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Congress of the United States
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March 22, 2016

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to include language that would prohibit funds from being used to carry out the expansion of the no wake zone outlined in the "Minor Modification to Boating Restrictions at Havasu Wildlife Refuge" news release issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service) on May 20, 2015.

As you may know, on May 20, 2015, the Service issued a News Release that established new boating restrictions and expanded the no wake zone within the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge. This order was "effective immediately" and the newly closed areas were quickly marked with regulatory buoys and signs blocking access to areas that had been utilized by recreational enthusiasts for decades. This order was implemented by the acting refuge manager without engaging local stakeholders or providing an opportunity for public comment. These arbitrary closures also became effective two days before Memorial Day Weekend, a very important tourist weekend for Lake Havasu.

I have received countless emails and letters from my constituents expressing outrage about this closure. I received so many comments on this issue that I decided to have several members from my staff visit the actual site. During this visit, they met nine-year-old Ryder Bliss, one of the people significantly harmed by this closure. Ryder is a special needs child who learned to water ski on the part of Lake Havasu that the Service shut down. This is the only place on the lake that Ryder feels safe skiing because of the high speeds at which boats travel on other parts of the lake. Because of the closure, Ryder no longer has a safe place to ski. Instead, the Service expects him to ski on the open lake where boats regularly travel around 70 miles per hour. Ryder is not alone. This same sentiment has been echoed by numerous people who have used this part of the lake to teach new skiers, children, and individuals with physical or mental disabilities who do not feel comfortable learning in the open water. By closing this area, the

Service has effectively closed the lake to these people.

Shamefully, this action was not even based on merit. It occurred because two paddle boaters that recently moved to Arizona made up lies and encouraged the agency to take this action. The agency shifted course after stating numerous times that it could not take the requested action and that if it did take any action, it would first solicit public comments. However, no public comment period ever occurred.

Given Lake Havasu's status as a premier vacation destination, this issue affects much more than just my constituents. In fact, I have been informed by my colleagues Paul Cook (R-CA) and Adam Schiff (D-CA) that they have also received complaints about this closure.

Accordingly, I ask that you include language similar to the following in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017:

"Sec. ____ . None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to carry out the expansion of the no wake zone outlined in the "Minor Modification to Boating Restrictions at Havasu Wildlife Refuge" as published in the news release issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on May 20, 2015."

I thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.", with a large, stylized initial "P" and "G".

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress