

Fundraiser planned as Air Force awaits EA draft for flyovers

By Chandra Johnson

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The Taos Peaceful Skies Coalition plans a Valentine's Day fundraiser as Cannon Air Force Base said this week the public can expect the draft of its environmental assessment in spring.

Coalition founder Cliff Bain said in an e-mail that the "Love Our Skies" Valentine concert was scheduled for Feb. 12 at Bareiss Gallery, 7-9 p.m.

"We work to assure that Northern New Mexico, our home, never becomes a training range for the U.S. Air Force," the announcement read. "Together we will protect the land, water, wildlife and people of el norte."

Air Force Capt. Laurence van der Oord said in an email Tuesday (Jan. 18) that the draft environmental assessment of the 94,000square-mile area proposed for low-altitude training flights would be available in the spring.

"Following completion of the draft EA, there will be another public comment period to gain input on the draft document," van der Oord said. "Those comments will be used to prepare the final EA, which probably won't be complete until the late summer timeframe."

The Air Force announced that it would compile an environmental assessment of the area (including Taos County) to be used as training ground for pilots to learn low-altitude flight maneuvers.

Van der Oord emphasized in his statement that "all normal FAA regulations still apply if flying in any populated areas like Taos, Taos Pueblo or any of the other towns in the 94,000square-mile area."

For more information on training, visit cannon.af.mil and peacefulskies.org.