

Conservation Fact Sheet

Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act

- There are 12 Wilderness Study Areas that exist either partially or completely within Washoe County. Wilderness Study Areas were designated to be studied to determine if the areas should become wilderness. This study did occur and resulted in the BLM 1991 Record of Decision, however Congress has not taken action on these areas.
- The goal of the legislation is to give permanent designations to these areas either through the creation of Wilderness Areas, National Conservation Areas or by releasing or returning to public multi-use designation.
- Without legislation all Wilderness Study Areas, or portions within Washoe County will remain and continue to be managed as wilderness study areas. These areas were created by Congressional legislation and therefore Congressional legislation is required to make any changes to the designation.
- Wilderness Study Areas were created as areas that might meet the criteria for wilderness and to be studied to determine if they did meet the requirements of Wilderness as outlined in the 1964 Wilderness Act. The Bureau of Land Management did the study which was published in 1991, however no federal legislation has been brought forward to change those designations.
- This legislative effort allows Washoe County to settle the issues of Wilderness Study Areas giving permanent conservation to qualified appropriate areas and returning the areas that do not qualify back to public multi-use BLM land.
- The Bureau of Land Management cannot change the designation of Wilderness Study Areas. The only way such designations can change is through an act of Congress. This bill allows those designations to occur.
- Legislation has available 3 different designations that can be applied, this includes Wilderness Areas, National Conservation Areas and release or return to public multi-use land. The proposal will include all 3 designations based on where they are the most appropriate.
- This legislation can give all users a firm understanding of how the lands can be used. Since Wilderness Study Areas were not created to be designated as such permanently there can be confusion or disagreements about the types of uses or enforcement that is applicable.
- For a better understanding of the types of activities allowed under the different designations being proposed please see the document below.

The guidelines and policies for grazing in wilderness are as follows:

1. There shall be no curtailments of grazing in wilderness areas simply because an area is, or has been designated as wilderness, nor should wilderness designations be used as an excuse by administrators to slowly "phase out" grazing. Any adjustments in the numbers of livestock permitted to graze in wilderness areas should be made as a result of revisions in the normal grazing and land management planning and policy setting process, giving consideration to legal mandates, range condition, and the protection of the range resource from deterioration.
2. The maintenance of supporting facilities, existing in an area prior to its classification as wilderness (including fences, line cabins, water wells and lines, stock tanks, etc.), is permissible in wilderness. Where practical alternatives do not exist, maintenance or other activities may be accomplished through the occasional use of motorized equipment. This may include, for example, the use of backhoes to maintain stock ponds, pickup trucks for major fence repairs, or specialized equipment to repair stock watering facilities. Such occasional use of motorized equipment should be expressly authorized in the grazing permits for the area involved. The use of motorized equipment should be based on a rule of practical necessity and reasonableness.
3. The construction or new improvements or replacement of deteriorated facilities in wilderness is permissible if in accordance with these guidelines and management plans governing the area involved. However, the construction of new improvements should be primarily for the purpose of resource protection and the more effective management of these resources rather than to accommodate increased numbers of livestock.
4. The use of motorized equipment for emergency purposes such as rescuing injured persons, sick animals or the placement of feed in emergency situations is permissible. This privilege is to be exercised only in true emergencies, and should not be abused by permittees.

In summary, grazing management in wilderness should be that activities or facilities established prior to the date of an area's designation as wilderness will remain in place and may be replaced when necessary for the permittee to properly administer the grazing program. Meaning, if livestock grazing activities and facilities were established in an area at the time Congress determined that the area was suitable for wilderness and placed the specific area in the wilderness system, they will be allowed to continue. With respect to areas designated as wilderness prior to the date of this Act, these guidelines shall not be considered as a direction to reestablish uses where such uses have been discontinued.

Questions and Answers

How will these areas be managed for grazing?

Under the Bill, grazing within designated Wilderness Areas where established prior to the passage of the Washoe County bill shall continue to be permitted. Further, the legislation gives direction to the BLM on how grazing will be managed. These are called the Congressional Grazing Guidelines and they are cited in the legislation as House Report No. 101-405.

