

Legislative Committee on Public Lands' Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas Subcommittee



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**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS' WILDERNESS AND
WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS SUBCOMMITTEE**

BULLETIN 03-14

JANUARY 2003

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ACRONYMS USED BULLETIN NO. 03-14

BDR Bill Draft Request
BLM Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of the Interior
LCB Legislative Counsel Bureau
S.C.R. Senate Concurrent Resolution
SDCNR State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
The Act The Wilderness Act of 1964
WSA(s) Wilderness Study Area(s)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS' WILDERNESS AND WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS SUBCOMMITTEE

This summary presents the recommendations approved by Nevada's Legislative Committee on Public Lands' Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas Subcommittee at its final meeting on October 7, 2002. All place names mentioned in this bulletin are in Nevada unless otherwise noted.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATION

Please note: The bill draft requests (BDRs) referenced in this document will be available at the beginning of the 2003 Legislative Session.

The Subcommittee recommends that the 72nd Session of the Nevada Legislature adopt the following resolutions:

1. Authorizing an interim study to examine the issue of wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in Nevada. The study would, in part, make formal recommendations to the Nevada Legislature, members of Nevada's Congressional Delegation, and others regarding suitable areas for formal wilderness designation by Congress. The study would also examine current policies regarding WSAs (selection, management, qualification, et cetera) and seek input from various governmental agencies, organizations, and individuals regarding wilderness topics. (BDR No. R717)
2. Urging Congress to:
 - A. Encourage the Nevada Congressional Delegation to work with all interested Nevadans, land managers, affected stakeholders, local governments, special interest organizations, and the larger American public to work together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect in pursuit of Wilderness Area designation for Nevada's public lands.
 - B. Encourage education at all levels of government and among all stakeholders to ensure facts are accurately presented when wilderness issues are debated and that proper interpretations of applicable laws are made when officials are implementing wilderness legislation.
 - C. Require development of accurate, consensus-based boundary maps for Wilderness Areas using technologies such as Geographic Information Systems.

- D. Oppose the creation of buffer zones around Wilderness Areas and instead supporting the requirement of clear and concise boundaries based on recognizable features on the ground such as roads and drainage.**
- E. Support the position that existing roads not be closed to create Wilderness Areas.**
- F. Support appropriate measures, including use of roads, to ensure elderly and disabled citizens have continued access to Wilderness Areas.**
- G. Support access to historical roads, whether documented or undocumented, to preserve access to private property.**
- H. Support “cherry stem” roads (dead-end roads extending into Wilderness Areas but excluded from designation as part of the Wilderness Area by drawing the boundaries of the Wilderness Area around and just beyond the edges of the road) to all ranching water diversions.**
- I. Support appropriately managed grazing and logging as an integral tool for reducing potential fire danger in Wilderness Areas and WSAs.**
- J. Consider future population growth and urban expansion when designating Wilderness Areas in view of the fact that Nevada is the state with the highest percentage population growth in recent years and public lands in the state are receiving increased impacts from human activity and development.**
- K. Support the Sierra Pacific Resources Centennial Plan involving the release of utility corridors within the Sunrise Mountain Instant Study Area.**
- L. Support the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Department of the Interior, recommendation for designation as a Wilderness Area of 1,865 acres of land known as Marble Canyon, located adjacent to the Mt. Moriah Wilderness Area, left out of the 1989 Nevada Wilderness Protection Act, but otherwise not creating any additional Wilderness Areas in the vicinity.**
- M. Support national and state legislation requiring explicit consideration of natural resource dependent communities in the public land use planning process for decisions that will affect private economic activity on public lands.**
- N. Hold extensive hearings in Washington, D.C., and relevant locations in Nevada prior to any changes in WSA designations or other changes for Nevada public lands.**
- O. Recommend designation of WSAs as Wilderness Areas be conducted through a collaborative process.**

P. Support precise specification of allowable activities within Wilderness Areas.

Q. Recommend ranchers' preexisting rights to access via "cherry stem" roads, grazing permits, and water permits be specifically outlined and guaranteed in Wilderness Area legislation. (BDR No. R-715)

3. Urging Congress to:

A. Support fire suppression efforts that are not confined to "minimum tool necessary" requirements and support adequate access be afforded to combat fires.

B. Oppose reinventorying Nevada lands for purposes of creating Wilderness Areas or additional WSAs.

C. Recognize the BLM surveys and recommendations were conducted in a very short time with limited staff and mapping capability compared with today's technology, and are outdated. Therefore, before acting on those recommendations, Congress should ensure more current information is included in the discussions.

