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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 19, 2010

NEWS RELEASE

Legislative Committee on Public Lands (NRS 218E.510)

Date: Friday, July 30, 2010
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Place: Bristlecone Convention Center
Sage and Juniper Rooms
150 Sixth Street
Ely, Nevada

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PUBLIC LANDS COMMITTEE TO HEAR FROM EL PASO CORPORATION IN ELY

Senator Dean A. Rhoads (R-Tuscarora), Chair of the Legislative Committee on Public Lands, announced that the Committee will hold its fifth and final meeting of the 2009-2010 Legislative Interim at the Bristlecone Convention Center in Ely, Nevada, on Friday, July 30, at 8:30 a.m. The agenda is not yet available.

Senator Rhoads has asked a representative from the El Paso Corporation to appear at the Committee's upcoming Ely meeting. The Chair's request is in response to El Paso's recently announced donation of \$20 million to the Western Watersheds Project and the Oregon Natural Desert Association. According to news reports, in exchange for the donations (\$15 million to a fund for the benefit of the Western Watersheds Project and \$5 million to a fund for the benefit of the Oregon Natural Desert Assembly), the two environmental groups will drop their objections to El Paso's proposed 680-mile natural gas pipeline (Ruby Pipeline LLC), estimated to cost \$3 billion. Further, Western Watersheds Project's stated priority for the use of the funds is to purchase grazing permits from willing ranchers for the purpose of permanently retiring those grazing rights on public lands.

Rhoads stated, "Many ranchers and private landowners have cooperated with El Paso's demands for rights-of-way across private property so the pipeline could proceed. If these ranchers and landowners had known that a deal was being made to provide funding to retire grazing permits and to put ranchers out of business, I suspect that most of the private landowners would never have signed agreements with El Paso."

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Rhoads continued, **“Hopefully, the representative from El Paso will explain why the corporation entered into an agreement with Western Watersheds Project, an extremist environmental organization, whose stated goal is to eliminate grazing on public lands and why local residents and the livestock industry were not consulted. Without BLM and U.S. Forest Service grazing permits, most Nevada ranchers cannot survive.”**

Noting the secondary impacts that retirement of grazing permits would have on rural counties, cities and towns, Rhoads went on to explain, **“Retiring grazing permits will have impacts far beyond the individual rancher who chooses to sell. When ranches go out of business, that means fewer jobs which translates into less business for the local feed and equipment stores, grocery stores, restaurants, and all the other businesses in town. Rural economies are already struggling in many parts of our State and this effort by outside environmental organizations to eliminate grazing on public lands should be of concern to all Nevadans.”**

The Legislative Committee on Public Lands was created in 1983 to review and comment on federal land management policies and practices and to provide a forum for the discussion of public lands matters. The Committee is one of the two legislative committees which regularly hold meetings outside of Carson City or Las Vegas.

The members of the Committee are: Senator Terry Care (D-Las Vegas); Senator John J. Lee (D-Las Vegas); Senator David R. Parks (D-Las Vegas); Senator Dean A. Rhoads (R-Tuscarora); Assemblyman Paul Aizley (D-Las Vegas); Assemblyman David P. Bobzien (D-Reno); Assemblyman John C. Carpenter (R-Elko); Assemblyman Jerry D. Claborn (D-Las Vegas); and Clark County Commissioner Tom Collins. Alternate members are: Senator Mike McGinness (R-Fallon); Senator Michael A. Schneider (D-Las Vegas); Assemblyman Pete Goicoechea (R-Eureka); and Assemblywoman Ellen B. Spiegel (D-Henderson).

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