"I'd ask that we table this and bring it back after it is complete," Litman said. "To vote on it tonight would be skimming it over very quickly."

Rapson asked Litman what ambiguities in the resolution were specifically troubling to him. Litman responded that the resolution needed more definition of what exactly constitutes motorized vehicles. He said that he could also not agree with the Whitney Pockets boundary change. In addition, the portion of the resolution dealing with the acceptable timeframe for emergency road closures was not realistic, he said.

The initial draft of the resolution stated that emergency road closures could not last for more than 24 hours. "Frankly, these are not monumental issues," Rapson said.

In reference to the road closures, Rapson allowed that the wording could be changed to permit for seven calendar days closure to repair the road and get it open again.

"The important thing is that there needs to be some definition of the word temporary," Rapson said. "Temporary could be closing the road for 100 years if you are comparing it to a millennium or two or three or five. So, in my mind, there has to be some definition of that term."

"I think that we have worn this thing out," Rapson concluded. "I want to see it end tonight; no more postponing or research. I'd like to make a motion and if it passes it passes; and if not, I guess we will go from there."
Rapson made a motion to accept the resolution with the small changes that had been introduced at the meeting. The motion was approved with Rapson, Hafen and Withhelder voting in favor, Delaney and Green were opposed.

Several people spoke at the final public comment period of the meeting expressing disapproval of the Council's action. Many of these urged the mayor to veto the resolution. But in a conversation with the PROGRESS on Friday morning, the mayor stated he had no plans to veto the action.

http://mvprogress.com/2015/05/06/mesquite-city-resolution-scales-back-support-for-gold-butte-nca-legislation/

LAS VEGAS SUN

Preservation is worth the effort

Guest Writer: Valerie McNay
Published: May 4, 2015

With the recent observance of Earth Day (April 22) it seems fitting to recognize many of the incredible places we have in Nevada that help to make our state home.

The Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Mount Charleston Wilderness Area, Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, Great Basin National Park and so many other places are protected for us and for future generations.

One common thread to all these places, as Amber Phillips pointed out in a recent article, is Sen. Harry Reid ("A Monumental Push: Reid plans to designate two more areas for protection," Las Vegas Sun April 19). He had a hand in protecting all of these areas and continues to build on this legacy by working most recently to protect Gold Butte and Basin and Range. I have followed his effort to protect Gold Butte starting with the passage of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002. Since then, local advocates have been working hard to protect the cultural, natural and historic treasures in Gold Butte and have built a long and diverse list of supporters calling for protection of this area.

Another place activists have been rallying behind is Basin and Range, working to protect the landscape and the art found within its boundaries. Knowing what all the existing protected public lands do for our quality of life and our economy, imagine what protecting two more incredible landscapes will do to for us, our state and our future

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/may/04/preservation-worth-effort/

Lands are worth preservation

Guest Writer: Christopher Ryan
Published: May 1, 2015

I fully support and applaud Sen. Harry Reid's efforts to instill permanent protection of some of Southern Nevada's most treasured lands. I am hopeful that Congress and the White House will see the benefits of keeping these lands open to the public rather than viewing them as a commodity better suited for corporate consumption or to appease a rancher-turned-sensationalized-cult-hero.

I consider myself an outdoor and off-road enthusiast. Therefore, I am especially fond of Gold Butte for its wide variety of natural beauty. The rock formations are unique in that they cannot be found anywhere within driving distance of the Southern Nevada area. There is a wide array of wildlife representative of the Silver State, such as the bighorn sheep, the desert tortoise, the banded Gila monster and many other indigenous species. I also must mention the ancient campsites, caves and rock art that serve historical as well as educational purposes.

To the north are Basin and Range, which have their own cultural and recreational value and are also included within Rep. Dina Titus' and Reid's proposals.

In my opinion, these lands fit the criteria of the Sun's definition of a "national monument" and therefore should be permanently protected and preserved for future generations to enjoy. Hopefully common sense prevails and Nevada will be kept in its natural grace rather than a skin of concrete.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/may/01/lands-are-worth-preservation/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Counter point

Guest Writer: Michael M. McGreer
Published: April 30, 2015

Ammon Bundy is misleading the public (Opinion "Bundy objects to legislative testimony," *Desert Valley Times* Tuesday April, 28, 2015) when he claims that his father (Cliven) "owns" 11 water rights. Bundy applied and received permits to use water from 11 streams feeding into the Mesquite community wells. These "permits" were never adjudicated.

The state water engineer gives anyone claiming a water right a non-adjudicated permit. In order for the permit to be adjudicated (verified) a request must be filed with the state water engineer. To date, neither the water board nor the city council has request such an adjudication.

Each of Bundy' cows typically eats 26 pounds of public owned feed each day. Therefore, Bundy is stealing 9,490 pounds per year or 949,000 pounds of feed from the public.

Each cow consumes approximately 50 gallons of water each day. That is 18,250 gallons of water per year or 1,825,000 gallons per year for 100 head. That is about 5.6 acre-feet of water. An acre-foot is equal to 325,851 gallons. One-acre foot is approximately enough water to support a family of five for a year.

Therefore, Bundy is taking enough water to support five families of five to water his illegally grazing cattle, which are consuming about 949,000 pounds of feed from the public domain each year. And neither the city council nor the water board cares.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/30/letters-editor/26660011/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Terrible Idea?

Guest Writer: Tony Barron
Published: April 30, 2015

Sawing people in half usually ends well on the stages in Las Vegas.

But city Councilman Kraig Hafen's new idea of cutting the proposed Gold Butte NCA in half, eliminating all of the north portion, is a terrible idea.

He would exclude all of the Virgin Mountains and all of the mountains north bajada with its rich history of hundreds of CCC check dams. He would also eliminate all of the Arrowhead Trail highway which was the highway from Salt Lake to Los Angeles about 100 years ago.

His proposal would exclude Little Virgin Peak and the Gold Butte Twin Peaks. All of the easiest to reach recreational destinations would be purged from the proposed NCA.

Adding, in this case, injury to injury, Kraig and some other council members want to forbid any further wilderness designation in Gold Butte, despite the fact that the proposed wilderness areas are already de facto wilderness and would not close a single mile of legal roads.

The truly ironic and annoying thing is that Mesquite certainly, with the influx of retirees in the last five years, has become even more supportive of public lands than ever before. It's time for the City Council to stop "advancing to the rear" and simply reaffirm the original Gold Butte proposal, Resolution 649, designating all of Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with wilderness.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/30/letters-editor/26660011/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Opinion: City Council comments get out of hand

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 30, 2015

I just want to remind everyone that the resolution the Mesquite City Council passed Tuesday holds no legal weight in the eyes of anyone, anywhere.

Congress isn't going to look at it and immediately make changes. It is just a written statement of support, or in this case "sort of" support, of designating a National Conservation Area in Gold Butte.

I know it's still a very important issue to several residents and Gold Butte lovers. I understand that this resolution basically reflects how the town feels. But if you really stop to think about it, the way it is written mostly reflects how the community feels about the issue.

About half of the comments at City Council reflect those who want federal protection for Gold Butte. The other half want nothing to do with it and think the feds should just stay out of it.

Well, Council drew the NCA line at Whitney Pockets and That should make everyone a little irritated. They still supported a NCA designation but not all the way. So really, no one is getting what they want.

I once heard a true compromise occurs when neither sides are really happy with the agreement. I think that's what we have here.

I think what really matters is that everyone loves Gold Butte and can help protect it, whether that be by picking up trash or supporting (or opposing) federal legislation.

But the way the last two City Council meetings ran it felt like Mesquite was going to have the final say so on the matter. I had to keep reminding myself just because Council wrote down in a resolution what it wanted to see didn't mean it would happen. Like I said before, this is just a statement of support, or lack thereof.
When people stormed Council about medical marijuana facilities in the city I understood. Council was the final stop, it would give the ultimate ruling.

In the last month though, I felt like very few people's comments evolved.

Those who didn't want federal protection still didn't want federal protection. They said almost the exact things at the second meeting that they did at the first. Federal protection, as far as the council was concerned, was expected. Maybe it would have been better and more constructive to give tips, like Councilman Kraig Hafen did, about what to do with the disagreement. He said to push it back. There you go, an idea.

The other side kept repeating the same things as well. Gold Butte needs protection, Gold Butte needs protection. I would have liked to have heard why the area north of Whitney Pockets needed protection because that's what had changed since the last meeting.

I'm not saying I agree with Hafen or Councilman George Rapson for that matter. I am simply saying they both saw something they didn't like in the bill and made a suggestion to change it. That's what I feel the public should have done as well — offered solutions instead of endless complaints.

Don't even get me started on the petty personal attacks that happened Tuesday night either — on both sides. I was a little bit embarrassed to be sitting

there listening to grown men and women sling mud at each other. If you're going to consume my night with public comment I'm okay with that; I just ask that you make it constructive, intelligent, and stick to the subject at hand.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/30/city-council-comments-get-hand/26660061/

MESQUITE LOCAL NEWS

Locals Care Too

Guest Writer: Jim Weber
Published: April 30, 2015

So your headline reads "Out-of-towners address issues related to Gold Butte" perhaps misleading some to assume there is little local support for the Gold Butte National Conservation Area. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact that our Public Lands and Gold Butte are also of considerable interest and support from citizens outside the Virgin Valley should be noticed by the Council as well as the anonymous "city staff" that determined the issue should be brought to the Council probably in hopes of withdrawing previous City support.

I'm sure those actions didn't disappoint MLN. MLN has a history of gushing at every outburst from a delusional local rancher as though it contained messianic qualities. But more importantly, our reputation as a City is at stake. We can be seen as progressive and welcoming City or as a closed haven for those who can't locate a flux capacitor to experience the nineteenth century.

Last month the Indiana State Government learned a bitter lesson about legislating in an echo chamber. The City Council should take note. They have a choice between what's easy and what's smart and in the best interests of the City. The right choice is clear.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/locals-care-too

MESQUITE LOCAL NEWS

Council splits votes; passes new resolution for Gold Butte support

Writer: Stephanie Frehner
Published: April 29, 2015

Tuesday night's regular City Council meeting was another long one, as 40 people, both local residents and several out-of-town visitors, spoke against any changes in the existing Resolutions 649 and 669 for more than 90 minutes.

The new Resolution, 867 was motioned by Councilman George Rapson, seconded by Councilman Kraig Hafen, that would support an National Conservation Area designation for the Gold Butte area with no additional Wilderness areas and that temporary closures of roads due to an 'Act of God' are reopened within seven working days. Mayor Al Litman voiced his opposition to the language in the Resolution before a motion was made, stating that the language was too ambiguous, much like Senate Bill 199, and in regards to terms of road closures and access for mechanized vehicles.

"Frankly these are not monumental issues here," stated Rapson. "This is a Resolution, it is not a legal document. It's simply a statement of position (by the City). We could over-engineer this thing and have a 40 page legal document."

The revised resolution also had an exception that would allow the Virgin Valley Water District to have access to existing water rights in the area and be able to build and construct necessary facilities.

Rapson's motion was approved with three votes for it made by Rapson, Hafen and Councilman Geno Withelder. Councilman Rich Green and Councilwoman Cindi Delaney voted against it. Comments in the final public comment portion of the meeting had several people calling for the Mayor to veto the decision. Litman spoke with the MLN Wednesday morning stating that he would let the Resolution stand as council had voted.

Other items covered in the meeting Tuesday night included approval for the week of May 17-23, 2015 as "National Public Works Week", accepting of a presentation from the Colorado River Commission regarding the City receiving power from Hoover Dam and approving the Operation Location Agreement with the Nevada Institute of Autonomous Systems, which would operate drone testing on City property near Exit 112.

Council also voted unanimously to keep the current candidate filing fee of $25 per applicant instead of raising the fee to $100.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/council-splits-votes-passes-new-resolution-for-gold-butte-support/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Council limits support of NCA area

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 29, 2015

Council limits support of NCA area.

Public comment filled the majority of a contentious, three-hour Mesquite City Council meeting Tuesday about a resolution giving Council's support on trimming the size of the National Conservation Area to end at the Whitney Pockets area.

Comments ranged from the location of the line at Whitney Pockets, to Open Meeting Law violations, to personal attacks, to tortoises eating cow waste.

Two previous resolutions regarding designating Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area (NCA) with wilderness areas were brought before the Council for review during the April 7 Technical Review meeting. During the April 14 Regular City Council meeting, City Hall was flooded with hours of public comment from both sides of the issue.

Some said Gold Butte didn't need any federal protection while others rallied for a NCA designation. At the April 14 meeting Council directed staff to write a new resolution that didn't support wilderness, ensured existing roads stayed open and ensured no potential water rights for Mesquite were restricted.

Once the new resolution was approved, the old resolutions would be rescinded.

A NCA designation would ensure federal protection for the Gold Butte area. A wilderness designation means there is no mechanized or motor vehicles permitted or building of permanent or temporary structures. It is the strictest designation, according to *nps.gov*.

Only Congress can designate wilderness in an area, the site says.

City Attorney Bob Sweetin drafted the resolution and presented it to Council at the April 21 Technical Review meeting. The draft included the three points Council had requested.

At that meeting Mesquite Councilman George Rapson requested additional adjustments to the resolution including no restrictions of mechanized or motorized vehicles.

City Liaison Officer Aaron Baker said that if Gold Butte received a NCA designation, per federal legislation, Mesquite would have a representative on an advisory council that would be established. This language was added to the Mesquite resolution, indicating Mesquite would like to be represented at the advisory council.

Baker also pointed out if Gold Butte is designated an NCA there would be a visitor's center built within Mesquite city limits. Council agreed to have that language drafted into the resolution as well.

The council also agreed to define "temporary" in the resolution.

City Council member Kraig Hafen said during the tech review he had a few suggestions on defining the Gold Butte complex itself and added he would like to see the NCA boundary line at Whitney Pockets.

This means everything north of the Whitney Pockets area that backs up to the Mesquite/Bunkerville areas including Bitter Ridge, Black Ridge and the Virgin River Peaks, would not be inside the NCA boundary. Everything south of Whitney Pockets would.

This change would keep NCA regulations out of the community's "backyard."
Hafen's comment on the Whitney Pockets boundary line was brief and wasn't further discussed by council. Some residents and council members seemed surprised when the item showed up as a new condition on the resolution.

Councilman Rich Green said Tuesday he was surprised to see the NCA designation at Whitney Pockets and did not agree with the idea.

Councilwoman Cindi Delaney said she also had concerns about the Whitney Pocket line.

"I think that needs further study as to where exactly the line should be," she said. "So, I'm not in favor of that one."

Several residents said the same thing, that the bill was drastically different than what was presented at the tech review April 21.

Mesquite resident Bill Hurd questioned who had altered the bill and requested action be taken against whomever it was.

"The differences between what the council desired at those open meetings and the resolutions are so extreme that they were obviously made deliberately and not by error," Hurd said Tuesday.

Hurd said if it was Sweetin who made the changes, without direction, he should be fired; if one or two council members made the changes outside the open meetings they should resign, and lastly if three or more council members requested changes outside the open meeting action should be taken against them for breaking the state's Open Meeting Law (OML).

The OML requires a quorum at a meeting open to the public.

Hafen Tuesday night made a show of having Tracy Beck, deputy city clerk, read the minutes from last week's tech meeting to prove the state's Open Meeting Law was not violated.

"So I would welcome Mr. Hurd, since you brought it up, I'm not gonna resign. I would invite you and your colleagues who have experience writing letters of supposed open meeting violations, I would submit to you to file it tonight," Hafen said. "If you need some help, you can get it to me and I will see it gets to the proper hands. Put it on the record that there has been absolutely no open meeting violations."

Hafen added that Sweetin took his direction from staff, that he did not go off on his own adding changes to the resolution.

Rapson said some of the changes that were made needed clarification.

He said he didn't intend for there to be "no wilderness" but "no additional wilderness," no additional restrictions on mechanized or motorized vehicles and no additional road closures.

Delaney agreed, adding that no wilderness would indicate that the Council wanted to have previously designated wilderness area revoked, which is not the Council's intent.

Mesquite Mayor Al Litman was excused from last week's tech review but said Tuesday he couldn't agree with the resolution as it was written. He said he thought the language was ambiguous and needed clarification.

Delaney said earlier in the meeting that reviewing the resolution was a process and Council could still make changes.

Litman wanted to define motorized/mechanized vehicles; change the time frame of temporary; review the Whitney Pockets, and define what could happen to close the roads temporarily since "Act of God" seemed broad.

Rapson disagreed with the mayor and said Council was "beating a dead horse." He made a motion to change the definition of temporary from 24 hours to seven days for road closures and added there will be no additional wilderness designations.

Currently there are two wilderness areas designated in the Gold Butte area, Lime Canyon and Jumbo Springs, according to Baker.

The motion passed 3-2 with councilmembers Delaney and Green voting against it.

Rapson left out of his motion to add no more additional road closures or additional restrictions on motorized/mechanized vehicles.

Sweetin told the *Desert Valley Times* Thursday although Rapson didn't include the items in his resolution it wasn't necessary.

"The Council was discussing future legislation regarding a National Conservation Area," Sweetin said. "They weren't looking at anything that would impact current the Area of Critical Environmental Concern regulations."

The resolution holds no legal weight, as pointed out by several at Tuesday's meeting. It is simply a statement of support on behalf of Mesquite.

Several people spoke at the second public comment period of the meeting urging the mayor to veto the resolution and bring it back at another time.

Baker said Wednesday the mayor has no plans to veto the resolution.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/29/council-approves-gold-butte-resolution/26579967/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#NVLeg Live Thread: Day 87

Writer: Andrew Davey
Published: April 29, 2015

Road trip! We hit the road again yesterday. You'll find out even more about where I went and what I saw, but I can tell you right now about a certain something I witnessed last night.
Want to know what I saw?

7:30 AM:

So my LTN Editorial Board colleagues quite graciously gave me a wonderful tour of Mesquite yesterday. Isn't it pretty out there? And why is this so damned hard for the Mesquite City Council to understand?

Elaine has more details on the Mesquite City Council ultimately voting 3-2 to walk back support for protecting Gold Butte. I just find it perplexing that this very council, the council who just rebuked #BundyRanch #Crazytown two weeks ago, caved into pressure by the Bundys and their allies. I also find it perplexing that they ultimately settled for a "split the baby solution" (with a resolution only supporting protection for half of Gold Butte, and a resolution that calls for nearly unlimited vehicle access everywhere) that pleases no one.

Council Members Kraig Hafen & George Rapson stated this resolution is only as valuable as the paper it's printed on, as they believe the federal government will somehow go ahead and take action to protect Gold Butte with or without them. With that kind of attitude, they essentially risk creating that very reality. As US Senator Harry Reid (D) & President Obama consider next steps on Gold Butte, they & US Rep. Dina Titus (D-Paradise) are actively seeking local input. If the Mesquite Council majority continue to thumb their noses at the feds like this, they only risk forfeiting their own seats at the table.

And then, there's their odd attitude about the future of Gold Butte. Of course, they remind me of State Senate Majority Leader Michael Roberson (R-Henderson) pushing SJR 1 in his attempt to "split the baby" on public lands policy in Carson City. He & his allies have tried to sell it to "TEA" drinkers in the Building as "real action", yet they've assured more level-headed folks in there that it's only ceremonial.

So why waste time on it? SJR 1 certainly doesn't change federal policy, but it does endorse #BundyRanch insurrectionist lawlessness. Yet because it doesn't really change any real policy, the #BundyRanch crew are not satisfied with it. They wanted the original AB 408, and no ceremonial BS will satisfy them or Assembly Member Michele Fiore (R-Las Vegas).

You know what happens when one splits the baby? The baby dies, and one is then charged with murder. Both the Mesquite City Council and the Nevada Legislature should keep this in mind.

http://letstalknevada.com/nvleg-live-thread-day-87/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#MesquiteNV City Council Votes To Weaken Support to #ProtectGoldButte

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 29, 2015

By a vote of 3 to 2, Mesquite City Council voted to weaken the city's commitment to National Conservation with Wilderness at Gold Butte by passing Resolution 867 during a 3-1/2+ hour meeting last night. Councilpersons Kraig Hafen, George Rapson and Geno Withelder voted yes. Councilpersons Rich Green and Cindi Delaney voted no. Mayor Al Litman stated he could not support Resolution 867 in its current form and recommended that council not take a vote last night and continue to improve the document. Councilman Rapson ignored him and made a motion that was seconded by Hafen and Withelder added his vote.

An audience of about 100 people sat through more than 50 public comments before and after Resolution 867 passed with minor changes. I counted 24 people who were opposed to Resolution 867 in its current form and who support NCA with Wilderness at Gold Butte and 17 who are opposed to the federal government's involvement in Gold Butte and who supported Council's subsequent action. Three other speakers sounded neutral on the matter.

Resolution 867 will replace Resolutions 649 that was passed (unanimously) in 2009 and 669 that was passed in 2010 and re-affirmed by city council in 2012. Both resolutions positioned Mesquite in support for Gold Butte as National Conservation with Wilderness, which is higher level of protection than its current status as Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Two language changes to Resolution 867 included changing "no Wilderness" to "no additional Wilderness". Gold Butte currently has two Wilderness areas within its 350,000 acre complex. Wilderness can only be established or eliminated through an Act of Congress and the new wording of Resolution 867 will not contest the status of those two existing Wilderness areas. The other change was language regarding the time frame the City wants for the agreed duration of a temporary road closure from 24 hours to seven days.

Two other controversial statements in the resolution remained. One subject to confusion was the Council changing the boundaries of the NCA area, cutting it in half. At the Technical Review meeting on Tuesday, April 21 when Council reviewed the first draft of the Resolution, there was no discussion on boundary changes for NCA. There was a reference to back up material and maps that would be sent to council members after the meeting, per Kraig Hafen's request, as he stated that he preferred Whitney Pockets as a boundary area. That request for additional materials became a boundary change without any open discussion by council members. I was in the room, as were several other observers, who did not consider that to be a request for a boundary change. But Councilman Hafen insisted this action was proper. City Attorney Bob Sweetin explained the Resolution was drafted according to the instructions of Council at the Technical Review meeting.

The other statement that "no restriction shall be made relating to the access or use of any mechanical or motorized vehicle" indicates that all vehicles can go anywhere within the Gold Butte area. Even the current status of ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) restricts motorized vehicles to "designated routes" (the government name for the over 500 miles of existing roads).

Several speakers encouraged Mayor Al Litman to veto Resolution 867, thereby keeping the first two resolutions in place, in order to allow for City Council to continue working on Resolution 867 and clear up confusing language as well as fully discuss the impact of the city proposing a boundary change.

Every council member except Kraig Hafen has stated support of Gold Butte being protected as a National Conservation Area. Hafen and Rapson did, however, vote to rescind the original resolution in 2012, so their positions remained consistent. Geno Withelder, however, voted both in 09 and 10 to support the two original resolutions. He flip flopped. Al Litman, Cindi Delaney and Rich Green were consistent in their support for reasonable protections for Gold Butte. Al Litman voted to continue support in 2012. Both Delaney and Green expressed their support during the 2013 campaign.

What does this mean? City council's action has no legal bearing. It is simply a statement of support or no support from a nearby community. Legislation has been proposed in the United States Congress and its language continues to be adjusted. This matter has been adjudicated by multiple agencies, experts and interest groups for more than a decade.

The issue is more about perception than substance. It was clear from the high-fiving and back slapping of the anti-government folks after the vote that they felt they got a "win." It is the opinion of many that it is not helpful for Mesquite to be perceived as supporting anti-government rhetoric. Like it or not, this is the valley where Cliven Bundy led an armed civilian militia showdown with the federal government last April over illegally grazing cows at Gold Butte. A number of speakers warned city council that a vote to weaken its support of federal protection for Gold Butte would poorly position the city in the eyes of the county, state and federal government. It is my opinion that Mayor Al Litman had the right solution — keep working on the resolution so council could come to a consensus and be comfortable with the final result. That opinion was also openly shared by Councilpersons Delaney and Green.

This was a 50-50 split. Three council members vs two council members and mayor. The mayor does not have a vote except in a tie, but Mayor Litman's statement was clear. He does not like much of what's in Senate Bill 199 and he wants the city on record stating where it has preferences, so he asked that the previous resolutions be re-considered. But he didn't think Resolution 867 was written well enough to make a coherent and proper statement.

I think this was a slip-shod process on something that is critically important to the reputation of Mesquite. It deserved more due diligence from council members. Hardly anyone from the county, state or federal governments pays attention to the actions of city council because it mostly tends to local matters. But they are paying attention to this vote because it is also a county, state and federal matter.

Let's Talk Nevada writers will continue to write about this topic. Below are video clips of council's discussion and vote, from my handheld camera. A compilation of comments is being edited together and will be published later, as will a better version of the below comments on our YouTube channel. If you are interested in viewing what precisely was said, you can click on the links below.

http://letstalknevada.com/mesquitenv-city-council-votes-to-weaken-support-to-protectgoldbutte/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

Let's "Bubble Wrap" #MesquiteNV City Council

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 27, 2015

Councilman Kraig Hafen's brother, Tilman, said "bubble wrap me" at the last city council meeting while opposing the city's resolution to federally protect Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness.

After watching the actions and attitudes of this city council, I've concluded the only way to save our city is to "bubble wrap" and stifle them before it's too late.

Arrogant and ignorant doesn't begin to describe these council members. They may also be operating outside the bounds of the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

I attended this past Tuesday's technical review meeting and recorded the discussion on re-wording of the National Conservation Area Resolution for Gold Butte. It was agreed at the City Council meeting on April 14, 2015 that a new resolution would be drafted to replace 649 and 669 which are statements in line with the Clark County Commission that Mesquite City Council agrees that Gold Butte should be protected as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness.

These original resolutions were passed by Mesquite City Council in '09 and in '10 and re-affirmed in '12. Then suddenly, THIS city council decides to re-visit the resolutions since they aren't in better alignment with Cliven Bundy's views and that of his pioneer family brethren who contend Gold Butte is theirs to use and abuse without restriction. Council even picked the first anniversary of Cliven's armed civilian militia invasion that forced federal officers to stand down to avoid bloodshed as the **perfect time** to re-visit these resolutions — which did not HAVE to be brought up at all.

HERE is the draft resolution that was discussed at the Technical Review meeting on April 21.

Geno Withelder, Cindi Delaney, Kraig Hafen, George Rapson and Rich Green talked about how they do not want any wilderness designated at Gold Butte. Never mind that Gold Butte already has two Wilderness Areas that never were and never will be accessible by any road. This has been explained to them over and over again, but THIS city council appears unable to grasp the concept.

Council agreed that temporary road closures at the discretion of the BLM might be necessary due to natural disasters and public safety; also that water accessibility should not be infringed– which language is already in the bill. These guys like to keep saying the big bad federal government is trying to infringe on our water rights– which it isn't, but it sounds good to the anti-government crowd.

That's about all that was said regarding proposed Resolution 867. They all nodded that it looked pretty good. City Attorney Bob Sweetin stated he would draft new wording based on this discussion.

HERE is the draft resolution that surfaced Thursday to be presented at Mesquite City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 28.

It says *"The Gold Butte area shall not have any area designated as "wilderness."* That's not any MORE area – but ANY at all. Never mind there are already two wilderness areas.

It says *"any National Conservation Area designation north of the area commonly known as Whitney Pockets, more technically known as the southern portion of Township 16 South, Range 70 East would be overbearing and unnecessary, as such area are not comparable in either presentation, historical or cultural value or recreational value, to areas such as Whitney Pockets or Gold Butte;"*

In other words, THIS city council is re-writing the boundary of the established and agreed upon National Conservation Area, essentially cutting it in half. At no time were any boundary issues discussed at the technical review meetings of April 7 or April 21 or the City Council meeting of April 14. This is out of bounds, un-vetted, and has never been discussed within the view of the public.

And … *"The roads throughout the Gold Butte complex shall not close at any time, day or night, even if the area is designated as a National Conservation Area, for any reason, excepting only acts of God, in which case the roads may be closed for bona fide emergency purposes for not longer than 24 hours."*

Dictating road closure timing for "acts of God?" Who made these guys civil engineers?

Or how about this statement *"the citizens and the Council of City of Mesquite do not want restrictions that would prevent accessing any part of the Gold Butte Complex by way of motorized vehicles, a necessary consequence of a wilderness designation."*

THIS city council speaks only for itself – not ALL citizens of Mesquite as regards the federal protection of Gold Butte. Council is ignoring citizens who WANT Gold Butte to get full federal protection … and there never were any roads in "wilderness."

Reality Check — Gold Butte does not belong to Mesquite or Bunkerville. It is federal land, managed by the federal government and it will stay that way …. despite Cliven Bundy's attempts to change it. Mesquite happens to be the Gateway City to an area of historical, ecological and wildlife significance.

Remember … the original agenda item placed by Attorney Sweetin on April 7 was cryptic and non-descriptive as if they were trying to sneak through a vote to vacate these resolutions without anyone noticing. Members of council acted **oh so offended** that we suggested it might be so … like watching a child deny his hand was in the cookie jar with crumbs all over his face.

Why even bring up the existing Gold Butte resolutions? According to Cindi Delaney THIS city council is peeved at the BLM for not extending comments on its Resource Management Plan. At the council meeting she said *"The BLM was up here ….. and like happens a lot of time in Clark County and the state of Nevada, Mesquite got treated like the ugly step child. They didn't want to give us a separate hearing or some time for people to come talk. We all got a little worked about it and we all were talking about it and I think Mr. Sweetin said maybe we should re-look at these things."*

The truth is that the BLM held open its comment period for 150 days including two extensions. THIS city council was too disorganized to pay any attention until the last minute and "got a little worked about" the BLM not accommodating ITS timetable. THEN when the BLM agreed to come and make a presentation, answer questions, and take public and City Council comments the City CANCELLED the meeting, saying it had received unspecified threats. But, of course, council never told us lowly citizens what those threats were or who they came from. Can any of us guess who might have threatened the City if it met with the BLM? Council eventually held the meeting after wasting time.

The citizens of Mesquite have a problem here. Either THIS city council is meeting secretly and illegally outside of the public view and changing things up, or we have one or two self serving bullying council members who dictate their terms to everyone else outside of regular order … or … we have a new city attorney who is off the reservation "doing his own thing" – bringing up these

resolutions that fuel controversy, then wording the new one to reflect his own beliefs and to try to drive his own agenda.

Which is it? We'll let you know when we get answers – principals of *Let's Talk Nevada* didn't get call backs or email responses on Friday, but expect to hear from city officials today.

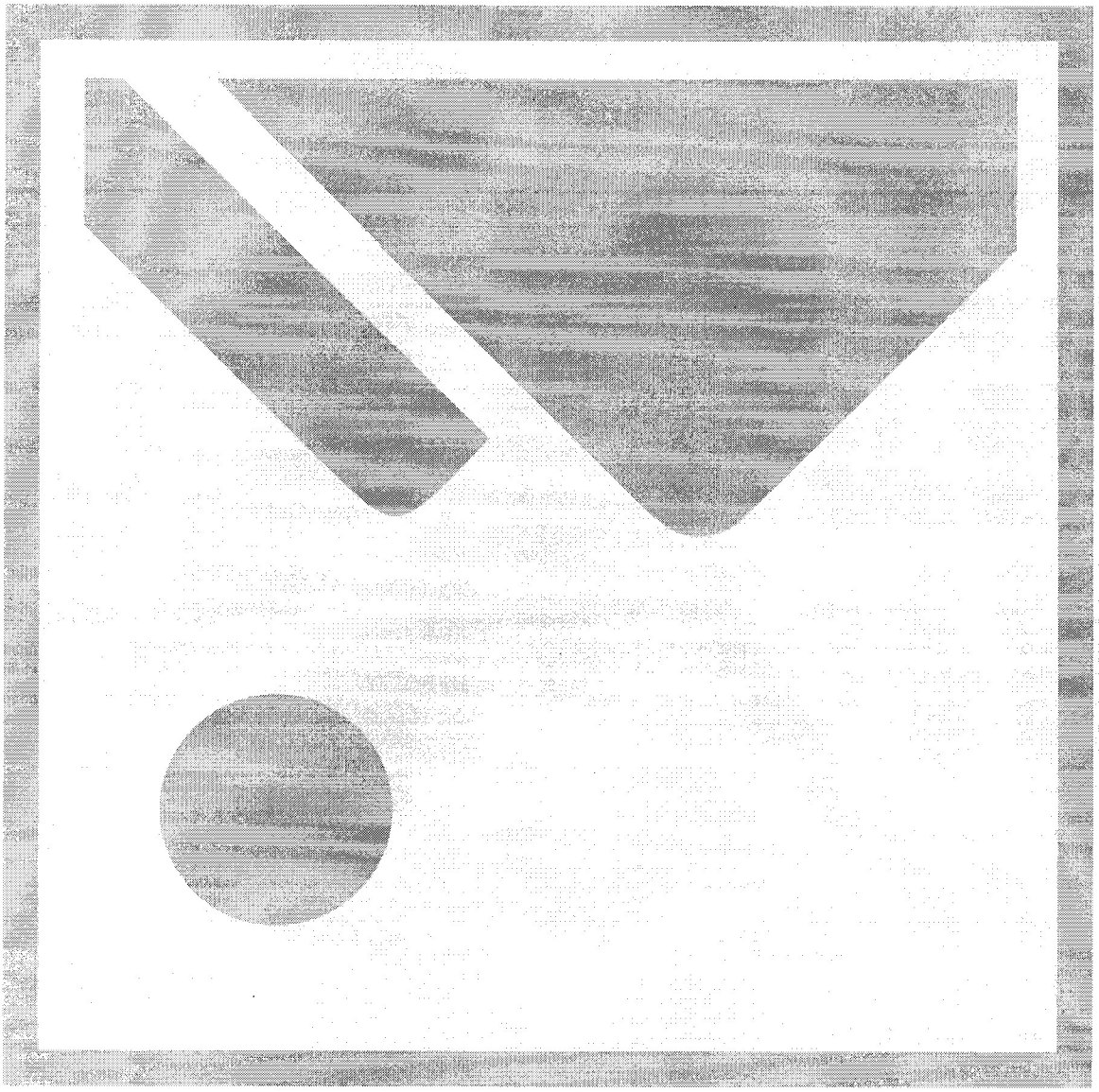
So …. here we go again. Tuesday at 5 p.m, Mesquite City Hall, 10 East Mesquite Boulevard. Be there to give your public comments on Gold Butte as National Conservation Area with Wilderness.
Phone is 702-346-5295.

Email to Council and Mayor is HERE.

http://letstalknevada.com/lets-bubble-wrap-mesquitenv-city-council/

Social Media Coverage: April 28, 2015 Mesquite City Council

https://storify.com/jackieomdb/nevadans-speak-up-to-protectgoldbutte-in-gomesquit



TWEETREACH SNAPSHOT FOR

#protectgoldbutte

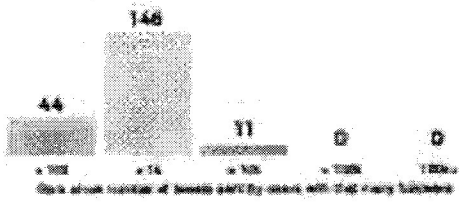
ESTIMATED REACH

18,184

ACCOUNTS REACHED

EXPOSURE

97,395 IMPRESSIONS

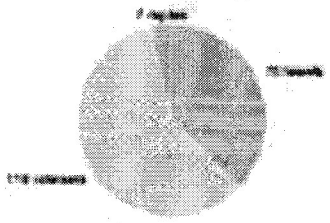


ACTIVITY

201 TWEETS

34 CONTRIBUTORS

8 DAYS



TOP CONTRIBUTORS

19.9k

@DianaSnavely

37

#goldbutte

45

#goldbutte

MOST RETWEETED TWEETS

7

6

5

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

What's going on?

