

NEWS RELEASE from *Peaceful Chiricahua Skies*

For Immediate Use 5/9/22

Comment Deadline Extended to June 3 for Air Force proposal to Increase Flights, Noise Over Southeast Arizona *Campaign informing public of negative impacts making a difference*

Portal, AZ— One effect of the thousands of letters and comments responding to the U.S. Air Force's (USAF) plan to allow low-altitude military flights with high-decibel noise levels across southern Arizona and New Mexico has been the extension of the project's comment deadline to June 3.

"There's no question that the proposal set off alarm bells among a wide range of stakeholders who will be affected by these misguided military training rules," said Karen Fasimpaur, a volunteer who helped launch the campaign called Peaceful Chiricahua Skies designed to delay and ultimately halt the proposal. The campaign has already generated more than 1,000 petition signatures calling for the withdrawal of the plan and enlisted dozens of local businesses in opposition. The peacefulchiricahuaskies.org site also provides resources and background information about the Air Force proposal.

Wynne Brown, president of the Chiricahua Regional Council, a conservation group that works to protect important intact habitats in the Chiricahuas and surrounding areas, says the extra time for comments is appreciated and critical to the Air Force's eventual determination of final rules it will accept, first in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) scheduled for release in Fall 2023 and then in a final EIS set for the following year. The DEIS document will involve extensive additional public comment. "The strong response of the Chiricahua-Peloncillo Mountain community to the obvious threats to people, wildlife, protected lands, domestic animals and the local economy has been key to this extension," Brown said.

Fasimpaur notes that the Peaceful Chiricahua Skies campaign is now focusing on renewing the push for comments and encouraging residents to report all current military flights that are nuisances, including those that fly outside of the existing boundary, which currently does not include the area around the recreation-based community of Portal.

While much of the response to the proposal has come from the community around the Portal, Arizona—Rodeo, New Mexico area, the region to be affected by the new expansion proposal represents a much larger landscape than that. According to the new training boundaries shown in proposed USAF maps, the Tombstone MOA portion of the proposal would expand to include much of eastern Cochise County, plus the entire Bootheel of New Mexico, including Douglas, Bisbee, Portal in AZ, and Rodeo and Playas in NM. Several other new MOAs (Military Operations Areas) proposed for expansion in southern Arizona and New Mexico present similar issues. See peacefulchiricahuaskies.org for more details.

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