D. Support adoption of a schedule for timely consideration of a plan to release lands not designated as Wilderness Areas. (BDR No. R-716)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEE ACTION

Additionally, the Subcommittee voted to:

1. Send a Subcommittee letter to Nevada's Congressional Delegation supporting the position adopted June 4, 2002, by the Advisory Board on Natural Resources of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (SDCNR) to endorse the recommendation of R. Michael Turnipseed, P.E., Director, SDCNR, as outlined in his May 24, 2002, letter to Nevada's Congressional Delegation.

Please note: This recommendation was rendered moot by passage of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002.

2. Include a statement in the Subcommittee report supporting the creation of a herd management viewing area in the Johnnie Herd Management Area of the Spring Mountain Range.

3. Include a statement in the Subcommittee report supporting the creation of designated areas in Clark County for off-road vehicle recreation to ease the burden on other areas.

- 4. Send a Subcommittee letter to the Nevada Legislature to encourage allocation of funds to coordinate state and local efforts to promote Wilderness Areas.**

Please note: A copy of this letter is attached to this document in section "VI. Appendix."

**REPORT TO THE 72ND SESSION OF THE NEVADA LEGISLATURE BY NEVADA'S
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS' WILDERNESS AND
WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS SUBCOMMITTEE**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Committee on Public Lands' Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas Subcommittee is an outgrowth of Senate Concurrent Resolution (S.C.R.) No. 6 introduced in the 71st Session of the Nevada Legislature. Because of the press of business during the Legislative Session, S.C.R. 6 and several other proposed resolutions could not be acted on before adjournment. However, policymakers felt the issue of wilderness study areas (WSAs) was important enough that the Legislative Commission created this Subcommittee after the Session ended.

All place names mentioned in this bulletin are in Nevada unless otherwise noted.

A. SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF

The Legislative Commission appointed the following legislators to serve on the Subcommittee:

Senator Dean A. Rhoads, Chairman
Assemblyman P.M. "Roy" Neighbors, Vice Chairman
Senator Mark E. Amodei
Senator Dina Titus
Assemblyman David D. Brown
Assemblyman Jerry V. Claborn

The following Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) staff members provided support for the Subcommittee:

Christine Kuhl, Senior Research Secretary, Research Division
R. René Yeckley, Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Scott Young, Principal Research Analyst, Research Division

B. HEARINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Subcommittee held five meetings during the course of the study. Meetings were held in Las Vegas, Tonopah, Reno, Ely, and Carson City. Extensive testimony regarding the impact of wilderness designations and WSAs was provided by state and federal agency representatives, local government officials, environmentalists, ranchers, miners, Native Americans, and the general public regarding the impact of wilderness designations and WSAs. Additionally, the Subcommittee and staff toured several WSAs.

At its final meeting, the Subcommittee adopted recommendations, including three bill draft requests, for consideration by the 2003 Legislature. The recommendations cover a variety of issues and are summarized in the “Summary of Recommendations” section of this bulletin, beginning on page v.

This bulletin: (1) provides an account of the Subcommittee’s activities during the 2001-2002 Legislative Interim; (2) provides background information on the development of Wilderness Areas and WSAs in Nevada; and (3) summarizes the major issues considered and acted upon by the Subcommittee.

A large volume of data was collected during the course of the study and much of it is included in exhibits that became part of the Subcommittee minutes. All supporting documents and minutes of meetings are on file with the Research Library of the LCB (775/684-6827). Additionally, minutes (without exhibits) are available on-line at: <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/71st/Interim/StatCom/Wilderness/>.

II. GENERAL BACKGROUND ON WILDERNESS ISSUES

A. THE WILDERNESS ACT OF 1964

The first people in America perhaps viewed the land as a vast wilderness with isolated outposts of humanity. In time, other groups came and the country’s growing population fanned out across the continent, altering the natural landscape more and more, spreading the hallmarks of civilization far beyond the humbler precincts of the original waves of people. Gradually, the remaining wilderness areas began to appear more like the isolated outposts. As people began to appreciate the beauty and value of what was being lost, a feeling arose that some portions of this natural heritage should be preserved for future generations. These sentiments found expression in the federal Wilderness Act of 1964 (herein referred to as “the Act”).

The Act established the National Wilderness Preservation System. This system now consists of more than 104 million acres of federal public land designated by Congress as Wilderness Areas, National Parks, National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and Western Heritage Lands. Some of these areas are under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture; others are managed by the National Park Service and some by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Department of the Interior.