Can changes still be made to the Wilderness boundaries?

Yes, there is still an opportunity for ranchers and other stakeholders to help adjust boundaries to ensure access, even after the bill has been introduced.

What about wildfire and invasive weeds in Wilderness?

Similar to other Nevada legislation the authority to determine best practices and application of such issues will be determined by the Secretary of the federal agency who manages the land in question.

Will I still be able to hunt in Wilderness?

Similar to other Nevada legislation the Secretary may conduct any management activities in the wilderness areas that are necessary to maintain or restore fish and wildlife populations and the habitats to support the population. Many hunters believe that their highest quality hunting experiences take place in wilderness.

What if I have a mining claim or lease in an area that is designated for Wilderness?

Once areas are designated as wilderness, they are subject to valid existing rights but the remainder of the area will be withdrawn from mineral leasing laws.

Can areas that aren't wilderness study areas be designated as Wilderness?

Yes, there are several examples of this in Nevada including in Clark County (Wee Thump Joshua Tree Wilderness), Lincoln County (Big Rocks Wilderness), White Pine County (Becky Peak and Bristlecone Wilderness) and Lyon County (Wovoka Wilderness). Congress is the only entity that can make a qualitative and factual determination of what should and should not be designated as Wilderness.

Some of the areas proposed for Wilderness were recommended "non-suitable" by the BLM. Why are they being considered for Wilderness?

The BLM made their wilderness suitability recommendations in 1991 as part of the Wilderness Recommendations Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These recommendations are over 30 years old and many things have changed since they were made. The current Washoe County legislative process gives everyone a chance to re-look at the issues and the original WSA boundaries. When BLM made their recommendations it was a onetime shot and those recommendations cannot be changed by the

BLM. Only Congress can designate or release areas from wilderness study area status.

There is often confusion on “non-suitable” recommendations. As a part of the EIS effort in the 1991 Record of Decision by BLM, looked at all the wilderness study areas and weighed their wilderness values against other resource values and made recommendations on which wilderness study areas or portions of the wilderness study areas should be recommended to Congress as “suitable or non-suitable” for Wilderness designation. Some of these areas meet the requirements for Wilderness; however there were management concerns that lead them to ultimately designate the area as “non-suitable”. However, much time has gone by, and due to land transfers and acquisitions many of those management concerns have been alleviated and therefore changes to the final maps from Washoe County have reflected those changes.

DRAFT

Difference between the Designations in the Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act

Wilderness	National Conservation Area	Return to Public Mutli-use
Allowed:	Allowed:	Allowed:
Grazing	Grazing	Grazing
Hiking	Hiking	Hiking
Outdoor Recreation Activities	Outdoor Recreation Activities	Outdoor Recreation Activities
Hunting, Fishing and Trapping	Hunting, Fishing and Trapping	Hunting, Fishing and Trapping
Military Overflights	Military Overflights	Military Overflights
Wildfire, Insect and Disease Management	Wildfire, Insect and Disease Management	Wildfire, Insect and Disease Management
Wildlife Management	Wildlife Management	Wildlife Management
Wildlife Water Development Projects	Wildlife Water Development Projects	Wildlife Water Development Projects
	Off-Road Travel	Off-Road Travel
		Land Acquisitions
		Mining
		Energy Development (oil/gas/renewable)
Not Allowed:	Not Allowed:	Not Allowed:
Vehicle Travel off marked trails	Mining	Must comply with all BLM rules and regulations associated with use of public lands (under the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976)
Mining	Creation of New Roads	
Creation of new roads	New Buildings or structures, including transmission lines, sheds, camps, lodges (anything other than structures used for overnight camping that would be removed when done)	Management regulated by Resource Management Plans created by BLM field offices
New Buildings or structures, including transmission lines, sheds, camps, lodges (anything other than structures used for overnight camping that would be removed when done)		
Motorized equipment (outside of designated roads)	Additional restrictions can be placed through the management plan that BLM and the committee will create for these areas	
Tree cutting by mechanized equipment (unless otherwise approved by BLM for wildfire management)		