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April 25, 2016

The Honorable Daniel Ashe
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 330
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Director Ashe:

I write to express my concern regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) efforts to severely restrict recreational boating at Havasu National Wildlife Refuge in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. On April 12, 2016, the USFWS released a "Compatibility Determination" proposing further limits on boating activities on Havasu National Wildlife Refuge. This would effectuate and expand the restrictions that were announced by USFWS on May 20, 2015. Those restrictions were "effective immediately" and lacked any input from the community.

In reaction to these proposals, I have heard from a number of Lake Havasu City stakeholders who have serious concerns about the impact these restrictions will have on many businesses throughout Lake Havasu City. They are concerned that these restrictions on recreational boating will significantly harm industries critical to the health of the regional economy.

Since the early 1990s, both visitors and the citizens of Lake Havasu City have used the land and waters managed as the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, and the many activities these public lands support are essential to the local and state economy. Boating occurs year-round on the Refuge and is host to visitors participating in sightseeing/pleasure trips, fishing, hunting, waterskiing, wakeboarding, and tubing, among others. By USFWS's own estimates, approximately between two and three million visitors vacation at Lake Havasu annually. Additionally, an average holiday weekend attracts 50,000 boaters to the area.

The regional economic impact of visitors to Lake Havasu City is substantial, and significantly contributes to the greater regional economy. According to a 2008 Arizona Office of Tourism survey on Lake Havasu City, approximately $208.5 million of regional purchases were made by out-of-region visitors, contributing to a total economic output of $252.8 million for Mohave County. This economic activity is supported by 3,766 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.

With this in mind, I request that you please provide the justification for your legal authority to implement these restrictions unilaterally. In consultation with local government officials and business owners, I ask that no decision be made final until a thorough attempt is made to understand and address the above concerns raised by local stakeholders. Please indicate your commitment to doing so and describe when those consultations will occur.

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I appreciate your prompt consideration of this request, and I ask that this matter be handled in strict accordance with all agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines.

Sincerely,

John McCain
United States Senator