

Keep Public Lands in Public Hands

The Nevada Lands Management Task Force studied the feasibility of transferring federal lands to state or private ownership during the Interim. Although the members of the task force had good intentions, their report and accompanying proposal to transfer lands to the state in two phases are fatally flawed.

Public Lands Have Broad Support

✧ 78% of Nevadans agree that the national forests, parks, wildlife refuges, and other public lands in Nevada belong to all Americans.¹

✧ 62% of Nevadans don't think it would be fair or fiscally responsible to force Nevada taxpayers to foot the bill for managing America's public lands.¹



Significant Negative Impacts

✧ Lands slated for transfer in the report under phases 1 & 2 include areas used by sportsmen, OHV users, wildlife watchers and other outdoor enthusiasts. Restricting or privatizing these lands would severely impact the \$14.9 billion in consumer spending and \$1 billion in state and local taxes created by outdoor recreation in Nevada.²

✧ Nevada has a poor history of keeping lands in public hands. At statehood, the state was given 2.7 million acres. It sold and traded its way down to 3,000 acres today.³ Given the state's regular budget problems, there is good reason to believe that new public lands would be sold, a permanent solution to solve a short-term budget crisis.



Public Land Management is Costly

✧ The task force report admits that the BLM loses \$30 million per year on average managing public lands. That number likely undersells the point, because it does not seem to include the costs of wild horse management or fighting wildfires.

✧ Many of the potential costs outlined in the report are simply estimates. There is no reason to believe that Nevada has a unique way of fighting wildfires at a cheaper rate than the federal government. The reality is that the vast majority of acres burned during Nevada wildfires are public lands.

✧ Federal agencies are often the target of litigation from industry and environmental groups. There is no analysis in the report of the costs that would come from defending state land use decisions in court.



The best thing about Nevada is that you can chase that big buck over ridge upon ridge without ever running into a no trespassing sign. This is the beauty of the American system of public lands.

Transfers Not Feasible

*The crux of the task force report calls for Congress to transfer ownership of federal lands, which currently belong to all Americans. Generally, House & Senate leaders require fair market value for transfers.⁴

*These issues are not new, and this is not the first time that Nevada has discussed public land transfers. A far more productive route, which has been used many times before, is to work with our federal delegation to negotiate lands bills that address specific needs.



Federal Law Persists

*Even if public lands were transferred, as set forth in the report, federal law such as the Endangered Species Act would still be in effect. As Nevada faces a 2015 deadline for a potential sage-grouse listing, it would be foolish for the state to take on the added costs of complying with a listing, a burden which would currently fall to the federal agencies.

*Many Nevadans rightly have concerns about wild horse management by the BLM, but those management responsibilities would fall to the state under these recommendations. Poor state horse management in the Virginia Range shows just how challenging this can be.



Flawed Income Analysis

*The task force report assumes that Nevada could make significant income by averaging the income brought in from state trust lands in other Western states, however there is little analysis given as to why these cases are similar or representative. For example, Nevada has little commercial timber, oil, gas or coal. At any rate, much of the income realized in other states comes from land sales, which undercuts the pledge by the task force to maintain all existing uses and access.

*The report anticipates significant revenue from land sales, but there is no analysis as to how the price per acre was chosen, or who would be buying transferred lands from the state. Likely suspects are foreign governments and corporations⁵ & wild horse advocates.⁶ Additionally, the report does not mention the sources of new water for transferred lands that are sold for development as well as the impacts on existing water users and uses.

*In other western states, grazing fees on state lands average \$6.86 per AUM, more than five times the federal rate of \$1.35. In Nevada, state land grazing fees are \$15 per AUM.⁷ The task force report includes no discussion of grazing fees under state management.

1 - Polling conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, Sept. 2014

2 - Outdoor Industry Association, 2012

3 - Our Public Lands - Not For Sale, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, November 2014

4 - <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2014/feb/28/tule-springs-monument-bill-stalls-house-over-earma/>

5 - <http://www.fieldandstream.com/blogs/conservationist/2013/10/new-dangerous-ignorance-american-public-lands>

6 - <http://savingamericasmustangs.org/about/about-the-sanctuary/>

7 - http://nass.usda.gov/Charts_and_Maps/Grazing_Fees/gf_am.asp