

NEWS

FROM THE OFFICE OF

ROBERT A. LOVINGOOD

**First District Supervisor,
County of San Bernardino**

**For information, contact
Don Holland (760) 995-8100**

www.sbcounty.gov/bosd1/

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: June 16, 2016

Cook, Lovingood hail Havasu victory

Congressman Paul Cook and San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Robert A. Lovingood hailed the withdrawal of a federal proposal that would have severely curtailed boating and other recreational activities on Lake Havasu.

The controversial regulations proposed in April by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would have prevented water-skiing, tubing, and wakeboarding within the 4,000-acre manmade Topock marsh and on an additional 520 acres of the Havasu Reservoir.

“While the recent announcement by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to withdraw the proposed recreational restrictions on Lake Havasu is promising, it doesn’t mean this issue is over,” said Rep. Paul Cook, R-Apple Valley. “We must remain vigilant and continue to make sure federal regulators hear our objections to limiting public land use.”

Nearly 3 million visitors vacation at Lake Havasu each year, spending more than \$200 million and supporting nearly 4,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

“The proposed federal regulations were a classic example of excessive governmental over-reach that would have ended wonderful recreational activities and closed businesses,” Lovingood said. “We need to bring common sense to regulatory agencies. We need to always remember government exists to serve people and that that public has a right to use its public lands – and waterways.”

In May, Lovingood and Board Chair James Ramos sent a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stating the proposed restrictions were likely to have a devastating impact on the amount of visitors to San Bernardino County’s Park Moabi on the California side of the river.

A typical holiday weekend draws nearly 50,000 boaters to the area. Some 75 percent of tourists are interested in waterskiing, wakeboarding or boating while visiting Havasu. More than 1,000 people turned out to public hearings on the proposed federal regulations.

“After reflecting on input we received at public meetings and the great numbers of letters and comments submitted, I have reached the conclusion that more communication is needed before any additional changes are introduced at Havasu National Wildlife Refuge,” said Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, Southwest Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “I have decided to withdraw the current draft CD at this time to allow for further discussions with the community and other stakeholders.”

A Memorandum of Understanding will provide the framework for ongoing dialogue with the community and interested parties.

Motorized boating is already restricted by the USF&W on 17.5 miles of waterways in the area. The proposed new rules come on the heels of a USF&W closure last year that prohibited motorized boating within the reservoir in a half mile area that had been used by recreational enthusiasts for several decades.

On May 20, 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued new motorized boating restrictions that arbitrarily expanded a no-wake zone on Lake Havasu. The restrictions were created behind closed doors, with no notice and no opportunity for public comment. Then on April 12, 2016, the Service announced additional draft regulations and the agency's intent to pursue even more restrictions on Lake Havasu. Once again, these proposed closures are based on an agenda, not science or need to close even more areas on Lake Havasu to motorized boating activities.

On Wednesday, the House Appropriations Committee passed an amendment to the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2017, which included language condemning the actions taken by the Service when proposing new boating restrictions for Lake Havasu.

-END-