Guest Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 27, 2015

What's going on with this City Council?

I attended the technical review meeting on Tuesday when members discussed wording of Resolution 867 on federal protection for Gold Butte. What was agreed is different than what is being presented at the City Council meeting on Tuesday night.

In particular, radical boundary changes for the National Conservation Area were added after the meeting. Gold Butte is a magnificent tourist magnet of historical, ecological and wildlife significance that has been and always will be managed by the federal government.

It is time for members of this City Council to quit indulging itself with self-serving games and start acting responsibly on behalf of this city.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/27/letters-editor/26481881/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Council to cut Gold Butte NCA protection

Writer: Staff Reporter
Published: April 27, 2015

The Mesquite City Council is scheduled to vote on a resolution regarding a National Conservation Area (NCA) designation for Gold Butte Tuesday at its regular meeting at 5 p.m.

Old resolutions that were approved by previous councils supported an NCA designation with possible wilderness areas. The current council, however, disagreed with those resolutions and decided not to support any wilderness areas in Gold Butte.

Council directed staff to draft a new resolution regarding support for an NCA in Gold Butte that will be reviewed at tonight's meeting. If the Council approves the resolution, the old one wills officially be repealed. If not, council can instruct staff to further amend the new resolution.

The new resolution includes language saying "a wilderness designation would be overly burdensome and impractical for the visitors of Gold Butte..." according to city documents found at www.mesquitenv.gov.
According to nps.gov, a wilderness designation is "the highest level of conservation protection for federal lands." It is an area where "the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain," the site says.

It further explains wilderness " as an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions..."

"Only Congress may designate wilderness or change the status of wilderness area," the site says.

A wilderness designation would prohibit permanent roads and generally does not allow motorized equipment, motor vehicles, mechanical transport, temporary roads, permanent structures or installations, according to nps.gov.

The new resolution also includes language regarding the potential road closures; restricting mechanical or motorized vehicles; potential Virgin Valley water rights; an advisory council being established, and a visitor's center being built inside Mesquite city limits.

The resolution also says a NCA designation north of Whitney Pockets would be overbearing and unnecessary.
Local special interest group Friends of Gold Butte (FOGB) disagrees with the proposed resolution according to a call to action posted on their Meetup.com page.

"In this resolution, the council is asserting that the area of the proposed NCA be cut in half," the page says. "This is a dangerous proposal. Drawing the boundary at Whitney Pockets would fail to protect habitat for the desert bighorn sheep and the desert tortoise."

The call to action asks supporters to write City Council members and to attend the meeting tonight to voice concerns.

In other scheduled business, council will hold a public hearing before voting whether to change the candidacy filing fees in Mesquite. Currently the fee is $25, one of the lowest in Clark County. It passed the fee will change to $100. If Council agrees to pass the change any future funds collected from the increase will be placed into the general fund, according to city documents.

The meeting begins at 5 p.m., on the second floor in council chambers in City Hall, 10 E. Mesquite Blvd.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/27/council-cut-gold-butte-nca-protection/26482945/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Chamber shows new video

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 23, 2015

The Mesquite-Area Chamber of Commerce showed its new video at the Community Forum Thusday. The video is designed to attract new business and tourism to Mesquite, according to Noel Smith, chamber president-elect.

The video was paid for with a 2013 grant from the Nevada Commission on Tourism (NCOT) and a matching grant from the Mesquite Regional Business Inc. (MRB), Smith said.
Outgoing MRB CEO Gaye Stockman said the grant from her agency was $1,000, making the cost of the production about $2,000.

Todd Simon, THS-Visuals Motion Pictures, spent three days in Mesquite last fall filming different areas in the city including casinos, the Mesquite Fine Arts Gallery, Mesquite Sports and Events Complex, Virgin Valley Heritage Museum, local dining, the Mesquite Community Theater and several golf courses.

The finished product shows Long Drive competition at the MSEC, classes at the art gallery, a family touring the museum, people playing and riding at the Awesome Adventures Park, skydiving, kayaking on the Virgin River, hiking in Gold Butte, dining, hotels, the Mesquite Toes-Tap Team practicing, gambling and more.
The production is packed with local people

The video is available on the chamber's new website, www.mesquitechamber.org. It's planned to be on the MRB website; NCOT, travelnevada.com; and Las Vegas Convention and Vistiors Authority's (LVCVA), www.lvcva.com, website as well.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/23/chamber-shows-new-video/26268453/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Richard Cooper
Published April 23, 2015

I am writing to voice my disagreement with the Mesquite City Council's decision to discuss repealing their resolution to support Gold Butte.

Events of the last year have made it obvious that local control and local ownership of our wild lands is not always in the best interest of the public and the taxpayer. Many times local control disrespects our land and our public will for the sake of an individual's profits.

A local rancher has used the public's land and refused to pay rent. Why should we trust this rancher to pay rent to the state or county or respect any other form of law and order. Especially when he can bully and intimidate local officials with his gang.

Please support free access to and protection of our federal, state and local public lands that support tourism and economic development for all Americans.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/23/letters-editor/26268097/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Tuesday Council Meeting to revisit Gold Butte Resolution

Writer: Stephanie Frehner
Published: April 23, 2015

According to Tuesday's Technical Review Meeting, the Mesquite City Council will revisit the potential Resolution 867 that would replace Resolutions 649 and 669, which supported designating Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area.

Through discussions, it was clear that there is still some fine-tuning that will need to take place, but the council will be addressing the new verbiage at the April 28 meeting. On the cover sheet for the item, it states that "The proposed resolution resolves that 649 and 669 be repealed and that Gold Butte be designated a National Conservation Area subject to: (1) no wilderness designation; (2) the roads remaining open; and (3) access to water not being restricted."

However, there are other areas in which the council will need to decide if they wish to have it included in the resolution including, but not limited to, a possible advisory council, location of a visitor's center (if one is built for Gold Butte), core values, designated roads and the "expression of a position relative to the Virgin Valley Water District." As per Aaron Baker, the City Liaison, an email received from VVWD Manager Kevin Brown stated that the VVWD was against the designation of Gold Butte as an NCA as the language exists in the current bill. The language that Brown and the VVWD would like in the Federal Bill will be provided in the Regular Agenda on the City's website, www.mesquitenv.gov, on Thursday morning. Council will also discuss specific road issues.

Other items on the agenda include a presentation from the Colorado River Commission (CRC) regarding power from the Hoover Dam and consideration of Resolution 866, supporting their draft establishing allocations from a resource pool for the Boulder Canyon Project (Hoover Dam).

Currently, the City of Mesquite uses two megawatts of power per month at $95 per megawatt hour (MWH). Reaching an agreement with the CRC could drop their fees to $65 per MWH. The CRC could approve the agreement, if reached, for up to 50 years, saving the city a substantial amount of money over time.

In other business for the next meeting, council received sufficient materials and information to move forward with an agreement and establishment related to Nevada Institute for Autonomous Systems (NIAS). The Institute will have access to 1400 acres near the Exit 112 area for testing.

Council will also hold a Public Hearing for the adoption of Bill No. 491 as Ordinance 491 which would amend Chapter 8 Elections application fees. Currently, the applicants for Council and Mayor pay a nominal $25, which is the minimum allowed by the State of Nevada. While there is no requirement to raise the fee, council will be discussing the possibility of doing so, bringing Mesquite up to the levels of other municipalities in the state that charge upwards of $100 per application.

The April 28 Council Meeting will begin at 5 p.m. at City Hall, 10 E. Mesquite Boulevard.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/tuesday-council-meeting-to-revisit-gold-butte-resolution/

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

Gold Butte full of treasures

Writer: Brandon Mullens
Published: April 20, 2015

The next time you hike or travel to Gold Butte, Red Rock, Whitney Pocket or any other prehistoric, or historic locations be cautious of its resources and treasures.

During a Friends of Gold Butte education series last week, Rayette Martin, executive director of Nevadans for Cultural Preservations, explained the cultural resources in Southern Nevada and how you can help protect them.

Martin, a cultural anthropologist with more than10 years of experience exploring the Nevada outdoors, said she has 18 years of supervisory and volunteer management experience. She enjoys working with the public.

Some prehistoric cultural resources that can be found throughout the southern end of the Silver State include rock shelters, hunting blinds, pottery, stone tools, rock art and agave roasting pits, Martin said. Historic cultural resources include mines, ghost towns, purple glass and even rusty cans.

"Pretty much anything that's been there for 50 years or more is a cultural resource," Martin said. "There's evidence that people have been here over 12,000 years or longer, (but) it's debatable. Some of the things that tell us this are the rock shelters, roasting pits that are quite common and the petroglyphs and pictographs found in Gold Butte."

There are lots of resources that people don't seem to notice or look interesting to them, such as arrowheads, Martin said. Cans that are scattered throughout desert are also very important to anthropologists.

"They tell us how many people were in the area, how long they stayed and what time frame they were there," she said. "You can also track the can scatters to see where people moved. You can also tell the diets of miners that were there."

Martin also said people like to collect the purple or blue glass they find scattered around but there's lots of new glass being manufactured and people don't know whether the glass is new or old.

"When in doubt, leave the glass there," she said.

A major reason why cultural resources and artifacts are important to Nevadans is because it belongs to all of us, she said. It's where future generations are going to live. It also belongs to the Native Americans.

"I've actually heard from some Native Americans that nature is a museum," Martin said. "That coming across those items and those places is part of the experience. They don't see museums the way we do, by having them in a building. So when you take an item away from its context, from the rock shelter, heat or landscape, it doesn't have the same meaning or significance."

Sadly, some artifacts are stolen; rock shelters are marked with graffiti. Some use rock sculptures for target practice or trash is burned, Martin said. The audience gasped when Martin showed rock art with more than a hundred sketched figures inside of a cave in the Red Rock area near Las Vegas that had been scratched out.

"They took so much time to scratch it out that they lost a finger nail," Martin said. "That's intentional, pre-meditated angry-type destruction."

Martin gave the crowd some tips and advice to protect historic areas and their resources.

- Take pictures not things.
- Stay on trails. Many cultural resources are very close to jeep and hiking trails. Leaving the trails in vehicles can cause damage to sensitive cultural areas.
- Enjoy the rock art without touching it. Oils from your hands can damage the art.
- Use extreme caution when visiting mines and buildings; many of them are unstable.

"The 'trash' is a part of us all, Native Americans and families of the pioneers," Martin said. "If you want to know about the treasure back then, you can tell by the trash."

If you see any suspicious activities in these historic sites, or damages, contact the NVFCP at 702-466-3013, or info@nvfcp.org. For more information, visit www.NVFCP.org.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/20/gold-butte-full-treasures/26096187/

A monumental push: Reid plans to designate two more areas for protection

Wrtier: Amber phillips
Published: April 19, 2015

Until late last year, environmentalists' and tourism officials' dream of Congress bestowing a national monument outside Las Vegas seemed like a long shot.

A bill to protect almost 23,000 acres of prehistoric fossil beds outside North Las Vegas had languished in Congress for several years.

But thanks in part to Sen. Harry Reid's behind-the-scenes jockeying in 2014, Tule Springs National Monument is becoming a reality.

Now Reid is pushing for two more national monuments in Nevada to protect more than 1 million acres of desert outside Las Vegas.

Three national monuments within a four-hour drive from the Strip would be beyond tourism officials' wildest dreams. But such a turn of events would be a nightmare for many Nevada Republicans, and they may not be able to stop it from happening.

What is a national monument?

Designation as a national monument offers one of the highest levels of federal protection for a swath of land in America. Congress or the president create monuments to protect land with historical or cultural significance. Examples include Mount Rushmore in South Dakota and Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C., where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

National monuments differ slightly from national parks in that the parks, such as the Grand Canyon, are created to protect educational or scenic land.

What does Reid want to protect?

Reid reintroduced a bill in January that would create a conservation area over 350,000 acres of desert scrub near Gold Butte, the mining ghost town northeast of Lake Mead. The area's colorful rocks, canyons and petroglyphs are popular with hikers, bikers and off-roaders.

Reid also reintroduced a bill that would withdraw 800,000 acres of land in Lincoln and Nye counties from oil and gas drilling. The move would ensure that Nevada artist Michael Heizer could protect "City," a miles-long Earth sculpture he has carved and built in the desert over decades.

Democratic Rep. Dina Titus recently introduced two similar bills in the House of Representatives. But the bills have almost no chance of advancing in Congress during Reid's remaining 21 months in office. His next-best option is to convince President Barack Obama to protect the land by designating it part of two new national monuments.

Why is this controversial?

The Republican-controlled Congress is reluctant to hand the federal government control of so much land and close it off to development, particularly energy development in rural Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties.

The Gold Butte proposal is particularly contentious because it covers the land where Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed standoff with federal officials last year.

Republican Sen. Dean Heller introduced legislation with Nevada's three House Republicans to take away the president's power to create national monuments.

"If it's something the state government wants, the local government wants, the federal government wants, that's fine," Heller said. "I just want things to go through the process."

But Reid appears to be forging ahead, making his case in public meetings and letters to administration officials. In February, he and Titus invited a high-ranking official from the Department of the Interior to a public meeting in Southern Nevada filled with supporters in favor of protecting the land.

"Legislation has always been Reid's priority, but he's not opposed to designations," Reid spokeswoman Kristen Orthman said.

What will happen?

There's a very real chance Reid could get his wish and see Obama designate two new national monuments in Southern Nevada before both leave office in January 2017.

Reid has gathered a diverse and powerful group of supporters: the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Nevada Resort Association, wilderness activists, MGM Resorts International CEO Jim Murren and Barrick Gold Corp.

The president, whose administration has designated 16 national monuments since 2009, tends to choose projects that have strong local support and a clear public input process, said Matt Keller, of the Wilderness Society.

"It's a challenge to move these things, and lawmakers have to find openings when they have them," Keller said.

Reid already is credited with creating Northern Nevada's Great Basin national park and more than 60 protected wilderness areas. Leaving a 30-year career in the U.S. Senate with three national monuments to his name would be the capstone of Reid's environmental legacy.

"These are our lands," he told KNPR. "They are federal lands. They belong to everybody in America."

http://m.lasvegassun.com/news/2015/apr/19/reid-making-monumental-push/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Protecting Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Kathryn McQuade
Published: April 16, 2015

When I first moved to Mesquite from the east, I really did not have an appreciation of the desert environment. I felt it was dry and baron and lacking diversity. Since moving here, I have made an effort to study and explore our area through reading and hiking. I now realize how very fragile our desert ecosystem is, and how difficult it is for the plants, animals and insects to survive and thrive in our harsh conditions. This appreciation for the fragility of our environment is why I am asking you to continue to support the protection of Gold Butte.

I have hiked through many portions of Gold Butte, and have seen first hand some of the destruction of the area through people's irresponsible littering of paper, plastic, home articles, tires, also going off trail with ATVs, shooting holes in ancient artifacts and leaving shotgun and bullet casings on the ground.

The current violations are evidence that Gold Butte will continue to be abused if we don't move to protect it. While the Federal Government is not always seen as the perfect custodian, it has far more resources available than State and Local Governments that are struggling today to balance budgets.

All the various outdoor constituents should be able to enjoy this wonderful area, but each must do it in a responsible and thoughtful manner, to preserve its beauty and health for everyone today and into the future... not just for the benefit of a few special interests. National Parks and federally protected areas receive the publicity and are drawing more and more tourist each year, particularly millenniums who prefer active vacations. This of course would be good for Mesquite, the city that is the gateway to Gold Butte.

So in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, an avid sportsman, a good businessman and exceptional leader:

"We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields and obstructing navigation."

"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

"Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us."

Your vote today is not just for the people in this room, but for future generations and how we as a city will be defined in the future. I ask you to vote to support protecting our area.

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

City supports NCA for Gold Butte

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 15, 2015

After being bombarded with comments for nearly 90 minutes Tuesday night on making Gold Butte a National Conservation Area (NCA), the Mesquite City Council voted to support the designation as long as there is no wilderness area connected to it.

City Councils in 2009 and 2010 had previously approved the support for the NCA "with wilderness," but this Council has a problem with the wilderness designation.

"These support virtually any legislation with a NCA designation," Councilman George Rapson said. "My problem is not with NCA, it's with wilderness."

Council passed a motion to draft a new resolution that supports legislation for a NCA designation but with no wilderness, no road closures and no restrictions on Virgin Valley water rights.

The old resolutions will be officially repealed should the new resolution be approved at the next City Council meeting, April 28 at 5 p.m.

Mesquite Mayor Al Litman prefaced the public hearing on Gold Butte by saying it had nothing to do with Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy and his battle with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over unpaid grazing fees.

Bundy last week held an anniversary celebration in Bunkerville to commemorate the group's alleged "victory" over the BLM.

However, several speakers brought Bundy into the discussion Tuesday night include two members of the Moapa Band of Paiutes.

Vickie Simmons of the Moapa Band disputed Bundy claim that his family has ancestral rights to the land and he shouldn't have to pay grazing fees.

"This is not Bundys' ancestral land; it is my tribe's ancestral land," Simmons said. "I support protection of Gold Butte. This will be no place to be should you turn these resolutions backward."

Former Mesquite City Councilman Karl Gustaveson said it's unfortunate that Gold Butte and the Bundys can't be separated into separate items because of the situation that attracted national attention last year.

"The Bundy situation was a real step backward for the community," he said. "I voted on both these resolutions as a positive. I'm very disappointed. People are going to look at it and think they (the City Council) agree with what happened a year ago. I don't agree with it and I hope the rest of you don't either."

Resident John Williams questioned why the item was even being considered.
"Who wants to overturn it?" Williams asked. "Today is the wrong day to do it. There is no worse PR move for the city than to be attached to Bundy."

Tony Barron agreed and said Gold Butte is not just the backyard of the city's pioneers. He said Gold Butte deserves protection.

"We can be known as the gateway to Gold Butte, or the gateway to Bunkerville," Barron said.
For more on Tuesday's Mesquite City Council meeting see Friday's edition of the Desert Valley Times online at www.thespectrum.com/Mesquite.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/15/city-supports-nca-gold-butte/25823187/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#MesquiteNV City Council Speaks on #ProtectGoldButte

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 15, 2015

More than 100 people packed Mesquite City Council Chambers Tuesday night. The majority of citizens were there to weigh in on whether the city should continue its support for Gold Butte to obtain National Conservation Area with Wilderness federal protection.

Mesquite City Council passed Resolution 649 in 2009 and Resolution 669 in 2010 affirming support. Resolution 669 was voted on again and approved in 2012. The resolutions were brought up for discussion because only one current council member, Geno Withelder, was on council when the resolutions were passed and the Bureau of Land Management is preparing its Lands Management Plan.

Currently Gold Butte is designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) but more resources to better manage the land will become available if it obtains the National Conservation Area with Wilderness federal designation.
Gold Butte is at the center of the federal government's conflict with Cliven Bundy over his illegal use of the land to graze about 900 head of cattle. BLM officers began a court ordered roundup of his cattle last spring which led to an influx of armed militia into the area to defend Bundy's claim to grazing rights. BLM officers were forced to withdraw from the area after a standoff closed the I-15 freeway and nearly led to a shoot-out on April 12, 2014. Reportedly, BLM officers no longer enter the area because of threats.

I counted 41 people who spoke on these resolutions, with 31 in favor of keeping them in place and 10 opposed. When someone asked how many people in the room were from Mesquite, more than ¾ of the audience raised their hands. Several others had traveled from Las Vegas and Henderson.

Speakers pointed out that hiking, camping and off road riding along with enjoying the beauty of Gold Butte is what brought them to the area. Several pleaded for the desert ecosystem to be protected and ancient artifacts be safeguarded.

Jaina Moan, Executive Director of Friends of Gold Butte, emphasized the importance of Gold Butte to Mesquite's local economy because communities within close proximity to federal lands see a boost in visitors and new residents.

Opponents to the resolutions largely complained about restrictions that would be imposed if Gold Butte was designated National Conservation Area with Wilderness. Brian Haviland of the Bunkerville Town Council reminded Mesquite City Council that Bunkerville opposes these resolutions. He stated that Gold Butte is part of Bunkerville's township, not Mesquite's.

Vicki Simmons of the Moapa Band of Paiutes told the crowd "it is not (Cliven) Bundy's ancestral land, it is my (family's) ancestral land." The crowd cheered.

Former Mesquite City Councilman Karl Gustavson said he is disappointed these resolutions were being re-visited during the one year anniversary of the Bundy-BLM conflict and he reiterated his support for Gold Butte's federal protection.

Upon completion of comments, each city council member made a statement about Gold Butte's designation as National Conservation with

Wilderness. In 2012, Councilmen Kraig Hafen and George Rapson voted to rescind Resolution 669. Each one explained why they had problems with the Wilderness Area but did not entirely oppose it being a National Conservation Area.

Councilman Rapson made a motion that these resolutions be rescinded and replaced by a new one that supported Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area, however specifying that no additional wilderness be added, all existing roads remain open and ensuring water rights be protected. Councilman Rich Green clarified that the existing resolutions would remain in place unless and until the new resolution passed. The second was made by Councilwoman Cindi Delaney.

Here is a video of each council person's statement. Councilman Geno Withelder participated by phone, so the video is audio. This is a hand-held camera from the audience.

During Closing Public Comments, Jaina Moan clarified what was in the NCA proposal and offered to work with City Council so the process of establishing Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness could move forward. She expressed confidence that everyone's concerns can be met.

http://letstalknevada.com/mesquitenv-city-council-speaks-on-protectgoldbutte/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Long meeting agenda draws out-of-towners

Writer: Stephanie Frehner
Published: April 15, 2015

Tuesday's City Council meeting brought a completely packed house, with over 130 in attendance. But it wasn't filled with locals concerned about the new library proposal or sale of land around Exit 118. No, it was out of town residents who claim to visit Mesquite for its location adjacent to Gold Butte.

The item on the agenda was to discuss the council's position on existing resolutions that showed support for turning Gold Butte into an NCA, or National Conservation Area. The existing Resolutions, #649 and #669 have been in effect since October 2009 when signed by then-Mayor Susan Holecheck. Five and a half years have passed without changes to the area, and with the recent developments with the Bureau of Land Management, city staff determined that it would be good to bring the resolutions back to council to discuss. There was no mention in the materials that any action would be taken, but the possibility was there.

For more than 90 minutes, attendees stood up and spoke for three minutes, sometimes more, of why they want Gold Butte protected and what it means to them. Some even went so far as to threaten that they would never come back to Mesquite if the council were to overturn the resolutions.

But then there was one tall gentleman who stood up and spoke his opposition to making Gold Butte an NCA. Brian Haviland, a member of the Bunkerville Town Board stated that "The BTAB is against wanting to have an NCA dedication in our area. The Gold Butte area is within the Bunkerville Township, it is our town… we do not feel it will help us." He was one of only a few who spoke in opposition of the support.

After the comments were finished each council member stated their position and concerns, most citing that they don't have a problem with the NCA portion on protection, but more with the wilderness aspect. That section allows for some unclear lines and undesirable regulations that would hurt those who want to enjoy the area.

Ultimately, the council voted unanimously to rescind the two resolutions once a new resolution with more specific details was approved, potentially at the next meeting.

Other business of Tuesday's meeting included approving talks with the Library District in how to proceed with building a new library at 105 W Mesquite Boulevard. Dr. Ronald Heezen, the Library District's Executive Director, was in attendance and stated that building the new 16,000 square foot library could be the boost that the city needs to bounce back from the recession. The land, which was purchased for $1.7 million dollars in 2009, is now only worth about $500,000. With it being empty, it's considered one of the 'eye sores' of the town.

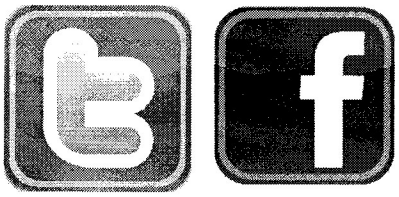
If things move along with the city and the Library District, the new $7 million library could be finished in as little as 1 ½ years. Heezen noted that newer libraries usually see a 200% increase in usage and that both the old and new buildings would be staffed by the district through their Outreach Services Division. He also noted that there are many possibilities for the design of the new

building, which the community may have some part of. For now, though, it looks like more talking is in store. With Councilman Rich Green's motion to approve, the rest of the council approved 5 – 0 to move forward with the talks.

The council also approved a new employment agreement with City Manager Andy Barton, which would increase his salary by 6% over a two-year period, or $3450 per year. Cited in the agenda materials, "there are sufficient funds in this year's CMO budget to accommodate this expense. This will be a budgeted expense for fiscal year 2015-2016." This is Barton's first raise since he was hired in April 2012, and there would be no changes to his benefits or duties.

The next regular City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28 at 5 p.m. Among agenda materials, were public notices of a City Council Budget Workshop on May 13 and 14 at 3 p.m. each day at City Hall and public comments will be accepted at those times. A copy of the tentative budget will be on file at the City Clerk and Treasurer's offices as well as the City's website at www.mesquitenv.gov. A formal Public Hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 19 at 3 p.m. at Council Chambers

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/long-meeting-agenda-draws-out-of-towners/



Social Media Coverage: April 14, 2015 Mesquite City Council

https://storify.com/jackieomdb/nevadans-speak-up-for-protectgoldbutte-in-gomesqui

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#MesquiteNV – The Gateway to Gold Butte

Writer: Jaina Moan
Published: April 13, 2015

On Tuesday, April 14, the Mesquite City Council will reexamine their support for protecting the Gold Butte region as a National Conservation Area (NCA). There are many reasons why this beautiful place should be protected, but the economic benefit of protecting Gold Butte should resonate with everyone who cares about Mesquite. As the "Gateway to Gold Butte," Mesquite will attract both new visitors and new residents and the economic gains to the community will be sustaining for generations.

The first boost Mesquite will see are the direct benefits from increased numbers of tourists who will travel to the area to visit Gold Butte. These initial, curious visitors will have heard about the recent national recognition and permanent protection for Gold Butte and will be drawn to the excitement of exploring its natural and cultural resources. Most of these visitors will pass though Mesquite. They will buy gas, food, drinks and gear as they prepare for a day of exploration. Some visitors will stay the night or several nights. They will combine a visit to Gold Butte with a round of golf on Mesquite's picturesque courses and enjoy the gaming opportunities in Mesquite casinos. They will buy souvenirs and leave with fond memories of their visit. Some will likely return to explore more areas in Gold Butte.

Over time, as more people hear about Gold Butte and its beauty, more visitors will be attracted to the region, generating additional economic gains for the City of Mesquite. Jobs will be created to support more tourists, new businesses and restaurants will open, and tax revenue will increase.

A permanent protection for Gold Butte will also attract new residents. People like to live in areas that are surrounded by natural beauty. All Mesquite residents appreciate the dramatic landscapes such as Flat Top Mesa and the Virgin Mountains. Permanently protecting Gold Butte will safeguard these dramatic vistas and open spaces, providing one more compelling reason to call Mesquite home. A study released in March 2014 by the Center for Western Priorities reported that retirees are three times more likely to move to counties that have a higher percentage of protected lands. The report further estimated that between 2000 and 2010, over 65,000 jobs have been created in Nevada to support retirees—these jobs were created in a range of industries including health care, housing, construction, banking, and entertainment (http://westernpriorities.org/goldenrush/).

Are you skeptical about the promise of such economic gains? Studies have shown that Americans love to spend time outdoors and our passion for hiking, camping, hunting, OHV riding, and birding contributes significantly to our economy. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that consumer spending in the U.S. outdoor recreation industry in 2012 totaled 646 billion dollars and supported 6.1 million jobs. In Nevada alone, the outdoor recreation industry contributed 14.9 billion dollars, supported 148,000 jobs, and raised 1 billion dollars in tax revenue (http://outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/recreation/economy.html).

There are many examples of how other gateway communities have benefited by proximity to protected lands. Headwaters Economics, an independent non-profit research group, has been

tracking the economic performance of seventeen western communities that are located adjacent to newly created national monuments (designated between 1982 and 2011). Their analysis looks at four indicators of economic growth: population, employment, personal income, and per-capita income. Their results show that all seventeen communities experienced economic growth in these areas following the designation of the national monument in their region (http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/reports/national-monuments).

Protected lands are also attractive to international tourists. Earlier this year, the *Las Vegas Review Journal* reported that the Nevada Commission of Tourism is focusing its outreach efforts to attract more international visitors to rural Nevada (http://www.reviewjournal.com/business/tourism/rural-nevada-seen-growing-international-tourist-draw). Travelers from other countries appreciate the unique attractions that Nevada offers and protected lands are at the top of the list. It is easy to see why. Open, wild land is becoming increasingly rare in or world. The United States is one of only a few countries that has set aside land for the purpose of preservation. Our decision to protect Gold Butte today will result in a sustainable economic benefit as more people travel to experience land in its pristine state.

Permanent protection of Gold Butte will provide a reliable and sustaining economic benefit for the City of Mesquite and its residents. It is an important resource for our community. We have the opportunity to ensure that it stays that way for our future generations to benefit from and enjoy. Please attend the Mesquite City Council meeting on Tuesday evening to voice your support for permanently protecting Gold Butte.

Jaina Moan is the Executive Director for Friends of Gold Butte, a non-profit organization working to achieve permanent protection for Gold Butte's biological, geological and cultural resources through education, community outreach and advocacy. www.friendsofgoldbutte.org

http://letstalknevada.com/mesquitenv-the-gateway-to-gold-butte/

Desert Valley Times
Virgin Valley's Independent Newspaper

City may flip on Gold Butte designation

Writer: Staff Writer
Published: April, 12, 2015

The Mesquite City Council is scheduled to vote Tuesday on whether to continue supporting Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area or withdraw previously approved backing for the designation. Written as "Discussion and Possible Action on Resolution 649 and Resolution 669," it's easily missed on Tuesday's regular council meeting agenda.

Resolution 649, passed in October 2009, shows support for legislation deeming Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with wilderness.

"Now, therefore, it is hereby resolved by the mayor and City Council (that) the City of Mesquite, Nevada, supports the designation of the Gold Butte Complex as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness," the resolution says. "The city further urges Congress to enact these designations and mandate that an effective management plan be implemented that secures the interests of neighboring jurisdictions."

Resolution 669, passed in May 2010, also supports the NCA designation but includes a list of inclusions seeking a committee to start drafting legislative language for the NCA designation as well as other things.

The council doesn't have to alter any previously-passed resolution Tuesday night. It can amend them, leave them alone or change the opinion.

In other business, the Council has scheduled a public hearing on a bill that would change the residency requirement to be eligible for the office of mayor or city council from one year to two. The bill is designed to ensure candidates for mayor or City Council are "thoroughly familiar with the City of Mesquite, its issues and its citizens," according to background documents.

The Council has also scheduled a public hearing Tuesday on whether there should be an increase in candidacy filing fees. The fees haven't been reviewed or adjusted since 1999, making them among the lowest in Clark County, said background documents.

City staff recommends raising the filing fee to $100 from its present $25.

This bill also changes the time when candidates must file to run to the first two weeks of March in the election year. The statute now says no more than 70 days, but no less than 60 days before the primary election.

In other agenda matters, the Council will hear from Las Vegas-Clark County Library District representatives on building a new library on the vacant lot in front of the current library and vote for or against supporting a new facility.

The vote will not bind the city in any way.

The new facility would come at no cost to the city.

The meeting begins at 5 p.m., at City Hall, 10 E. Mesquite Blvd.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/13/city-may-flip-gold-butte-designation/25734699/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

Bye, Bye BLM?

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 10, 2015

The Mesquite City Council will vote on Tuesday to withdraw the city's support for Gold Butte to be federally protected as a National Conservation Area.

This is a big deal.

I'm guessing you missed the discussion on what it means for our community, which you'd think we should have since the Virgin Valley has gained national notoriety for armed civilian militia driving out the federal government from Gold Butte. Not to mention that BLM officers continue to be threatened if they enter the area.

"Yo, Cliven Bundy, we're with you, bro."

It was listed on the City Council's administrative agenda on Tuesday as *"Discussion and Possible Action on Resolution 649 and Resolution 669."* When it came up for a brief discussion, no one whispered the words "Gold Butte" and it seemed a little cryptic. So I stopped City Attorney Bob Sweetin as he was leaving the technical review meeting to confirm that these were the Gold Butte resolutions and asked which city council persons requested it be put on the agenda. He wouldn't name names but explained that only Geno Witthelder was on the council when these resolutions passed and it is part of the record used by the Bureau of Land Management in its recent Land Management Plan. Hence, these initiatives are being re-visited.

Yes, new people get elected each go-around when voters decide who to support based on candidates' positions. Four of six city council persons and mayor were on the ballot in 2013. I'm guessing you missed the candidates debate on whether the city should continue its support for Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness. I did. That's because it was old news, a done deal. But that was before Cousin Cliven led an armed civilian insurrection against the federal government to keep this land all in the family. Now Mesquite City Council will decide – again – on whether to rescind these resolutions.

"We've got your back, buddy Bundy."

On October 27, 2009 Resolution 649 HERE was adopted that says City Council of the City of Mesquite supports federal legislative designation of Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness. Read Minutes HERE. It was a unanimous vote in favor with Councilpersons Donna Fairchild, Geno Witthelder, Karl Gustavson, David Bennett and Randy Ence voting yes.

On May 11, 2010 Resolution 669 HERE was passed which updated the city's preferences on the management of this land. It re-affirms the City of Mesquite's support for Gold Butte to be protected as a National Conservation Area. Read Minutes HERE. City council members who voted in favor of Resolution 669 were Geno Witthelder, Randy Ence, Donna Fairchild and David Bennett. Karl Gustavson voted no.

You might remember another vote, whether to rescind Resolution 669, when Mesquite City Council voted on April 24, 2012. Mayor Mark Wier cast the deciding vote keep the resolution in place. Councilmen Kraig Hafen and George Rapson voted to rescind it. Councilmen Karl Gustavson and Al Litman voted to let it stand. Councilman Geno

Witthelder was absent. You can read the minutes from that meeting HERE.

What has changed since 2009, 2010 and 2012? Cliven Bundy's shameful militia showdown with the federal government, and thus Councilman Kraig Hafen has rounded up the votes on City Council to rescind these two resolutions. This is the local component in an apparent overall land grab strategy at the state and federal level.
"Our great grand pappies settled this land – its ours!"

This is how we got here. The great reservoir of support for Gold Butte to be federally protected, as reflected in that unanimous city council vote in 2009, was drained through a misinformation campaign and intense lobbying effort by the opposition. Pioneer family politicians like Cresent Hardy, Kraig Hafen (and others) were infuriated by those resolutions and have lobbied against Gold Butte federal protection ever since.

Mesquite used to call itself "The Gateway to Gold Butte." Festivals and hiking tours were organized to draw tourists and educate locals about the unique beauty and history of the area. It is a positive attribute to promote our city. Supporters did not effectively re-gain support of business leaders or citizens in response to that relentless opposition campaign. Gold Butte became a contentious issue and more than one person told me they were tired of arguing over it. People became confused.