In accordance with the Act, Congress has designated numerous areas in the State of Nevada as Wilderness Areas, including the Alta Toquima Wilderness Area, Arc Dome Wilderness Area, Currant Mountain Wilderness Area, East Humboldt Wilderness Area, Grant Range Wilderness Area, Jarbidge Wilderness Area, Mt. Charleston Wilderness Area, Mt. Moriah Wilderness Area, Mt. Rose Wilderness Area, Quinn Canyon Wilderness Area, Ruby Mountains Wilderness Area, and Table Mountain Wilderness Area.

Under the Act, wilderness is defined as “. . . an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence . . . which generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable. . . .” Wilderness Areas must also have “. . . outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation,” contain at least 5,000 acres, and “may also contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value [Section 2(c)].”

If an area of federal public land is designated as a Wilderness Area, it must be managed in a manner that preserves the wilderness character of the area and ensures the area remains unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as a Wilderness Area. In conjunction with the provisions of the Act, the Secretary of the Interior may identify certain portions of federal public lands as WSAs to determine the suitability of those areas for designation by Congress as Wilderness Areas. Until a WSA is designated by Congress as a Wilderness Area or released back to general use, the Wilderness Study Area must be managed in a manner that does not impair its suitability for preservation as a Wilderness Area.

B. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT WILDERNESS SURVEYS

In 1977, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM conducted an initial inventory of 49 million acres of Nevada land for potential designation as WSAs. By 1979, the BLM had reduced this inventory to 15 million acres. In 1980, the BLM designated 110 WSAs in Nevada, covering 5.1 million acres. Then, in 1991, the BLM completed its survey and recommended 1.9 million acres within 52 WSAs for designation as Wilderness Areas and the release of the remaining 3.2 million acres. After the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area was created by Congress in 2000, the balance of Nevada lands remaining in WSAs dropped to just under 5 million acres, where it stands now.

C. CLARK COUNTY CONSERVATION OF PUBLIC LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES ACT OF 2002

During the course of this study, Congress considered two measures, both called the “Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002.” One bill, S.2612, was introduced by Nevada Senators Harry Reid (D) and John Ensign (R) on June 11, 2002. A similar measure, H.R. 5200, was introduced in the House of Representatives by U.S. Congressman Jim Gibbons. Working closely together, the Nevada delegation was able to secure passage of H.R. 5200. The measure was signed into law by President George W. Bush on November 6, 2002, and is now Public Law 107-282.

Under the new law, 444,000 acres of federal land have been granted wilderness status, including portions of the following areas: (1) Mount Charleston, northwest of Las Vegas; (2) North and South McCullough Mountains, south of Henderson; (3) Muddy Mountains, northeast of Las Vegas; and (4) Arrow Canyon, east of the Desert National Wildlife Range.

Additionally, the bill adds 26,433 acres to the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and creates the 48,438-acre Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area near Henderson.

The measure also releases 183,375 acres of BLM property throughout the county from WSA status and sets aside about 6,000 acres for a planned community north of Jean, near where Clark County plans to build a second airport. Furthermore, the measure provides for corridors for power lines and a possible high-speed magnetic levitation rail in the area south of Las Vegas. Finally, the bill provides for a land swap near Red Rock National Conservation Area involving 1,071 acres that were added to Red Rock in exchange for transferring 998 acres of federal land to the Howard Hughes Corporation. The legislation is being viewed as a potential model for resolution of further WSA issues in Nevada.

III. MAJOR ISSUES CONSIDERED DURING THE STUDY

A. GENERAL APPROACH TO WILDERNESS ISSUES

Consideration of wilderness issues historically has been contentious and discussions polarized. Against that backdrop, it is not surprising that the process of designating suitable areas and release of remaining land has continued for a quarter of a century. There are deep philosophical differences about what constitutes appropriate use of lands and what qualities really capture the essence of wilderness. A number of witnesses who testified before the Subcommittee stressed the need for more positive interaction among interest groups, better understanding of what the Act actually says, and willingness to meet at the local level to identify areas of common concern. As a result, the Subcommittee adopted the following recommendations:

- 1. Encourage the Nevada Congressional Delegation to work with all interested Nevadans, land managers, affected stakeholders, local governments, special interest organizations, and the larger American public to work together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect in pursuit of Wilderness Area designation for Nevada's public lands.**
- 2. Encourage education at all levels of government and among all stakeholders to ensure facts are accurately presented when wilderness issues are debated and that proper interpretations of applicable laws are made when officials are implementing wilderness legislation.**

