

## Public Lands

### Legislation

Beginning in 2000 Esmeralda and Nye Counties have endeavored to pass a Townsite Treaspass Bill to legitimize the historic towns of Goldpoint and Ione Nevada. This bill has been sponsored and introduced a number of times over the years without success. In this session the bill was sponsored and introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Gibbons and by Senator Reid at the same time.

Goldpoint's limbo status is a vexation for county government and the residents of the small community. Fire protection is one example. Esmeralda has provided trucks and other firefighting equipment but can not get funding to build a firehouse because we do not have legal title to land. The county has water rights to supply the residents but progress on a pipeline right of way is held up because there legally is no town. Goldpoint is one of the best examples of a mining camp left in the State of Nevada thanks to the determination of it's residents to renovate and preserve the town and draws many tourists. The people who live there can not capitalize on the tourism because they can not get insurance, or obtain licenses necessary to operate business.

### Economic Justice

The lopsided ratio of private versus federally managed lands, coupled with a small population, is an increasing economic burden to our taxpayers. According to our County Assessor 96.8% of the total county area of 3,589 square miles is under federal management.

Our road crews maintain in excess of 1,500 miles of roads, providing access to wood cutting areas and mines on federally managed lands. Our roads are also increasing being used for recreation promoted by the State of Nevada Tourism and off-road vehicle races under special use permits issued by the Bureau of Land Management. Only 469 miles of the roads in Esmeralda County are certified as eligible fuel tax mileage because there is a population factor in the calculation. Elevated precious metals prices have resulted in a great deal of exploration activity, and increased wear on roads. At the same time fuel prices have dramatically increased and the balance of our road fund declines more with each passing year.

The Bureau of Land Management collects \$712,500(5,700 x \$125) in maintenance fees for the 5,700 mining claim located within our territory, versus \$79,800 in fees that are collected by our Recorder. Since the BLM land records are no longer easily accessible to the public local courthouses have once again become the primary source for mineral survey data. All our records are manual so when someone conducts research one of the county staff is needed at their shoulder.

So the Federal Government is managing, the State of Nevada is promoting and the county is taking care of the roads, maintaining the land records, and hauling the solid waste generated. Payments in lieu of tax are never fully funded , unpredictable, and there is increasing pressure to reduce the share of fuel tax to rural counties even talk of basing fuel tax allocation based on sales.

**EXHIBIT B - LANDS**  
**Document consists of 2 pages.**  
**Entire Exhibit Provided**  
**Meeting Date: 03-24-06**

It is imperative to the survival of Esmeralda County that more land within our border be privatized to give us a reliable tax base to sustain the governmental services that are mandated by law. No significant disposal of land identified has occurred in our county. It has been suggested that a lands bill for Esmeralda County is the best way to accomplish this. Before a bill could be brought forth a land use plan will need to be prepared with public input which will require time and staff that we do not have and can not afford.

Additional fee revenue from mining claims on federally managed lands would provide some relief right now.

### Natural Resources

The possibility of development of the geothermal resources in our county has provided a ray of hope for an economic driver, source of additional property tax and royalty revenue. With the introduction of the Angle initiative and about face in federal policy it appears our hopes may have been in vain.

The geothermal lessors in our county are small Nevada companies, one of which is locally owned. These companies have experienced difficulty in obtaining funding to explore and develop their properties. Whereas, Ormat, a large foreign owned company appears to enjoy a favored status. Our geothermal resources are located in the Clayton Valley near the town of Silver Peak and in Fish Lake Valley near the town of Dyer. Transmission lines controlled by Sierra Pacific Power already exist in the Clayton Valley that tie in to the power grid in Nevada and west to California. Fish Lake Valley is serviced by Valley Electric and lacks transmission lines.