The backdrop to this was Cliven Bundy who continues to defy court orders to remove his cows from Gold Butte. He has considerable support in Bunkerville and Moapa Valley ... but we're talking about Mesquite where golf course owners, casino owners, businesses and homeowners have made a tremendous economic investment. Mesquite is the economic driver of the Virgin Valley.

The prudent and conservative thing to do is keep Resolutions 649 and 669 in place ... which was re-affirmed as recently as 2012. That was only one city council election ago.

Why does this argument matter? Either our Open Land is protected under the jurisdiction of the federal government for future generations to enjoy – to camp, to ride, to hike, to visit. Or it isn't. We choose to protect its historical value, its art and artifacts, its wildlife, its ecological balance. Or we don't. Gold Butte is particularly critical to a gateway city like Mesquite that relies on tourism, families and retirees to keep the economy humming along. Without Gold Butte, we lose a unique treasure that draws increasing numbers of visitors and new residents to our city.

When people say to me, "well, I don't like the federal government and its restrictions," I explain that local control will lead to private ownership and the land will be taken away from everyone. Like ... DUH! The federal government has been preserving open space for more than a century now. It's a tourism magnet, revenue enhancer and property value builder.

Now, dear reader, you have a choice. You can retreat into your cocoon of apathy and let Cliven Bundy win this one without debate, or you can send emails to our city council and mayor and tell them that Gold Butte is a natural treasure and must be protected, and that the city should keep Resolutions 649 and 669 in place. And/or you can call and/or you can show up at City Hall Tuesday at 5 p.m. and speak during public comments at the beginning of the meeting — you've got three minutes max.

You will hear each one of our council members say this has nothing to do with Cliven Bundy. WRONG. It has EVERYTHING to do with Cliven Bundy. His destructive crusade is a visible backdrop to this vote on Tuesday.

My goodness! Look at the calendar! It is one year THIS VERY WEEK when armed militiamen chased BLM federal officers through the streets of Mesquite when they agreed to stand down to avoid a shootout with civilian militia along the I-15. All because Cliven defied court orders, wouldn't remove his cattle from Gold Butte and called in armed civilians to protect him. I heard excuses from elected Mesquite officials that this was a Bunkerville issue and a federal issue and the City

couldn't do a thing. Now they will vote on whether to join the Bundy choir of anti-government zealots right after Cliven's big celebration party out at the ranch.
Is this furthering Mesquite's positive reputation? I'm guessing you missed the condemnation of Bundy's actions by our city council and mayor. I did, too.

http://letstalknevada.com/bye-bye-blm/

"Happy Anniversary, Cliven. We've got a present for you in honor of your victory over the feds." Will that be the message Tuesday night? Or will wiser heads prevail?

LAS VEGAS WEEKLY

Bird and Hike's Jim Boone on exploring—and championing—Nevada's wilderness

Writer: Kristen Peterson
Published: April 1, 2015

It's inevitable that searching the Internet for Southern Nevada hikes, geology or birding will land you on Jim Boone's birdandhike.com. The same can be said for online hunts regarding snakes in Nevada or bristlecone pine on Mount Charleston. Need to navigate Wilson's Pimple Loop Trail at Red Rock? Bird and Hike can help with that, too. Boone is ubiquitous. A birder with a Ph.D. in ecology, he's covered much of the region's wilderness areas, studied its mammals, vegetation, geology and vistas, then shared his findings online, providing anything from GPS coordinates and access routes to bird species and trail levels of difficulty. Launching the site in 2002 to counter the lack of web-available public information, the former senior scientist with the Yucca Mountain Project comes with a background in biology, rock climbing and park rangering. Most recently, he's assisted the Conservation Lands Foundation on informative tours to Basin and Range as part of the effort to promote conservation there.

You pretty much have this Valley covered. Is there any hike you haven't done? All the places in between. There are an infinite number of places to hike. Every ridge, every canyon, every wash and every mountaintop.

What's your favorite? There are so many ways to judge your favorite. If your favorite is the place you go back to the most, Goldstrike Hot Springs would probably fit. But I think the area I like the most is the Sheep Range. It's wild and remote, and it's well-managed, so you don't have people driving their ATVs all over the desert. And it's quiet. It's the kind of the thing we would hope could happen at Gold Butte.

What is the status of Gold Butte? Gold Butte has been on the radar for conservation for quite some time. There are a lot of nice, wide-open spaces out there, but it's a pretty heavily used area by off-roaders. While most off-roaders are responsible people, there are a few that will go out there and drive wild, run over the bushes and break up the soil crust, run over tortoises and damage rock art sites and other cultural sites.

Is it a matter of educating or enforcing? It's both. Part of the goal of protecting Gold Butte is to get some small amount of monitoring out there by some land management agency people. There are vast, open spaces with grand scenery and tall mountains and broad valleys and wild erosional patterns in the rocks and world-class archeological sites with just amazing amounts of rock art. It's just pristine

Who are you trying to reach with your website? Those who have never gone out and have no idea what is out there. The way I write the descriptions is far more detailed than your average hiker might need, but I'm trying to demystify the outdoors for the people who haven't been there before.

Do crowds at these geographic and prehistoric cultural sites concern you? It's a conundrum that you've got to have people that get out and see it so they'll fall in love with it and be willing to protect it. But on the other hand, huge crowds of people just by their simple presence degrade the area.

I'm guessing Basin and Range is too distant and remote to be adversely affected by recreation? That's the same thing people said about Central Park. When Central Park was developed it was way out in the sticks, and who would ever go out there? It's that really, really long-range vision. We've got to get out in these faraway places and set them up as conservation lands so they don't just get whittled away over time.

How do visitors respond to Basin and Range?
They stand in the basin, they look this way and see forever into the distance, they turn that way and see forever into the distance and they come away with, 'Ya know, I never thought a basin could be so beautiful,' because usually a basin is what you're driving through to get somewhere else.

http://lasvegasweekly.com/as-we-see-it/weekly-qa/2015/apr/01/bird-and-hike-jim-boone-hiking-las-vegas/

What's in store for Nevada after Harry Reid retires

Writers: Yesenia Amaro, Ben Botkin, Henry Brean, Jennifer Robison, Howard Stutz, Steve Tetreault and Richard N. Velotta
Published: March 28, 2015

U.S. Sen. Harry Reid's Friday announcement that he will not seek re-election in 2016 left many Nevadans wondering what the future holds for the Silver State after its most powerful voice at home and in Washington passes from the scene.

In ways big and small, Reid was known to bring home the bacon for Nevada projects he liked — and to work tirelessly to kill those he did not.

Here's a look at Reid's role in key Nevada issues, and what the future may hold without him:

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

Reid's announcement sets off a 22-month race between those who hope he can drive the final nails into the coffin of Yucca Mountain before he leaves, and those who see an opportunity to revive the mothballed nuclear waste project after his departure, or even before.

Making use of his seniority and clout, Reid almost singlehandedly relegated the proposed industrial site and underground disposal system for radioactive material to the dustbin of history. On Friday, he repeated that "Yucca Mountain is dead," a disposal plan now outdated and too expensive to revive.

The emergence of Republican majorities on both sides of Congress has sparked talk of a Yucca comeback but it remains to be seen whether that has legs or is merely a dead-cat bounce.

"I can well imagine somebody deciding that money should be spent for the license to go forward," opening years of new technical battles and litigation, said Mary Olson, Southeast director of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, an environmental advocacy group.

"We are ready, willing and able to go more rounds on this," Olson said.

But without Reid, she said, "We'll have to go to 10,000 hammers instead of one."

David Blee, executive director of the U.S. Nuclear Infrastructure Council, said Reid may be tested anew on Yucca Mountain before he leaves office.

"He's been a polarizing force on the nuclear energy front," Blee said. "The way he has operated was by sheer power. The fact he is a lame-duck leader is going to have a bearing."

Bob Halstead, director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, said the state will maintain a vigorous fight against a project it views as unsafe and threatening to the Nevada economy.

"Sen. Reid's announcement does not change the state's strategy on legal and regulatory matters and it does not change our chances of winning on the safety issues" in any license proceeding, Halstead said.

WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Reid used his clout in Washington to help keep water flowing to constituents and money flowing to water agencies back home.

"Sen. Reid has been a champion for water issues not only in Southern Nevada but across the state," said John Entsminger, general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

Entsminger said Reid's "seminal" achievement for water and the environment in the state was the 1998 passage of the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. The legislation, since attacked by critics as classic pork-barrel politics, freed federal land for sale to developers and directed the proceeds to state-level conservation and other initiatives.

Ten percent of that money was earmarked for new water infrastructure to serve the growing community. To date, the authority's share of SNPLMA totals roughly $288 million.

Reid has also pushed legislation to protect Lake Tahoe, settle disputes on the Walker and Truckee rivers, untangle lawsuits blocking conservation work on the Colorado River, and, most recently, pump federal money into a pilot project aimed at keeping more water in Lake Mead.

Entsminger doesn't expect Reid's focus on water to change over the next 22 months.

"I think we can count on the senator to continue to call attention to the drought on the river and in California," he said.

As for life after Reid, the valley's top water manager remains hopeful that Nevada's loss of political clout won't hurt its standing on the Colorado River.

PUBLIC LANDS

Conservationists had a strong ally in Reid.

The 22,650-acre Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument became a reality in December, when President Barack Obama signed legislation protecting the fossil-rich area that Reid had championed.

He also had a hand in designating millions of acres as wilderness.

Reid's role extended well beyond Nevada. He also took a strong stance against efforts to weaken or scrap the federal Antiquities Act, which allows the president to declare an area a national monument without congressional approval.

"I am certain that after the announcement phones were ringing among conservationists about Sen. Reid's announcement of retirement," said Lynn Davis, senior program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association's Nevada field office. "There is no question this reverberated not only among Nevadans, but also among conservationists around the country."

Conservationists hope Reid's successor will inherit his approach of getting all parties at the table on public lands issues.

Reid may also leave some unfinished business, including legislation to designate 350,000 acres in Gold Butte northeast of Las Vegas as a national conservation area. The vast swath of land has petroglyphs, sandstone ridges and shuttered mine sites. Republicans in Congress oppose the designation, but longtime conservationist John Hiatt said he wouldn't be surprised if Reid uses the coming 22 months to end-run his opposition.

"It could happen," Hiatt said. "It could be designated as a national monument by the president. I'm sure that's still in his bag of tricks."

GAMING

The American Gaming Association told its members Friday the casino industry can't wait until Reid's last day in Washington to find a "new champion."

A few hours after Reid's announcement, AGA CEO Geoff Freeman sent a missive touting Reid's leadership, but also addressed key imperatives with the pending retirement.

Freeman said one person can't replicate Reid's efforts.

"This is going to take 30 people to protect and promote the industry," Freeman said. "We can always count on the Nevada delegation, but it's also time for champions to emerge from other gaming states, such as Pennsylvania, Iowa, Ohio and Illinois. There are 1.7 million jobs tied to gaming and we need to protect those jobs."

During Reid's 2010 re-election campaign, MGM Resorts International executives credited him with saving the financially troubled CityCenter development and the 22,000 construction and resort jobs associated with the project. Reid used his influence as Senate majority leader to help keep the CityCenter's financial backers from walking away from the Strip development during the financial industry's meltdown.

Las Vegas Sands Corp. Senior Vice President of Government Affairs Andy Abboud agreed with Freeman's assessment.

"I think it spreads out among several people," Abboud said. "He was the most respected member in either the House or the Senate on gaming issues. In that regards, he's irreplaceable."

Freeman said Reid helped "transform gaming" into today's industry. But with casinos in 40 states, the stakeholders have grown.

"Sen. Reid has been an instrumental champion of gaming and it will require a much larger group of casino proponents to rival his passion and effectiveness," Freeman said.

On Friday, Reid indicated during an interview on KNPR's State of Nevada that he "wouldn't stand in the way" of the Senate considering legislation that would ban online gaming during his final months in office.

IMMIGRATION

Luz Marina Mosquera, director at Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional in Las Vegas, said Reid's retirement could have an impact on immigration reform.

Mosquera credits Reid with playing a role President Barack Obama's actions on immigration, such as his November executive action that would prevent millions of people in the country illegally from being deported. In 2012, Obama also used his executive power to allow young people in the country illegally, known as DREAMers, to stay and work in the country without fear of deportation.

Reid was always pressing for immigration reform, Mosquera said.

"He was someone who aside from representing us as Nevada, he was advocating for immigrants," she said Friday. "We all got very sad. Now who is going to help us? We are no longer going to have him there for our state and for our immigrant community."

And the work on immigration is not done.

"The battle continues," she said. "The battle isn't done."

TRANSPORTATION

Southern Nevada transportation leaders say they'll continue to enjoy the relationship they've had with other members of Nevada's congressional delegation, but the loss of Reid and his seniority will make securing infrastructure funding a little harder.

Tom Skancke, a member of the Nevada Transportation board and an advocate for a high-speed rail network, said state officials probably won't realize until he's gone how valuable Reid has been as an advocate for state projects.

"His influence will be substantially missed," Skancke said. "He's been an advocate for infrastructure of all kinds throughout his career and he's been a supporter of high-speed rail for more than 30 years. It's not going to be easy to fill those shoes."

In an interview aired by Nevada Public Radio on Friday, Reid said he's still hopeful that he could help secure a Federal Railroad Administration loan

for construction of a high-speed line between Southern California and Las Vegas. But if it doesn't happen by September, he said, "I'm afraid we've lost it."

Tina Quigley, general manager of the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, said Reid has been an example for other members of the state's congressional delegation on how to advocate on behalf of a constituency on transportation matters.

"It's going to be a big loss," Quigley said. "But regardless of your politics, you can't deny that Harry Reid brought millions of transportation dollars to Southern Nevada throughout his career."

Quigley said Reid and four other members of the delegation will be speakers at next month's groundbreaking for the I-11 Boulder City Bypass project. Noting the support and help from other members of the delegation, Quigley said, "We'll be in good hands."

GREEN ENERGY

Nevada's clean energy industry has had no stronger supporter than Reid, who often said the Silver State's rich solar, geothermal and wind resources could make it the "Saudi Arabia of renewable energy."

But it's taken the senator's own brand of power to push the state toward green energy.

Most notably, Reid challenged NV Energy's plans to build or buy as much as 4,500 megawatts of coal generation in 2006, said Lydia Ball, a Las Vegas-based consultant to the Clean Energy Project and a former Reid aide. That included fighting NV Energy's $5 billion, 1,500-megawatt Ely Energy Center, which the utility put on indefinite hold in 2009.

"Sen. Reid was the one who was willing to lead that conversation and say, 'This isn't the direction Nevada should be going,' " Ball said. "He really opened it up to allow solar in particular to develop."

Reid's efforts didn't always work out.

After claiming in 2012 that NV Energy hadn't "done enough to allow renewable energy to thrive," Reid pressed the utility to buy power from a proposed $5 billion solar project that Chinese company ENN planned near Laughlin. But the utility already exceeded the state's requirements on its renewable portfolio, and there was no guarantee the Public Utilities Commission would allow a purchase agreement. The ENN plant never materialized.

Still, Nevada's solar-industry jobs more than doubled in 2014, making it the country's fastest-growing state for solar employment, the Solar Foundation reported in February. Nevada ranked No. 7 for solar jobs, with 5,900 positions, and No. 1 for jobs per capita.

What's more, NV Energy got 18 percent of its generation from renewables in 2013, up from less than 5 percent in 2003, and is on track to receive at least 25 percent of its power from green energy by 2025.

"We're all feeling bittersweet. We owe Sen. Reid a debt of gratitude for his leadership," Ball said. "You can't help but think about how we're losing our strongest, biggest, oldest champion."

Ball and NV Energy officials agreed the sector is now strong enough to support itself after Reid retires.

"Sen. Reid has been a champion of Nevada's energy independence. He's been an advocate for Nevada's investments in renewable energy and efficient natural gas generation," said Paul Caudill, NV Energy's president and CEO. "His leadership was instrumental in bringing the One Nevada transmission line to fruition, which is yielding daily benefits to our customers. These projects are among his legacies, and will ensure that our state continues to pursue a thriving sustainable energy future for all Nevadans."

Reid will use his remaining months in office to advocate for clean energy. He's scheduled to speak

on the topic at an April luncheon of the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas/what-s-store-nevada-after-harry-reid-retires

What now? Here's how Harry Reid will likely spend his last months in the Senate

Writer: Amber Phillips
Published: March 28, 2015

For Sen. Harry Reid, it's legacy time. In announcing his retirement Friday, Nevada's senior Democrat said he wanted to leave while he was ahead.

"I want to go out at the top of my game," Reid said in an interview the same day with Nevada Public Radio.
These final two years in the Senate are critical for Reid to ensure that's what happens. Without a grueling 20-month campaign, Reid has a chance to cement his legacy in the state in everything from transportation to wind farms.

Here's some of what he's likely to focus on in the final two years of a 34-year career in Congress:

Renewable energy
The same day Reid announced his retirement, another announcement circulated in Las Vegas: In two weeks, Reid would be headlining a talk there on the clean energy economy.

It was a sign of Reid's continued commitment to shutting down Nevada's coal economy while building up its wind, solar and geothermal industry.

He helped secure hundreds of millions of dollars in the 2009 economic stimulus bill to build renewable projects in the state and has helped upgrade Nevada's grid through transmission lines to ship solar, wind and geothermal energy generated in the desert to cities like Los Angeles.

Reid said Friday he planned to fight in Congress to maintain tax cuts for the renewable energy industry. "I am going to continue doing everything I can to have a cleaner source of energy for electricity production, and one really good way to do that is with solar," he said.

For his work in renewable energy and much more, Reid "deserves a monument," said Nevada Democrat and confidante Billy Vassiliadis.

Public lands
Reid is an environmentalist at heart, and he's worked to secure hundreds of thousands of acres of wilderness in Nevada for federal protection.

"I am so moved by what he's done for Nevada," said Neil Kornze, a former Reid aide and the director of the Bureau of Land Management, the agency that manages most of the public land in the state. "I look at the maps of the West, specifically the map of Nevada, and I see Harry Reid's mark in every county, in every community."

And the entire Colorado River basin can thank Reid, who helped maneuver a behind-the-scenes water treaty with Mexico, said former Las Vegas water czar, Pat Mulroy.

"There wouldn't be a reservoir on the All American Canal if it wasn't for Sen. Reid," she said.

The job's not over: Reid has filed two bills in the Senate — not without controversy — that would protect thousands more just a few hours in and around Clark County.

One is the Gold Butte Basin and Range, which Reid waxed about Friday:

"Gold Butte is a beautiful place not far out of Las Vegas at all. I have been there, such wonderful archaeological wonder with hieroglyphics on those rocks it is really a beautiful place and we need to protect that because with the tremendous growth in Las Vegas area that will be destroyed."

Yucca Mountain

"Yucca Mountain is dead," Reid also declared Friday. "It will never be a high-level nuclear repository."

As talks to restart the project gained momentum in Congress, this was one of several times in the past few weeks Reid has felt compelled to declare dead a 1980s law consigning the Nevada desert to store the nation's commercial nuclear waste.

Reid has been influential in putting the brakes on Yucca Mountain, and he indicated Friday he would continue serving as a roadblock for it. Even as he was planning his retirement announcement, Reid said he had lunch with the Secretary of Energy this week, who also "doesn't want it to happen."

Reid pointed out he would still be able to block legislation in the Senate for the next two years.

"So there is going to be no legislation passed to either create Yucca Mountain or do anything to change how it now exists."

The Economy

As President Barack Obama mentioned when he phoned into KNPR to surprise Reid, the then-Senate majority leader helped stop the nation from spiraling into a depression in the 2008 economic meltdown. Back home, Reid was part of boardroom-level negotiations back home to save CityCenter, the $9.2 billion MGM Resorts development project that threatened to implode and take Las Vegas down with it.

As Nevada's economy is on the rebound, Reid said Friday he believed a critical component of protecting its growth was protecting collective bargaining rights and labor power in the workplace.

"I think that we need to strengthen the middle class, and one reason to do that is through organizing workers so that they get good working conditions, good wages, good benefits," he said.

In fact, Reid's relationship with organized labor was a cornerstone in building the state's Democratic Party. Unions were the foundation of his 2010 re-election win against Sharron Angle. They bused voters to the polls and funneled money to his campaign.

Reid's relationships with unions weren't always affectionate.

National trade groups urged Reid and Senate Democrats to approve the Keystone XL pipeline project. Reid blocked Keystone legislation from passing while he was majority leader. Unions also slammed him for his role in passing the Affordable Care Act, health care reform that Reid's staff was influential in crafting. This month marked the fifth anniversary of the law, known as Obamacare. Reid was one of few lawmakers who publicly praised the law for helping more than 8 million Americans enroll in health care plans.

Politics

The godfather of the modern-day Nevada Democratic Party doesn't appear to be stepping down from one of his favorite roles anytime soon.

He made sure Friday to come out with an endorsement of who he wants to replace him: former Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto.

And he promised he'd do everything he could to raise money for her, as well as for Nevada Democrats, Senate Democrats and for Hillary Clinton, should she run for president.

Speaking of presidential politics, Reid's one paragraph will likely include his ability to push Nevada's presidential primary to the top of the list; the first in the West and first four overall.

Now, the nation's eyes are expected to be on Nevada in 2016.

"We're what most refer to as a flyover state," said Chris Miller, the chairman of the Clark County Democratic Party. "If it weren't for Sen. Reid being the majority leader in U.S. Senate, there's a lot of things we wouldn't have in Nevada."

Assessing his own legacy

In interviews, Reid normally shies away from talking about his legacy. But he ended his public comments Friday on Nevada Public Radio with a thought on that subject:

"I want people to remember me as someone who never forgot where he came from," Reid said, "and who fought every day of his life to make sure that the kids like Harry Reid — these little boys from Searchlight and these kids in these teeming big cities — that we could look to me and say, 'You know, if Harry Reid could do it, I could do it.'"

http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2015/mar/28/what-now-heres-how-harry-reid-will-likely-spend-hi/

NEVADA APPEAL
nevadaappeal.com

Another trip to the state's scenic back roads

Writer: Rich Moreno
Published: March 28, 2015

Last week I wrote about the Bureau of Land Management's Back Country Byways in Northern Nevada so this week I'll take a look at the program's scenic back roads found in the rest of the state. Nevada has a total of eight National Back Country Byways, which are roads off the beaten track that have been selected by the BLM for their scenic beauty and natural attractions. Most of these routes are not paved so a high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended.

In addition to the five I previously mentioned (California Trail Byway, Lovelock Cave Byway, Fort Churchill to Wellington Byway, Mountain Wilson Byway, and Lunar Crater Byway), the others include:

• Bitter Springs Trail Back Country Byway—This scenic drive begins at Valley of Fire State Park and winds 28 miles along the foothills of the Muddy Mountains, through several dry washes, past a handful of abandoned mining operations and ends on North Shore Drive in Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The byway intersects with the Old Spanish Trail, a pioneer route traveled by Spanish explorers as early as the 1770s. For more information, contact the BLM Las Vegas office, 702-647-5000.

• Gold Butte Back Country Byway—This 62-mile ride begins about 90 miles northeast of Las Vegas and five miles south of Mesquite. The road offers magnificent views of red and white sandstone cliffs and rock formations as well as plenty of desert wildlife. If you stop along the way, you can find petroglyph sites, sinkholes and the ruins of the historic mining camp of Gold Butte, established in 1908. For more information, contact the BLM Las Vegas office.

• Red Rock Canyon Back Country Byway—This 15-mile loop actually winds through the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, which is about a half-hour west of Las Vegas. One of the few paved byways, the one-way road offers self-guided trails with interpretive signs, picnic areas, and scenic vista pullouts. The Red Rock Visitor Center offers guided tours and programs. There is a $5 charge per vehicle. For more information, contact the BLM Las Vegas office.

Two final Back Country Byways worth mentioning that aren't in Nevada but skirt the border between Nevada and California are located in the state's Northwestern corner. They include:

• Surprise Valley/Barrel Springs Back Country Byway -This 93-mile road begins and ends in Cedarville, California, which is about 23 miles east of Alturas (northwest of Reno). This lengthy journey passes through historic communities, like Lake City and Fort Bidwell, and crosses into Nevada's wide-open Great Basin country. For more information, contact the BLM Cedarville office, 530-279-6707.

• Buckhorn Back Country Byway—This rustic byway begins on Nevada State Route 447 on the edge of Duck Flat, about 40 miles northeast of Gerlach. The single-lane gravel road climbs to a high plateau of sagebrush and pinon-covered hills and passes several small lakes. It ends at Ravendale on U.S. 395, between Susanville and Alturas. For more information, contact the BLM Cedarville office, 530-279-6707.

The Spectrum
A GANNETT COMPANY

BLM Working to Restore Gold Butte

Writer: Brandon Mullens
Published: March 19, 2015

JJ Smith, restoration project manager at the Bureau of Land Management, informed an audience of the ecology of the Gold Butte area and its issues of endangered species and plants at the Friends of Gold Butte Education Series Wednesday at the Community Theatre.

When studying ecology, ecologists focus on four things, Smith said:

- The interactions of organisms between them and the environment.
- Movement and materials of energy through ecosystems.
- Succession of ecosystems over time.
- The abundance of distribution of organisms.

Smith said he and his restoration crew do quite a few restoration projects in desert environments.

"They're very difficult and it takes a lot of time and money," he said. "The chances of success are sometimes very low. Mainly because there's not much water, making restoration here more difficult than anywhere else I've worked. And because we have pre-major challenges like red brome grass."

Red brome is a big problem in the desert because it uses a lot of water; it crowds out other species; and it causes wildfires, Smith said.

"Wildfire is the perhaps one of the biggest problems in the deserts," Smith said. "and most of the trees and bushes and other species cannot sustain a fire. It's a real problem."

Smith said they've tried many ways to try and prevent wildfires, or grow the native plants that used to inhabit the area.

One way is an aerial seeding study where they flooded areas with many different native seeds to try and regrow the stuff that died. However, 85 percent of the seed gets eaten, mostly by ants, birds and other animals.

"It's a big waste of money, most of the time," Smith said. "It also doesn't take care of the red brome grass that remains there and grows back."

Another way of bringing back the native plants to the desert is growing them in greenhouses and having volunteers plant them out in the desert, but the problem with that is that it's incredibly expensive and takes a lot of time, he said.

A third option is using the technology to pinpoint the areas to focus on, such as where red brome is and where the burn areas are and where it starts.

"We've been using satellite data and satellite imagery and modules to figure out where are the best targets to look at," he said. "We also use satellites to measure the reflectance so we can see when the red brome comes up."

The final way is using a lot of herbicides, which Smith has not done yet, to try and reduce patches of weeds at least to keep adjacent areas from burning.

"This is something we're looking into but it's not a popular idea," Smith said.

Smith also noted that there are animals like spring snails and the Moapa dace are becoming part of the

endangered list because some plants and other predators are infecting their habitats.

"We are a hot spot full of endangered species."

Smith said they have worked to restore the Muddy River, and the BLM started acquiring land to help keep the Moapa dace alive because talapia was becoming an invasive species.

"It worked its way up into Lake Mead and it started eating the dace," Smith said. "What we did was put a fish barrier, or dam, to keep fish from coming upstream, and then we started restoring the surrounding habitat to make the conditions in the water better for the fish."

The testing they've done has worked out well, and they think they have a good chance of restoring the native species back into the system, Smith said.

He said the Virgin River is having the same problems as the Muddy River, which they hope they can get working on within a couple of years.

Encourage Efforts to Preserve Lands

Guest Writer: Brian DiMarzio, Las Vegas
Published: March 19, 2015

To the Editor:

While we celebrate the amazing achievement realized late last year with the designation of Tule Springs Fossil Beds as a national monument, we must remember we cannot stop our efforts.

Sen. Harry Reid and Congresswoman Dina Titus have introduced companion bills to protect two other Nevada treasures: Gold Butte and Basin and Ridge. They need and deserve our appreciation and support. These lands need immediate protection for open space, wildlife, art and cultural resources. We know achieving these goals will not be easy.

Please take the time to call or email Reid and Titus to say thank you and to let them know we are behind them. Perhaps even more important, contact the other members of our Nevada delegation to let them know how important these areas are, not only for our enjoyment of these beautiful areas, but also to our tourist economy. As a Realtor in Las Vegas, I am concerned about doing all we can do to make Southern Nevada a place people want to make their home.

More National Parks

Guest Writer: Jim Boone, Las Vegas
Published: March 17, 2015

To the Editor:

California, Arizona and Utah have large federal conservation lands that attract tourists from around the world. In Las Vegas, visitors from around the world use our city as a hub to visit Death Valley, the Grand Canyon and Zion — all of which are in other states. We could keep these visitors in Nevada, and keep their tourist dollars here, if we developed park areas of similar quality.

With Red Rock Canyon, the Spring Mountains, Lake Mead, Valley of Fire and Great Basin as our base, we could add Gold Butte and Basin and Range to create our own grand circle of parks in Nevada. By keeping tourists in our state, or even just connecting our parks with those in other states, Nevada could develop an energetic outdoor tourist economy in gateway communities on par with our neighbors.

Gold Butte (Clark County), with its many wonders, is well-known to local outdoor enthusiasts, but Basin and Range (Lincoln and Nye Counties) is little-known. Basin and Range offers grand vistas, from enormous unspoiled basins to snow-capped mountain ranges, with a cultural history spanning the last 11,000 years and remarkable geologic formations. Conserving Basin and Range would also enable Nevada ranchers to stay on the land as they have for generations, keep open miles of back roads and conserve the unspoiled view from Michael Heizer's land art project, "City."

Basin and Range is already federal land, so enormous benefit could be gained in Nevada by drawing a line on a map, changing the name of the enclosed area and constructing a couple of campgrounds. This seems like a no-brainer for rural economic development.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters-uncooperative-gop-drags-down-us

The Spectrum
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Environmental Issues

Guest Writer: Bon Kruder, Mesquite
Published: March 9, 2015

To the Editor:

I attended Hardy's town hall meeting and he was quite confident, perhaps arrogant, that "his people" were taking very good care of the land around here, speaking on Gold Butte.

I could include scores of additional photos of dumped couches, appliances, carpet and heaps of garbage all over the Virgin Valley, particularly out in the Bunkerville wilderness, which is Cresent's backyard — so to speak.

My hiking friends and I pack out garbage every time we visit our desert wilderness. Mr. Hardy should be ashamed to claim he's an environmentalist, which he did, at his latest public forum at Mesquite City Hall.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/03/09/letters-editor/24668065/

Protecting Nevada Lands

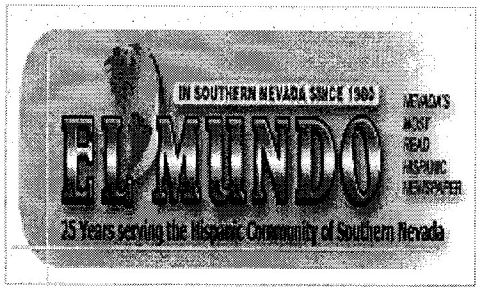
Guest Writer: Tim Castille, Mesquite
Published: March 8, 2015

To the Editor:

Thank you for the article about the public lands meeting hosted by Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Dina Titus ("Lands bill could hamper Yucca Mountain Project," Feb. 20 Review-Journal). I attended the meeting, and the room was packed with Southern Nevada residents who expressed overwhelming support for public lands protection.

It was heartening to see people of all ages and backgrounds attest their love and appreciation for Gold Butte, Tule Springs and the Great Basin. Given the turnout at the meeting, the numerous testimonials made by people in support of public lands and the noticeable lack of opposition, I believe that this is not an issue that has two sides. It seems to me that all Nevadans love their public lands, and there is overwhelming support for protecting these treasured places.

http://m.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters-construction-defect-law-full-flaws



"Nevada is working to conserve its natural lands"

Writer: Valdemar González
Published: February 28, 215

Everyone knows Las Vegas for its hotels and casinos, shows and entertainment services. Although many also know the beauty of surrounding natural areas like Lake Mead or Red Rock Canyon, few know that work is continuing to protect more public lands.

The major national parks like the Grand Canyon were not established overnight, nor easily, and this is also true for smaller areas like the new Tule Springs in Southern Nevada. At the end of last year, Congress passed a law protecting Nevada's lands which created the Tule Spring Fossil Beds National Monument. El Mundo covered the ceremony where Senator Harry Reid, Representative Dina Titus and now former Representative Steven Horsford established this national monument.

According to information from the office of Senator Reid, Tule Springs, with more than 22,000 acres, contains the greatest number of animal fossils from the Ice Age in the Southwest area of the country.

Thanks to the legislative work of Reid, Titus and Horsford, who voted to pass this law, Southern Nevada now has a natural area protected for its archeological and scientific value, but which is also available for recreation, which means tourism, which drives the largest sector of the local economy.

In this vein, the struggle continues for a law designating the Gold Butte area a natural monument in North Las Vegas. Senator Harry Reid and then Representative Steven Horsford – both Democrats – brought the bill for federal protection of Gold Butte, a site which must be protected for the enjoyment of the people now and for future generations according to North Las Vegas Councilman Isaac Barrón, perhaps its strongest supporter.

If Congress approves the bill to protect Gold Butte, it will put Gold Butte on the tourism map, so that visitors from afar will have another reason to visit Las Vegas. Councilman Barrón has also said that he considers it an ideal place for residents of North Las Vegas and the rest of the valley to spend time outdoors with their families.

On February 18, 2015, Senator Reid and Representative Titus held a public forum regarding conservation of Nevada's natural resources, where Barrón championed the necessity for a law to protect Gold Butte.

http://issuu.com/elmundolv/docs/em-lv_20150228_a

LAS VEGAS SUN

Protect Nevada's future by securing our past, preserving our lands

Guest Writer: Isaac Barron
Published: February 27, 2015 2 a.m.

There is true economic and communal value in protecting public lands.

Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Dina Titus recently held a public meeting to gather our community's input on the opportunities to preserve Nevada's public lands. Our diverse community attended the meeting in numbers demonstrating our shared love for open spaces and public lands. I appreciated this opportunity to speak on behalf of the community I represent in North Las Vegas and the students I teach and advise at Rancho High School. I want to thank our national leaders for hosting this discussion and protecting our community's interests.

The recently designated Tule Springs National Monument will be an economic catalyst for our region. The unique urban nature of Tule Springs will support local economic growth by attracting more tourists to our region as well as enticing tourists to stay longer to explore our newest national treasure. Tule Springs provides a unique border by surrounding the northern edges of North Las Vegas and the greater Las Vegas Valley. This protective border to our community will attract more families and increase the quality of life for our residents.

These economic benefits also can be experienced in cities such as Mesquite and Alamo as they fight to permanently protect the spectacular lands and cultural resources in their communities. Nevada has been blessed with a bounty of natural beauty and archeological artifacts; it has a wealth of places worthy of permanent protection as administratively designated national monuments.

I love to be outdoors. I try to get out every hunting season with my family to bond and grow together. We have loved to fish, camp and get outdoors for years now. The open spaces surrounding our valley offer the chance to unwind, find oneself, and commune with nature and family. I want to see the same opportunity to enjoy the natural and historical resources afforded to our future generations.

As a teacher at Rancho High School and as a father, I know the experience of recreation on public lands can positively influence a child's development and life. Witnessing the awe-inspiring beauty of rolling hills and majestic mountains can give a child a new perspective and help them overcome the adversity faced in their day-to-day lives. As an educator, I know firsthand the issues that some of our youths face, and helping them is my passion.