B. LOCAL INPUT

An important aspect of positive interaction among interested parties is recognition of impacts on local citizens and solicitation of input from those most directly affected by the decision making process. In this regard, the Subcommittee adopted three recommendations:

- 1. Urge Congress to support national and state legislation requiring explicit consideration of natural resource dependent communities in the public land use planning process for decisions that will affect private economic activity on public lands.**
- 2. Urge Congress to hold extensive hearings in Washington, D.C., and relevant locations in Nevada prior to any changes in WSA designations or other changes for Nevada public lands.**
- 3. Recommend designation of WSAs as Wilderness Areas be conducted through a collaborative process.**

C. BOUNDARIES

Another area of major concern to many people is the method by which the actual boundaries of Wilderness Areas are demarcated. The Subcommittee heard testimony that sometimes it is difficult to determine where the true boundary is because imprecise landmarks like old trails or the “base” of a mountain are used. Such vague boundaries make it difficult to properly manage a Wilderness Area and place members of the public in jeopardy of inadvertently violating wilderness restrictions. A broad spectrum of interested parties supported use of modern technologies such as Global Positioning Satellite systems to establish precise boundaries.

In a related vein, a consensus developed concerning so-called “buffer zones.” These are sometimes ill-defined areas immediately adjacent to WSAs that some parties have advocated as a transition zone between Wilderness Areas and surrounding land. An example would be a Wilderness Area that ends at the base of a mountain or ridge with the sloping alluvial plain used as a “buffer.” Testimony from interested parties indicated a clear preference for precise boundaries.

Responding to the general agreement regarding boundaries and buffer zones, the Subcommittee adopted the following recommendations:

- 1. Require development of accurate, consensus-based boundary maps for Wilderness Areas using technologies such as Geographic Information Systems.**
- 2. Oppose the creation of buffer zones around Wilderness Areas and instead support the requirement of clear and concise boundaries based on recognizable features on the ground such as roads and drainage.**

D. SPECIFICATION OF ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES AND GUARANTEE OF RIGHTS

As important as where the boundaries are, is clarification of what are considered the allowable activities within Wilderness Areas. Although as noted above, certain preexisting uses are recognized by the Act, the Subcommittee heard a great deal of testimony indicating that in practice, the actual application of the Act may depend on the subjective interpretation of successive federal administrators and local managers. The resulting inconsistencies in interpretation and application of the Act have caused frustration and distrust. Instances were cited where one land manager would approve a project or procedure only to have the next decide it violated the Act and then a third would agree with the first and allow the project to proceed. Furthermore, some holders of preexisting rights in WSAs testified there is often pressure on them from federal managers that appears designed to discourage them from continuing to exercise those rights.

In view of this situation, and to provide more clarity for all parties involved in the use and management of Wilderness Areas, some witnesses recommended that, as each Wilderness Area is created, the enabling legislation precisely detail the specific activities that are allowed and those that are prohibited. In connection with this testimony, the Subcommittee adopted the following recommendations:

- 1. Urge Congress to support precise specification of allowable activities within Wilderness Areas.**
- 2. Urge Congress to recommend ranchers' preexisting rights to access via "cherry stem" roads (dead-end roads extending into Wilderness Areas but excluded from designation as part of the Wilderness by drawing the boundaries of the Wilderness Area around and just beyond the edges of the road), grazing permits and water permits be specifically outlined and guaranteed in Wilderness Area legislation.**

E. ROADS AND ACCESS

As already mentioned, the Wilderness Act recognizes certain rights for grazing, mining, and water use that preexisted Wilderness Area designation or WSA creation. Access across wilderness land in order to exercise these rights has proved difficult to administer in a manner acceptable to all parties. Concerns were expressed by numerous witnesses regarding problems they experienced in obtaining access to effect repairs at stock watering facilities located in WSAs; other parties maintained the elderly and disabled were being denied access to wilderness experience because of a lack of roads. Still other witnesses stressed the importance of allowing mechanized equipment into Wilderness Areas to combat fires in order to protect both the wilderness itself and to prevent uncontrolled fires in Wilderness Areas from posing a threat to nearby property and communities.

Additionally, testimony indicated that occasionally existing roads are closed in order to qualify an area for wilderness designation, since under the Act such areas must be roadless. Finally, holders of preexisting rights in WSAs testified there is often pressure placed on them from federal managers that appears to be designed to discourage continued exercise of those rights.

