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Havasu National Wildlife Refuge Announces New Refuge Manager And Renews Commitment to Community Collaboration

Arizona – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is pleased to announce Richard (Richie) Meyers as the Manager for Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Meyers will report to the Refuge in February.

An experienced manager, Meyers most recently served as Refuge Manager for Lacassine NWR in Louisiana, for seven years. He also held a key leadership role serving as Deputy Project Leader for both Hakalau NWR in Hawaii, and Hatchie NWR in Tennessee. Meyers also oversaw three refuges in Tampa Bay, Florida, as Assistant Refuge Manager at the Merritt Island NWR Complex. During his successful management career, Meyers recognized the importance of working with partners and community leaders to achieve a balance in conservation management.

“Richie’s long and vast career on national wildlife refuges and his commitment to community engagement make him the ideal Refuge Manager for Havasu,” said Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, the Service’s Southwest Regional Director. “I’m confident that his leadership skills are just what we need to take a fresh look at Refuge resource issues as we seek to establish a more collaborative relationship with the community.”

In May of 2015, the Service implemented a wake restriction on a ½ mile backwater area north of Mesquite Bay on Havasu National Wildlife Refuge. The decision was met with some degree of concern from the local community.

The Service is committed to maintaining a cooperative effort to communicate management decisions regarding public safety, conservation, recreation, and economic impacts. As a result of recent discussions with parties of the Memorandum of Understanding to Facilitate Collaborative Regional Administration of Lake Havasu, the Service has reconsidered the 2015 no-wake designation of the ½ mile backwater on Havasu NWR.

“I want to honor our commitment to the Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the community,” said Tuggle. “After careful deliberation and discussions with my staff and our partners, I have decided to reassess the ½ mile backwater currently designated as no-wake.” Tuggle

added, “I remain committed to working with the local community and partners to ensure the safety of all users and to taking a comprehensive approach to recreational uses on the Refuge that are vital to the economic and social fabric of the area. This approach will result in a more cooperative and transparent solution for this area.”

Effective February 1, 2017, the ½ mile backwater no-wake restriction designated in May 2015 will be lifted. Visitors are asked to use caution while enjoying the area and to follow existing boating regulations and applicable laws as well as exercising proper etiquette on the waters.

Havasu National Wildlife Refuge will continue to work with the community and stakeholders to engage them in the development of a draft recreational boating Compatibility Determination (CD) that balances resource conservation with recreational opportunities. The draft CD will be available for public comment within the year.

The Colorado River is a dynamic and continually changing river. Over time, backwater areas are created that alter flow and direction. Managing recreational opportunities on an ever-changing river can be challenging. The Service will continue to evaluate how to best meet and balance the needs of wildlife and Refuge visitors.

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