We need to ensure everyone has the opportunity to enjoy our public lands today and that the future generations I have the pleasure of educating every day do too. Protecting areas such as Tule Springs, Gold Butte, and Basin and Range Province will not only preserve traditions of hunting and camping, but will also serve to recognize the importance of public lands to our culture, our families and our economy.

Isaac Barron is a teacher at Rancho High School and a North Las Vegas councilman representing Ward 1.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/feb/27/protect-nevadas-future-securing-our-past-preservin/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Hardy needs to protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Bryon George, Mequite
Published: February 26, 2015

To the Editor:

Representative Hardy was quoted as saying, "I think it's time the federal government got out of our state." *(Rep. Hardy expects to see some action on federal land issues, MLN Feb. 19, 2015)* What is not clear from the article is how he proposes to protect our public lands for future generations. Our treasured places, like Gold Butte, cannot be protected with good intentions alone and the state/city/county does not have the financial resources to effectively manage a 350,000 acre habitat without bankrupting us.

Hardy also noted that he views these lands as "laboratories of industry." I urge Hardy to consider the sustainable economic gains that can be realized by protecting Gold Butte and other Nevada lands for the enjoyment of future generations. Protected lands are good for rural, local economies – certainly better than extractive and exploitative industries that privatize and destroy the land.

We all want to see this special place that is our backyard in Mesquite protected. Congressman Hardy, as a freshman in Congress, should work with the rest of the delegation to work to make that happen, or he should move out of the way so Gold Butte gets the permanent protection it deserves and that the majority of us here in Mesquite support.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/02/hardy-needs-protect-gold-butte/

Greenwire

Obama flexes muscles on resources with eye on legacy

Writer: Phil Taylor, E&E reporter
Published: February 23, 2015

President Obama has quickly built a hefty portfolio on natural resource issues.

In the last two years, Obama has designated or expanded a dozen national monuments, preserved more than 1.1 million acres in the West and moved to permanently ban drilling in the oil-rich Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

And in the last month he's proposed the biggest expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration in a generation, paving the way for drilling rigs to plumb mostly virgin waters from Virginia to Georgia, while permitting the first oil production in the nation's largest petroleum reserve. Last Friday, his administration unveiled major rules governing Arctic oil exploration.

While Obama still has nearly two years left in the White House, his allies and critics are already sizing up his record on resources -- and thinking about what's to come.

If history is any indication, Obama's pace of executive actions on lands and waters could accelerate.

Consider that President Clinton in his last year in office designated or expanded 18 of his 19 national monuments, permanently setting aside more than 3.3 million acres, according to National Park Service **data**.

Obama last week designated three new monuments covering 22,000 acres in Illinois, Colorado and Hawaii, calling parks, monuments and waters the "birthright of all Americans."

Other major land and energy decisions are fast approaching:

- The administration will decide in coming months whether to permit Royal Dutch Shell PLC to drill in the relatively pristine Chukchi Sea off Alaska's North Slope, where there are an estimated 15 billion barrels of oil.
- The Bureau of Land Management will write or finalize major rules governing hydraulic fracturing, methane venting and flaring, and royalties.
- And BLM will finalize unprecedented new protections for sage grouse across tens of millions of acres of Western rangelands, an effort some conservationists are comparing to Clinton's sweeping 2001 roadless rule.

"What Obama is doing is setting a platform for action over the next two years," said Bill Meadows, former president of the Wilderness Society. "There's so much more that can be done, and I think he's enjoying it."

Not enjoying Obama's action: Republican lawmakers.

"This White House has shown once again its utter and complete disdain for the public process, Congress and the communities most impacted by these unilateral, unchecked land designations," House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) said after Obama's monuments announcement last week. "Obama has sidelined the American public and bulldozed transparency."

While Republicans accuse Obama of flouting Congress and putting a regulatory muzzle on the nation's energy renaissance, they appear powerless to stop him.

The 1906 Antiquities Act gives presidents almost unchecked powers to ban oil drilling, mining and

logging across enormous swaths of the American West. Clinton famously used the law in 1996 to designate the 1.7-million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in southern Utah, blocking development of a massive coal deposit and enraging lawmakers in the Beehive State.

Obama has so far used the law more diplomatically, designating monuments only where there is broad political support and, incidentally, only in states that voted for him in 2012.

He's used the act 16 times, setting aside land at a faster clip than Clinton, but with fewer acres. But it's tough to draw comparisons, since every acre conserved is not equal.

A big test will be whether Obama will protect landscapes in hostile territory -- such as the half-million-acre Boulder-White Clouds in central Idaho and nearly 2 million acres surrounding Canyonlands National Park in Utah. Republican lawmakers in those states are urging Obama to stand down as they seek legislative protections.

But top Obama aides say the president has plenty of ink in his pen for creating monuments if Congress fails to act.

Green groups are also seeking protections of 1.7 million acres surrounding the Grand Canyon, more than 1 million acres in the Southern California desert and 350,000 acres of Nevada's Gold Butte, a vast desert of multihued rocks, petroglyphs and slot canyons.

Obama getting 'the hang of it'

Conservationists say Obama has gone from timid to bold on resource issues.

They point to Obama's proposal last month to designate some 12 million acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness -- barring access to an estimated 10 billion barrels of oil that Alaskan officials badly want to supply the depleted Trans-Alaskan Pipeline System.

The move was symbolic, since only Congress can decide whether the refuge is opened to drilling. But it reversed a Reagan administration plan seeking full oil and gas development in the 1.5-million-acre coastal plain -- a major policy stamp for the next 15 years.

And in contrast with the Fish and Wildlife Service's draft ANWR wilderness proposal -- which was quietly unveiled in August 2011, barely getting noticed in the media -- Obama and his advisers touted the final wilderness plan with gusto. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Chief of Staff Tommy Beaudreau stopped by the Washington, D.C., headquarters of the Alaska Wilderness League to celebrate the proposal.

It was a poke in the eye to the Alaska congressional delegation, including Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska).

"He's growing more comfortable using the administrative powers at his disposal," said Mike Matz, director of U.S. public lands for the Pew Charitable Trusts. "His administration has gotten ... the hang of it."

Matz credited John Podesta, the president's senior counselor on global warming, who founded the liberal Center for American Progress, for prodding Obama to act. Podesta in summer 2012, while at CAP, called monument designations "good politics," arguing they could burnish Obama's re-election bid in key Western battleground states. The ANWR announcement came at a politically advantageous time, given that gasoline prices were plunging as domestic oil production in the Lower 48 soared.

Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt played a similar role with Clinton by challenging the 42nd president to match the conservation achievements of past commanders in chief, Matz said.

"In Obama, you had another instigator in John Podesta," Matz said. "You need someone who can make the administration comfortable up and down the ranks."

Greens question whether Obama will keep up the momentum as key staffers depart and the administration heads for the home stretch.

Podesta left the White House this month to join Hillary Clinton's political team as she considers jumping into the 2016 presidential race. And Mike Boots, the acting chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, who is viewed as another champion for land protections, plans to leave the administration in March.

In addition, Obama is already laying claim to protecting more land and waters than any other president. The claim is true if you count the president's decision last September to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument to more than 490,000 square miles.

Some conservationists fear he'll rest on his laurels. But others see new allies arriving at the White House.

A fresh arrival hailed by green groups is Christy Goldfuss, a former National Park Service political appointee who worked under Podesta at CAP, who is being groomed to take the helm at CEQ, sources said.

Environmentalists are also enthusiastic about Michael Degnan, a former Sierra Club representative, and Angela Barranco, who are both at CEQ, as well as Jewell's Deputy Chief of Staff Nikki Buffa, BLM Director Neil Kornze, and Agriculture Department Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie.

Last Wednesday, Interior Deputy Secretary Michael Connor attended a public meeting in Las Vegas with Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev.) to discuss their proposals to protect more than 1 million acres at Gold Butte and at Garden and Coal valleys, which include remote archaeological sites and a massive public art project.

Connor's attendance suggests the administration could be considering the area for a future monument. Jewell and Bonnie in December also visited Northern California's Berryessa Snow Mountain region, where conservationists are clamoring for a 350,000-acre monument designation.

'Not a love fest'

Douglas Brinkley, a history professor at Rice University who has written extensively on land conservation, said Obama must act with more pluck to rival Clinton's conservation legacy.

Neither president will rival the achievements of Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson or Jimmy Carter, who make up the "Mount Rushmore" of land conservation, according to Brinkley.

But Obama, who has already earned the title of "the climate change president," faces few political risks in pushing the conservation envelope, Brinkley said.

"The political atmosphere couldn't be better for the president to be brave in using the Antiquities Act."

The administration has put its stamp on public lands in more subtle ways, too, by implementing controversial oil and gas leasing reforms in 2010 that were followed by a steep drop in BLM lands leased for drilling, and by yanking 77 George W. Bush-era oil and gas leases that former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar argued were too close to national parks in Utah.

BLM issued 1,157 oil and gas leases in fiscal 2014, a 20 percent drop from the previous year and the lowest amount in at least a quarter-century, according to agency statistics released last month. Over the past five years, the agency has leased an average of 1.5 million acres annually, down significantly from the 4 million acres the George W. Bush administration leased annually during its final five years in office.

Oil production has grown steadily on Western federal lands, but nowhere near as fast as on private tracts overlying shale plays in states like North Dakota and Texas. The administration's critics blame BLM red tape, while others attribute the discrepancy to geology.

Natural gas production has dropped steadily on federal lands -- even as it has soared elsewhere -- and oil production has fallen under Obama's watch in the Gulf of Mexico, though some of the drop can be attributed to the halt in drilling following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill.

"[For] people pushing for more government control and less extraction on federal lands, Obama is their savior," said Dan Kish, senior vice president for the Institute for Energy Research, a free-market advocacy group. "He's basically given them all they want and more."

Oil backers offered tempered praise for Obama's decision last month to open the Atlantic Ocean to future leasing, though they blasted his decision to ban development within 50 miles of shore, a restriction some fear will preclude exploration altogether.

The leasing proposal "slams the door on industry and on new jobs, increased economic activity, added revenue and strengthened energy security," said Randall Luthi, president of the National Ocean Industries Association.

But Meadows, the Wilderness Society former president, said Obama is far from a conservationist lap dog. Obama's "all of the above" energy platform has included a heavy emphasis on natural gas drilling, coal leasing in Wyoming and drilling in the Arctic Ocean, Meadows said. "This is not a love fest by any means," he said.

http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060013840/print

'Very pragmatic'

According to Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton Interior official, Obama has been "bullish" on the future of oil and gas development.

The administration has implemented unprecedented safety reforms in the Gulf of Mexico and is preparing two major rules governing hydraulic fracturing and the venting and flaring of methane -- moves that should facilitate continued development of federal minerals, he said.

"The Obama administration has reformed and improved the safety and environmental sustainability of oil and gas development on public lands and waters more profoundly than any other recent president," Bledsoe said. "This administration, in my view, has been very pro-oil and gas development, even while protecting pristine landscapes from development and creating a record area of new national monuments."

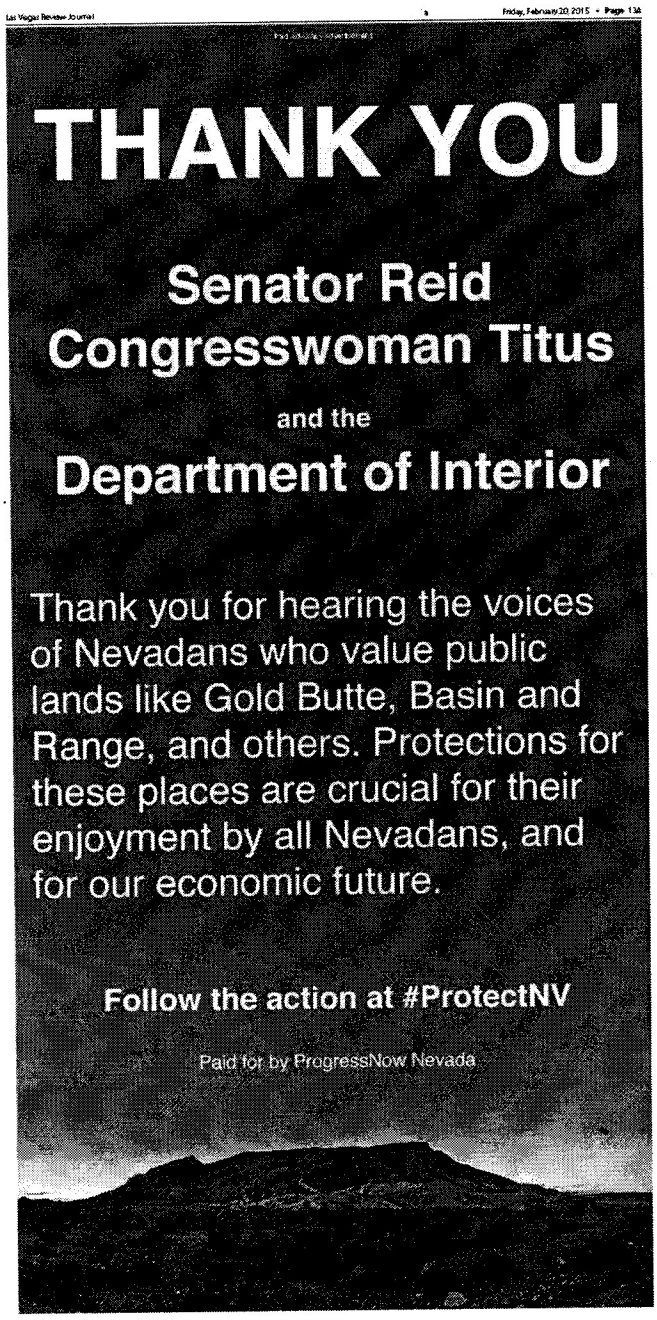
Bledsoe said it is politically remarkable that less than five years after the BP PLC oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the administration is poised to open the Atlantic.

Moreover, the administration has taken a flexible approach to conserving the greater sage grouse, Bledsoe said, by taking lessons from the northern spotted owl, whose protection under the Endangered Species Act in the early 1990s led to dramatic reductions in logging.

"They're very pragmatic," Bledsoe said. "It's a window into the adaptability of the Obama administration's view of conservation broadly."

ProgressNow Nevada Thank You Ad

Published: February 20, 2015



Conservation bill could block Yucca rail route, but prospects shaky

Writer: Henry Brean
Published: February 19, 2015 12:27a.m.; Updated: February 19, 2015 6:59p.m.

Though its sponsors insist it wasn't their intent, a Nevada lands bill pending in Congress could throw up another road block to a Yucca Mountain Project.

The legislation, introduced last year by U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, would restrict mining and energy exploration on more than 800,000 acres of federal land in two lonesome valleys straddling Lincoln and Nye counties

The Senate Minority Leader has said he wants to withdraw the land in Garden and Coal valleys to protect "City," noted artist Michael Heizer's sprawling earth sculptor roughly the size of the National Mall. Supporters of the bill want a national monument dedicated to "City" and to the pristine basin-and-range landscape around it.

The designation would also block a future rail corridor for nuclear waste shipments to the proposed Yucca Mountain repository, which Reid spokeswoman Kristen Orthman acknowledged Wednesday while saying Yucca Mountain is not why Reid introduced the bill or decided to target so much land for withdrawal. That's just a welcome side-effect, Orthman said.

Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., who quietly introduced a House version of the bill last week, also said Yucca Mountain has nothing to do with it.

Motivations aside, the legislation faces an uphill battle in a GOP-led Congress already pushing back against such lands bills. Rep. Cresent Hardy, R-Nev., has vowed to fight the bill and a measure, also sponsored by Reid, to designate 350,000 acres at Gold Butte in northeastern Clark County a conservation area. Both areas are in Hardy's congressional district.

The two bills also are drawing opposition from local officials and some rural residents.

And the push for increased protection of Gold Butte is further complicated by the lingering dispute between federal authorities and Cliven Bundy, whose cattle roam the area in defiance of court orders and aborted government round-ups.

Titus said she still hopes to work on the lands bills with Hardy, whom she described as "more open" to protecting Gold Butte than in the past.

On Wednesday, Titus and Reid hosted a "conversation about conservation" in Las Vegas for an audience of several hundred.

The enthusiastic crowd packed the jury assembly room at the Lloyd George U.S. Courthouse to celebrate the new Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument at the northern edge of the Las Vegas Valley and to call for the protection of Gold Butte and Garden and Coal valleys.
The preservation pep rally was for the benefit of Michael Connor, the deputy U.S. secretary of interior, who had just toured Tule Springs.

Gold Butte, less than 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas, is in particular need of preservation, said Reid via video link from Washington, where he is recovering from eye surgery.

"What a loss it would be if we didn't protect it," he said. "If we don't do something, it will be gone in a matter of decades."

Titus, in person, said the lands must be preserved "for us, for the whole country and for generations to come."

Art lovers argue that Heizer's masterwork warrants special protection and could become a World Heritage site one day. "City" has been described as one of the most ambitious pieces of art ever, a network of sculpted berms, plazas and geometric shapes a 1.5 miles long and 900 feet wide inspired by ancient cities of South and Central America.

For a piece like that, "you need the scale of Nevada," said Michael Govan, head of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. "It is almost finished, and that's why its protection is so paramount."

Several dozen people spoke of what Gold Butte, Tule Springs and the lonely valleys of the southern Great Basin mean to them.

Just one person opposed the conservation measures. The man, who called himself "John Q. Public," railed against the treatment of Bundy and criticized the government for trying to kick the public off public land.
The audience hissed and booed and shouted him down, receiving an obscene gesture in return.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/water-environment/conservation-bill-could-block-yucca-rail-route-prospects-shaky

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#NVLeg Special Report: This Land Is Our Land

Writer: Andrew Davey
Published: February 19, 2015

Every so often, I can hear Woody Guthrie singing when I travel to and through the wide open expanses of Nevada (that is, when I'm not hearing "Wide Open Spaces", one of my favorite Dixie Chicks songs). This land is your land. This land is my land. This land was made for you & me.

When did we lose track of this very American dream? When did "this land is made for you & me" become "controversial"?

Ever since Cliven Bundy launched his "Range War" against the rule of law, his extreme "TEA Party" allies have been trying to "shift the Overton Window" and make the concept of public lands seem "controversial". Bundy's buddies in the Nevada Legislature are pushing SJR 1 to demand the federal government transfer wide swaths of federal public land to the State of Nevada so the state can turn the land over to developers and other commercial interests. And US Rep. Cresent Hardy (R-Mesquite) vows to "fight tooth and nail" any attempt by US Senator Harry Reid (D) to secure federal protection for Gold Butte.

Yet when Senator Reid and US Rep. Dina Titus (D-Paradise) held a joint community meeting on the state of Nevada's public lands, the crowd gathered at te Lloyd George Federal Building in Downtown Las Vegas expressed overwhelming support for preserving Gold Butte, Tule Springs, and Garden Valley (in Lincoln County).

Mesquite community leaders, such as Former City Council Member Karl Gustaveson and current Virgin Valley Water District Board Member Sandra Ramaker, spoke in favor of creating a National Conservation Area (NCA) for Gold Butte. So did the Nevada Resort Association's Virginia Valentine. So did Sean Fellows on behalf of Sig Rogich and Rogich Communications. So did local business leader & philanthropist Jenna Morton. So did the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA). And so did Paiute Nation tribal leaders. And so did many more Southern Nevadans.

Democrats, Nonpartisans, and Republicans all stated their support for federal protection for Nevada's environmental treasures at Lloyd George yesterday. Educators, students, art lovers, history buffs, health care professionals, business executives, sportsmen, hikers, and others from all walks of life professed their love for Nevada's natural wonders... And their desire to keep these wonders public and preserved.

Really, the only opposition came from someone who was referring to himself as "John Q. Public". He spoke of Harry Reid's "BLM goons", being forced into "gay marriage", "abortion on demand", "environmental junk science", "domestic terrorists", and the kind of material one typically hears from the "black helicopter" crowd.

I had heard from several folks at Grant Sawyer who were concerned about Bundy supporters causing a scene at the event. But in the end, only "John Q. Public" rose to make his nonsensical rant before making a dramatic (yet peaceful) exit.

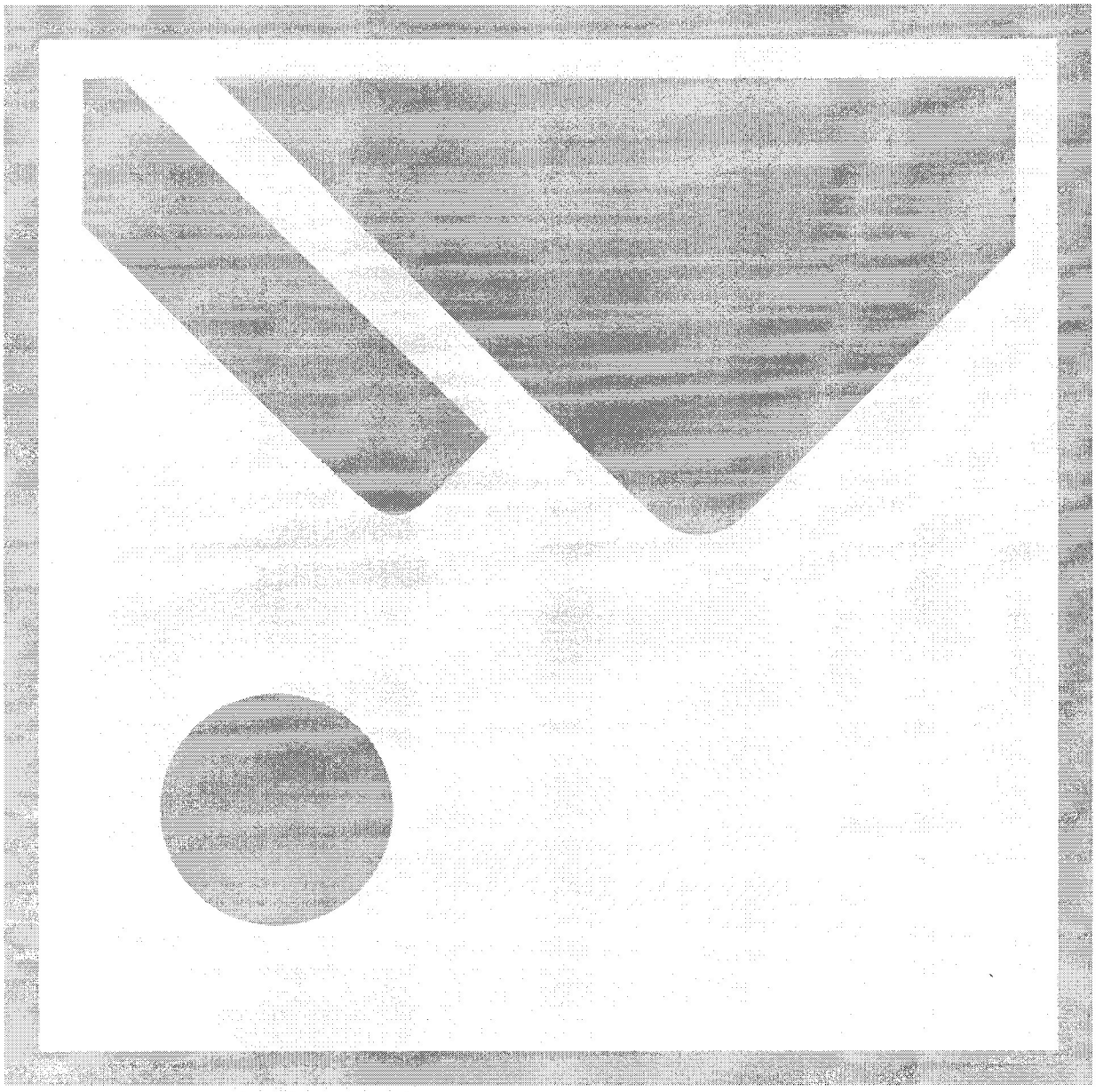
So why are Cresent Hardy and several Republican state legislators behaving as if most Nevadans agree with the Bundy Bunch and "John Q. Public"? Why are they claiming they have some sort of mandate to privatize these critical public resources?

This land is your land. This land is my land. This land is all our land. Nevada was made for you and me.

http://letstalknevada.com/nvleg-special-report-this-land-is-our-land/

Social Media Coverage: February 19, 2015 Public Meeting in Las Vegas

https://storify.com/jackieomdb/southern-nevada-conversation-on-conservation



FOR COMMITTEE USE ONLY

Gold Butte Media Clip Book
Jan. 2015 – Jan. 2016

Petroglyph Panel in Gold Butte (T. Rylander)

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The Spectrum

Protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Steve Kiggins
Published: February 7, 2016

As a Mesquite resident, I enjoy getting outdoors to hike and enjoy the lands in my backyard. I have been to Gold Butte, and agree with Jud Burkett's article, "Gold Butte Worthy of Protection." Gold Butte is our piece of the Grand Canyon, and we should be proud of that. It was a special day when I finally saw Falling Man. Climbing around the petroglyph panels in this spectacular area, I realized how unique this place was, and how more people needed to see it.

I have hiked down to the Doodlebug Arch and back up Amber Cat Canyon, looked down into Devil's Throat, visited the old Gold Butte town site, climbed around Little Finland and hiked through Keyhole Canyon. Being a part of the Mesquite community has made me realize that Gold Butte would help our city, and bring more people in to stay at our hotels, eat at our restaurants and shop at our stores.

If Gold Butte were permanently protected, it would of course ensure that the wildlife and geology will be preserved, but it will also bring people in to see this majestic new place. We would see a new type of tourist -- the Gold Butte tourist. I hope to see protection soon, because we need it, for the land and for Mesquite. And because "Thousands of over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity."

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Can We Live Up to Our Responsibility for Gold Butte's Treasures?

Guest Writer: Terry Rylander
Published: February 4, 2016

I was reading Tom Garrison's article, Little Finland: Isolated and Awesome published on January 28, and it was one of the best descriptions of one of the most special places in Gold Butte. As a long-time board member of Friends of Gold Butte, I often get to take folks out there for their first time. I get to see the looks of amazement and wonder as they explore the mysterious sandstone fins trying to name the different shapes they might represent.

Mesquite is a pretty small town and I feel like I know a lot of people here. It still surprises me when I ask if they have ever been to Gold Butte. Most don't even know where or what it is. "Isn't that just more barren desert?" they ask. "What could possibly be so special about Gold Butte?" If my only experience was driving between Mesquite and Las Vegas, I might very well feel the same way.

So, thank you for publishing Tom's article on Little Finland. I hope it inspires more folks to take a Sunday drive out to Gold Butte and go exploring. We in the Mesquite area are fortunate to have Gold Butte in our own backyard. It has a long history, scribed as much as 2000 years ago by the Native Americans, who knew even then that Gold Butte is a magical, spiritual place. From fascinating geology, to the many species of plants and animals, to the snow-capped mountains and desert bajadas, Gold Butte has it all.

Having Gold Butte in our own backyard also comes with responsibilities to ensure its future. Yes, most people are good visitors. However, it only takes a few to quickly undo what has been around for generations. Friends of Gold Butte is working diligently to gain federal designation for Gold Butte. This will move the land into a higher-level funding pool that could provide better road signage, education, and perhaps facilities! And to quickly squash any rumors, we are advocating that all 500 miles of roads stay open – it's written into the bill.

I urge everyone to go learn about Gold Butte and the special treasure you may not have even known about!

The Spectrum

Protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Sandy Johnson
Published: February 3, 2016

As a Mesquite resident, I enjoy getting outdoors to hike and enjoy the lands in my backyard. I have been to Gold Butte, and agree with Jud Burkett's recent article, "Gold Butte Worthy of Protection."

Gold Butte is our piece of the Grand Canyon, and we should be proud of that. It was a special day when I finally saw Falling Man. Climbing around the petroglyph panels in this spectacular area, I realized how unique this place was, and how more people needed to see it.

Being a part of the Mesquite community has made me realize that Gold Butte would help our city, and bring more people in to stay at our hotels, eat at our restaurants, and shop at our stores. If Gold Butte were permanently protected, it would of course ensure that the wildlife and geology will be preserved, but it will also bring people in to see this majestic new place.

We would see a new type of tourist -- the Gold Butte tourist. I hope to see protection soon, because we need it, for the land and for Mesquite.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/2016/02/03/protect-gold-butte/79787436/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Little Finland: Isolated and Awesome

Writer: Tom Garrison
Published: January 28, 2016

In the hiking world, the first and most important factor is finding the trailhead. Some are well marked, well-traveled, and easy to find. Others off the beaten path and require some effort. And then there are trailheads way out in the middle of nowhere demanding real effort from the hiker to even find the trail. My wife Deb and I have done all three, but prefer the latter two. The harder to reach trails tend to be more pristine and almost by definition have fewer visitors—hence solitude.

Our latest adventure entails the third type—a long drive on back county roads to a seldom visited area. The destination is Little Finland (aka Devil's Fire or Hobgoblin's Playground) in the Gold Butte region of southeast Nevada. If you enjoy water and wind-sculpted orange sandstone, easy hiking, some rock scrambling, and incredible vistas in a desert wilderness try this exploration.

The Gold Butte region comprises 360,000 mostly wilderness (not a legal designation) acres administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Some is designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern for its tortoise habitat; cultural and historical resources; and natural, scenic, and botanical qualities. It is located west of the Arizona border, south and east of the Virgin River, and north of the Colorado River. This territory is where the Great Basin, Mojave Desert, and the Colorado Plateau meet, each contributing a colorful piece to the region. People in Mesquite, and other nearby areas, are working hard to upgrade the legal status to National Conservation Area that affords more protection for this fragile environment. The terrain is rugged and high clearance vehicles (and sometimes four-wheel drive) are required for many of the back roads. I highly recommend a high clearance vehicle for this adventure. You might be able to make it in a standard vehicle, but do you want to take the chance?

There are no restroom facilities or water available in the Gold Butte territory, although the Whitney Pocket locale has primitive camping spaces. Humans have a long history in the Gold Butte region as witnessed by what they left—Native American rock art (petroglyphs), the Gold Butte ghost town (established in 1908), and structures at Whitney Pocket built by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s.

We left St. George on a crisp January morning. The first leg of the journey was simple—go south on Interstate 15 and drive approximately nine miles past Mesquite to Exit 112 (Riverside/Bunkerville exit). Take the exit and continue south three miles crossing the Virgin River. Once across, the first intersection is Gold Butte Road. Turn right (west) at the intersection and set your trip odometer to 0. Gold Butte Road is paved, although not well maintained. The first five miles roughly parallel the Virgin River and take you past some horse ranches. Stop along this stretch for nice photos of the meandering river. Later on you'll see an oasis at ten miles and around 13.8 miles in catch a glimpse of Lake Mead to the west. At 21 miles, near Whitey Pocket, the paved road ends.

We continued south on the now unpaved Gold Butte Road for 3.9 miles and turned right (southwest) onto Mud Wash North Road at the sign for Gold Butte, Mud Wash, and Red Bluff Spring.

We traveled Mud Wash North Road for 3.1 miles and turned right (west) onto Mud Wash Road. The

intersection is not signed, Mud Wash North simply merges into Mud Wash Road and winds northwest. We stayed on the main road and passed a wooden corral at 1.8 miles from the intersection.

After four miles we came to the intersection with Little Finland Road and turned right (east). It is 1.8 miles, in a southeasterly direction, from the intersection to the Little Finland trailhead.

The trailhead elevation is 1,740 feet and the temperature during our exploration was in the low 60s under a gray sky. It did clear up a bit toward the end of our time at Little Finland, but photos suffered from the overcast.
We began by following the trail, mostly in a wash. The exciting part of Little Finland is located on top of a relatively flat bench, about 50 feet above the sandy wash through which runs a small seasonal creek. In spots, the surrounding area is stained white by salt deposits. We found a not too step route and scampered up to the mesa.

A big surprise is the size of the strange rock formations. Most are only three or four feet tall. Squatting down to take photos makes them appear larger. Little Finland is an odd place. Rocks are supposed to be solid, stable. Maybe a little bit boring. Not here. Here the bright orange sandstone reaches and bends, folding into impossible shapes. How many millennia did it take for the forces of erosion to carve these marvels? Eventually they will crumble back into sand.

The Little Finland mesa runs generally north-south and extends about ½ mile. Along with great views, the eroded sandstone presented incredible formations—small arches and windows, cavities and deep fissures, competing with rock fingers for our attention. All of this rising above the flat desert plain.

We wandered around Little Finland for about 1 ½ hours and hiked about 1.8 miles.

I recommend this adventure combining strange natural beauty with solitude—we did not encounter any other humans. After exploring the wilderness, we stopped in Mesquite for a late lunch. What could be better?

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2016/01/little-finland-isolated-and-awesome/

npr

Dispute Over Cattle Grazing Disrupts Patrols Of Federal Land

Writer: Kirk Siegler
Published: January 27, 2016

Ever since a tense, armed standoff near Cliven Bundy's Nevada ranch in 2014, a vast and sensitive piece of federal public land adjacent to the Grand Canyon has gone unmanaged and unpatrolled.

It's safe to travel into the area called Gold Butte so long as you're not in a federal vehicle, according to Jaina Moan of Friends of Gold Butte, which wants to see the area federally protected.

The last time there was any known federal presence was last summer, when scientists under contract with the Bureau of Land Management were camped here, gathering field research.

"Unfortunately that also was canceled after shots were fired at one of the contract crews," Moan says.

Gold Butte, roughly the size of Los Angeles County, is basically lawless right now. Trash is dumped here and there. Some of the BLM's route markers are torn down. Illegal off-road tracks from ATVs lead into the desert. Some pioneer gravesites were even dug up, bones scattered everywhere.

If no one is patrolling it, who's going to deter vandals? That's a question Moan and William Anderson, the former chairman of the local Moapa Band of Paiutes, who consider this desert sacred, are asking more and more as the dispute between Bundy and the government drags on.

The occupation of a federal wildlife refuge in Oregon has renewed attention to the federal government's case against Bundy in Nevada. The government's inaction against him is often cited as emboldening his sons to storm the refuge this month.

In southern Nevada, meanwhile, scores of the family's cattle continue to graze illegally in and around Gold Butte.

William Anderson watches with frustration as a mangy-looking group of them crosses a four-wheel-drive road in the heart of Gold Butte. He considers the cattle a threat to desert grasses and plants that his people have gathered and used out here for generations.

"[The cattle are] out here just roaming the area and they are stepping on areas that are culturally sensitive to our people," he says.

No one knows for sure how many cows are roaming here since federal agencies pulled out of the area shortly after the standoff.

The Nevada state director of the BLM, John Ruhs, defends the agency's decision to keep field staff away. He says there are still threats and intimidation tactics directed toward his employees there.

"When it comes to having employees on the ground doing things like monitoring or restoration work, it's just not getting done because of the safety concerns we have for our employees," Ruhs told NPR.

Ruhs would not discuss the government's case against Bundy, and neither would the Department of Justice. But Ruhs did say that he now requires his staff doing fieldwork elsewhere in Nevada to go out in teams, never alone. It's a frustrating climate, he says. The BLM's mission is to manage public lands for all sorts of uses by everyone, not just cattle ranchers.

"We don't do anything on our own as personal individuals," Ruhs says. "We do things that are mandated from Congress, and we follow the laws

that are given to us, and we try to enforce them appropriately."