The Subcommittee adopted the following recommendations designed to address these concerns:

- 1. Urging Congress to support the position that existing roads not be closed to create Wilderness Areas.**
- 2. Urging Congress to support appropriate measures, including use of roads, to ensure elderly and disabled citizens have continued access to Wilderness Areas.**
- 3. Support access to historical roads, whether documented or undocumented, to preserve access to private property.**
- 4. Support “cherry stem” roads to all ranching water diversions.**

F. POSITION ON BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Perhaps the most significant issue encountered by the Subcommittee revolved around the BLM recommendations for wilderness designations. As noted previously, the BLM’s 1991 final recommendation identified 1.9 million acres of WSAs as suitable for Wilderness Area designation and indicated the remaining 3.2 million acres should be released to general use. Some interested parties advocated adopting the BLM recommendations largely without modification. Other participants suggested setting aside the BLM surveys and essentially updating the whole designation process based on newer technology, and more current population and use trends. Still other people proposed various changes to the BLM recommendations based on such criteria as mineral development potential or wilderness values they felt the BLM had incorrectly discounted in its report.

After extended discussion, the Subcommittee opposed reinventorying Nevada lands. It also rejected recommendations that would have substantially reduced the amount of land recommended by the BLM by imposing such restrictions as limiting Wilderness Areas to land without any preexisting water rights or limiting the number of acres in any given county to an amount not exceeding the acres of private land in that county.

Instead, the Subcommittee supported focusing final selection of Wilderness Areas on the 1.9 million acres without slavishly adopting that recommendation while also agreeing to support the use of more current information to modify the BLM recommendation. To this end, the Subcommittee adopted the following recommendations:

- 1. Oppose reinventorying Nevada lands for purposes of creating Wilderness Areas or additional WSAs.**
- 2. Recognize the BLM surveys and recommendations were done in a very short time with limited staff and mapping capability compared with today's technology, and are outdated. Therefore, before acting on those recommendations, Congress should ensure more current information is included in the discussions.**
- 3. Send a Subcommittee letter to Nevada's Congressional Delegation supporting the position adopted June 4, 2002, by the Advisory Board on Natural Resources of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (SDCNR) to endorse the recommendation of R. Michael Turnipseed, P.E., Director, SDCNR as outlined in his May 24, 2002, letter to Nevada's Congressional Delegation.**

Please note: This recommendation was rendered moot by passage of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002.

G. LOCALIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

Additionally, the Subcommittee supported several specific, localized recommendations for deviations from the BLM survey.

The Subcommittee heard testimony regarding the need for a utility corridor within the Sunrise Mountain Instant Study Area. The corridor is necessary to connect high voltage power lines from the new electric generating plants located near Apex with the regional grid in and around Las Vegas. Without the new transmission lines, it would be impossible to build the generation plants which are needed to ensure southern Nevada has an adequate supply of power to sustain its economy and guarantee system reliability.

The Subcommittee also responded favorably to a suggestion that the existing Mt. Moriah Wilderness Area be augmented by the addition of 1,865 acres of the adjacent land known as Marble Canyon. This area consists of 12,715 acres of which the BLM recommended designation of the 1,865 acres. Originally, the BLM study area comprised 19,150 acres but 6,435 acres were designated as the Mt. Moriah Wilderness Area on December 5, 1989, when President George Bush signed the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act.

The Subcommittee adopted two other limited recommendations. One provides for a wild horse viewing area near the Spring Mountain Range and the other encourages designation of places in Clark County for off-road vehicle use. The Subcommittee heard testimony that people living in the urban areas of Clark County often travel to adjoining rural counties in search of off-road recreational sites because of current restrictions on such activities closer to home.

In response to the above-mentioned concerns, the Subcommittee adopted the following recommendations:

- 1. Support the Sierra Pacific Resources Centennial Plan involving the release of utility corridors within the Sunrise Mountain Instant Study Area.**
- 2. Support the BLM recommendation for designation as a Wilderness Area of 1,865 acres of land known as Marble Canyon, located adjacent to the Mt. Moriah Wilderness Area, left out of the 1989 Nevada Wilderness Protection Act, but otherwise not creating any additional Wilderness Areas in the vicinity**
- 3. Include a statement in the Subcommittee report supporting the creation of a herd management viewing area in the Johnnie Herd Management Area of the Spring Mountain Range.**
- 4. Include a statement in the Subcommittee report supporting the creation of designated areas in Clark County for off-road vehicle recreation to ease the burden on other areas.**

