

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

October 12, 2017

*Request for public meeting in Silver City re: military training over the Gila National Forest*

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to formally request that a public meeting be held in Silver City, New Mexico, regarding the proposal to expand military overflights out of Holloman to areas over the Gila Wilderness and Aldo Leopold Wilderness. While scoping meetings were held in Truth or Consequences, Carlsbad, and Las Cruces, there was no meeting in Silver City, which is the most populated area in the Gila and which would be most directly affected by the addition of thousands of military flights over the forest.

We became aware of this proposal only a few days ago, when a Truth or Consequences resident who attended one of the scoping meetings called contacts in Silver City. As far as we can tell, other than notification in the federal register, there was no overt attempt to engage the public in Silver City. Notification was not sent to local conservation organizations, sportsmen organizations, businesses, or the Grant County Commission, and over the last few days we have experienced an outpouring of unsolicited contacts from our members in Silver City who are deeply concerned.

The economy of Silver City and the surrounding areas is heavily dependent on people visiting the Gila from all over the world. The nation's first wilderness area, and the largest in the state, attracts visitors who want to experience its quiet places, see its archeological sites, float its rivers, see its wolves, and hunt its elk. All of these activities require a quiet forest and would be disastrously impacted by 10,000 low-elevation military flights and 30,000 flares, which can devastatingly disrupt wildlife in addition to the activities of humans. This is especially troubling given the pervasive risk of forest fires.

As you know, one of the central purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is to engage the public in agency decision-making. Agencies are required to make serious efforts to reach the members of the public who would be most interested in their proposals. The members of the public who would be most interested in the proposal would provide the most beneficial feedback to the agency, which in turn fulfills one of NEPA's other obligations: to take a "hard look" at all the potential impacts of its actions, and to determine if an alternative course is wiser.

We believe Holloman AFB has not fulfilled that obligation here, and request that it hold an additional public meeting in Silver City and extend the scoping comment period until after it occurs so that members of that community can submit their information.

Thank you for your serious attention to this matter, and please add all signatories below to the list of interested parties for this project from this point forward.

Sincerely,

Judy Calman  
Staff Attorney  
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance  
142 Truman St. NE #B-1  
Albuquerque, NM 87108  
505-843-8696  
[judy@nmwild.org](mailto:judy@nmwild.org)

*On behalf of:*