Nevada has a long and troubled history with these sorts of domestic insurgencies. In the 1990s, bombs were placed on U.S. Forest Service property and the BLM's state headquarters in Reno. The case against Bundy and his unpaid grazing fees goes back some 20 years, too.

Land managers in the late 1990s also planned to round up some of his cows that crossed into the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Alan O'Neill, who was superintendent there at the time and is now retired, recalls that at the last minute, the federal prosecutor stopped it, worrying of a Waco-type situation.

"When people break the law and there's no penalty, it just emboldens them to continue to do that," O'Neill says.

Bundy and his supporters have told NPR in recent interviews that their fight is about a lot more than cows. Like a lot of the mountain west, rural Nevada's economy has struggled and Bundy is one of the last ranchers in this corner of the state. Many were forced out or bought out over the years as Las Vegas expanded and federal environmental laws got tougher.

Still, the current movement to take back federal land that the Bundys and others have led is infuriating to people like William Anderson of the local tribe.

"They can get in line — we're saying the same thing about our people, too," Anderson says.

Back in Gold Butte, Anderson points out a petroglyph panel on a red rock slope. Two of the ancient drawings have recent bullet holes.

"It's really hard to even believe that somebody would come in and try to destroy it, or remove it," he says. "It's something that's been here forever."

Anderson says Gold Butte should be protected and managed by the local tribes.

http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/01/27/464490320/dispute-over-cattle-grazing-blocks-patrols-of-federal-land

The Spectrum

Gold Butte worthy of protection

Writer: Jud Burkett
Published: January 21, 2016

I've wanted to find the time to get out to Gold Butte for quite some time now. My friend and former colleague, Desert Valley Times editor Dave Bly, brought back some amazingly beautiful photographs from out there that he shared with me once upon a time, and since then, it's been on my "to do" list.

Considering that Bly left the DVT in 2012, I'm almost ashamed it has taken me this long to make the trip.

Last week, the Friends of Gold Butte, an organization whose mission statement says they exist to "achieve the permanent protection of Gold Butte's biological, geological and cultural resources through education, community outreach and advocacy," invited me and Steve Kiggins, executive editor of The Spectrum & Daily News, to join them for a hike through Gold Butte to introduce us to the lands they are trying to protect.

To get there, you take the Bunkerville exit, just south of Mesquite on Interstate 15. Just after you pass over Virgin River turn right. There's a small parking area and a kiosk with a map at the turnoff, and drive out on Gold Butte Road.

After passing the Bundy Ranch and a few other homesteads along the banks of the river, you'll soon find yourself surrounded by creosote, sage and the occasional Joshua tree with jagged mountain peeks to one side and a gentle slope leading down to the shores of Lake Mead on the other. Gold Butte is surrounded by the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument to the west and the Lake Mead National Recreation Area to the south and east.

The area is classified as a National Area of Critical Environmental Concern and is supposed to be managed by the Bureau of Land Management. However, Cliven Bundy's cattle still roam freely over much of the land that encompasses Gold Butte, and following the stand-off in Bunkerville two years ago, the BLM ceased actively managing Gold Butte for fear of violence, officials said.

It really is a shame the land is the subject of so much contention that it's being left unmanaged. We only had time to visit a couple of spots in Gold Butte, but what we saw was well and truly deserving of protection.
Byron George, the president of the board of directors for the Friends of Gold Butte, described why he fell in love with the area while we drove out through the desert.

"Gold Butte is an absolutely peaceful wilderness area that brings serenity," he said. "It's a place of solitude. Out here, when you're out in the wilderness, you're totally alone, especially after dark. You're blown away by the awesome expanse of the space and it's just incredibly quiet. It's hard to find that in today's world."

Our first extended stop was at the Falling Man Petroglyph site. After about 12 to 13 miles of riding on the rather rough but paved Gold Butte Road, we turned west onto a side road and after a short ride arrived at the trailhead. There is a small parking corral surrounded by sandstone rising up from the desert floor, but not much more to mark the trail. There is a sign asking visitors to take care and to respect the cultural sites, but none of the usual interpretive signs you'll find at BLM-managed sites like the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve. In any case, most of the larger signs we passed bore multiple

bullet holes and were a perfect illustration of why this land needs to be better protected.

After a short hike along clearly defined trail through the sandstone, you begin to spot them. First, just a few here and there, but as you hike through the rocks the petroglyphs become more and more numerous.

As you walk over solid sandstone, the trail becomes less clearly defined and you begin to wander through the small canyons, but at every turn there are more figures carved into the rock. Some are hidden under ledges, some look like the carver had to do a good bit of rock climbing to reach the spot where they would leave their mark and there are multiple huge slabs of sandstone etched with dozens of petroglyphs.

I've been out to some of the most spectacular petroglyph sites in the area from Little Black Mountain to the Tempi'po'op Trail in the Santa Clara River Reserve and I've never seen a greater concentration of rock art in one place than there is to be found at the Falling Man site.

The site takes its name from a lone etching carved at the base of a cliff that looks just like a man falling through space, but that one carving is just one among hundreds, if not thousands of carvings. It is, quite literally, an outdoor art museum built by the ancient occupants of these lands.

It helped that we had guides; when you have George along with Tom Cluff, the vice-president of the Friends of Gold Butte, and Jaina Moan, the organization's executive director, leading you through the maze of rocks, it's much easier to find the more spectacular rock art locations. Had I gone without them, I would've been lucky to have found a fraction of the number of petroglyphs we saw.

We also saw the marks from gunfire on top of the petroglyphs on at least one of the same panels where rock art was located.

It really is a shame that these lands aren't being cared for better. The beauty of the landscape, combined with the cultural resources, really should be more accessible and open to the public.

As it is, not too many people even know it's there, and there are no sings, no rangers, not even any restrooms available for the few visitors who do manage to find Gold Butte.

After wandering among the rock art, we took the Gold Butte Road all the way to where the paved portion of the road ends at Whitney Pockets. The scenery is beautiful, and while the weather on this particular day started out cold and a bit rainy, by the time we stopped at Whitney Pockets for lunch it had turned into a beautiful day.

We spotted a couple of Bundy's emaciated cows on the side of the road and numerous piles of manure around the campsites at Whitney Pocket, giving me a whole new perspective on the issue. While I can understand the frustration that comes with dealing with large bureaucracies, the alleged crimes still being perpetrated in Gold Butte aren't an appropriate response. Gold Butte doesn't belong to Cliven Bundy, it belongs to everyone.

Gold Butte is a resource that we should all be able to share.

The Friends of Gold Butte hope to see the passage of legislation currently making its way through Congress that would designate Gold Butte as a national conservation area. Such a designation would afford the area greater protections for Gold Butte.

It would provide education and help to preserve the cultural resources in the area, prevent the few signs from becoming bullet-riddled and stop the creation of illegal roads crisscrossing the landscape. It would provide funding for things like a visitors center, trail maintenance, interpretive sings, rangers and restrooms.

While I feel like I've just barely scratched the surface of what there is to see in Gold Butte, I truly hope the area can be protected and preserved for future generations.

While it may be fashionable in some local circles to bash the BLM and cry for greater local control of public lands, this is one area that definitely deserves

the protections that come with a national conservation area designation.

I'm glad I finally got out there to begin exploring it.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/life/2016/01/20/gold-butte-worthy-protection/79066662/

The Spectrum

Gold Butte speaker series opens this week

Writer: Staff Writer
Published: January 18, 2016

The Friends of Gold Butte Speaker Series in Mesquite will open a new year on Wednesday night.
What better place to start than at the beginning?

Dr. Steve Rowland, a professor of geology at UNLV, will speak about the geologic evolution of the Gold Butte region during a presentation that will describe the forces and processes that have helped shape one of the most dynamic landscapes of southern Nevada over the last 500 million years.

"From a geologic perspective, Gold Butte is a complex and intriguing place," said Jaina Moan, executive director for the Friends of Gold Butte, a non-profit organization with about 500 members that is working to achieve permanent protection for what they affectionately describe as Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon. "Understanding the forces that have shaped this landscape over time is important because it helps us appreciate the region we live in."

Rowland's 45-minute presentation will also provide a glimpse into a past world when dinosaurs, protomammals and other animals left their footprints in the rocks at Gold Butte. A question-and-answer session and group discussion will follow.

All monthly speaker series events are held inside the Mesquite Community Theatre, 150 N. Yucca St. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Presentations begin at 7 p.m. All events are free and open to the public.

Located south of Mesquite, between the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument and the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Gold Butte covers some 350,000 acres. The Friends of Gold Butte is actively lobbying to gain permanent protection for the area.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2016/01/18/gold-butte-speaker-series-opens-week/78979914/

Poll: Nevada voters support solar power, fear for the Colorado River

Writer: Scott Lucas
Published: January 11, 2016

Ninety-one percent of Nevada voters said low levels of water in the state was a problem, and 70 percent believed that the Colorado River was at risk, according to the 2016 Conservation in the West poll released today by Colorado College's State of the Rockies program.

It's the first time Nevada has been included in the survey, which has gauged voter attitudes on water and conservation issues in Western states since 2011. It found that Nevada voters were broadly supportive of more efficient use of water, the spread of solar power and federal conservation programs.

Water issues were among the most pressing concerns in Nevada. Some 86 percent of voters named the drought as a concern, while 67 percent named poorly planned growth and development and 58 percent named climate change.

By a 68 percent to 18 percent margin, Nevada voters preferred to address the state's water shortages through more efficient use rather than by diverting water from less to more populated regions.

Despite a recent Public Utilities Commission ruling that has severely impacted the industry in Nevada, voters here were broadly in favor of solar power compared to conventional sources. A total of 75 percent of voters said they favored continued tax incentives for solar and wind energy.

Solar power was the most popular choice of voters, with 53 percent saying they would encourage its use, compared to 10 percent in favor of natural gas and 2 percent for coal. With the exception of Arizona, Nevada voters were the most supportive of solar power among the states surveyed.

In addition, Nevada voters were mostly in favor of conservation efforts. A slight majority of Nevada voters — 52 percent — said that they opposed turning over federal lands to the state, while 78 percent supported presidential authority to designate national monuments, like the recently protected Basin and Range National Monument. Fifty percent of Nevada voters said they opposed rancher Cliven Bundy, while 30 percent described themselves as supporters.

The poll, conducted in December, contacted 400 voters each in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming, in addition to the Silver State. Voter attitudes were similar across the region to those found in Nevada. For statewide results, the poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/jan/11/poll-nevada-voters-support-solar-power-fear-for-th/

LAS VEGAS WEEKLY

Talking tradition and presence with Paiute artist and activist Fawn Douglas

Writer: Kristen Peterson
Published: January 6, 2016

Sipping an avocado smoothie at Tiabi Coffee & Waffle on Maryland Parkway, Fawn Douglas discusses ongoing damage to the petroglyphs in unprotected Gold Butte. Wearing a T-shirt that reads "Made in Native America," the 30-something artist and activist says she is disgusted that people are using the ancient art for target practice, and makes it a point to take Native youth to the area to expose them to the importance of preservation.

Douglas lives and celebrates her heritage in her daily life and art. Now living in the retro-hip Paradise Palms neighborhood, she grew up in the Downtown colony of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, and stays connected by mentoring Native youth in activism and culture, whether it's starting a tribal arts and recreation program or advocating to change Columbus Day.

Having just earned her B.A. from UNLV, Douglas heads this summer to the international artist residency Arquetopia in Mexico, where she'll learn pigment making from natural materials. Her art is Native American contemporary, but the pigments will help in her quest to revive the tribal tradition of basket making. She recently visited her family's heirlooms at Overton's Lost City Museum.
The two-time Little Miss Paiute and tribal council alum has been doing Native dance since childhood and helped organize the Native American Student Association's powwow coming up at UNLV on January 9. We spoke with Douglas, who in addition to connecting past with present, strives to make Natives more visible in contemporary society.

What motivated you to visit your family's artifacts at the Lost City Museum?Personal research. I'd been wanting to learn how to make baskets. My people are known for it. There are no members of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe that currently do it, and this is something I will not be able to learn in school. I viewed my great-grandmother Topsy Swains' collection and her mother's baskets.

How did the artifacts arrive at the museum? Various ways. One of the smaller baskets made by Topsy Swain was purchased by Dr. William S. Park in 1935. It was acquired by Iola and R.F. Perkins after his death in 1946. It was then acquired by the State of Nevada from R.F. Perkins in 1973.

What was it like to see them? It took me back to a simple time. I loved [Topsy]; she was the sweetest lady. I guess there is a part of my culture I long for. I don't want that to go away. I want to bring it back to the youth. It's important to be reminded what makes you special, different. We are a small tribe. Our culture is special and we are significant to this region.

Why did the basket-making tradition disappear among Las Vegas Paiutes? I have relatives that still do it from Moapa Paiute Tribe. Willows for making the baskets grow along the river there. The willows don't grow here. Maybe that has something to do with it. My uncle Estes lives in Arizona. I asked him last year about making baskets, and he told me his wife Hopper makes them. I can learn from her. I am hoping to visit soon. There's a certain time when the willows are grown.

How would you describe Downtown's Paiute colony? Chill. I haven't lived there since I was a kid. I go back frequently, though, to visit family and do events at our multi-purpose [center]. It looks the same, feels the same. I like how it's all families that live in three cul-de-sacs that make up the colony. You can walk up or down the hill and everyone is connected. That togetherness is something I can appreciate now, but took for granted growing up there.

What are common misconceptions about Native people? That we are a thing of the past, don't exist anymore. A lot of people don't know we're here. In the schools, Native American people are talked about in a past tense.

What have you learned from mentoring youth about celebrating their heritage? Supporting youth and pushing for them to be proud of their heritage is important. It's what makes them special. That identity is so important to them. They are the strongest voices against being called "redskins," among other racist terms. They are supportive over environmental protection and are actually the strength behind me. I wouldn't have stepped up without the strength of their voices.

What will you be learning at Arquetopia? I want to learn about the techniques for creating natural pigments from Oaxaca and apply it. There are Paiute techniques for making different colors from desert flowers and roots. I am so fascinated how other cultures produce their colors. We might have many similarities as indigenous peoples'. I look forward to learning what that is.

http://lasvegasweekly.com/as-we-see-it/weekly-qa/2016/jan/06/talking-tradition-and-presence-with-paiute-artist/

Senator Reid's "To Do" List

Guest Writer: Geoff Rhodes
Submitted: January 5, 2016

I was glad to read Senator Reid's goals for 2016 published last Saturday January 2nd. I applaud him for continuing to stand behind Gold Butte and for his dedication to seeing Gold Butte protected permanently. The "old indian writings" as the Senator referred to them, are only some of many treasures to discover in Gold Butte. The area is rich with natural resources and recreation opportunities. An official designation for Gold Butte is in the best interest of all Nevadans. 2016 is the year to get Gold Butte off the "To Do" list and I am sure Senator Reid will get it done.

Reid talks about his goals for final year in U.S. Senate

Writer: Peter Urban
Published: January 2, 2016

Reid has introduced a handful of Nevada-centric bills — most looking to preserve public lands. The bills aren't likely to become law — few do given the modern-day gridlock in Congress — but that doesn't mean they will go unanswered. Reid has shown in the past that he can secure action on his proposals by inserting them into must-pass legislation or turning to the administration for help.

He pointed to preserving Gold Butte as a potential beneficiary of White House intervention and noted that Democrats had succeeded this year in stymieing Republican attempts to limit Obama's ability to name new federal preserves.

"As far as the president doing anything administratively, the only place he might do something is Gold Butte," Reid said. "That is something I'm sure he is looking at."

The environmentally sensitive Southern Nevada region has become more vulnerable to intruders and vandals since the Bureau of Land Management largely withdrew from Gold Butte after armed confrontation with supporters of rancher Cliven Bundy.

Friends of Gold Butte have documented disturbances to the desert landscape. Off-road vehicle tracks now mar an area adjacent to one of the area's signature petroglyph panels, the group said.

The organization said the evidence of lawlessness underscores a need for the federal government to step in and increase protections for the scenic region, 350,000 acres between Lake Mead and the Arizona border that has been called Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon.

"That is a beautiful area," Reid said. "I've been there, and it is stunning. It shouldn't be ruined by people who desecrate those old Indian writings."

http://www.reviewjournal.com/politics/reid-talks-about-his-goals-final-year-us-senate

The Spectrum

A boost for Mesquite

Guest writer: Charles Loomis
Published: December 26, 2015

A study was recently released that examined the economic benefits of designating Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area. This study showed that more visitors would be attracted to our area and this would result in significant economic benefits for Mesquite.

Specifically, the analysis found that an additional $2.7 million would be generated by visitors staying in Mesquite each year. That money could help our businesses grow, create new jobs and generate more tax revenue.

I moved to Mesquite because it is surrounded by beautiful, natural places, but let's be honest, this city could use an economic boost. A Gold Butte NCA would create long-lasting benefits for our community and at the same time, would ensure that our beautiful places remain pristine.

If you own or operate a business in Mesquite, I encourage you to support permanent protection for Gold Butte.

Mesquite

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/2015/12/26/boost-mesquite/77779464/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=

Desert Valley Times
Virgin Valley's Independent Newspaper

Economic Benefits of Designating Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Charles Loomis
Submitted: December 17, 2015

A study was recently released that examined the economic benefits of designating Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area. This study showed that more visitors would be attracted to our area and this would result in significant economic benefits for Mesquite. Specifically, the analysis found that an additional $2.7 million would be generated by visitors staying in Mesquite each year.

That money could help our businesses grow, create new jobs and generate more tax revenue. I moved to Mesquite because it is surrounded by beautiful, natural places, but let's be honest, this city could use an economic boost. A Gold Butte NCA would create long-lasting benefits for our community and at the same time, would ensure that our beautiful places remain pristine. If you own or operate a business in Mesquite, I encourage you to support permanent protection for Gold Butte.

LAS VEGAS SUN

Stop dumping at Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Rafael Lopez
Published: December 15, 2015

Anyone who's ever set foot or tire in Gold Butte should relate to the letter about the importance of protecting it ("Gold Butte's beauty deserves protection," Las Vegas Sun, Nov. 12). The sculpted red sandstone and rock spires mentioned are a painting come to life. It's amazing what Mother Nature can create, but it's even more amazing how quickly people can destroy it.

We've all seen the illegal dumping on much-needed habitat or the graffiti on priceless rock art that can never truly be restored. It's on all of us to ensure these terrible acts become less frequent. It starts by making a statement to our elected representatives that Gold Butte is valuable and should be permanently protected, but it also requires us to continue being good stewards and educate others about doing the same.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/dec/15/stop-dumping-at-gold-butte/

The Beauty of Gold Butte Needs Protection

Guest Writer: Carolina Chacon
Submitted: December 15, 2015

Less than two hours outside of Las Vegas lays a beautiful stretch of the Mojave Desert called Gold Butte. Here you'll find forests of Joshua and Yucca, slot canyons and sandstone valleys, dozens of ancient petroglyphs and a host of wildlife. You can hike, hunt, camp, bike, ride and explore 360,000 acres of rugged, untouched terrain.

I was lucky enough to climb through these natural monuments recently and to witness firsthand the beauty of a Nevada sunset descending upon red, jagged cliffs. I also saw the damage inflicted on this vulnerable landscape by bullets, glass, graffiti, tire tracks and other unregulated activities.

It became clear that Gold Butte, Nevada's slice of the Grand Canyon, deserves protection.

Others see it, too. Applied Analysis just conducted an economic analysis of the value of preserving Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area, and found that such a designation would attract more than 35,000 visitors each year. The region as a whole would benefit from visitors who need lodging, food and entertainment, especially those who set out to enjoy the myriad additional wonders, natural or otherwise, that Southern Nevada offers. Mesquite alone could see a boon of $2.7 million in extra revenue annually, as well as 28 new full-time jobs.

It makes sense economically and environmentally to preserve this land for today's tourists and future generations. Congress and the White House can ensure that this terrain remains wild and free of tampering but available to visitors. As Republican presidential candidates arrive in Las Vegas to debate their plans for the nation, now is the time to remind them of the importance of growing our economy and preserving public lands. Nevadans should take this opportunity to shine a light on the beauty of Gold Butte – and the need to protect it.

Federal protection is needed for Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Dana Higgins
Submitted: December 8, 2015

I was happy to read that protection for Gold Butte will bring economic benefits to the City of Mesquite (*Federal protection is needed for Gold Butte*, 12/5/15). Mesquite has been my winter home for the last four years, since I retired. We selected this place because of the surrounding areas and outdoor recreational opportunities.

I love hiking in Gold Butte. It is a magical place, and I have always supported conservation efforts to protect its amazing natural and cultural resources. I believe that protecting Gold Butte will bring sustainability to Mesquite's economy. Mesquite is a great community, full of hardworking people.

We are often overlooked by visitors who are headed to attractions like Zion, Lake Mead and the Grand Canyon, but now we have a chance to see an increase in visitation to our wonderful town. Mesquite is the Gateway to Gold Butte, Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon, and I am excited for the opportunity that awaits.

RGJ Reno Gazette-Journal
A GANNETT COMPANY

Preserving Our Lands

Guest Writer: Frankie Perez
Submitted: December 1, 2015

As a student at the University of Nevada, I learn about how America came to be a great nation, and the key role lands have played in our rise to the top, especially here in Nevada.

Most things I read or learn about in my classes, I wonder if future generations will get to experience them in their lifetime. Public lands on the other hand provide future generations with the opportunity to step where our ancestors might have once stepped and see in the petroglyphs that decorate many rocks throughout our great state what they saw, heard or experienced. There is no deeper connection to our history then being able to appreciate the same pristine places those before us once inhabited.

Preserving our lands is preserving a piece of American history. We must do more to preserve this piece of us, so that others may also enjoy our history in person and not just in textbooks. That is why I agree with Ron from Patagonia in his recent letter to the Reno Gazette-Journal that we must act to protect Gold Butte in Southern Nevada. It's time that we all step up and take action to preserve our history.

RGJ Reno Gazette-Journal
A GANNETT COMPANY

Protect our public lands

Guest Writer: Laura Martinez
Submitted: November 30, 2015

Latinos are the fastest growing demographic in the United States, but we are also among the most underrepresented groups in outdoor recreation and conservation. I love hiking, but until now have not been an active participant in protecting the places I enjoy exploring.

It's a sad reality that special places in Nevada, like Gold Butte, are being irreversibly damaged. As Mr. Hunter mentioned in his view to the RGJ, damage is being inflicted upon historic and cultural sites and we need to do more to protect them. Part of the experience of being outdoors in places like Gold Butte, is being able to connect with our culture and history. I would hate to see my community miss out on these experiences because we failed to do the right thing.

As we grow as community and learn about the beautiful lands that surround us, Latinos will no longer be underrepresented in conservation and outdoor activity. Instead we will lead in protection for our public lands, and will be loyal visitors to Gold Butte and many other special places throughout Nevada

LAS VEGAS SUN

Federal protection is needed for Gold Butte

Guest Writers: Mauricia Baca and Linda Balfour
Published: December 5, 2015

The Nevada Governor's Global Tourism Summit was convened in Las Vegas last month with a primary goal of preparing local businesses for the "wave of international visitors that Nevada will welcome as its travel appeal expands into new markets."

Most often we associate international travel to Nevada with the Las Vegas Strip. The summit highlighted an even wilder draw to the Silver State: a journey through the great outdoors of the American West. Southern Nevada is the heart of world-renowned outdoor playgrounds such as Red Rock National Conservation Area and the new Basin and Range National Monument, and is within a day's trip of regional destinations such as Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona and Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks in Utah. It's time to add Gold Butte to this list, for Nevadans and tourists alike.

Located between the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument and the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Gold Butte is Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon. It is a treasure trove of cultural, historic and natural wonders including thousands of petroglyphs, historic mining and pioneer-era artifacts, dramatic geologic features such as sculpted red sandstone and rock spires, and fossil track sites dating back 170 million to 180 million years. If all of that wasn't enough, Gold Butte is an amazing place to recreate — offering the opportunity to experience this magical place through hiking, hunting, birding, camping, OHV riding on designated trails and more.

Support for Gold Butte's permanent protection spans nationwide. The locally based Outside Las Vegas Foundation (OLVF) has supported permanent protection for Gold Butte for years. Most recently, the group released an economic study showing that protection of Gold Butte is good for Nevada's economy. Footwear company Keen launched a nationwide campaign to create lasting change and permanently protect more than 3 million acres of places where we all play in five areas around the United States — Gold Butte being one. Keen has provided financial support and technical resources to Friends of Nevada Wilderness in the effort to protect Gold Butte.

According to OLVF's study, conducted by Applied Analysis, protecting public lands unquestionably results in economic benefits for surrounding communities. It concludes that Mesquite — Gold Butte's gateway city — would realize a $2.7 million benefit and the creation of 28 full-time jobs in the first year of Gold Butte's designation. For a community such as Mesquite with fewer than 20,000 residents, these kinds of economic numbers are not a drop in the bucket.

Mesquite also would see an increase in unquantifiable economic benefits such as increased quality of life for residents. The recreational tourism market is expanding in Southern Nevada; permanently protecting Gold Butte is good for business.

The opportunity for a strong recreation economy, a wealth of ways to play outside, and abundant, unmatched antiquities are just some reasons Keen chose to advocate for Gold Butte in its Live Monumental campaign.

"Live Monumental is a rallying cry to protect some of our nation's most special places for their recreational, ecological, and historical values," said Kirk Richardson, executive director of the company's outdoors campaign, Keen Effects.

Despite being one of Nevada's most valuable outdoor recreation resources, Gold Butte is also one of the most endangered. In the past 18 months Gold Butte has suffered from vandalism, illegal development, damage to cultural sites, grave robbing and more. Due to additional threatening circumstances, now is the time for Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon to receive the protection it deserves. If passing Sen. Harry Reid and Congresswoman Dina Titus' bills calling for a national conservation area is not in the cards, we seek action by President Barack Obama, and we urge him to exercise the Antiquities Act and protect Gold Butte as a national monument. Action is needed now, before it's too late.

Mauricia Baca is executive director of the Outside Las Vegas Foundation, which was formed in August 2000 to increase quantity, quality and access to trails and open-space systems. Linda Balfour is Keen's communications director.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/dec/05/federal-protection-is-needed-for-gold-butte/

RGJ Reno Gazette-Journal
A GANNETT COMPANY

One view: Gold Butte deserves federal protection

Guest Writer: Ron Hunter
Published: November 25, 2015

In 1906, the destruction of Native American cultural sites in New Mexico's Chaco Canyon and what is now Colorado's Mesa Verde National Park prompted Congress to pass the Antiquities Act. President Teddy Roosevelt signed the bill into law in order to protect "historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest" on these and other of our nation's public lands. TR had a strong vision for protecting our country's most special and sacred places.

More than 100 years later, damage inflicted upon historic and cultural sites in southern Nevada's Gold Butte region underscores the continuing need for this law and why it should be used to safeguard this unique and spectacular place today. Gold Butte is Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon. It is an area rich in natural wonders, including expansive petroglyph panels, historic mining and pioneer sites, threatened wildlife species, and astonishing red sandstone formations. In recent years we've witnessed an increase in the degradation of this landscape — from graverobbing, to trespassing, to illegal development and petroglyph destruction. Gold Butte is in dire need of protection, whether through swift passage of the Gold Butte National Conservation Area Act sponsored by Senator Harry Reid and Representative Dina Titus, or through national monument designation under the Antiquities Act.

When Patagonia, a global outdoor clothing and gear brand, moved its Global Service Center to Reno in 1996, I had the opportunity to explore Nevada's deserts, basins and ranges. I first visited the Gold Butte area in 2002 and have been back many times since. Whether it is walking along a trail and raising my eyes to see the Falling Man petroglyph off in the distance, or hiking the ridges to the summit of Billy Goat Peak for spectacular views of some of the wildest country in southern Nevada, I never tire of the experience.

Protecting a remarkable landscape like Gold Butte offers other tangible rewards. Research suggests preservation of Gold Butte would also benefit the local economy. A study released recently by the Outside Las Vegas Foundation found that a protective designation for Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon would increase visitation to the region by an additional 35,000 trips per year. This would mean nearly $3 million for local communities in lodging, entertainment, food, and beverage expenditures. These findings echo the results of numerous studies of western communities namely, that protected lands attract new residents, tourists, and locals resulting in a boon to businesses, jobs, and incomes.

At Patagonia, environmental and social responsibility are core values. We recognize the fundamental connection between protecting our great outdoors and our business, and we work hard to preserve wild lands and waters in Nevada because these places are close to our hearts. With Patagonia's Global Service Center based in Reno, we understand the value of access to local public lands, as do so many of our 500 employees who hike, hunt, camp, bike, fish, ski, kayak, and climb in our unique and remarkable Nevada public lands. To those of us here at Patagonia who recreate in Nevada, it is important to act responsibly and leave behind a place we would want to live in.

We have an opportunity to keep some of our local wildlands just as they are, so that future generations have places to play, to explore, and to experience Nevada as we do today, and as so many generations did before us. That is why to us it makes sense for the environment and for local economies to protect

Gold Butte now and we hope Congress and the president hear our call.

Ron Hunter started with Patagonia 28 years ago and has worked at their Reno Service Center for the past 19 years. He is responsible for Patagonia's employee activism and oversees a number of the company's grant programs.

http://www.rgj.com/story/opinion/voices/2015/11/25/one-view-gold-butte-deserves-federal-protection/76388976/

The Spectrum

Protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Michele Burkett
Published: November 21, 2015

I note the recently released economic study showing overwhelming benefits for Mesquite's economy. In the more than 10 years that I have lived in Mesquite, I have witnessed the economic ups and downs affecting our town -- a national measure for Gold Butte would provide a sustaining source of revenue for our local economy.

Additional tourism dollars in the form of outdoor adventure is at our doorstep. As Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon, Gold Butte deserves permanent protection.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/2015/11/21/protect-gold-butte/76050876/

Ralston | Live

Reporter: John Ralston
Published: November 18, 2015

TV Interview starting at 9:30: http://video.vegaspbs.org/video/2365610925/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

Election 2016 Live Thread: T-355 Days

Writer: Andrew Davey
Published: November 18, 2015

Yes, hennies, the famed Jeremy Aguero studied the potential impact of heightened federal protection of Gold Butte… And found that Southern Nevada stands to benefit immensely.

"We take great pride in the data we put together for our partners and we were pleased to work with Outside Las Vegas on this study. The findings in our report are clear: there are economic benefits to protecting public lands. As a company, we are committed on many levels to see Southern Nevada's economy grow and diversify and this study now becomes part of the tools we can look to when we think of the overall economic picture here," said Aguero.

Applied Analysis' research shows the economic benefits to Southern Nevada when an area like Gold Butte (located 75 mile northeast of Las Vegas) is permanently protected. The memo and full study are attached. Key points of the research found that:

Visitation to the Gold Butte area is likely to increase as a result of the designation. The analysis found that Gold Butte's proximity to nearby cities, including both Mesquite and Las Vegas, as well as various other nearby national parks, monuments, and recreation areas provide a reasonable expectation that designation and preservation of the area would draw an additional 35,000 visitor trips per year.

If just 10 percent of these new visitors to Gold Butte decided to spend the night in Mesquite, the total economic impact for the community would be $2.7 million per year, creating 28 full-time jobs throughout the community.

There are also unquantifiable economic benefits including an increase in the quality of life for local residents.

Congresswoman Dina Titus spoke not just about the quantifiable data, but the qualitative aspects important to permanently protecting the Gold Butte area. "Gold Butte is Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon. Protecting it isn't just about conservation; it is about unleashing the economic potential all around Southern Nevada," said Congresswoman Titus of Nevada's First Congressional District. "Today, Gold Butte attracts thousands to see the natural and cultural wonders this special place offers. I am proud to sponsor legislation that would permanently protect this unique environment and ensure more visitors and future generations can share this experience," said Congresswoman Dina Titus.

http://letstalknevada.com/election-2016-live-thread-t-355-days/

LAS VEGAS SUN

Gold Butte's beauty deserves protection

Guest Writer: Ace Acosta
Published: November 12, 2015

On a crisp Sunday morning the Sierra Club, Friends of Gold Butte and several members of the Moapa Band of Paiutes gathered near the entrance of Gold Butte, with one of the Paiute members leading a blessing before the hike.

Driving down the trail we caught sight of a hawk elegantly soaring in the distance. It was a sign of the awesome day ahead. Midway through the drive we stopped to take in the remote vastness of Gold Butte — 350,000 acres of rugged mountains, Joshua and Mojave yucca trees, and vibrant-colored sandstone, equally worthy of protecting as Red Rock.

The Old Spanish trail runs through Gold Butte, a historic trade route traversed by Spanish explorers as early as the late 16th century connecting New Mexican settlements to Los Angeles. Exploring Gold Butte, I was able to learn more about my Mexican-American roots, an experience I think everyone in Las Vegas should have.

Finally, we arrived at the destination of our hike and prepared to set off. On the trail we passed large, beautiful Joshua trees the likes of which I'd never seen before. The first stop up the trail we observed petroglyphs. A plethora of ancient knowledge covered the scattered boulders, telling stories left to be interpreted. The Moapa Band of Paiutes chairman was awestruck, as this was his first time seeing these magnificent "rock stories."

Gold Butte offers such alluring geological features, majestic wildlife, meaningful and intriguing history, and timeless solitude. All worth protecting for future generations to explore and enjoy.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/nov/12/gold-buttes-beauty-deserves-protection/

RGJ Reno Gazette-Journal
A GANNETT COMPANY

Amodei off the mark on public land issues

Guest Writer: Kevan Burton
Published: October 30, 2015

Congressman Amodei's recent comments on the Outdoor Industry Alliance's findings that the majority of Nevadans oppose public land transfers to the state ("Outdoors Industry muscles into politics of public land," Oct. 23) prove just how far off the mark he is on public land issues. Nevada State Legislature's Senate Joint Resolution 1 met strong opposition. The majority of Nevadans know that the state cannot afford the management of public lands yet this is conveniently glossed over.

The American Lands Council, which leads the movement in the West to transfer federal lands to the states, is funded by taxpayer money (yes, they are using yourmoney to rob you of your public lands) and Americans for Prosperity, the right-wing group heavily bolstered by the Koch Brothers. Why is ALC is going to such great lengths to transfer public lands to the state?

The answer is clear — once Western states can't afford managing public lands, they'll sell them off and open them up for private interests. There goes our public access, our outdoor recreation — auctioned off to the highest bidder. Instead, we should be working towards protecting more of our public lands — let's make Gold Butte the first.

http://www.rgj.com/story/opinion/2015/10/30/letter-amodei-off-mark-public-land-issues/74890202/

The Spectrum

Protect the wilderness around you

Writer: Brandon Mullens
Published: September 17, 2015

"The pioneers thought it was a place where the devil roamed," Jose Witt of Friends of Nevada Wilderness said Wednesday. "It's transitioned into now more of a place as a sanctuary for wildlife and humans to go out and kind of free their spirit."

That's how he described historic Gold Butte, a place with numerous wilderness areas, at the Friends of Gold Butte speaker series held at the Mesquite Community Theatre.

Witt and Dr. Geoffrey Frasz, a professor of environmental ethics at the College of Southern Nevada, both provided the audience an informative presentation that included the philosophy of wilderness in areas like Gold Butte, Jumbo Springs andMuddy Mountains, and how a "land ethic" has shaped differing attitudes toward wilderness in our society why wilderness areas are important.