H. CONTINUING LEGISLATIVE STUDY

Recognizing that selection of wilderness is a prolonged process that has not been and will not be settled in a short time, the Subcommittee adopted a recommendation to create another Interim Study Committee following the 72nd Legislative Session to continue the work of consensus building and evaluation undertaken by the present Subcommittee. This decision was prompted by the progress already made by Nevada's Congressional Delegation in connection with the Clark County bill. While it only addresses land in Clark County, it is evidence that diverse interests can reach compromises on the many involved issues surrounding Wilderness Area designation and can serve as a model for resolving similar issues in the remainder of the state. It is important to preserve the momentum generated by the success of this measure. The following is the recommendation adopted by the Subcommittee in this regard:

Adopt a resolution authorizing an interim study to examine the issue of wilderness and WSAs in Nevada. The study would, in part, make formal recommendations to the Nevada Legislature, members of Nevada's Congressional Delegation, and others regarding suitable areas for formal wilderness designation by Congress. The study would also examine current policies regarding WSAs (selection, management, qualification, et cetera) and seek input from various governmental agencies, organizations, and individuals regarding wilderness topics.

IV. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

A. MEETINGS

The Legislative Committee on Public Lands' Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas Subcommittee met five times throughout Nevada. In conjunction with two meetings, field excursions of WSAs were conducted. The Subcommittee met in the populous areas of southern and northwestern Nevada, and also held meetings in areas of the state where WSA issues are in the forefront. The meetings in rural Nevada counties include a scheduled time for local government officials to present their concerns and report happenings pertaining to WSAs within their counties. Attendance typically ranged from 30 to 50 people.

Following are summaries of the Subcommittee's deliberations and activities at each of the meetings and field excursions.

1. Las Vegas Meeting (November 19, 2001)

The Subcommittee's first meeting was held in Las Vegas on November 19, 2001. At this meeting, BLM made presentations regarding the history and implementation of the various federal wilderness enactments. The BLM also explained present management policies for WSAs and the process for ultimately designating some or all of these areas as wilderness. Representatives of several environmental advocacy groups presented educational and background information. Additionally, representatives of other groups that frequent Wilderness Areas also expressed their concerns and desires during public testimony. Finally, Nevada Power Company officials outlined the impact of proposed electrical transmission line upgrades on Wilderness Areas.

2. Tonopah Meeting (February 15, 2002)

The Subcommittee held a meeting on February 15, 2002, in Tonopah, and received testimony regarding the activities of the Tri-County Group, which consists of Lincoln, Nye, and White Pine Counties. Additionally, various Nye County officials testified on wilderness issues affecting that county specifically. Stephanie Licht, Coordinator, Nevada Land Use Summit, provided an overview of the 2000 and 2001 Land Use Summits, and a preview of the 2002 Summit. Next, representatives of Advocates for Access to Public Lands, a California based grass-roots organization, spoke regarding Wilderness Area designation proposals and potential impacts on the White Mountain Range in California. An update of the Nevada Mining Association's Wilderness Area designation recommendations was provided. In conclusion, public comment heard.

3. Reno Meeting (March 7, 2002)

The Subcommittee's third meeting was held on March 7, 2002, in Reno. The Subcommittee received testimony regarding perspectives and recommendations on wilderness issues from the

following organizations: (1) The Nevada Wilderness Project; (2) Nevada Cattlemen's Association; (3) Nevada Association of Counties; and (4) Nevada Farm Bureau. Finally, public comment was also heard.

4. Ely Meeting (May 3, 2002)

Ely was the site of the Subcommittee's fourth meeting, held on May 3, 2002. The Subcommittee received reports regarding the impacts of WSAs in White Pine County from representatives of the White Pine County Board of Commissioners. A briefing on the activities of the Public Land Users Advisory Committee was provided and Native American perspectives on WSAs was presented by the Nevada Indian Commission. Representatives of Friends of Nevada Wilderness reviewed information regarding the economic impacts of Wilderness Areas and the impacts of off-road vehicle use on public lands. Extensive public comment was also heard.

5. Carson City Meeting/Work Session (October 7, 2002)

The Subcommittee's final meeting and work session was held in Carson City October 7, 2002. Following an update on the "Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002" and testimony regarding the Nevada Mining Association's recommendations for Wilderness Area designation, the Subcommittee received public comment and proceeded with its work session. Please refer to the section titled "Summary of Recommendations," beginning on page v of this bulletin for a review of actions taken by the Subcommittee.

