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Governor Sandoval

#9B

March 25, 2017

County Manager John Slaughter  
Washoe County Manager's Office  
1001 E. Ninth Street  
Reno, NV 89512

**RE:** Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners' Input to the Washoe County Lands Bill

Dear Mr. Slaughter:

The Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners (Commission) discussed the Washoe County Lands Bill (Bill), 114<sup>th</sup> Congress Version, at its recent meeting. The Commission understands that a new version of the lands bill is likely to be introduced in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. As such, the Commission offers its inputs on any future version of the Bill.

Component number 1 of the previous version of the Bill indentified federal lands for disposal or transfer. While the Commission understands the need and motives for these areas, there are some concerns regarding potential impacts to wildlife populations and public land access. For the most part, the Commission is not concerned with those isolated tracts located between existing private parcels in and around the Reno/Sparks Metropolitan Area. However, large tracts of public lands located north and east of the Truckee Meadows do raise concerns. These areas contain important wildlife habitat and offer wildlife viewing, hunting and other recreational activities in close proximity to the urban core. The Commission requests that the County work with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to identify key wildlife habitat within the proposed disposal / transfer area and determine the best course of action for keeping these areas and associated habitat intact.

Component number 2 of the previous version of the Bill identified areas for potential designation as Wilderness and/or release from Wilderness Study Area designation. The Commission supports the concept of resolving the issues associated with Wilderness Study Area. The Commission also supports the concept of Wilderness Designation in the appropriate scenario. The following concerns were raised by the Commission in review and discussion of the mapping provided by Friends of Nevada Wilderness:

- Wilderness designation can have a profound influence on active and proactive land management, including protection, enhancement and restoration of critical wildlife habitat. Minimum tool requirements and analysis can often hamper fire suppression, post-fire rehabilitation / restoration, and management of noxious and invasive weed species. As such, Wilderness designations should focus on areas with high ecological resilience and resistance. These areas are typically found at higher elevations with higher annual precipitation rates and a lower presence of noxious or invasive species.
  - The Commission suggests mapping proposed Wilderness designation boundaries overlapped with resilience and resistance data that has been developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Those areas of low resilience and resistance should be excluded from Wilderness designation and released from WSA.
  - The same should be done for known occurrences of noxious and invasive weed species. Such mapping data should be available through the Nevada Department of Agriculture and/or BLM. Those areas with invasive and noxious species (particularly medusahead) should be excluded from Wilderness designation and released from WSA so that active management can be implemented to contain invasive and noxious vegetation.
    - The County should consider utilizing funding from land sales to manage noxious and invasive species.
  - Language should be included in the Bill to allow for active and emergency actions to allow for fire suppression, post-fire rehabilitation / restoration, noxious weed management and habitat enhancement for those area ultimately designated as Wilderness.
- Wilderness designation can have a profound influence on wildlife management activities, including but not limited to: trap and transplant of wildlife, collaring and monitoring wildlife, water development (both guzzlers and improvement of natural water sources) and maintenance of such waters.
  - Language should be included in the Bill to allow for standard, active wildlife management in areas ultimately designated as Wilderness without the need for minimum tool analysis and requirements.
  - Language should also be included to allow for normal census and management of wild horse and burro herds. Left unchecked, these herds can have profound negative impacts on wildlife habitat and sparse water resources.
- Wilderness designation impacts access to and travel within such areas. The public input received by the Commission suggests that access in the proposed Wilderness Areas may not be sufficient as proposed.
  - Further outreach should be conducted to identify boundary adjustments and designation of cherry-stem roads to allow sufficient access for wildlife-based recreation. Outreach activities should include detailed mapping of each area that shows existing roads and trails.

- The Commission suggests specific outreach to the Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife as well as wildlife conservation / sportsmen organizations to identify critical access areas and corridors.
- The Commission also suggests specific outreach to the Nevada Department of Wildlife to identify critical administrative access areas and corridors.

Given the complex nature of the Bill and the disparate viewpoints associated with each aspect, the Commission suggests that the County pursue a calculated, diligent and consensus driven process. Such a process will ensure transparency and a means to providing updated information including current bill language and associated maps.

The Commission hopes the above listed concerns will be addressed going forward, and would be happy to engage in the process as appropriate. The listed suggestions, if incorporated, could serve to significantly reduce and/or mitigate many of these concerns and result in a positive outcome from the State's wildlife resources, wildlife enthusiasts and Washoe County.

Sincerely,

Grant Wallace  
Chairman

CC: Nevada Congressional Delegation

GW/jd/dm