Frasz referenced Aldo Leopold, an American author, scientist, forecaster, ecologist, conservationist and environmentalist, who influenced the shaping of the wilderness conservation movement with a focus in ecological or holistic ethics.

Leopold was assigned to manage forest areas in New Mexico and deal with predatory eradication, Frasz said. However, he saw wildlife management as a technique for restoring and maintaining diversity, not just for producing a surplus of animals for sport hunting.

"Wilderness for him meant a healthy biotic community that included wolves and mountain lions and helped form the Wilderness Society," Frasz said. "The land has a value for its own sake, not just for human use."

In 1949, Leopold developed the idea of a "land ethic" in his work A Sand County Almanac.

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land," Frasz said. ""The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively, the land."

Frasz said obviously not all people are moved by the arguments of why wilderness areas should be preserved. He gave the audience "instrumental" arguments for wilderness.

Wilderness areas are stockpiled with genetic materials we may need such as medicine, he said, adding that Madagascar periwinkle is used to treat childhood leukemia and Hodgkin's disease. He continued by saying wilderness areas act as preserve for scientific studies; give humans places to practice travel and camping skills; provide spiritual inspiration like cathedrals; and allow humans to experience the presence of wild animals to fully develop as human.

"A 'self' needs to identify with 'others' to mature," Frasz said. "This means not only other persons, but many other species. Wilderness areas provide extensive opportunity to encounter wildlife and grow as a human being."

"You look at the Mojave Desert and people think it's a bearing wasteland because it's so brown, but there's so much life and the life out there is precious because it can survive in harsh weather conditions," Witt said.
Witt also argued that the wilderness provides clean air and perfect night skies for future generations, saying the Great Basin Desert has some of the cleanest air in the nation, as do other wilderness

areas due to the Clean Air Act. When the land managers see their air quality is degrading, they're mandated by congress to work with local, state and county officials to improve air quality.

"In Vegas, we get the classic smog where it just looks brown in the valley and weather guys are saying 'oh, we can't wait for that wind storm to come in and blow out all that pollution,'" Witt said. "So the clean air is coming from our wilderness areas."

However, Frasz said wild areas such as Gold Butte, Jumbo Springs, Muddy Mountain and Jarbridge are "constantly under pressure to yield to economic development."

"Wilderness is a resource that can only shrink," Frasz said. "It will never grow. We're never going to be able to make more wilderness areas, the most we can do is keep the existing ones from shrinking."

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/09/17/protect-wilderness-around/72361098/

Chukar hunters should set sights on Utah
Writer: C. Douglas Nielsen
Published: September 16, 2015

Hunters looking to bag a few chukars this fall may want to turn at least part of their hunting attention north and east to the Beehive State. Utah's chukar numbers are the highest they have been in 17 years.

According to the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, population surveys put chukar numbers at 101 birds per square mile in Toole County, a milestone that only has been reached once in the past 20 years. In 1998, biologists observed the previous high of 117 birds per square mile in survey areas.

Elsewhere in Utah, hunters can expect to find higher than average chukar numbers even if they don't quite reach that 100-bird-per-square-mile mark.

Jason Robinson, upland game coordinator for the DWR, said such peaks in chukar populations are a rare event. "I encourage hunters to get into the field and take advantage of it," he said.

Two primary factors play important roles in population spikes such as Utah is experiencing this year. The first is weather, and the second is a population cycle.

"The winter was warm and mild," Robinson said, "and most of the adult birds made it through. The birds were in good condition as they entered the breeding season. That allowed the females to lay plenty of eggs."

Those conditions were followed by a wet May, which produced bumper crops of green vegetation and insects, both a primary food sources for new chicks. In Nevada, biologist are crediting May rain storms with saving the Silver State's chukar season.

"Without moisture received during (May) and into June, the upcoming chukar season would likely have been a complete "bust," said Shawn Espinosa, upland game biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife. "They just needed that extra moisture to have a good hatch this year, and it looks like that's what happened."

Though biologists are unsure why it occurs, Utah's chukar population tends to cycle high, or spike, about every eight years. The last peak was in 2006 when bird numbers nudged the 100-birds-per-square-mile mark. Before that, it occurred in 1998.

Nevada's chukar population hasn't hit the record numbers found in Utah, but Espinosa said hunters should expect to find hunting conditions similar to those of the 2014-15 hunting season. He anticipates some of the best success to come early in the season.

The most productive hunting is generally found in the northern counties, but there are populations of chukar scattered throughout Southern Nevada. Places to look include Gold Butte, the mountains between Interstate 15 and Caliente and east of Highway 93, the mountains near Beatty and those north of the Tonopah Test Range.

In Utah, hunters will find the highest concentration of birds in Toole, Juab and Millard counties in areas located west of Interstate 15. Robinson said other places hunters might consider looking for chukars are the rocky river corridors of Southern Utah and the Book Cliffs east of Price. Even the foothills of the Wasatch Front hold chukars.

In Arizona, chukars can be found in the northwest corner of the state north of the Colorado River. According to the Arizona Game & Fish

Department, "Mild winters combined with expanding cheat grass on the Arizona Strip are both benefiting chukar range expansion. Chukar populations should again be in good numbers for this year."

Arizona's chukar season is already underway. It started Sept. 4 and runs through Feb. 7. The daily bag limit is five birds, and the possession limit is 15. In Utah, the general chukar season opens Sept. 26 and continues through Feb. 15. The bag and possession limits are five and 15.

In Nevada, the season dates are Oct. 10 through Feb. 7, but the bag and possession limits are a little more generous. The daily bag limit is six chukar, and the possession limit is 18.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/columns-blogs/the-outdoors/chukar-hunters-should-set-sights-utah

Protect Gold Butte, before visitors overrun it

Guest Writers: Darren Daboda and Anthony Barron
Published: August 30, 2015

When U.S. Bureau of Land Management officials arrived at the dedication site of the Gold Butte Backcountry Byway in June 1989, they were met by a line of peaceful protesters from the Moapa Band of Paiutes. The Paiutes were deeply concerned about the road. An official byway meant increased access, more motorized vehicles and the potential for disrespect and destruction of sites that are part of the Moapa Paiutes' cultural heritage.

Sadly, the foresight of the Moapa Paiutes was accurate. Gold Butte has experienced unremitting destruction, and the need to permanently protect it grows more urgent every day.

The Southern Paiutes have been in this region since time immemorial. They looked to the land for their livelihood and found food, shelter and water to sustain a traditional lifestyle. They left behind their stories on the rock walls of Gold Butte — stories that are not replaceable if lost. We need to act now to preserve Gold Butte before its treasures disappear.

Equally significant is Gold Butte's natural environment. With elevations that range between 1,500 and 8,000 feet, this land hosts a variety of ecosystems that provide habitat for threatened and rare species. The threatened desert tortoise thrives in the lower desert regions. Desert bighorn sheep grace the higher, remote elevations in the southern half of Gold Butte. Endangered plant species, such as the Las Vegas bearpaw poppy, grow in undisturbed soils. The relict leopard frog, once thought extinct, has been found in the rare but healthy springs tucked away in small oases. The area has so many unique biological and cultural qualities that the BLM has designated the entire region, approximately 348,000 acres, as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern — an administrative title that requires a specialized management plan.

Today, there are many more visitors to Gold Butte. Most of them travel respectfully along Gold Butte Road, observing signs that direct them to stay on the road. But there are many others who don't respect the land or its significance. They tear across landscapes that contain clues to the people who once lived here — through ancient agave roasting pits and sacred springs, and into archaeological and historical sites. They shoot bullets into the petroglyphs and scratch out the images that were carved long ago. They destroy and remove signs. They dig up ancient graves. They cut fences and drive where they are not supposed to go. They use the land and leave their waste and trash behind. The desert is trampled, habitat is lost. The threatened species, having lived here for tens of thousands of years, are steadily losing ground in the face of this intrusion.

A record of the past is written in Gold Butte, but its history and its natural environment are being erased — degraded by irresponsible, disrespectful and sometimes intentionally malicious behavior.

The problems of vandalism, trash and intrusions are getting worse. The recent damage report released by Friends of Gold Butte provides evidence that a new, more intrusive human threat has hit. It's a threat that is illegally defacing the fragile desert landscape, using heavy equipment to dig an unauthorized trench, miles long, to bury a pipe for water delivery, destroying prime desert habitat and threatening plants and animals. It's a threat that blatantly disregards the rules of this Area of Critical Environmental Concern and the ethic of

conservation. A threat that, left unchecked, will destroy the last continuous piece of undeveloped Mojave Desert land in Nevada. Even worse, this threat is a challenge to the idea of public land, that this land is ours and belongs to all Americans.

We need to ensure permanent protection for Gold Butte now, either through congressional or administrative action, so that future generations can experience Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon and see this majestic landscape as our Paiute ancestors saw it.

Darren Daboda is chairman of the Moapa Band of Paiutes. Anthony Barron is former president of Friends of Gold Butte.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/protect-gold-butte-visitors-overrun-it

Now it's time to protect Gold Butte, too

Guest Writer: Steve Rowland
Published: August 21, 2015

In future decades and centuries, our two recently created national monuments Tule Springs Fossil Beds and Basin and Range will join Red Rock Canyon, Valley of Fire and Lake Mead as cherished elements within Southern Nevada's natural landscape. Such outdoor recreation opportunities attract a growing population of visitors who shun the bright lights of Las Vegas in favor of natural features.

These folks, who often pick up their rental cars at McCarran International Airport and scurry off to the national parks of Arizona, California and Utah, are finding increasingly compelling incentives to linger for a few days in the natural wonderlands of Southern Nevada, helping to diversify our tourism base. But there is one additional natural treasure Gold Butte that is also deserving of high-profile protective status. Stationed between the Overton Arm of Lake Mead and the Nevada-Arizona state line, Gold Butte is a fantastic medley of jagged-ridge geology, petroglyph-panel archaeology, fossil-footprint paleontology and glorious Mojave Desert scenery.

The times are changing, and our population is expanding. Graze-your-cattle-wherever-you-like libertarianism may have worked OK in the sparsely populated 19th and early 20th centuries, but it is not a viable strategy for Southern Nevada in the 21st century. Now is the time to protect Gold Butte. It will preserve this spectacular region for the enjoyment of all of us in the near term, and for future generations in perpetuity. And it will significantly contribute to Southern Nevada's growing reputation as a mecca for outdoor recreation.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters/letters-now-its-time-protect-gold-butte-too

Damage at Gold Butte

Reporter: Paul Joncich
Aired: August 20, 2015

https://iqmediacorp.com/ClipPlayer/?ClipID=75807f7e-8cf1-4d52-becf-9b0d9bfa4a6f

Gold Butte backers work to protect southern Nevada landscape

Writer: Tony Garcia
Published: August 20, 2015

There is an effort to preserve part of the Southern Nevada desert/mountain landscape. The 350,000 acres in Gold Butte are rich in historic value and scenic beauty. But some of this land is being damaged. "So Whitney Pockets that has these Aztec sandstone outcroppings," says Jaina Moan, executive director of Friends of Gold Butte, who shows off photographs of Gold Butte. She loves the land and all it offers. "It's part of this big swath of beautiful land. It's part of the Grand Canyon ecosystem, and so that's why we call it Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon," Moan says. This beauty near the Arizona border draws in visitors to absorb its rich rewards, reminiscent of the Grand Canyon.

"There's a lot of people who have come here and said, 'Well, we don't see anything.' Well, it's the side roads, as you know, where you see everything. And there's thousands of petroglyphs here. There's photo ops that are incredible. It's just a great place … wildlife … great place," says former Mesquite Councilman Karl Gustaveson. Friends of Gold Butte says there are people, perhaps unknowingly, ruining precious historic and cultural sites. "It's heartwrenching.

For a place when you love that place, you know that that place is important for the animals live there, and it's a place that's important to be preserved," Moan says. Friends of Gold Butte have released a report showing damage to the land and its petroglyphs that tell the stories of the lands' inhabitants from thousands of years ago. Bullet holes ruin one site. The report reveals ATV and vehicle traffic on the land, and unauthorized trenches for water. "When a person trenches, makes a deep trench across the landscape like that, they are damaging habitat," Moan says.

The organization would like the land to be designated a national conservation area; and more presence from the Bureau of Land Management to maintain and protect the area. Both Sen. Harry Reid and U.S. Rep. Dina Titus have introduced bills to help protect Gold Butte. Friends of Gold Butte is circulating an online petition.

http://www.news3lv.com/content/news/local/story/Gold-Butte-protection-supporters-reid-titus-nevada/Et-MswtW6ESAxI34CSXOgw.cspx

Nothing like the night sky at Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Christian Gerlach
Published: August 19, 2015

The Perseid meteor shower blazed across our dark desert skies this past week, and I was fortunate enough to share the experience with a group of youths who had never even witnessed a meteor streak across the sky. Our natural world put on for us an awesome show displaying the wonder and beauty of the universe in all of its glory.

Every star in the sky was visible as we passed the light pollution barrier of Las Vegas. The best place to see such a sight is just out of town, behind Mesquite in Gold Butte. The youngsters who have been volunteering in the effort to protect Gold Butte loved the views. These young champions of our public lands got to see something I was fortunate enough to enjoy growing up.

My parents had these experiences themselves growing up and they imparted that wonder of our natural world and a dark night's sky. Unfortunately, many young Nevadans never get to experience dark skies and the Milky Way in its entire splendor. The lights of the city drown out the stars. The fact is most people now live in cities, and that trend will continue to grow. It is rare now that youths even get to see dark skies.

That is why we have to protect public lands like Gold Butte, so everyone will have the opportunity to gaze upon the stars and be inspired the same way our species has throughout the ages.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters/letters-nothing-the-night-sky-gold-butte

Gold Butte called more vulnerable to vandals

Writer: Steve Tetreault
Published: August 19, 2015

WASHINGTON — In the aftermath of armed confrontation with supporters of rancher Cliven Bundy, the Bureau of Land Management largely has withdrawn from Gold Butte, leaving the environmentally sensitive Southern Nevada region more vulnerable to intruders and vandals, a preservation group said Wednesday.

Friends of Gold Butte in a 34-page report documented disturbances to the desert landscape since November. It said previously closed illegal roads have been reopened, and are "quite well traveled now."

Off-road vehicle tracks now mar an area adjacent to one of the area's signature petroglyph panels, the group said. Signs at a popular campground designated a "no vehicles" zone have been ignored judging from tire markings entering and leaving the area.

One series of photos details an unauthorized water delivery system presumably to support illegal grazing. It is constructed out of an old gas storage tank, trenches of shallowly buried pipes and a makeshift trough of an oversized truck tire cemented to the desert floor. Photos taken in May show a dead roadrunner and another small animal that evidently died trapped in the trough.

The organization said the evidence of lawlessness underscores a need for the federal government to step in and increase protections for the scenic region, 350,000 acres between Lake Mead and the Arizona border that has been called Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon.

"This documented and ongoing damage highlights the urgent need to permanently protect Gold Butte," said Jaina Moan, executive director for Friends of Gold Butte.

BLM had no immediate comment on the report.

The Cliven Bundy connection

The area is designated by the BLM as an Area of Critical Environment Concern, and has been managed to protect habitat for the desert tortoise and Bighorn sheep and to shield petroglyphs and historic mining-era artifacts from destruction.

But the group said the BLM and other federal land agencies have halted activities in the region since April 2014, "due to adverse circumstances."

It does not say so directly but that is when armed government agents faced off with similarly armed supporters of Bundy over the rancher's cattle trespassing on federal land.

The potentially deadly showdown was defused but the episode served to further ratchet tensions surrounding land uses in the West. Workers for the BLM and the National Forest Service have been cautioned for their safety and have been under fire, at times literally.

"In the absence of a land management presence, Friends of Gold Butte has witnessed an increasing level of intrusion near historic and cultural sites as well as impacts to sensitive desert areas that are habitat for threatened and endangered species," the group said.

Moan in an interview expressed sympathy for the BLM.

"We really feel the BLM is doing the best they can under very tenuous circumstances," she said. "Really, the fact is they need more resources."

In June, the BLM told employees and contractors to stay out of Gold Butte after shots were fired near a survey crew campsite along the western slope of the Virgin Mountains.

The three-person crew reported three shots were fired from a nearby road, and three more shots were fired an hour later. Nobody was injured but the crew packed up and quickly left.

In April 2014, the Review-Journal documented a gravesite that had been dug up at the long-abandoned Gold Butte town site where mining flourished for a brief period a century ago.

Protection sought from Washington

The Friends of Gold Butte report was issued a month after President Barack Obama signed a proclamation creating the Basin and Range National Monument withdrawing for conservation 704,000 acres of land in Lincoln and Nye counties.

Some environmentalists believe Gold Butte is as deserving of preservation, and have stepped up calls for Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., to use his influence in the final year of the Obama administration to arrange for a similar designation even as residents of northeastern Clark County are deeply split on the idea.

Asked during an Aug. 12 meeting with Review-Journal reporters whether he plans to seek executive action again, Reid said, "Well, I think I've asked the president for enough for a little while, so I'm just going to let that work its way through the system."

But he left the door open, saying, "Sometime I might do it, but I'm not right now."

http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/water-environment/gold-butte-called-more-vulnerable-vandals

EL TIEMPO

Buscan preservar zona de Gold Butte

Writer: Anthony Avellaneda
Published: August 14, 2015

Decenas de personas se reunieron en las instalaciones del edificio Zappos Campus para solicitar la protección permanente del área Gold Butte, una zona natural e histórica ubicada en el Condado de Clark.

El área de 'Gold Butte' se encuentra a menos de dos horas de Las Vegas y cuenta con una extensión territorial de 350,000 hectáreas, este lugar fue habitado hace más de 3,000 años por nativos americanos, motivos por los cuáles es importante preservar dicha área para distintas empresas y organizaciones como 'Battle Born Progress'.

La subdirectora de Battle Born Progress, Jocelyn Torres argumentó que, "Este evento es parte de una excursión que está haciendo está compañía de zapatos para tratar de convencer al departamento de interior y al presidente Obama de que protejan permanentemente el área de Gold Butte. Este lugar tiene muchos elementos que deben ser protegidos como la tierra, naturaleza, los animales que habitan en esa área, también hay partes culturales e históricas de los indios nativos como pinturas en las piedras".

Durante el evento, se explicó que se deben tomar acciones para preservar este lugar como un monumento nacional, se busca que haya vigilancia constante en la zona, limpieza, personal de atención y señales para instruir a los visitantes.

"El proceso es un poco confuso, se puede proteger mediante un acto del presidente, él puede decir que esa área debe ser protegida como monumento nacional y firmar dicha proclamación. Otro conducto es por el congreso, el cual tendría el proceso igual que cualquier otra ley", acotó Torres.

Al evento asistieron distintos representantes gubernamentales como Isaac Barrón, concejal del Distrito 1 de North Las Vegas, quién explicó que la preservación de esta zona podría traer cuantiosos beneficios para los habitantes de Nevada.

"Estos lugares repercuten a la comunidad en temas económicos, estamos hablando de millones de dólares que se pueden explotar cuando la gente sale a disfrutar de nuestra riqueza natural. Al mismo tiempo debemos usarlo con mucha responsabilidad en estos terrenos que tenemos se ve un desierto imponente pero a su vez es un medio ambiente muy frágil que no tiene ninguna manera de repararse", dijo el concejal.

"Lo que hacemos ahora para proteger y preservar es algo que es de mucha importancia, no solo para nosotros, hijos y nietos, sino también para las generaciones que aún no han nacido y nosotros tenemos el deber de proteger nuestros terrenos para que ellos también lo puedan disfrutar", mencionó Isaac Barrón.

En el evento se expuso que en el área de Gold Butte se han encontrado distintos objetos que según especialistas fueron propiedad de los primeros nativos americanos, tales como abrigos rocosos, escrituras y pinturas rupestres, atractivos que podrían ser utilizados como un importante impacto turístico.
El integrante de la organización Sierra Club, Christian Gerlach compartió con El Tiempo otro motivo más por el cual se debe proteger dicho lugar.

"Esa área es muy importante para el mismo Lago Mead ya que ayuda a llenar el Río Colorado, se abastecen mediante otros sistemas de cuencas hidráulicas para formar los dos ríos, debajo de Gold Butte hay mucha agua y se tiene que preservar esa área para asegurarnos de que los ciclos naturales hidráulicos sigan como van ahora", detalló Gerlach.

El representante y organizador de Sierra Club también señaló que hacer construcciones de desarrollo urbano o destrucción en esa zona del desierto tendría severas repercusiones, además destacó la importancia de preservar la historia del lugar.

"Tiene mucha historia para los latinos, desde los años 1700's hay campamentos de españoles que estuvieron ahí. Hay que unirnos en estos temas para proteger la tierra, solo tenemos un planeta, un lugar para nuestra especie, si lo desperdiciamos no vamos a tener otro método para sobrevivir por eso debemos tener un balance del desarrollo, civilización y la naturaleza", concretó Gerlach.

http://eltiempolv.com/noticias/buscan-preservar-zona-gold-butte

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Group Steps Up Efforts To Preserve Gold Butte

Writer: Casey Morell
Published: August 03, 2015

A new push to make the Gold Butte region a preservation site is taking place.

The Live Monumental campaign is part of a nationwide effort from non-profits and private industry to federally protect five different areas in the country, including Gold Butte.

Jaina Moan, the executive director of Friends of Gold Butte, told KNPR's State of Nevada that the area is a beautiful example of Nevada's Mojave Desert. "Gold butte is a treasure trove of cultural and natural wonders," she said "It is a very special place for many Southern Nevadans."

The area is about 350,000 acres between the Arizona border and Lake Mead National Recreation Area about two hours northeast of Las Vegas. It is currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Moan said it is home to ancient petroglyphs, sandstone features, desert mountainscapes and sensitive plant and animal species.

Both Sen. Harry Reid, D-NV., and Rep. Dina Titus, D-NV., have introduced bills aimed at protecting the area but so far it hasn't happened. However, Sen. Dean Heller, R-NV., sent a letter to President Barack Obamaasking for it not to be designated as a national monument because of concerns it "would escalate anger and frustrations with the Department of the Interior government in a region of our state where tensions are already presently high."

Gold Butte is close to Bunkerville where rancher Cliven Bundy and supporters faced off with BLM agents in April 2014. The standoff was sparked by a dispute over Bundy's cattle and whether he had to pay grazing fees to the federal government. For many, the dispute centered on whether the federal government could manage lands in the state.

Moan said the added attention the area has received as meant more people are going there and some visitors are doing more damage.

"It's clear now that we must call on our congressional leaders and the administration to take whatever steps necessary to ensure that this area is permanently protected," she said.

However, Moan said protection would not mean an end to people using Gold Butte for recreational purposes, like ATV's. She said the bills introduced by Reid and Titus still allow people to use 500 miles of roads for ATV's and other vehicles.

The efforts of Moan's group have received national attention thanks to the Live Monumental campaign sponsored by Keen Footwear.

The maker of sports-focused footwear is on a two-month tour of the country, looking to collect 100,000 signatures on a petition asking lawmakers to designate Gold Butte and five other areas as national monuments.

Hundreds of people showed up for the tour stop last week at the Zappos.com headquarters in downtown Las Vegas. To Moan, those numbers show just how supportive the community is of the designation.

"I think that southern Nevadans want their public lands protected," Moan said.

http://knpr.org/knpr/2015-08/group-steps-efforts-preserve-gold-butte

#LiveMonumental Update: Las Vegas and Gold Butte

Writer: Staff Blogger
Published: July 31, 2015

#LiveMonumental Update: Las Vegas and Gold Butte

What happens in Vegas…will hopefully not stay in Vegas!

We had such a great turnout for our event over at Zappos HQ with Friends of Nevada Wilderness joining us…and we hope to keep that momentum going! Over 500 people showed up to enjoy an ice cream cone, get a t-shirt designed by KEEN ambassador Jeremy Collins, get some pint glasses and other swag courtesy of Klean Kanteen and the Conservation Alliance, take a spin on the climbing wall provided by Zappos, and of course, sign their names to the Live Monumental petition to enact five new national monuments! From Las Vegas, we headed out to Gold Butte with Zappos to get some hiking in, but we ran into a few bus troubles on our way.

The RV broke down on the way to Mt. Charleston, but luckily our friends at Zappos were there to help us out and we were back on the road in no time! We trekked on toward a blue moon (two moons in a month) hike at Newspaper Rock. The next one isn't going to happen for another three years, so the team decided to capitalize on the opportunity! On the way to that, we got caught in a flash flood that sidetracked us for a little while, but we finally made it! All the hiccups along the way made this hike even more worth it.

Getting to see all these amazing areas across the U.S. is just one of the reasons why #LiveMonumental is so important to us. With this campaign, we want to share those experiences and preserve the areas that make them possible. Please visitLiveMonumental.com to sign, spread the word, and help us reach 100,000 signatures to let Washington, D.C. know that public lands are important to us.

http://blog.keenfootwear.com/blog/2015/07/31/livemonumental-update-las-vegas/

Conservationists, company rally to protect Gold Butte

Writer: By Henry Brean
Published: July 30, 2015

Two monuments down, one to go.

That was the message from conservationists Thursday during a rally at the downtown headquarters of Zappos meant to spur momentum for the protection of Gold Butte in northeastern Clark County.

The roughly 350,000-acre area two hours northeast of Las Vegas is home to ancient rock art galleries, sweeping desert vistas and twisted fields of pastel-colored sandstone hemmed in by Lake Mead and the Grand Canyon.

Longtime local environmental advocate John Hiatt said it's the sort of place that would already be a national park if it existed in almost any other state. "The petroglyphs in that area outshine anywhere else in Southern Nevada," he said.

The conservation community has been pushing for national recognition of Gold Butte for more than a decade. What they got instead was a pair of new monuments elsewhere in Nevada.

In December, bipartisan legislation led to the creation of Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument at the northern edge of Las Vegas. Then on July 10, President Barack Obama used his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate Basin and Range National Monument on 704,000 acres of remote Lincoln and Nye counties over the objections of rural officials and Nevada Republicans in Congress.

Now conservationists want to shift attention back to Gold Butte, and this time their push has some corporate oomph behind it.

Thursday's event was part of a new campaign called "Live Monumental" by Oregon-based KEEN Footwear. It was the first stop on a cross-country road trip the shoe company is sponsoring to drum up support and gather petition signatures for Gold Butte and four other places it considers monument-caliber: Boulder-White Clouds, Idaho; Owyhee Canyonlands, Ore.; Mojave Trails, Calif.; and Birthplace of Rivers, W.Va.

Kirsten Blackburn from KEEN said the company picked Gold Butte for its campaign after consulting with the Conservation Lands Foundation and other national preservation groups.

But the effort faces opposition from Republican lawmakers and one other major obstacle: The area is also home to several hundred cattle left to roam on federal land by a certain well-known Clark County rancher.
"Gold Butte is an incredibly complicated situation now. It's always been difficult, but with the Cliven Bundy situation, it's even more difficult," Hiatt said.

In 2014, the Bureau of Land Management moved to round up Bundy's livestock, but the operation was hastily canceled and the cattle released after an armed standoff between federal authorities and Bundy supporters.

Since then, BLM scarcely patrols the area, which has opened the door for an increase in litter, fence cutting and damage from off-road vehicles, said Jaina Moan, executive director of the nonprofit group Friends of Gold Butte.

"I think the need for protection is increasing and enhanced," she said.

In January, U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., introduced a bill to create Gold Butte National Conservation Area on almost 350,000 acres. The area would be administered, as it is now, by the BLM, and roughly a third of it would be designated as wilderness.

Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., introduced a House version in February. Neither bill has advanced out of committee.
Nevada's congressional delegation remains deeply divided over the idea.

Republican U.S. Sen. Dean Heller has publicly warned Obama against unilateral action on Gold Butte, "a region of our state where tensions are already presently high."

And Rep. Cresent Hardy, R-Nev., has promised to "fight tooth and nail" against the proposed wilderness designations or any other new restrictions in an area he thinks is just fine the way it is.

With opposition like that, Hiatt said, "there's no possible way" Gold Butte will win congressional approval, so it's likely to take more cajoling from Reid and another executive action by Obama to make it a national monument.

"He just did a big one in Nevada. Will he be willing to do another? I don't think anybody knows," Hiatt said. "Senator Reid has been able to pull a rabbit out of the hat on more than one occasion."

But outdoor activist Terri Robertson, a founding member of the Friends of Gold Butte, hasn't given up on Congress just yet.

She said a lot of time and effort went into crafting the current bills, which would not only designate Gold Butte as a national conservation area but also preserve some 500 miles of existing roads and many of the current uses in the area.

Roberston said opponents like Hardy and Heller should consider getting behind the legislation or risk ending up with a presidential decree they might find even more disagreeable.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/conservationists-company-rally-protect-gold-butte

Reid's conservation award

Guest Writer: Jose Witt
Published: July 13, 2015

To the Editor:

Sen. Harry Reid deservedly received the League of Conservation Voter's 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award. No matter how you feel about the senator, you can't deny the work he's done for the environment, not just for the country, but right here in Nevada.

Sen. Reid tirelessly and successfully fought against Yucca Mountain, created Great Basin National Park — thereby protecting some of the world's most ancient bristlecone pines — and established the Las Vegas favorite Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. Red Rock not only provides an outdoor playground for us city dwellers, but generates additional tourism. Sen. Reid has spearheaded protection for all 70 designated wilderness areas throughout Nevada, so that future generations can enjoy clean air, clean water and outdoor recreation for years to come.

Sen. Reid is still working to conserve wild places and wildlife habitat. President Barack Obama announced last week the designation of Basin and Range as a national monument. Earlier this year, Sen. Reid introduced legislation to protect Gold Butte. This award has been a long time coming.

http://m.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters-california-won-t-go-desalination

'The wheels of justice move at their own pace,' Jewell says of Bundy

Writers: Annie Snider and Phil Taylor
Published: June 25, 2015

INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev. -- Interior Secretary Sally Jewell said Nevada cattle rancher Cliven Bundy, whose ranch was the site of an armed confrontation with federal officials last year over unpaid grazing fees, will be brought to justice.

Speaking yesterday with reporters ahead of this week's Western Governors' Association meeting, Jewell said the federal government will continue pursuing Bundy in the courts.

"Cliven Bundy has had multiple court orders to remove his cattle from federal public lands, and he has not paid his grazing fees, and he has not abided by the law, and so we will continue to pursue that," Jewell said.

The Bureau of Land Management and Justice Department have faced criticism from conservation groups for failing to take action against Bundy and his supporters since BLM backed down from the near-violent standoff in April 2014.

Critics say the government's retreat emboldened others to challenge BLM's domain over federal lands in the West and has impeded BLM's ability to protect the environment and cultural sites.

Jewell defended BLM's decision yesterday, saying the safety of law enforcement officers and land managers "is of paramount importance" to her.

But she also said that's not the end of the story for Bundy.

"The wheels of justice move at their own pace, and we will continue to be very, very supportive," she said. "I'm confident that this issue's going to be resolved, and we will continue to cooperate at every level to make sure that that's the case."

Threats and assaults against BLM fell in 2014

But while the standoff at Bundy ranch highlighted the dangers of managing public lands in restive pockets of the conservative West, BLM in 2014 recorded the lowest number of threats and assaults against its employees since 1996, according to a report today from watchdog group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

BLM recorded 15 threats and assaults against employees last year, one-fourth below the previous year. It logged an average of 21 incidents annually over the previous five years.

The incidents include the relatively benign: On May 7, 2014, someone squirted water on a BLM officer at the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument in Southern California. But they also include an "attempted murder" of an officer with a pistol a month later at Edwards Crossing in California.

Notably absent from BLM's list was the standoff at Bundy's ranch, an incident in which armed protesters were videotaped verbally attacking BLM officers and pointing guns at them. BLM rangers had to deploy police dogs and a Taser on some protesters on a road near Bundy's ranch.

"BLM apparently wants to pretend that the whole Bundy fiasco never happened," said a statement this morning by PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch. "We are concerned that BLM may be discouraging employees from reporting threats in order to convey a false impression that there is proverbial peace in the valley."

The data PEER obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request were released just weeks after a survey crew under contract with BLM to study springs, seeps and cattle troughs on public

lands near Bundy's ranch heard two series of gunshots at night near their campsite (Greenwire, June 12). The incident prompted a BLM directive telling "all personnel and contractors" to stay out of the Gold Butte area until further notice, according to Jerry Keir, co-founder and executive director of the Great Basin Institute, which was doing the survey work for BLM.

BLM last year did record two incidents of harassment related to the Bundy standoff: an April 5 "Threatening Phone Call in Connection with Gold Butte Operation" and an April 18 "Intimidation And Frisking" of a non-law enforcement employee at a southern Utah campground.

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"Given that there are now large swaths of federal lands where BLM staff and law enforcement do not feel safe even to operate, this decline in reported incidents provides scant comfort," Ruch said.

BLM said in a statement today that the information it provided to PEER is accurate. But the Bundy standoff was omitted from the incidents report because the Justice Department is leading the government's investigation into threats made against BLM employees.

"The BLM remains resolute in addressing this issue, and we are continuing to cooperate with the Department of Justice in pursuing the matter through the legal system," BLM said

The Spectrum

BLM takes steps after shots fired near camp, cattle

Writer: Martin Griffith
Published: June 13, 2015

The Federal Bureau of Land Management is taking safety precautions and Las Vegas police are investigating after gunshots were fired near a group of contract employees on public land in southern Nevada where rancher and states' rights advocate Cliven Bundy's cattle continue to roam.

Three researchers from the Reno-based nonprofit Great Basin Institute were monitoring water seeps and springs in the remote Gold Butte area, about 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas, on June 5 when they were approached by two men who asked what they were doing, BLM officials said.

The employees, who were working under a bureau contract, left after six shots were fired later that night near their camp in the same area that's being considered for federal protection as a national conservation area.

No injuries were reported.

"The situation is under investigation and the BLM is taking appropriate safety precautions to ensure the safety of its employees and contractors," the agency said in a statement.

Las Vegas police spokesman Larry Hadfield confirmed Friday the "incident remains under investigation" by his department's detectives but said he "can provide no other details."

BLM spokesman Rudy Evenson declined to elaborate or comment on whether the agency has told its employees and contractors to stay out of the area.

The agency would not comment beyond the statement "given the sensitivity in southern Nevada" over public lands in the Gold Butte area, he added.

In April 2014, a tense standoff between Bundy and the BLM occurred after a federal judge authorized the agency to remove his cattle from public rangeland.

Bundy, who said he does not recognize the authority of the federal government, stopped paying grazing fees over 20 years ago and owes more than $1 million.

The confrontation pitted federal officers against heavily armed states' rights advocates who had converged on the Bundy ranch to halt the roundup of his cattle.

The BLM backed off, citing safety concerns.

It allowed Bundy supporters to release 380 cattle from pens that had been collected.

Jerry Keir, executive director of the Great Basin Institute, said the researchers were scheduled to spend a week in the area but were told by the BLM not to return after the incident occurred on their first day there.

The two men told the trio that they were there to fix a leak in a water trough.

But the researchers were unable to see the shooter because the shots were fired at night from roughly 1,600 feet away, he added.

Asked whether he thinks the shots were meant to intimidate them, Keir replied, "That's total speculation. It could have been three kids out shooting cans. There's no way to assign specific individuals to the incident."

The FBI on Friday would neither confirm nor deny it's investigating the case. The FBI also declined comment on its investigation into last year's standoff involving Bundy.