B. FIELD EXCURSIONS

1. South Reville and Kawich Wilderness Study Areas Field Excursion (February 15, 2002)

A field excursion of the South Reville and Kawich WSAs, located near Tonopah, was held upon adjournment of the Subcommittee's meeting on February 15, 2002. Staff from the BLM's Tonopah Field Station transported Subcommittee members, along with LCB staff and interested parties, into the WSAs utilizing "cherry stemmed roads." Participants then hiked through the WSAs as BLM staff pointed out unique features and characteristics.

2. The Clan Alpine Mountains and Desatoya Mountains Wilderness Study Areas Field Excursion (May 2, 2002)

The Clan Alpine Mountains and Desatoya Mountains WSAs, located near Ely, were observed on May 2, 2002, in conjunction with the Ely meeting. Subcommittee and staff members noted the unique features and characteristics of the areas.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas Subcommittee spent much of the interim gaining information about the process and guidelines for designating Wilderness Areas and insight into the many concerns surrounding the issue. The Subcommittee recognized that reaching a recommendation for the disposition of WSAs in Nevada is not quickly or easily achieved. However, the forum provided by the Subcommittee allowed Nevada residents and government officials to express many diverse opinions regarding the topic. The Subcommittee anticipates that the relationships forged during this study will continue and Nevadan's will demonstrate their ability to reach a resolution based upon participation and mutual respect for all parties involved.

The members of the Subcommittee would like to take this opportunity to thank the elected officials, representatives from federal, state, and local government, private organizations, and all other individuals who participated in this study's hearings. The Subcommittee appreciates the important assistance provided by the many talented people who testified at its meetings and participated in field excursions.

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APPENDIX A

Subcommittee Letter to the Nevada Legislature



Nevada Legislature

SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION

December 9, 2002

COMMITTEES:
Chairman
Natural Resources
Legislative Committee
on Public Lands

Member
Commerce and Labor
Taxation

DEAN A. RHOADS

SENATOR

Northern Nevada Senate District

Senator William J. Raggio
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
Post Office Box 281
Reno, Nevada 89504-0281

Assemblyman Morse Arberry, Jr.
Chairman
Assembly Committee on Ways and Means
2551 South Fort Apache Road, Suite 102
Las Vegas, Nevada 89117-8700

Dear Colleagues:

During the 2001-2002 Legislative Interim, a study was conducted to address the just-under 5 million acres of public land in Wilderness Study Area status in Nevada. Among the measures discussed during deliberations was the need for adequate funding to coordinate state and local efforts to promote the use of public lands in our great state that have already been designated by the Federal Government as bonafied Wilderness Areas.

Testimony received at our meetings illustrated the need to coordinate promotional activities of such areas in an effort to reap the financial benefits of these untapped assets. Nevada is already largely sustained by the financial benefits realized by the tourism industry, primarily gaming. However, studies indicate that many of these visitors would lengthen their visits to partake in outdoor recreational activities provided by Wilderness Areas if the opportunity were presented.

Consequently, the Legislative Committee on Public Lands' Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas Subcommittee voted to send this letter requesting that the Nevada Legislature encourage allocation of funds to provide for a coordinated advertising campaign between the state and local communities where Wilderness Areas exist. The Subcommittee recognized and discussed the fact that the State of Nevada is currently in a budget crisis and realized that the limited funds must be first allocated to provide for more critical services. However, the Subcommittee finds wilderness to be a very important issue not only for the state, but also for its rural communities, and would appreciate current or future consideration of this request as resources permit.

DISTRICT OFFICE:

Box 8, Tuscarora, Nevada 89834-0008 • Ranch (775) 756-6582 • Elko (775) 738-4490

LEGISLATIVE BUILDING:

401 S. Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701-4747 • (775) 684-6569 or 684-1401 • Fax No. (775) 684-6522

Thank you for your interest in Nevada's wilderness issues and economic opportunities.

