

## STATEMENT OF PEACEFUL SKIES COALITION

### LATA Delay - Reading Between the Lines

Peaceful Skies Coalition was notified on June 4, 2012 that the air force was going to delay its decision to impose a 60,000+ square mile Low Altitude Training Area (LATA) over the southern Rocky Mountains and fragile eastern plains of Colorado and New Mexico. Within an hour, the information was confirmed by two US Senate Offices, Mark Udall of Colorado and Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico.

Cannon afb released its official statement, the next day on June 5, 2012. It is clear that the air force and Congressional delegations got the message the people sent - this region is not appropriate or available for this type of training.

In a careful and no doubt, highly vetted choice of words, the public learned in a statement from the Public Affairs office at Cannon that:

\* "Emerging training requirements based on lessons learned in Afghanistan as well as training requirements identified in the 2007 "Air Force Special Operations Command Assets Beddown at Cannon AFB" Environmental Impact Statement now overlap with the need for the proposed low-altitude training."

\* "Once these requirements are fully defined, the Air Force will determine the appropriate environmental analysis, including whether it should transition to an Environmental Impact Statement. At this point, we expect to make that determination in early 2013."

\* *"The Air Force received comments from approximately 1,600 people, agencies and organizations during the Draft Environmental Assessment public comment period in late 2011 and thanks all citizens, Tribes, Pueblos, federal, local and state agencies, elected officials and private organizations for their inputs."*

[http://www.cannon.af.mil/news/story\\_print.asp?id=123304812](http://www.cannon.af.mil/news/story_print.asp?id=123304812)

This final statement by Cannon says it all. The plan was met by powerful outpouring of people insisting that this - one of the last pristine and substantially intact ecosystems left in the US - will be defended.

Many of the of the people who commented had expertise in biology, wildlife, livestock, physics, public health, economics, law, fire fighting and emergency response, pediatrics, renewable energy, ecotourism, and other fields. This wonderful pool of professional expertise pointed out Cannon's seemingly endless failures to meet even minimal NEPA requirements. Others who commented were indigenous, farmers, skiers, poets, ranchers and children, each pointing out that we are in a special place that in its very essence imparts a deep love of place that flows from generation to generation.

The public demanded that the air force be held in full compliance of the NEPA. We were not going to tolerate any violations of the law by an agency sworn to uphold that law. The public

said over and over that the air force was NOT going to be permitted to go forward, especially based on this NEPA process as led by its contractor SAIC. The LATA Environmental Assessment, now withdrawn for more analysis, failed on many levels to comply with law, regulation or well-established precedent.

An ad hoc coalition had to come together very quickly to fight the LATA. All of the region's cultures with our broad diversity had to overcome historic and current issues to focus on stopping a project that universally would harm each of us and the things we value. We succeeded because we all love this land, its precious water, and the animals and people that share in its bounty.

As Cannon tries to find a different way to bring this misguided plan back, they go forward knowing that the public has made it clear - not here! The air force already has huge amounts of existing airspace. In fact, if the public had any idea of the totality, they would be horrified at the economic and environmental costs.

"Peaceful Skies Coalition urges that the military fully comply with NEPA. Meeting this requires that the Department of Defense (DoD) study and disclose its total current baseline impact. No branch of the military has complied with this essential building block of NEPA," stated Carol Miller, President of the Peaceful Skies Coalition. "Peaceful Skies will continue to call for a comprehensive, up-to-date DoD baseline before additional NEPA projects are allowed to move forward."

Miller continued, "We are also telling our elected representatives to enact a funding ban to stop this LATA, now and the future. Link to an online letter [here](#). Our representatives cannot ignore the daily needs of New Mexicans while choosing to fund wasteful military spending."

Peaceful Skies Coalition is proud to be a part of a broad coalition of communities across the nation that are uniting to fight military base and airspace expansions.