Earlier this year, the BLM issued a statement saying it "remains resolute" in its goal to resolve the Bundy dispute through the legal system.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/2015/06/13/us-agency-takes-steps-shots-fired-near-researchers/71197488/

The Spectrum

Cliven Bundy denies involvement in shooting near BLM camp

Writer: Mike Donahue
Published: June 12, 2015

Bunkerville, Nevada, rancher Cliven Bundy on Friday denied he was involved in an incident in the Gold Butte area southwest of Mesquite on June 5 in which three Bureau of Land Management contractors claim shots were fired near their camp on two occasions one night.

A story published in a Las Vegas newspaper Friday morning said the FBI and Metro Police were investigating the alleged incident.

The three contractors, one man and two women working for the Great Basin Institute, were in Gold Butte surveying springs, seeps and cattle troughs for the BLM, according to the newspaper story.

The three told authorities they had pitched a camp their first night in the area and sometime in the dark someone shined lights on the camp, fired three shots, left the area and then returned an hour later and fired three more shots, the newspaper reported.

The trio told authorities they were monitoring water sources on June 5 when they were approached by two men who asked what they were doing.

The researchers left after six shots were fired later that night near their camp in an area that's being considered for federal protection as a national conservation area.

The contractors were working in an area where Bundy maintains a corral and watering trough and their report to the BLM reportedly said they had met two ranchers they believed might be related to Bundy's cattle operation before pitching camp.

Bundy told the Desert Valley Times he and his eldest son Ryan did meet the three contractors while delivering hay to his cattle.

"We did greet those people, but we didn't have anything to do with any shooting," Bundy said. "We just told them we hoped they'd enjoy their stay."

The contractors, Bundy said, were in a pickup with Nevada license plates but no other markings.

"I asked them what they were doing in the area, and they just said they were looking for a place to camp," Bundy said.

The rancher said he told them he was going to unload his hay at his corral and head house near a mountain spring and "then we'll get out of your way."

The survey crew said they pitched camp and went to bed about 9 p.m., according to the newspaper report. A short time later, they reportedly heard a vehicle and then the first shots.

"I'm going to go out on a limb here and stick my neck out and make a statement," Bundy said.

"I'm sticking my neck out because it indicates I have a prejudice against them but here it is: We ran the BLM and U.S. Park Service and their contract cowboys along with their armed army off this Clark County Nevada land," Bundy said, reading from a prepared statement. "We are not going to ever let American people have these guns pointed down our throats again. The bureaucrats always gets someone to do their dirty work, referring to the contract cowboys and referring to the others in the RJ (Las Vegas Review Journal) story. We ran BLM and their contractors off this land and they need to remember that. Basically those guys who were out there shouldn't be there."

Bundy said he read the newspaper story Friday morning and then called the MetroPolice substation in Overton.

"Sgt. (Bret) Empy and I went out there and if those people were telling the truth, that a vehicle shined their lights on the camp, shot a gun off, drove away and then came back and did it again, there was no sign of it," Bundy said. "They were on a dead-end road. There should have been tracks or something. They've tried to make me out the bad guy and make me a criminal over the last 20, 25 years. We risked our lives the last time, and we don't ever want that mess coming back."

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/2015/06/12/cliven-bundy-denies-involvement-shooting-near-blm-camp/71161998/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

BLM pulls workers from Gold Butte after shots fired near surveyors

Writer: Henry Brean
Published: June 12, 2015

Cattle owned by rancher Cliven Bundy roam a range in the Gold Butte area near Bunkerville, Nev., Nov. 26, 2010. (F. Andrew Taylor/View newspapers)

Bureau of Land Management rangers block a road 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas Tuesday, April 1, 2014. (John Locher/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

Little Finland, also known as Hobgoblin's Playground and Devil's Fire, as seen Thursday, May 22, 2014. The Gold Butte Region, administered by the BLM and the U.S. National Park Service, is located about 2-1/2 hours east of Las Vegas between the Overton Arm of Lake Mead. The area is popular for off road enthusiasts and near the Cliven Bundy ranch. (Jeff Scheid/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

A sign posted in the Gold Butte area as seen Thursday, May 22, 2014. The Gold Butte Region, administered by the BLM and the U.S. National Park Service, is located about 2-1/2 hours east of Las Vegas between the Overton Arm of Lake Mead. The area is popular for off road enthusiasts and near the Cliven Bundy ranch. (Jeff Scheid/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

Cattle belonging to Cliven Bundy are rounded up with a helicopter near Bunkerville Nev. Monday, April 7, 2014. (John Locher/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

Contractors for the Bureau of Land Management round up cattle belonging to Cliven Bundy with a helicopter near Bunkerville Nev. Monday, April 7, 2014. (John Locher/Las Vegas Review-Journal)

Gold Butte area as seen at sundown Thursday, May 22, 2014. The Gold Butte Region, administered by the BLM and the U.S. National Park Service, is about 2 1/2 hours east of Las Vegas. The area is popular with off-road enthusiasts. (Jeff Scheid/Las Vegas Review-Journal).

The Bureau of Land Management has told its employees and contractors to stay out of a disputed swath of public land in northeastern Clark County after shots were fired near a survey crew's camp last week.
The FBI and Metro police are said to be investigating the June 5 incident, which unfolded in a remote area at the northern tip of Lake Mead where Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy continues to graze cattle in defiance of federal authorities.

No one was injured, but the three surveyors from the Nevada-based Great Basin Institute packed their gear in the dark and quickly left the area after they said someone fired three shots from a nearby road and then returned an hour later to fire three more.

The agency later directed that "all personnel and contractors are not to work in the Gold Butte area at this time," said Great Basin Institute co-founder and executive director Jerry Keir, reading from the incident report submitted by his survey team.

A three-person crew was collecting data on springs, seeps and cattle troughs for a BLM inventory of the Gold Butte area. They were scheduled to spend a week in the area about 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas, but at the end of their first day along the western slope of the Virgin Mountains they were approached by two men in a vehicle who asked them what they were doing.

The surveyors said the men identified themselves as ranchers and were "very cordial."

A few hours later, shortly after the surveyors climbed into their tents for the night at about 9 p.m., they heard a vehicle on the road and saw its headlights shining on their camp. That's when the first shots were fired.

They told Metro and the FBI those shots and the second series an hour later came from roughly a third of a mile away from their campsite.

"To my knowledge they weren't shot at, but there was gunfire in the vicinity so they decided they should leave," said Terry Christopher, the environmental research institute's associate director in Southern Nevada.

Keir called the incident "highly unusual" for Nevada and "unprecedented" for the Gold Butte area, where hundreds of people from the institute have spent more than a decade monitoring desert tortoise populations and restoring riparian habitat.

He said the institute is now working to strengthen its emergency protocols and review its communication plan with dispatchers and the BLM.

The bureau had little to say about last week's incident beyond a prepared statement describing what happened.

"The situation is under investigation and the BLM is taking appropriate safety precautions to ensure the safety of its employees and contractors," the statement read.

Rudy Evenson, spokesman for the agency in Nevada, said he couldn't offer any additional information.

The survey crew was working in a 600,000-acre area that federal authorities temporarily closed early last year so contract cowboys could round up several hundred cows Bundy left to roam without a permit on federal land. The impound operation lasted a week before being called off on April 12, 2014, after the rancher's supporters, including armed militia members, shut down Interstate 15 and marched on the corral holding the cattle.

Bundy stopped paying fees to graze his cattle on public land more than 20 years ago amid a dispute over restrictions placed on his operation by federal range managers. The BLM responded by cancelling the rancher's grazing permit in 1994 and closing the land to livestock in 1999. Bundy ignored those decisions, just as he has two federal court orders directing him to remove his animals or have them confiscated.

It's unclear if the two men who spoke to the surveyors were from Bundy's ranch or if one of them was Bundy himself. Messages left for the rancher Thursday were not immediately returned.

Keir said the simmering conflict continues to hamper efforts to study, manage and protect Gold Butte, which has been proposed as a National Conservation Area for its rugged mountains, sandstone ridges, native American petroglyphs and historic mine sites between Lake Mead's Overton Arm and the Arizona border.

Along the Virgin and Muddy rivers near Lake Mead, for example, security concerns have kept workers away from restoration sites where invasive salt cedar plants are being replaced with native willows. When they do get to the sites, the workers sometimes find the ground trampled and the saplings eaten by rogue cattle.

"There have been complications," Keir said. "It's unfortunate."

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/06/blm-pulls-workers-from-gold-butte-after-shots-fired-near-surveyors/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

An Offended Mayor

Guest Writer: Mike McGeer
Published: June 11, 2015

Mesquite, Nevada Mayor Al Litman in his Splash Pad article seems concerned about criticism he and the city council receive from citizens.

It is untrue that the "blog site" he refers to are a "few in the community that will never be happy." Hundreds of people write and comment on that site every day. Articles range from veteran stories, legislative activities, water concerns, health and social issues, student loan issues, educational reform, etc. Stories and comments are local, statewide and national in scope.

Mayor Litman suggests that those writers and commentators are overly concerned with Mormons and Bundy. The Mayor is concerned since he and the City Council spent taxpayer dollars sending a lobbyist to the state legislature to testify in behalf of the Bundy land grab effort. Certainly, he is trying to defend the recent council decision to cut Gold Butte in half (privatize), end wilderness protection and allow unlimited motor vehicle traffic damaging sensitive land.

The blog site, a member of the Nevada Press Association, published The Book of Bundy, The chronicles of a Welfare Cowboy. That product represents a reasonable sample of references to the Mayor, council, Mormons and Bundy. Twelve authors wrote 59 stories over one year. They received 3,645 comments from 200 individuals totaling 236,861 words in the 487 pages book. The term "Mormon" was used 53 times (.02 %). Mayor Litman received five mentions (.002%). City Councilman Kraig Hafen received 18 mentions (.08%). Being mentioned less than 1 % of the time does not constitute an obsession to find fault with Mormons, the Mayor or members of the city council. Remember, Bundy is a statewide and national story as well as a local one.

The Mayor wants the public to believe that the 1931 Prevailing wage Davis-Bacon act contributed to the excessive splash pad price tag. Yet, his own survey of splash pad costs (also following Davis-Bacon) were considerably less than the Mesquite adventure.

The Mayor fails to mention that the Splash Pad project included a local taxpayer match, and future local operating expense from the local budget. Remember federal CDBG dollars are also taxpayer dollars.
Competent elected officials know that giving away taxpayer money and creating debt does not stimulate the economy. Unfortunately, the local group keeps accelerating the debt, with the splash pad, and by gifting some $400,000 + to a start-up business to do "economic development."

The whole point of this article is to bring to light the fact that no matter what the citizens are concerned about the Mayor gets offended.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/06/an-offended-mayor/

Start acting like real conservatives

Guest Writer: Tony Barron
Published: June 2, 2015

Kudos for the excellent guest column on public land ("Conservation a conservative value; Hardy's kneejerk opposition is not," Las Vegas Sun, May 20). It did a great job of pointing out the hypocrisy of claiming to be a conservative but being opposed to conservation. While the piece dealt mainly with Basin and Range, the same arguments apply to Gold Butte.

Gold Butte has been the subject of bills introduced in Congress to designate it as a National Conservation Area with wilderness. Gold Butte richly deserves and badly needs permanent protection, preferably as an NCA. But if the anti-conservationists prevail in Congress and the bills do not see the light of day, then its designation as a national monument would achieve that protection and be much preferred to no action at all.

It is past time to protect these special areas so all Americans, now and in the future, can enjoy their wonders and so Nevada can begin to enjoy the economic benefits protected lands have proved to bring. It's time for "conservatives" to live up to their name and start conserving our precious public lands.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/jun/02/start-acting-real-conservatives/

Nevada's proposed national monument full of artwork, undisturbed land

Writer: Henry Brean
Published: May 23, 2015

HIKO -- Nevada's new National Monument-in-waiting isn't really on the way to anywhere.

From Las Vegas, you head north along 120 miles of rural highway, then hang a left into one of the emptiest spaces in a state famous for its emptiness.

There is no pavement here. No services, cellular or otherwise. The only city is "City," a massive earthen sculpture by Michael Heizer that's said to be one of the world's largest pieces of art, still unfinished after more than 40 years.

The ranch and small farm where Heizer lives alongside his masterwork contains some of the only occupied buildings in the entire 704,000-acre expanse now proposed as Basin and Range National Monument. Save for a few other ranch houses tucked away in the canyons, the only structures you're likely to find are the empty husks of ghost towns.

That's reason enough to preserve it, says Jim Boone, our guide on this overcast Wednesday: "Just the fact that it's a really big piece of undisturbed land. It's a huge undeveloped area."

Boone is a Las Vegas ecologist and outdoorsman who runs an ever-expanding online encyclopedia of adventures called birdandhike.com. He's traveled across the proposed monument at least a dozen times since his first visit there more than a decade ago. Most of those trips have come since February, when he agreed to lead tours set up by the nonprofit Conservation Lands Foundation and other backers of the monument.

A few months ago, he shepherded Deputy Interior Secretary Mike Connor, Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze and others on a two-day outing that included a campout and a rare audience with Heizer in his "City."

Today's tour is cozier — just a reporter, a photographer, Boone and his wife, Liz.

We begin at the southeastern corner of Basin and Range, in the only portion of the monument with a paved road running through it. From state Route 318 north of Hiko, we turn east and then north into the White River Narrows Archaeological District on a dirt road that traces portions of the old highway right of way. Here, early people scratched symbols onto stone, turning outcrops of pale rhyolite into art galleries that would outlast even the ice age river that once flowed there.

In a few places, the ancient drawings have since been scratched over with graffiti or blasted with guns.
The richest concentration is at a place called the Amphitheater, just down an embankment from state Route 318, where a thick band of petroglyphs march in a line across the flat expanse of rock. As we puzzle over their meaning, a semi rumbles past on the highway behind us, the word "Navajo" printed in bright orange letters across its trailer.

A MONUMENTAL IDEA
The White House is said to be considering executive action under the 1906 Antiquities Act to make this part of a national monument, a move that would ban oil and gas exploration, wind and solar farms, water exportation and other development, including a potential rail corridor for nuclear waste shipments to Yucca Mountain.

"We're hopeful, so we say 'when,' not 'if,' " Boone says of the possible presidential action.

The idea has divided Nevada's congressional delegation, with Democrats encouraging the president to act and Republicans opposing the creation of new monuments without legislative approval — something this Congress is unlikely to give.

The area now being considered is about 100,000 acres smaller than what U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., proposed in his original monument bill, but it's still plenty big. It takes in a portion of Lincoln and Nye counties that's larger than Rhode Island yet home to fewer people than you might see at a busy Starbucks. At its heart are Coal and Garden valleys, two shallow bowls of scrub brush covering at least 300 square miles each.
Boone directs us there on a dirt road that angles northwest from the highway and through a low pass in the Seaman Mountains.

Coal Valley is vast and empty and dotted with cattle. A few muddy ponds hint at recent rain.

The cows near the road stare at us intently, then bolt when someone gets out of the Jeep to take their picture.
A pair of golden eagles circle overhead, harassed by ravens.

We train our binoculars on a black speck and a plume of dust at the far side of the valley that turns out to be a person on an all-terrain vehicle riding along behind a group of running cows. Boone says the ranchers he's talked to in the area seem to back the monument, so long as it doesn't keep them from doing what they've always done.

The monument's advocates insist the move will protect two of the last unspoiled basins in the entire Great Basin without disrupting the lives of those who cherish and depend on them. Ranchers would still get to ranch. The military would still get to train. Tourists would still get to tour.

Opponents argue the land is already well protected, both by its own geography and by existing federal management. Permanently locking away all 700,000 acres from any future development will make things worse for a pair of rural counties where all but a fraction of the land is already under federal control, they say.

LONESOME IN THE CITY
We cross from Coal to Garden Valley through Water Gap, a break in the Golden Gate Range where a small wash the color of chocolate milk rushes under the road through three oversized pipes. Despite the gap's name, Boone says this is the first time he has seen water moving through it.

A nearby hill offers an elevated view of Heizer's home and the "City" behind it. But even through binoculars, it's hard to make much sense of what we see. We get only a hint of Heizer's meticulously engineered concrete sculptures — think Mayan by way of Mars — which he has arrayed at each end of a long plaza lined with trenches and carefully groomed mounds of gravel.

The famously reclusive artist, now 70, is often described as difficult, even cruel, but Heizer was nothing but cordial and accommodating during the tour he granted earlier this year, Boone says.

He thinks Heizer's creation could be finished and ready to welcome its first visitors within the next few years. But for now, this "City" is not open to tourists. A sign near the metal gate at the edge of Heizer's property warns that trespassers will be "immediately reported to the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department for arrest and prosecution."

We head south, away from "City," on a network of dirt roads that traverse the valley. As big as it is, Heizer's work vanished quickly in the distance, swallowed whole by the far bigger bigness of land and sky.

Boone says Garden Valley is generally greener than Coal and grazed mostly by sheep, though we don't see any on this day. Instead, a lone pronghorn antelope bounds across the road in front of us.

Dark clouds drape gray curtains of rain over the Quinn Canyon Range to the west and the taller, snowcapped Grant Range to the north.

This landscape is typical of what geologists know as the Basin and Range province: narrow mountain blocks bracketed by long north-south valleys formed as the Earth's crust was stretched and broken by extensional faults. The province extends north into Idaho and Oregon and south into Mexico, but nowhere is it more pronounced and uniform than from Utah's Wasatch Front to the Sierra Nevada.

Boone says parks have already been established for most of the major habitat types found in North America, particularly those considered iconic in one state or another. The one that's missing is ours.

"The basin and range ecosystem is Nevada, and yet nowhere do we have basin and range protected within the National Conservation System," he says. "This sort of fills in a gap."

But is that reason enough to carve out a massive new monument? Even some conservationists candidly acknowledge that there are other places in the region more deserving of designation, chief among them the Gold Butte area in northeastern Clark County.

Boone doesn't consider it a choice of one over the other. He remains hopeful that Basin and Range will win President Barack Obama's signature, and Gold Butte will, too.

EARLIER ARTISTS

Our tour ends with a trip over Mount Irish on a narrow, rocky path through pinyon and juniper.

From there, the road descends past the abandoned town of Logan into the Mount Irish Archaeological District, a 640-acre collection of cliffs and boulders used for centuries by hunter-gatherers who marked their passage with thousands of petroglyphs.

Boone says no one alive today really knows what the symbols mean. All we know is they've been there a long time, and they're out there still

nevada-s-proposed-national-monument-full-artwork-undisturbed-land

shoreline beacon

Nevada: Road-trip from Las Vegas to Death Valley an eclectic blend of experiences

Writer: Ian Robertson
Published: May 17, 2015

There was plenty of sand, sun and sagebrush along the endless ribbon of Nevada highways as our mini-bus headed from Las Vegas towards the Mojave Desert and into Death Valley.
Beyond the city limits, there was also an amazing array of colours, endless blue skies, mountains, plus several unexpected lakes and rivers.

The state is famous for old west history, ghosts and ghost towns, but this traveller's tale focuses on very-much-alive places and people along the way, including:

GOLD BUTTE
Covering 145,686 hectares between the Colorado and the Virgin rivers, near the Lake Mead National Recreation Area and popular Valley of Fire State Park, Gold Butte was named after an early 1900s Clark County mining town.

The hot, dry area spotted with cattle ranches and farms was once occupied by Moapa and Piute Indians, whose ancestors left thousands of rock-art figures on dark reddish-brown sandstone crags that jut off the desert floor.
On one tall crag beside Gold Butte Rd., reached from Hwy. I15, swirling winds over uncountable millennia had carved doorways and myriad shapes in outcroppings.

Also a must for photographers are coconut-size buds on Joshua trees, plus white, pale yellow and deep orange wild flowers on grass or cactus, which provide shade for tortoises, lizards and roadrunners.

A Friends of Gold Butte staffer told us the environmental preservation group conducts hikes and photo sessions, while lobbying for the region to become a National Conservation Area.

MESQUITE
This farm community (pop. 15,276 or so) settled by Mormon pioneers between 1878 and 1882 along the Mesquite River, has a small museum.

Among the local artifacts are a rare arc lamp movie projector from the now closed Elwood Theatre, a foot-treadle sewing machine, military uniforms worn by locals and numerous typewriters -- including one that children of the Internet age can try out.

A travellers' stopping point along Hwy. I-15 between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Las Vegas and Los Angeles, Calif., Mesquite has several casino resorts, many public golf courses, plus an airport that offers skydiving.

NEED TO KNOW

The annual Gold Butte Days in Mesquite offers a street fair, outdoor activities, live entertainment and a street race. See facebook.com/GoldButteDays.

http://www.shorelinebeacon.com/2015/05/14/nevada-road-trip-from-las-vegas-to-death-valley-an-eclectic-blend-of-experiences

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

Let's Talk Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Mayor Al Litman
Published: May 7, 2015

The issue of Gold Butte is in the hands of the U. S. Government. In fact, it always has been regardless of what has been said by Mr. Bundy or anyone else. Mesquite's contribution has been a series of resolutions offering support in some fashion for a Federal designation of an NCA with Wilderness. I'll explain later what this means.

Gold Butte for those not totally familiar with it is a large, mostly unexplored piece of desert with mountains, around the size of Rhode Island, or somewhere near 350,000 acres depending on whom you listen to.

Gold Butte was actually a town in Clark County established in 1908 with mining pre-dating it by several years. Little remains today. By the way, no significant amount of gold was ever found there. The area does have interesting geology, history, prehistory, and wildlife typical of the area and climate.

Currently a part of Gold Butte is designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern which means there are areas where special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historical, cultural, and scenic values, fish or wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes. An ACEC designation is an administrative one made by the B.L.M. To go into detail about this designation with take another full article, so we will leave it at that for now.

Lets define an NCA or National Conservation Area. This designation is different from ACEC's in that Congress, not the B.L.M., designates them however, they are administrated by B.L.M. There are sixteen of them in the nine western states and Alaska. They go from eighteen acres to 1.2 million acres in size. You are probably familiar with Red Rock Canyon in Las Vegas and Sloan Canyon in Henderson.

To add further to the ACEC's, and the NCA, is the Wilderness designation. The Wilderness Act of 1964 is a general legal authority for congress to designate and agencies to manage wilderness. It is designed to provide long-term protection and conservation of Federal Public Lands. It covers land largely inaccessible with no permanent improvements and only altered by the forces of nature. To summarize, it must be designated by Congress only, but can also be undesignated or changed as to boundaries by Congress. This is a key point in understanding the ramifications of Wilderness designations.

Wilderness is managed by four Federal agencies, B.L.M., Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, and the national parks Service. Within the Wilderness designation are numerous rules and regulations to define what can and cannot be done. It covers water rights, search and rescue, hunting and fishing, roads, mineral exploration, vehicles, livestock grazing and much more.

This article is the first in a series that I hope will lay the groundwork for a discussion of where our Federal Government may be going and what options may be in our future. I wrote this, not to take a stand or position on Gold Butte, but to hopefully better bring about an understanding of our area and what might lie ahead.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/05/lets-talk-about-gold-butte/

Preserving public land is profitable

Guest Writer: Christian Francisco Gerlach
Published: May 6, 2015

The recent editorial "This land is our land, but Republicans see it differently" (lasvegassun.com, April 27) accurately depicts the real motivations behind the effort to take back public lands. The Sun deserves recognition for this truthful, no-holds-barred piece.

The fact is there are elected officials who are "on board with dumping federal lands off our ledger sheet" to balance the federal budget in the short term. The problem with this line of thinking is one negates the realization that in the long term there are far more profits to be made from preserving the land rather than pillaging it.

The editorial puts it best in pointing out the states will be more apt to sell the land they get from the federal government both for the short-term economic gain and as a land-management tactic. The states lack the resources to properly manage the land. The states will jump at the chance to help fill in budgetary shortfalls, and with the new asset of land in hand, they will see dollar signs before they see the long-term benefits that come with conservation.

The figures that prove there is true value to shared and protected public lands can be found in many studies. One of the larger studies by the Outdoor Industry Association found that Nevada's economy enjoys about $14.9 billion in annual economic activity from which the state can draw revenues. Thank you again!

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/may/06/preserving-public-land-profitable/

Moapa Valley PROGRESS

Mesquite City Resolution Scales Back Support For Gold Butte NCA Legislation

Writer: Vernon Robison
Published: May 6, 2015

The Mesquite City Council made key alterations to its position on proposed federal protection of the Gold Butte complex in a new resolution passed on Tuesday, April 28 by a split 3-2 vote.

In this action, the Council struck down two previous resolutions, passed in 2009 and 2010, replacing them with new language which, Council members said, aimed to more accurately reflected the current views of the general public in the community.

The new resolution retained the Council's earlier support for a National Conservation Area (NCA) designation on the vast area to the south of the city limits. But rather than falling in line with past federal legislation proposed by Nevada delegation members in Congress, as the previous resolutions had done, the new resolution suggested several conditions on any NCA legislation being passed.

First, the new resolution stated that no additional areas should be designated as federal wilderness. Currently the Gold Butte complex contains two wilderness areas totaling 27,863 acres. But proposed legislation for the NCA would add more than 200,000 additional wilderness acres to the area.

Another condition in the resolution was made to ensure that traditional access to the area be retained. It states that existing roads should not be closed at any time for any reason, "excepting only acts of God." In that case the roads could only be closed for emergency purposes for brief periods of time.

The resolution also states that "no restriction shall be made relating to the access or use of mechanical or motorized vehicles."

In addition it preserved the rights for the Virgin Valley Water District (VVWD) to access and develop its water rights in the area in the future as needed.

The resolution further requests that any advisory council established to govern a new NCA should allow for various seats to be appointed by City Council of Mesquite. It also requests that any visitor's center for a Gold Butte NCA be located within the city limits of Mesquite.

Finally, the new resolution proposed to trim the size of the NCA so that it's northern boundary would run east and west through the Whitney Pockets area. This cuts the proposed NCA acreage by about a quarter of the total proposed. It would leave out areas closest to Mesquite including Bitter Ridge, Black Ridge and the Virgin Peaks, The Virgin Mountain range is where the VVWD water rights are located.

This last condition was, perhaps. the most contentious at the meeting. During nearly two hours of public comment, several residents questioned when and how this addition had made it into the final draft of the resolution at all. Some even alleged that violations of open meeting law had taken place with the item being added out of the view of the public.

But during his comments, Councilman Kraig Hafen explained that he had requested the condition to be added during a technical review meeting that had been held in public on April 21. He asked deputy city clerk Tracy Beck to read the minutes of a segment of that meeting where he had made that request.

"Just to put it on the record right now, there has been absolutely no open meeting violations," Hafen said.

Councilwoman Cindi Delaney said that she had difficulty supporting the change in proposed NCA boundaries. "I think it needs further study as to where exactly the line should be drawn," Delaney said. "So I am not in favor of that one."

Councilman Rich Green said that he was taken by surprise by the boundary change because he had not remembered it being a part of the discussion at the earlier tech review meeting. "I don't recall that discussion, but even so, it is still subject to change and revision here at this meeting," Green said. "I am not in a position to support the changing of boundaries."

Another hot topic of discussion was the restrictions which the resolution placed upon any new wilderness designations.

During public comment, many expressed fear that establishing these vast areas as wilderness would restrict access to their favorite areas.

Jay Tobler, a Mesquite resident for 66 years, talked about how he and his family used to visit a remote scenic point on the Virgin Mountain range where they could look out over the Virgin Valley communities from a distance and even watch the July 4th fireworks below. He said that this is impossible now as the area is now in a federally-designated Wilderness Instant Study Area and has restricted access.

"I think that folks are getting kind of greedy about wilderness," Tobler said. "We don't need more federal control in these areas than we already have."

But others stressed the collective value of establishing wilderness areas."Wilderness is a basic human right for our citizens," said Michelle Burkett of Mesquite. "We don't need to have the noise of engines and motors on every part of the countryside."Some also disputed the idea that the proposed new wilderness designations at Gold Butte would close any existing roads.

"New wilderness has only been proposed in already roadless areas," said Jesy Simons of Las Vegas. "The existing roads through them will remain open, meaning that you can still take vehicles on them. None of the proposed wilderness areas have roads into them anyway so it makes no difference in accessing them."

Later on, during his comments, Councilman George Rapson disputed the logic of this argument.

"I have been reassured again and again that these proposed wilderness designations have no roads, they don't affect access, so it doesn't matter," Rapson said. "Well, if it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter.

You can't have it both ways. As it is, there are no roads in there. No one is suggesting any new roads be added. So whether it is officially designated wilderness or not, there is no motorized access. It will be, for all intents and purposes, wilderness; nothing changes and everyone is happy."
Rapson emphasized that things should remain the same: no more wilderness, nor more road closures, no more restrictions on motorized vehicles. He said he stood firm on that position.

If all that was understood, he would favor an NCA designation for Gold Butte, Rapson said. But he noted that even this would not be an instant fix to all of the problems.

"There are 300,000 acres out there," he said. "There is not going to be a cop on every corner just by making it an NCA. It won't prevent people from popping off their .45s out there. It won't prevent people from drinking beer and throwing the bottles on the ground. Those things will still happen."

During his comments, Mayor Al Litman expressed misgivings about the wording of the resolution. He said that there was a lot of language that needed "cleaning up." He didn't believe that it could be completed in that agenda.
"I'd ask that we table this and bring it back after it is complete," Litman said. "To vote on it tonight would be skimming it over very quickly."

Rapson asked Litman what ambiguities in the resolution were specifically troubling to him. Litman responded that the resolution needed more definition of what exactly constitutes motorized vehicles. He said that he could also not agree with the Whitney Pockets boundary change. In addition, the portion of the resolution dealing with the acceptable timeframe for emergency road closures was not realistic, he said.

The initial draft of the resolution stated that emergency road closures could not last for more than 24 hours. "Frankly, these are not monumental issues," Rapson said.

In reference to the road closures, Rapson allowed that the wording could be changed to permit for seven calendar days closure to repair the road and get it open again.

"The important thing is that there needs to be some definition of the word temporary," Rapson said. "Temporary could be closing the road for 100 years if you are comparing it to a millennium or two or three or five. So, in my mind, there has to be some definition of that term."

"I think that we have worn this thing out," Rapson concluded. "I want to see it end tonight; no more postponing or research. I'd like to make a motion and if it passes it passes; and if not, I guess we will go from there."
Rapson made a motion to accept the resolution with the small changes that had been introduced at the meeting. The motion was approved with Rapson, Hafen and Withhelder voting in favor, Delaney and Green were opposed.

Several people spoke at the final public comment period of the meeting expressing disapproval of the Council's action. Many of these urged the mayor to veto the resolution. But in a conversation with the PROGRESS on Friday morning, the mayor stated he had no plans to veto the action.

http://mvprogress.com/2015/05/06/mesquite-city-resolution-scales-back-support-for-gold-butte-nca-legislation/

Preservation is worth the effort

Guest Writer: Valerie McNay
Published: May 4, 2015

With the recent observance of Earth Day (April 22) it seems fitting to recognize many of the incredible places we have in Nevada that help to make our state home.

The Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Mount Charleston Wilderness Area, Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, Great Basin National Park and so many other places are protected for us and for future generations.

One common thread to all these places, as Amber Phillips pointed out in a recent article, is Sen. Harry Reid ("A Monumental Push: Reid plans to designate two more areas for protection," Las Vegas Sun April 19). He had a hand in protecting all of these areas and continues to build on this legacy by working most recently to protect Gold Butte and Basin and Range. I have followed his effort to protect Gold Butte starting with the passage of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002. Since then, local advocates have been working hard to protect the cultural, natural and historic treasures in Gold Butte and have built a long and diverse list of supporters calling for protection of this area.

Another place activists have been rallying behind is Basin and Range, working to protect the landscape and the art found within its boundaries. Knowing what all the existing protected public lands do for our quality of life and our economy, imagine what protecting two more incredible landscapes will do to for us, our state and our future

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/may/04/preservation-worth-effort/

Lands are worth preservation

Guest Writer: Christopher Ryan
Published: May 1, 2015

I fully support and applaud Sen. Harry Reid's efforts to instill permanent protection of some of Southern Nevada's most treasured lands. I am hopeful that Congress and the White House will see the benefits of keeping these lands open to the public rather than viewing them as a commodity better suited for corporate consumption or to appease a rancher-turned-sensationalized-cult-hero.

I consider myself an outdoor and off-road enthusiast. Therefore, I am especially fond of Gold Butte for its wide variety of natural beauty. The rock formations are unique in that they cannot be found anywhere within driving distance of the Southern Nevada area. There is a wide array of wildlife representative of the Silver State, such as the bighorn sheep, the desert tortoise, the banded Gila monster and many other indigenous species. I also must mention the ancient campsites, caves and rock art that serve historical as well as educational purposes.

To the north are Basin and Range, which have their own cultural and recreational value and are also included within Rep. Dina Titus' and Reid's proposals.

In my opinion, these lands fit the criteria of the Sun's definition of a "national monument" and therefore should be permanently protected and preserved for future generations to enjoy. Hopefully common sense prevails and Nevada will be kept in its natural grace rather than a skin of concrete.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/may/01/lands-are-worth-preservation/

The Spectrum

Counter point

Guest Writer: Michael M. McGreer
Published: April 30, 2015

Ammon Bundy is misleading the public (Opinion "Bundy objects to legislative testimony," *Desert Valley Times* Tuesday April, 28, 2015) when he claims that his father (Cliven) "owns" 11 water rights. Bundy applied and received permits to use water from 11 streams feeding into the Mesquite community wells. These "permits" were never adjudicated.

The state water engineer gives anyone claiming a water right a non-adjudicated permit. In order for the permit to be adjudicated (verified) a request must be filed with the state water engineer. To date, neither the water board nor the city council has request such an adjudication.

Each of Bundy' cows typically eats 26 pounds of public owned feed each day. Therefore, Bundy is stealing 9,490 pounds per year or 949,000 pounds of feed from the public.

Each cow consumes approximately 50 gallons of water each day. That is 18,250 gallons of water per year or 1,825,000 gallons per year for 100 head. That is about 5.6 acre-feet of water. An acre-foot is equal to 325,851 gallons. One-acre foot is approximately enough water to support a family of five for a year.

Therefore, Bundy is taking enough water to support five families of five to water his illegally grazing cattle, which are consuming about 949,000 pounds of feed from the public domain each year. And neither the city council nor the water board cares.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/30/letters-editor/26660011/

The Spectrum

Terrible Idea?

Guest Writer: Tony Barron
Published: April 30, 2015

Sawing people in half usually ends well on the stages in Las Vegas.

But city Councilman Kraig Hafen's new idea of cutting the proposed Gold Butte NCA in half, eliminating all of the north portion, is a terrible idea.

He would exclude all of the Virgin Mountains and all of the mountains north bajada with its rich history of hundreds of CCC check dams. He would also eliminate all of the Arrowhead Trail highway which was the highway from Salt Lake to Los Angeles about 100 years ago.

His proposal would exclude Little Virgin Peak and the Gold Butte Twin Peaks. All of the easiest to reach recreational destinations would be purged from the proposed NCA.

Adding, in this case, injury to injury, Kraig and some other council members want to forbid any further wilderness designation in Gold Butte, despite the fact that the proposed wilderness areas are already de facto wilderness and would not close a single mile of legal roads.

