



WSF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS UPDATE: National Desert Wildlife Refuge, Nevada

June 12, 2020 – The U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee this week refused a proposal to expand military use of Nevada's Desert National Wildlife Refuge.

For the past five years WSF's has been working with all stakeholders and policymakers regarding the Air Force's proposal to replace the expiring authority they currently have to train on 50% the refuge, with a permanent transfer to their authority to include 75% of the refuge – an additional 260,000 acres. Refuge lands are used by the Air Force over the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) from Nellis and Creech Air Force Bases.

"We have struggled over the last 20 years to schedule around Air Force use of the area to carry out our on the ground conservation activities in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nevada Department of Wildlife, said Peregrine Wolff, DVM, Chair of the Wild Sheep Foundation. "A transfer of authority of this magnitude would have made this problem much worse and add further difficulties for population surveys, habitat management (particularly water developments), scouting, and hunting."

This week, during a mark-up of the National Defense Authorization Act, the Senate Armed Services Committee decided not to expand the amount of land the Navy and Air Force have for their fighter and bomber pilot training. The mark-up includes a 20-year extension to the current NTTR program.

Brett Jefferson, immediate past Chair of WSF, commented, "This is extraordinary news and a testament to the effective collaborative efforts of WSF, our Chapters and Affiliates and industry conservation partners, all lead by our Legislative Affairs Coalition. If this new bill passes, it will be a win for bighorn sheep and all wildlife, but more importantly, it is a win for all the public to continue to enjoy and experience these special wildlands in the State of Nevada."

"There are still issues to be resolved at NTTR," Wolff concluded. "We must know what the Air Force actually needs, and we look forward to working with all concerned to resolve these."