Sincerely,

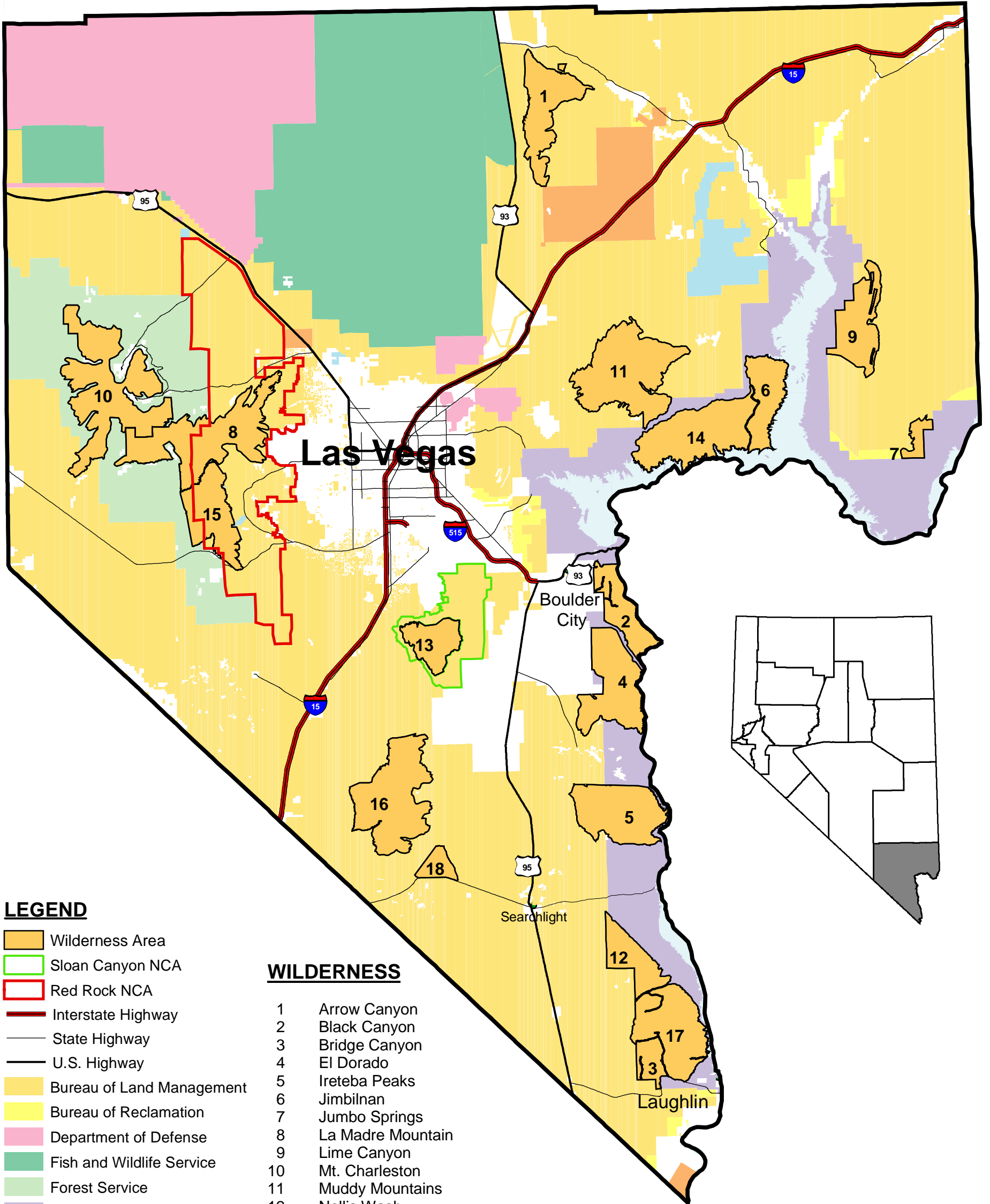
Senator Dean A. Rhoads
Chairman, Nevada's Legislative Committee on
Public Lands' on Wilderness and Wilderness
Study Areas Subcommittee

DAR/ck:L011

APPENDIX B

Map Titled “Clark County Wilderness Areas”

Clark County Wilderness Areas

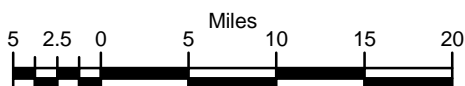


LEGEND

- Wilderness Area
- Sloan Canyon NCA
- Red Rock NCA
- Interstate Highway
- State Highway
- U.S. Highway
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Department of Defense
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Native American Reservation
- Private
- State of Nevada
- Water

WILDERNESS

- 1 Arrow Canyon
- 2 Black Canyon
- 3 Bridge Canyon
- 4 El Dorado
- 5 Ireteba Peaks
- 6 Jimbilnan
- 7 Jumbo Springs
- 8 La Madre Mountain
- 9 Lime Canyon
- 10 Mt. Charleston
- 11 Muddy Mountains
- 12 Nellis Wash
- 13 North McCullough
- 14 Pinto Valley
- 15 Rainbow Mountain
- 16 South McCullough
- 17 Spirit Mountain
- 18 Wee Thump Joshua Tree



December 13, 2002

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