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Subject: BLM Wilderness Management
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To Jennifer Crowe, Northern Nevada Director for Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
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Jamie Rodriguez, Washoe County Government Affairs
Jill Ralston, Deputy Division Chief, BLM Legislative Affairs Division

From: Tina Nappe

Subject: Washoe County's BLM Wilderness Proposals

Thank you for your attendance and patience at the January 24th Washoe County Wilderness designation discussion.

While there are good things in the Wilderness Law i.e. no roads and minimum use, there are two major shortcomings...the limits on wildlife research and severe limits on addressing pre- and post-fire management.

Since the 1964 Wilderness Legislation was passed, our knowledge of BLM landscape, a warming climate, and land management tools has substantially increased. We now know that native Americans regularly set fires to reduce trees. Many of the forests by 1964 had been logged and/or represented new growth as a result of logging. Or like the expansion of pinion-juniper are the result of a warming climate. BLM wilderness study areas, now being considered for permanent status, exist at lower elevations and in a warming climate where weeds, now primarily cheat grass, and fire have come to be among the primary hazards facing a wilderness future. At higher elevations fire can be a benefit, although fire has now been so suppressed that hot fires sweeping through the vegetation can result in permanent damage.....i.e. no restoration in many lifetimes....if at all.

I view wilderness not so much as a different recreation opportunity but as potential biological islands if fire does not permanently destroy the vegetation. We have the opportunity to learn more about species of wildlife, plants, insects, and invertebrates. Wilderness does not necessarily ensure their future. NDOW has been stymied in their efforts to conduct research on both bats and bighorn sheep by placing limits on the use of telemetry.

Even today, we know little about many of the species inhabiting wilderness or wilderness study areas. Wildlife research is an evolving process. As we begin to focus more on nongame or sensitive species, we will need access to modern technology to facilitate that research and to develop management plans if they are needed. Unfortunately, BLM has apparently issued several management wilderness guidelines that are sometimes contradictory and therefore subject to different interpretations at the district level.

The Washoe County Public Lands wilderness legislation can clarify wildlife research and recognize that pre and post fire management can be helpful in maintaining native ecosystems. It can limit the spread of cheat grass, which, unfortunately was introduced by us, spread over millions of acres by us through cars and boots and our creatures like livestock and dogs. Once fire burns low elevations, we will have cheatgrass deserts forever.

Our job is to maintain native species where possible. Isn't that also a goal of Wilderness?

Thank you for your attention.

