



**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS'
SUBCOMMITTEE TO STUDY WILDERNESS
AREAS AND WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS**
(Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 7 [File No. 63, *Statutes of Nevada 2003*])

SUMMARY MINUTES AND ACTION REPORT

The third meeting of the Legislative Committee on Public Lands' Subcommittee to Study Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) for the 2003-2004 interim was held on Friday, February 6, 2004, at 9 a.m. in the Bristlecone Convention Center, Sage and Juniper Rooms, 150 Sixth Street, Ely, Nevada. A copy of this set of "Summary Minutes and Action Report," including the "Meeting Notice and Agenda" (which is [Exhibit A](#)) and other substantive exhibits are available on the Nevada Legislature's Web site at www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/72nd2003/Interim. In addition, copies of the audio record may be purchased through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (e-mail: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775/684-6835).

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Dean A. Rhoads, Chairman
Assemblyman Jerry D. Claborn, Vice Chairman
Senator Mike McGinness
Assemblyman Pete Goicoechea
Assemblywoman Peggy Pierce

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

Senator Bob Coffin

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Jennifer Ruedy, Senior Research Analyst, Research Division
R. René Yeckley, Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Nenita Wasserman, Senior Research Secretary, Research Division

OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Rhoads explained that wilderness study areas are to be managed as wilderness until they are either approved or rejected by the United States Congress. The Subcommittee and staff then introduced themselves at the request of Senator Rhoads.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 23, 2004, MEETING IN CALIENTE, NEVADA

The Subcommittee **APPROVED THE FOLLOWING ACTION:**

SENATOR MCGINNESS MOVED TO APPROVE THE SUMMARY MINUTES AND ACTION REPORT OF THE JANUARY 23, 2004, MEETING HELD IN CALIENTE, NEVADA. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYMAN GOICOECHEA AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

SLIDE PRESENTATION ON WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS LOCATED WITHIN WHITE PINE COUNTY, NEVADA

Brian Beffort, Nevada Representative, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Reno, Nevada, presented a brief slide show and commentary on some of the wilderness areas within White Pine County.

Senator McGinness requested that Mr. Beffort report back to the Subcommittee regarding the recent increase or decrease of the goshawk and desert big horn sheep populations. Additionally, he requested the status of any state or federal protections for the two species.

REPORTS TO SUBCOMMITTEE

Progress Report on Efforts of White Pine County to Craft a Congressional Wilderness Bill for WSAs within the County

Paul Johnson, White Pine County Commissioner, Ely, gave a progress report on the efforts of White Pine County to craft a congressional wilderness bill for WSAs within the county. Mr. Johnson stated his opinion that adamant opposition to the WSAs has lessened in recent years. He reported that congressional leaders have urged the county commissioners to work with Friends of Nevada Wilderness and the mining industry to reach consensus in anticipation of a bill. Mr. Johnson noted that the consensus-building would be a challenge. He added that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Office in Ely has developed recommendations as to what should be designated as a wilderness study area. Subsequent to the BLM's recommendations, additional proposed WSAs have been received from Friends of Nevada Wilderness. Key issues addressed: (1) with the influx of off-highway vehicles, certain areas need to be protected; (2) designating lands with exceptional economic potential as WSAs should be carefully considered because it is important not to take lands that may benefit the county economically; and (3) the best recommendation received to date has been to have diverse interest groups formulate an agreement.

Overview of "Citizens' Wilderness Proposal": Lincoln and White Pine Counties

Brian Beffort, Nevada Representative, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Reno, read into the record a report from Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, who was unable to attend this meeting. The report was written to clarify the confusion between WSAs, WSA recommendations, and citizen-proposed wilderness areas. Please see [Exhibit B](#).

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Senator Rhoads read a letter addressed to the Subcommittee from William Higgins, resident, Clark County, Nevada, into the record. The letter emphasized the importance of wilderness providing an unfragmented habitat for animals. Please see [Exhibit C](#).
- Jonathan Brown, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs, Nevada Mining Association (NMA), Reno, summarized the NMA's recommendations and concerns regarding WSAs in White Pine County noting that Nevada's rural counties need economic opportunities and the ability to optimize resources for economic development. He provided a compact disc with his organization's recommendations for WSAs. One compromise he suggested would be to use post-mining lands as an alternative for off-road vehicles to access WSAs. Please see [Exhibit D](#).
- Pamela White, White Pine County resident, expressed concern about White Pine County losing its water to Las Vegas, Nevada. She suggested that the Subcommittee consider the possibility of filing for in-stream water rights and preserving and maintaining Nevada's aquifers. Her detailed testimony is [Exhibit E](#).
- Les Thrasher, resident, Las Vegas, expressed concern that although he pays the BLM \$3,500 annually to rent land for 35 mining claims in the Meadow Valley, the Bureau will not allow him to mine these claims. Senator Rhoads requested legal staff to assist Mr. Thrasher in determining the legal status of his 35 mining claims

positioned in the Meadow Valley Range Wilderness Area identified by the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal.

- Roger Campbell, Ely resident, expressed his concern that every mountain range in White Pine County appears to be designated as a WSA.
- Liz Arnold, resident, Lovelock, Nevada, stated that more access to lands should be available. Much of the land in Nevada that is not under wilderness status appears to be well-maintained.
- Ty Freeley, Ely resident, expressed concern regarding the inability of the Federal Government to properly manage the land for which it is responsible. He cited examples of increased fire hazards and beetle infestations on different federal lands.
- Joanne Garrett, White Pine County resident, stated she has been working for 34 years to protect White Pine County's water. She said the citizens of White Pine County agreed to raise taxes to protect rural water rights. Ms. Garrett expressed concern about the intrusion of water speculators into rural affairs and how White Pine County would share its water.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Subcommittee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nenita Wasserman
Senior Research Secretary

Jennifer Ruedy
Senior Research Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Senator Dean A. Rhoads, Chairman

Date: _____

LIST OF EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the "Meeting Notice and Agenda."

[Exhibit B](#) is a written report to the Subcommittee from Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Reno, read into the record by Brian Beffort, Nevada Representative, Friends of Nevada Wilderness. This report was prepared to clarify Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), WSA recommendations, and citizen-proposed wilderness areas.

[Exhibit C](#) is a letter dated January 23, 2004, addressed to the Subcommittee from William Higgins, resident, Clark County, which Chairman Rhoads read into the record. This letter emphasizes the importance of wilderness providing an unfragmented habitat for the animals.

[Exhibit D](#) is a letter to the handout provided by Jonathan Brown, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs, Nevada Mining Association (NMA), Reno, which summarizes the NMA's recommendations and concerns regarding WSAs in White Pine County.

[Exhibit E](#) is a copy of testimony provided by Pamela White, White Pine County resident, in which she expresses concern about White Pine County losing its water to Las Vegas.

This set of "Summary Minutes and Action Report" is supplied as an informational service. Exhibits in electronic format may not be complete. Copies of the complete exhibits, other materials distributed at the meeting, and the audio record are on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. You may contact the Library by [e-mail \(www.leg.state.nv.us/lcb/research/library/feedbackmail.cfm\)](mailto:www.leg.state.nv.us/lcb/research/library/feedbackmail.cfm) or telephone: 775/684-6827.