently used in the Sacramento National Forest and other points south and east.

After describing the three proposals, public comment was invited.

The meeting in Las Cruces attracted more than 100 people. Comment was limited to statements made by individuals on their own behalf or representing an organization. The Air Force will incorporate what was said into its final assessment report, but no debate was allowed at the meeting.

As it turned out, nearly all commenters articulated objections to the proposals, with no one endorsing the most expansive proposal presented at the beginning in a short film.

Objections included the noise associated with 10,000 training sorties per year, proximity to wildlife, potential for fires from flares and chaff that are routinely released, and the potential for catastrophic airplane crashes and wildfire in remote wilderness areas.

Several speakers noted we have worked so hard to protect and maintain our natural areas, and this is a threat to much that has been accomplished. The Friends of Organ Mountain Desert Peaks was especially vocal in this regard. Another point was raised by several pilots who spoke, all of them noting that expanded training would infringe on public airspace, making flights across the state more difficult.

We have just started to try to reach out to the Southwest Audubon (Silver City) to see if they have initiated any comment or action. **MVAS is willing to take the lead on this matter, but believes that this is also an issue for the NM Audubon Council and NM Audubon to comment on and would welcome guidance and collaboration on moving forward.**

This is time sensitive—**public comments are due January 31, 2020.**

We look forward to your thoughts and suggestions. **MVAS would be happy to present the issue in more detail to the Council and NM Audubon via a Zoom meeting.**

Yours,
Sid Webb
MVAS Board Member and Representative to NMAudubon Council

Cc: Jon Hayes, Executive Director of NM Audubon
Desiree Loggins, Network Action Manager, NM Audubon

References:

<https://www.lcsun-news.com/story/news/2019/12/08/new-mexico-holloman-air-force-base-f-16-fighter-military-training/2624173001/>

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