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United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

500 Gold Ave., SW
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103-1306

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R2/NWRS/060638

JUL 10 2015

The Honorable Paul A. Gosar
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gosar:

Thank you for your June 24, 2015, letter on behalf of your constituents regarding modifications to management of water skiing on Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). We recognize that many of your constituents are not in favor of the expanded closure but we were compelled to act given the increased safety risk from motorized boats to non-motorized recreational users on the Refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) recognizes the importance of public involvement in decisions regarding visitor use on the Refuge.

The decision to extend by ½ mile southward, an existing recreational motorized boating restriction to include a backwater area at the north end of Lake Havasu, was made due to increasing public safety concerns. Following a thorough review into complaints received by the Refuge from non-motorized boaters who frequent this backwater area, Refuge Management concluded that an immediate modification to the recreational boating program was warranted. Enforcing boating restrictions on this portion of the Refuge is provided for under existing Federal Regulations (50 CFR 32.22) and consistent with the jurisdictional authorities of the Service to regulate recreational activities on the Refuge. The decision to extend the motorized boating restriction was made prior to Memorial Day weekend to ensure all visitors were able to enjoy the Refuge in a safe manner during the busy holiday weekend.

Comprised of 37,515 acres along the lower Colorado River in Arizona and California, Havasu National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1941 to protect migratory bird habitat. It contains 30 river miles and encompasses 300 miles of shoreline from Needles, California to Lake Havasu City, Arizona. Backwater portions of the Refuge off of the main river provide important wildlife habitat and some of the last remaining nesting sites for the endangered Ridgway's rail.

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This fall, Refuge Management will initiate a review of the overall recreational boating program occurring on the Refuge. This will include soliciting public input from all users of the Refuge. Until then, the existing restrictions will remain in place to ensure the safety of our visiting public.

We appreciate your interest in recreational opportunities as well as ensuring the safety of all visitors utilizing the Refuge. Please contact me at 505-248-6282; or Aaron Archibeque, Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System, at 505-248-6937, if you have further questions regarding management of the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

Jay E. Nikolopoulos
ACTING Regional Director