The truly ironic and annoying thing is that Mesquite certainly, with the influx of retirees in the last five years, has become even more supportive of public lands than ever before. It's time for the City Council to stop "advancing to the rear" and simply reaffirm the original Gold Butte proposal, Resolution 649, designating all of Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with wilderness.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/30/letters-editor/26660011/

The Spectrum

Opinion: City Council comments get out of hand

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 30, 2015

I just want to remind everyone that the resolution the Mesquite City Council passed Tuesday holds no legal weight in the eyes of anyone, anywhere.

Congress isn't going to look at it and immediately make changes. It is just a written statement of support, or in this case "sort of" support, of designating a National Conservation Area in Gold Butte.

I know it's still a very important issue to several residents and Gold Butte lovers. I understand that this resolution basically reflects how the town feels. But if you really stop to think about it, the way it is written mostly reflects how the community feels about the issue.

About half of the comments at City Council reflect those who want federal protection for Gold Butte. The other half want nothing to do with it and think the feds should just stay out of it.

Well, Council drew the NCA line at Whitney Pockets and That should make everyone a little irritated. They still supported a NCA designation but not all the way. So really, no one is getting what they want.

I once heard a true compromise occurs when neither sides are really happy with the agreement. I think that's what we have here.

I think what really matters is that everyone loves Gold Butte and can help protect it, whether that be by picking up trash or supporting (or opposing) federal legislation.

But the way the last two City Council meetings ran it felt like Mesquite was going to have the final say so on the matter. I had to keep reminding myself just because Council wrote down in a resolution what it wanted to see didn't mean it would happen. Like I said before, this is just a statement of support, or lack thereof.
When people stormed Council about medical marijuana facilities in the city I understood. Council was the final stop, it would give the ultimate ruling.

In the last month though, I felt like very few people's comments evolved.

Those who didn't want federal protection still didn't want federal protection. They said almost the exact things at the second meeting that they did at the first. Federal protection, as far as the council was concerned, was expected. Maybe it would have been better and more constructive to give tips, like Councilman Kraig Hafen did, about what to do with the disagreement. He said to push it back. There you go, an idea.

The other side kept repeating the same things as well. Gold Butte needs protection, Gold Butte needs protection. I would have liked to have heard why the area north of Whitney Pockets needed protection because that's what had changed since the last meeting.

I'm not saying I agree with Hafen or Councilman George Rapson for that matter. I am simply saying they both saw something they didn't like in the bill and made a suggestion to change it. That's what I feel the public should have done as well — offered solutions instead of endless complaints.

Don't even get me started on the petty personal attacks that happened Tuesday night either — on both sides. I was a little bit embarrassed to be sitting there listening to grown men and women sling mud at each other. If you're going to consume my night

with public comment I'm okay with that; I just ask that you make it constructive, intelligent, and stick to the subject at hand.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/30/city-council-comments-get-hand/26660061/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Locals Care Too

Guest Writer: Jim Weber
Published: April 30, 2015

So your headline reads "Out-of-towners address issues related to Gold Butte" perhaps misleading some to assume there is little local support for the Gold Butte National Conservation Area. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact that our Public Lands and Gold Butte are also of considerable interest and support from citizens outside the Virgin Valley should be noticed by the Council as well as the anonymous "city staff" that determined the issue should be brought to the Council probably in hopes of withdrawing previous City support.

I'm sure those actions didn't disappoint MLN. MLN has a history of gushing at every outburst from a delusional local rancher as though it contained messianic qualities. But more importantly, our reputation as a City is at stake. We can be seen as progressive and welcoming City or as a closed haven for those who can't locate a flux capacitor to experience the nineteenth century.

Last month the Indiana State Government learned a bitter lesson about legislating in an echo chamber. The City Council should take note. They have a choice between what's easy and what's smart and in the best interests of the City. The right choice is clear.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/locals-care-too

MESQUITE LOCAL NEWS

Council splits votes; passes new resolution for Gold Butte support

Writer: Stephanie Frehner
Published: April 29, 2015

Tuesday night's regular City Council meeting was another long one, as 40 people, both local residents and several out-of-town visitors, spoke against any changes in the existing Resolutions 649 and 669 for more than 90 minutes.

The new Resolution, 867 was motioned by Councilman George Rapson, seconded by Councilman Kraig Hafen, that would support an National Conservation Area designation for the Gold Butte area with no additional Wilderness areas and that temporary closures of roads due to an 'Act of God' are reopened within seven working days. Mayor Al Litman voiced his opposition to the language in the Resolution before a motion was made, stating that the language was too ambiguous, much like Senate Bill 199, and in regards to terms of road closures and access for mechanized vehicles.

"Frankly these are not monumental issues here," stated Rapson. "This is a Resolution, it is not a legal document. It's simply a statement of position (by the City). We could over-engineer this thing and have a 40 page legal document."

The revised resolution also had an exception that would allow the Virgin Valley Water District to have access to existing water rights in the area and be able to build and construct necessary facilities.

Rapson's motion was approved with three votes for it made by Rapson, Hafen and Councilman Geno Withelder. Councilman Rich Green and Councilwoman Cindi Delaney voted against it. Comments in the final public comment portion of the meeting had several people calling for the Mayor to veto the decision. Litman spoke with the MLN Wednesday morning stating that he would let the Resolution stand as council had voted.

Other items covered in the meeting Tuesday night included approval for the week of May 17-23, 2015 as "National Public Works Week", accepting of a presentation from the Colorado River Commission regarding the City receiving power from Hoover Dam and approving the Operation Location Agreement with the Nevada Institute of Autonomous Systems, which would operate drone testing on City property near Exit 112.

Council also voted unanimously to keep the current candidate filing fee of $25 per applicant instead of raising the fee to $100.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/council-splits-votes-passes-new-resolution-for-gold-butte-support/

The Spectrum

Council limits support of NCA area

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 29, 2015

Council limits support of NCA area.

Public comment filled the majority of a contentious, three-hour Mesquite City Council meeting Tuesday about a resolution giving Council's support on trimming the size of the National Conservation Area to end at the Whitney Pockets area.

Comments ranged from the location of the line at Whitney Pockets, to Open Meeting Law violations, to personal attacks, to tortoises eating cow waste.

Two previous resolutions regarding designating Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area (NCA) with wilderness areas were brought before the Council for review during the April 7 Technical Review meeting. During the April 14 Regular City Council meeting, City Hall was flooded with hours of public comment from both sides of the issue.

Some said Gold Butte didn't need any federal protection while others rallied for a NCA designation. At the April 14 meeting Council directed staff to write a new resolution that didn't support wilderness, ensured existing roads stayed open and ensured no potential water rights for Mesquite were restricted.

Once the new resolution was approved, the old resolutions would be rescinded.

A NCA designation would ensure federal protection for the Gold Butte area. A wilderness designation means there is no mechanized or motor vehicles permitted or building of permanent or temporary structures. It is the strictest designation, according to *nps.gov*.

Only Congress can designate wilderness in an area, the site says.

City Attorney Bob Sweetin drafted the resolution and presented it to Council at the April 21 Technical Review meeting. The draft included the three points Council had requested.

At that meeting Mesquite Councilman George Rapson requested additional adjustments to the resolution including no restrictions of mechanized or motorized vehicles.

City Liaison Officer Aaron Baker said that if Gold Butte received a NCA designation, per federal legislation, Mesquite would have a representative on an advisory council that would be established. This language was added to the Mesquite resolution, indicating Mesquite would like to be represented at the advisory council.

Baker also pointed out if Gold Butte is designated an NCA there would be a visitor's center built within Mesquite city limits. Council agreed to have that language drafted into the resolution as well.

The council also agreed to define "temporary" in the resolution.

City Council member Kraig Hafen said during the tech review he had a few suggestions on defining the Gold Butte complex itself and added he would like to see the NCA boundary line at Whitney Pockets.

This means everything north of the Whitney Pockets area that backs up to the Mesquite/Bunkerville areas including Bitter Ridge, Black Ridge and the Virgin River Peaks, would not be inside the NCA boundary. Everything south of Whitney Pockets would.

This change would keep NCA regulations out of the community's "backyard."

Hafen's comment on the Whitney Pockets boundary line was brief and wasn't further discussed by council. Some residents and council members seemed surprised when the item showed up as a new condition on the resolution.

Councilman Rich Green said Tuesday he was surprised to see the NCA designation at Whitney Pockets and did not agree with the idea.

Councilwoman Cindi Delaney said she also had concerns about the Whitney Pocket line.

"I think that needs further study as to where exactly the line should be," she said. "So, I'm not in favor of that one."

Several residents said the same thing, that the bill was drastically different than what was presented at the tech review April 21.

Mesquite resident Bill Hurd questioned who had altered the bill and requested action be taken against whomever it was.

"The differences between what the council desired at those open meetings and the resolutions are so extreme that they were obviously made deliberately and not by error," Hurd said Tuesday.

Hurd said if it was Sweetin who made the changes, without direction, he should be fired; if one or two council members made the changes outside the open meetings they should resign, and lastly if three or more council members requested changes outside the open meeting action should be taken against them for breaking the state's Open Meeting Law (OML).

The OML requires a quorum at a meeting open to the public.

Hafen Tuesday night made a show of having Tracy Beck, deputy city clerk, read the minutes from last week's tech meeting to prove the state's Open Meeting Law was not violated.

"So I would welcome Mr. Hurd, since you brought it up, I'm not gonna resign. I would invite you and your colleagues who have experience writing letters of supposed open meeting violations, I would submit to you to file it tonight," Hafen said. "If you need some help, you can get it to me and I will see it gets to the proper hands. Put it on the record that there has been absolutely no open meeting violations."

Hafen added that Sweetin took his direction from staff, that he did not go off on his own adding changes to the resolution.

Rapson said some of the changes that were made needed clarification.

He said he didn't intend for there to be "no wilderness" but "no additional wilderness," no additional restrictions on mechanized or motorized vehicles and no additional road closures.

Delaney agreed, adding that no wilderness would indicate that the Council wanted to have previously designated wilderness area revoked, which is not the Council's intent.

Mesquite Mayor Al Litman was excused from last week's tech review but said Tuesday he couldn't agree with the resolution as it was written. He said he thought the language was ambiguous and needed clarification.

Delaney said earlier in the meeting that reviewing the resolution was a process and Council could still make changes.

Litman wanted to define motorized/mechanized vehicles; change the time frame of temporary; review the Whitney Pockets, and define what could happen to close the roads temporarily since "Act of God" seemed broad.

Rapson disagreed with the mayor and said Council was "beating a dead horse." He made a motion to change the definition of temporary from 24 hours to seven days for road closures and added there will be no additional wilderness designations.

Currently there are two wilderness areas designated in the Gold Butte area, Lime Canyon and Jumbo Springs, according to Baker.

The motion passed 3-2 with councilmembers Delaney and Green voting against it.

Rapson left out of his motion to add no more additional road closures or additional restrictions on motorized/mechanized vehicles.

Sweetin told the *Desert Valley Times* Thursday although Rapson didn't include the items in his resolution it wasn't necessary.

"The Council was discussing future legislation regarding a National Conservation Area," Sweetin said. "They weren't looking at anything that would impact current the Area of Critical Environmental Concern regulations."

The resolution holds no legal weight, as pointed out by several at Tuesday's meeting. It is simply a statement of support on behalf of Mesquite.

Several people spoke at the second public comment period of the meeting urging the mayor to veto the resolution and bring it back at another time.

Baker said Wednesday the mayor has no plans to veto the resolution.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/29/council-approves-gold-butte-resolution/26579967/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#NVLeg Live Thread: Day 87

Writer: Andrew Davey
Published: April 29, 2015

Road trip! We hit the road again yesterday. You'll find out even more about where I went and what I saw, but I can tell you right now about a certain something I witnessed last night.
Want to know what I saw?

7:30 AM:

So my LTN Editorial Board colleagues quite graciously gave me a wonderful tour of Mesquite yesterday. Isn't it pretty out there? And why is this so damned hard for the Mesquite City Council to understand?

Elaine has more details on the Mesquite City Council ultimately voting 3-2 to walk back support for protecting Gold Butte. I just find it perplexing that this very council, the council who just rebuked #BundyRanch #Crazytown two weeks ago, caved into pressure by the Bundys and their allies. I also find it perplexing that they ultimately settled for a "split the baby solution" (with a resolution only supporting protection for half of Gold Butte, and a resolution that calls for nearly unlimited vehicle access everywhere) that pleases no one.

Council Members Kraig Hafen & George Rapson stated this resolution is only as valuable as the paper it's printed on, as they believe the federal government will somehow go ahead and take action to protect Gold Butte with or without them. With that kind of attitude, they essentially risk creating that very reality. As US Senator Harry Reid (D) & President Obama consider next steps on Gold Butte, they & US Rep. Dina Titus (D-Paradise) are actively seeking local input. If the Mesquite Council majority continue to thumb their noses at the feds like this, they only risk forfeiting their own seats at the table.

And then, there's their odd attitude about the future of Gold Butte. Of course, they remind me of State Senate Majority Leader Michael Roberson (R-Henderson) pushing SJR 1 in his attempt to "split the baby" on public lands policy in Carson City. He & his allies have tried to sell it to "TEA" drinkers in the Building as "real action", yet they've assured more level-headed folks in there that it's only ceremonial.

So why waste time on it? SJR 1 certainly doesn't change federal policy, but it does endorse #BundyRanch insurrectionist lawlessness. Yet because it doesn't really change any real policy, the #BundyRanch crew are not satisfied with it. They wanted the original AB 408, and no ceremonial BS will satisfy them or Assembly Member Michele Fiore (R-Las Vegas).

You know what happens when one splits the baby? The baby dies, and one is then charged with murder. Both the Mesquite City Council and the Nevada Legislature should keep this in mind.

http://letstalknevada.com/nvleg-live-thread-day-87/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#MesquiteNV City Council Votes To Weaken Support to #ProtectGoldButte

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 29, 2015

By a vote of 3 to 2, Mesquite City Council voted to weaken the city's commitment to National Conservation with Wilderness at Gold Butte by passing Resolution 867 during a 3-1/2+ hour meeting last night. Councilpersons Kraig Hafen, George Rapson and Geno Withelder voted yes. Councilpersons Rich Green and Cindi Delaney voted no. Mayor Al Litman stated he could not support Resolution 867 in its current form and recommended that council not take a vote last night and continue to improve the document. Councilman Rapson ignored him and made a motion that was seconded by Hafen and Withelder added his vote.

An audience of about 100 people sat through more than 50 public comments before and after Resolution 867 passed with minor changes. I counted 24 people who were opposed to Resolution 867 in its current form and who support NCA with Wilderness at Gold Butte and 17 who are opposed to the federal government's involvement in Gold Butte and who supported Council's subsequent action. Three other speakers sounded neutral on the matter.

Resolution 867 will replace Resolutions 649 that was passed (unanimously) in 2009 and 669 that was passed in 2010 and re-affirmed by city council in 2012. Both resolutions positioned Mesquite in support for Gold Butte as National Conservation with Wilderness, which is higher level of protection than its current status as Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Two language changes to Resolution 867 included changing "no Wilderness" to "no additional Wilderness". Gold Butte currently has two Wilderness areas within its 350,000 acre complex. Wilderness can only be established or eliminated through an Act of Congress and the new wording of Resolution 867 will not contest the status of those two existing Wilderness areas. The other change was language regarding the time frame the City wants for the agreed duration of a temporary road closure from 24 hours to seven days.

Two other controversial statements in the resolution remained. One subject to confusion was the Council changing the boundaries of the NCA area, cutting it in half. At the Technical Review meeting on Tuesday, April 21 when Council reviewed the first draft of the Resolution, there was no discussion on boundary changes for NCA. There was a reference to back up material and maps that would be sent to council members after the meeting, per Kraig Hafen's request, as he stated that he preferred Whitney Pockets as a boundary area. That request for additional materials became a boundary change without any open discussion by council members. I was in the room, as were several other observers, who did not consider that to be a request for a boundary change. But Councilman Hafen insisted this action was proper. City Attorney Bob Sweetin explained the Resolution was drafted according to the instructions of Council at the Technical Review meeting.

The other statement that "no restriction shall be made relating to the access or use of any mechanical or motorized vehicle" indicates that all vehicles can go anywhere within the Gold Butte area. Even the current status of ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) restricts motorized vehicles to "designated routes" (the government name for the over 500 miles of existing roads).

Several speakers encouraged Mayor Al Litman to veto Resolution 867, thereby keeping the first two

resolutions in place, in order to allow for City Council to continue working on Resolution 867 and clear up confusing language as well as fully discuss the impact of the city proposing a boundary change.

Every council member except Kraig Hafen has stated support of Gold Butte being protected as a National Conservation Area. Hafen and Rapson did, however, vote to rescind the original resolution in 2012, so their positions remained consistent. Geno Withelder, however, voted both in 09 and 10 to support the two original resolutions. He flip flopped. Al Litman, Cindi Delaney and Rich Green were consistent in their support for reasonable protections for Gold Butte. Al Litman voted to continue support in 2012. Both Delaney and Green expressed their support during the 2013 campaign.

What does this mean? City council's action has no legal bearing. It is simply a statement of support or no support from a nearby community. Legislation has been proposed in the United States Congress and its language continues to be adjusted. This matter has been adjudicated by multiple agencies, experts and interest groups for more than a decade.

The issue is more about perception than substance. It was clear from the high-fiving and back slapping of the anti-government folks after the vote that they felt they got a "win." It is the opinion of many that it is not helpful for Mesquite to be perceived as supporting anti-government rhetoric. Like it or not, this is the valley where Cliven Bundy led an armed civilian militia showdown with the federal government last April over illegally grazing cows at Gold Butte. A number of speakers warned city council that a vote to weaken its support of federal protection for Gold Butte would poorly position the city in the eyes of the county, state and federal government. It is my opinion that Mayor Al Litman had the right solution — keep working on the resolution so council could come to a consensus and be comfortable with the final result. That opinion was also openly shared by Councilpersons Delaney and Green.

This was a 50-50 split. Three council members vs two council members and mayor. The mayor does not have a vote except in a tie, but Mayor Litman's statement was clear. He does not like much of what's in Senate Bill 199 and he wants the city on record stating where it has preferences, so he asked that the previous resolutions be re-considered. But he didn't think Resolution 867 was written well enough to make a coherent and proper statement.

I think this was a slip-shod process on something that is critically important to the reputation of Mesquite. It deserved more due diligence from council members. Hardly anyone from the county, state or federal governments pays attention to the actions of city council because it mostly tends to local matters. But they are paying attention to this vote because it is also a county, state and federal matter.

Let's Talk Nevada writers will continue to write about this topic. Below are video clips of council's discussion and vote, from my handheld camera. A compilation of comments is being edited together and will be published later, as will a better version of the below comments on our YouTube channel. If you are interested in viewing what precisely was said, you can click on the links below.

http://letstalknevada.com/mesquitenv-city-council-votes-to-weaken-support-to-protectgoldbutte/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

Let's "Bubble Wrap" #MesquiteNV City Council

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 27, 2015

Councilman Kraig Hafen's brother, Tilman, said "bubble wrap me" at the last city council meeting while opposing the city's resolution to federally protect Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness.

After watching the actions and attitudes of this city council, I've concluded the only way to save our city is to "bubble wrap" and stifle them before it's too late.

Arrogant and ignorant doesn't begin to describe these council members. They may also be operating outside the bounds of the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

I attended this past Tuesday's technical review meeting and recorded the discussion on re-wording of the National Conservation Area Resolution for Gold Butte. It was agreed at the City Council meeting on April 14, 2015 that a new resolution would be drafted to replace 649 and 669 which are statements in line with the Clark County Commission that Mesquite City Council agrees that Gold Butte should be protected as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness.

These original resolutions were passed by Mesquite City Council in '09 and in '10 and re-affirmed in '12. Then suddenly, THIS city council decides to re-visit the resolutions since they aren't in better alignment with Cliven Bundy's views and that of his pioneer family brethren who contend Gold Butte is theirs to use and abuse without restriction. Council even picked the first anniversary of Cliven's armed civilian militia invasion that forced federal officers to stand down to avoid bloodshed as the **perfect time** to re-visit these resolutions — which did not HAVE to be brought up at all.

HERE is the draft resolution that was discussed at the Technical Review meeting on April 21.

Geno Withelder, Cindi Delaney, Kraig Hafen, George Rapson and Rich Green talked about how they do not want any wilderness designated at Gold Butte. Never mind that Gold Butte already has two Wilderness Areas that never were and never will be accessible by any road. This has been explained to them over and over again, but THIS city council appears unable to grasp the concept.

Council agreed that temporary road closures at the discretion of the BLM might be necessary due to natural disasters and public safety; also that water accessibility should not be infringed– which language is already in the bill. These guys like to keep saying the big bad federal government is trying to infringe on our water rights– which it isn't, but it sounds good to the anti-government crowd.

That's about all that was said regarding proposed Resolution 867. They all nodded that it looked pretty good. City Attorney Bob Sweetin stated he would draft new wording based on this discussion.

HERE is the draft resolution that surfaced Thursday to be presented at Mesquite City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 28.

It says *"The Gold Butte area shall not have any area designated as "wilderness."* That's not any MORE area – but ANY at all. Never mind there are already two wilderness areas.

It says *"any National Conservation Area designation north of the area commonly known as Whitney Pockets, more technically known as the*

southern portion of Township 16 South, Range 70 East would be overbearing and unnecessary, as such area are not comparable in either presentation, historical or cultural value or recreational value, to areas such as Whitney Pockets or Gold Butte;"

In other words, THIS city council is re-writing the boundary of the established and agreed upon National Conservation Area, essentially cutting it in half. At no time were any boundary issues discussed at the technical review meetings of April 7 or April 21 or the City Council meeting of April 14. This is out of bounds, un-vetted, and has never been discussed within the view of the public.

And ... *"The roads throughout the Gold Butte complex shall not close at any time, day or night, even if the area is designated as a National Conservation Area, for any reason, excepting only acts of God, in which case the roads may be closed for bona fide emergency purposes for not longer than 24 hours."*

Dictating road closure timing for "acts of God?" Who made these guys civil engineers?

Or how about this statement *"the citizens and the Council of City of Mesquite do not want restrictions that would prevent accessing any part of the Gold Butte Complex by way of motorized vehicles, a necessary consequence of a wilderness designation."*

THIS city council speaks only for itself – not ALL citizens of Mesquite as regards the federal protection of Gold Butte. Council is ignoring citizens who WANT Gold Butte to get full federal protection ... and there never were any roads in "wilderness."

Reality Check — Gold Butte does not belong to Mesquite or Bunkerville. It is federal land, managed by the federal government and it will stay that way .... despite Cliven Bundy's attempts to change it. Mesquite happens to be the Gateway City to an area of historical, ecological and wildlife significance.

Remember ... the original agenda item placed by Attorney Sweetin on April 7 was cryptic and non-descriptive as if they were trying to sneak through a vote to vacate these resolutions without anyone noticing. Members of council acted **oh so offended** that we suggested it might be so ... like watching a child deny his hand was in the cookie jar with crumbs all over his face.

Why even bring up the existing Gold Butte resolutions? According to Cindi Delaney THIS city council is peeved at the BLM for not extending comments on its Resource Management Plan. At the council meeting she said *"The BLM was up here ..... and like happens a lot of time in Clark County and the state of Nevada, Mesquite got treated like the ugly step child. They didn't want to give us a separate hearing or some time for people to come talk. We all got a little worked about it and we all were talking about it and I think Mr. Sweetin said maybe we should re-look at these things."*

The truth is that the BLM held open its comment period for 150 days including two extensions. THIS city council was too disorganized to pay any attention until the last minute and "got a little worked about" the BLM not accommodating ITS timetable. THEN when the BLM agreed to come and make a presentation, answer questions, and take public and City Council comments the City CANCELLED the meeting, saying it had received unspecified threats. But, of course, council never told us lowly citizens what those threats were or who they came from. Can any of us guess who might have threatened the City if it met with the BLM? Council eventually held the meeting after wasting time.

The citizens of Mesquite have a problem here. Either THIS city council is meeting secretly and illegally outside of the public view and changing things up, or we have one or two self serving bullying council members who dictate their terms to everyone else outside of regular order ... or ... we have a new city attorney who is off the reservation "doing his own thing" – bringing up these resolutions that fuel controversy, then wording the new one to reflect his own beliefs and to try to drive his own agenda.

Which is it? We'll let you know when we get answers – principals of *Let's Talk Nevada* didn't get call backs or email responses on Friday, but expect to hear from city officials today.

So .... here we go again. Tuesday at 5 p.m, Mesquite City Hall, 10 East Mesquite Boulevard.

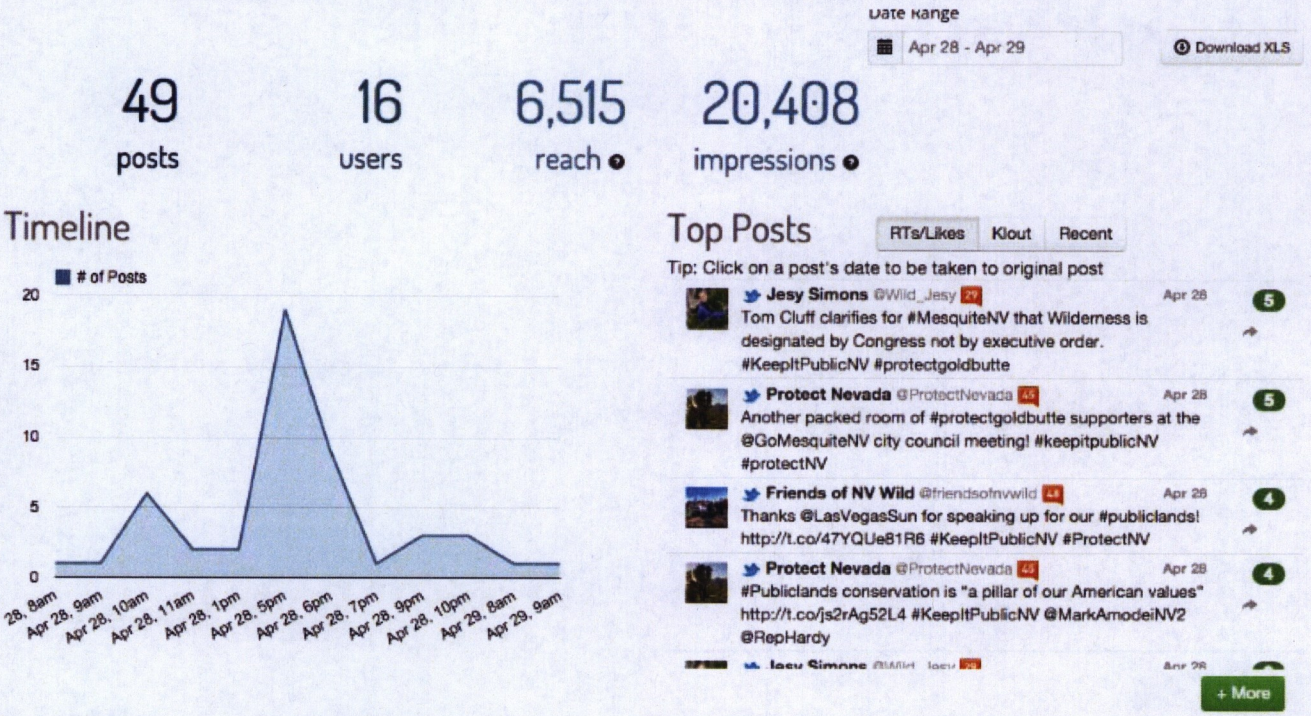
http://letstalknevada.com/lets-bubble-wrap-mesquitenv-city-council/

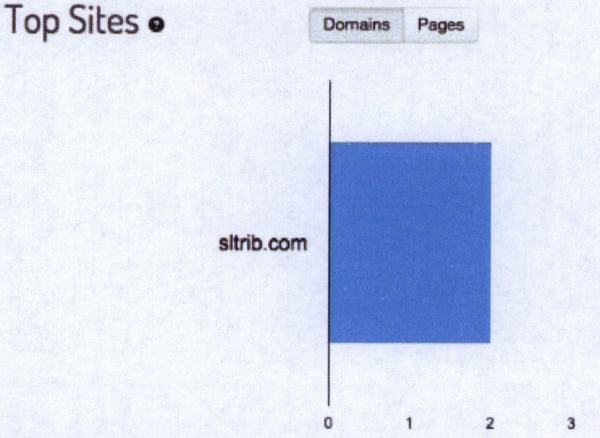
Be there to give your public comments on Gold Butte as National Conservation Area with Wilderness.
Phone is 702-346-5295.

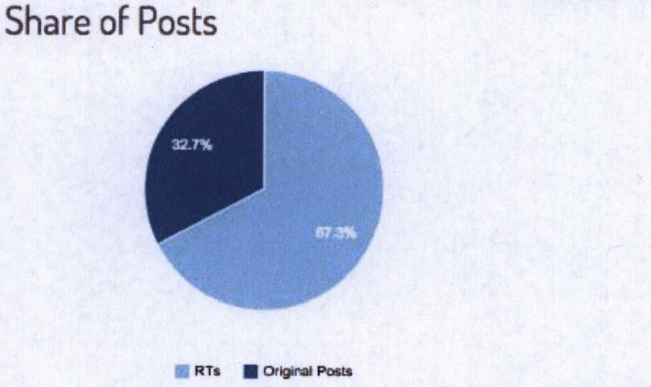
Email to Council and Mayor is HERE.

Social Media Coverage: April 28, 2015 Mesquite City Council

https://storify.com/jackieomdb/nevadans-speak-up-to-protectgoldbutte-in-gomesquit







TWEETREACH SNAPSHOT FOR

#protectgoldbutte

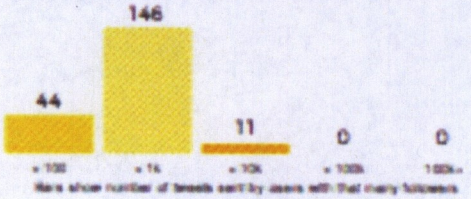
ESTIMATED REACH

18,184

ACCOUNTS REACHED

EXPOSURE

97,395 IMPRESSIONS

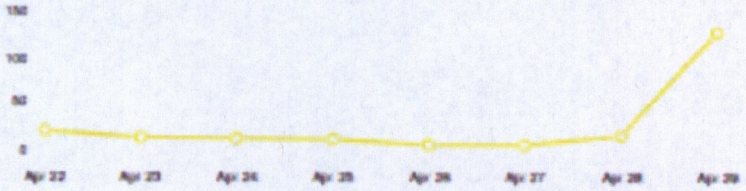


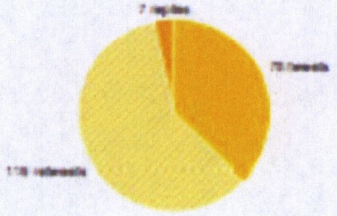
ACTIVITY

201 TWEETS

34 CONTRIBUTORS

8 DAYS





TOP CONTRIBUTORS

19.9k IMPRESSIONS — @DianeSnavely

37 RETWEETS — @goldbutte

45 MENTIONS — @goldbutte

MOST RETWEETED TWEETS

7 Friendsof Gold Butte @goldbutte
"Wildlife depends on wilderness areas to survive"
@GoldbutteNV The Byron George #protectgoldbutte

6 Friendsof Gold Butte @goldbutte
Rock sculptures from Little Finland. #ProtectGoldButte

5 Friendsof Gold Butte @goldbutte
Great statement from Jeay Simons @friendsofthewild
@GoldbutteNV #ProtectGoldButte

The Spectrum

What's going on?

Guest Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 27, 2015

What's going on with this City Council?

I attended the technical review meeting on Tuesday when members discussed wording of Resolution 867 on federal protection for Gold Butte. What was agreed is different than what is being presented at the City Council meeting on Tuesday night.

In particular, radical boundary changes for the National Conservation Area were added after the meeting. Gold Butte is a magnificent tourist magnet of historical, ecological and wildlife significance that has been and always will be managed by the federal government.

It is time for members of this City Council to quit indulging itself with self-serving games and start acting responsibly on behalf of this city.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/27/letters-editor/26481881/

The Spectrum

Council to cut Gold Butte NCA protection

Writer: Staff Reporter
Published: April 27, 2015

The Mesquite City Council is scheduled to vote on a resolution regarding a National Conservation Area (NCA) designation for Gold Butte Tuesday at its regular meeting at 5 p.m.

Old resolutions that were approved by previous councils supported an NCA designation with possible wilderness areas. The current council, however, disagreed with those resolutions and decided not to support any wilderness areas in Gold Butte.

Council directed staff to draft a new resolution regarding support for an NCA in Gold Butte that will be reviewed at tonight's meeting. If the Council approves the resolution, the old one wills officially be repealed. If not, council can instruct staff to further amend the new resolution.

The new resolution includes language saying "a wilderness designation would be overly burdensome and impractical for the visitors of Gold Butte..." according to city documents found at www.mesquitenv.gov.
According to nps.gov, a wilderness designation is "the highest level of conservation protection for federal lands." It is an area where "the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain," the site says.

It further explains wilderness " as an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions..."

"Only Congress may designate wilderness or change the status of wilderness area," the site says.

A wilderness designation would prohibit permanent roads and generally does not allow motorized equipment, motor vehicles, mechanical transport, temporary roads, permanent structures or installations, according to nps.gov.

The new resolution also includes language regarding the potential road closures; restricting mechanical or motorized vehicles; potential Virgin Valley water rights; an advisory council being established, and a visitor's center being built inside Mesquite city limits.

The resolution also says a NCA designation north of Whitney Pockets would be overbearing and unnecessary.
Local special interest group Friends of Gold Butte (FOGB) disagrees with the proposed resolution according to a call to action posted on their Meetup.com page.

"In this resolution, the council is asserting that the area of the proposed NCA be cut in half," the page says. "This is a dangerous proposal. Drawing the boundary at Whitney Pockets would fail to protect habitat for the desert bighorn sheep and the desert tortoise."

The call to action asks supporters to write City Council members and to attend the meeting tonight to voice concerns.

In other scheduled business, council will hold a public hearing before voting whether to change the candidacy filing fees in Mesquite. Currently the fee is $25, one of the lowest in Clark County. It passed the fee will change to $100. If Council agrees to pass the change any future funds collected from the increase will be placed into the general fund, according to city documents.

The meeting begins at 5 p.m., on the second floor in council chambers in City Hall, 10 E. Mesquite Blvd.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/27/council-cut-gold-butte-nca-protection/26482945/

The Spectrum

Chamber shows new video

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 23, 2015

The Mesquite-Area Chamber of Commerce showed its new video at the Community Forum Thusday. The video is designed to attract new business and tourism to Mesquite, according to Noel Smith, chamber president-elect.

The video was paid for with a 2013 grant from the Nevada Commission on Tourism (NCOT) and a matching grant from the Mesquite Regional Business Inc. (MRB), Smith said.
Outgoing MRB CEO Gaye Stockman said the grant from her agency was $1,000, making the cost of the production about $2,000.

Todd Simon, THS-Visuals Motion Pictures, spent three days in Mesquite last fall filming different areas in the city including casinos, the Mesquite Fine Arts Gallery, Mesquite Sports and Events Complex, Virgin Valley Heritage Museum, local dining, the Mesquite Community Theater and several golf courses.

The finished product shows Long Drive competition at the MSEC, classes at the art gallery, a family touring the museum, people playing and riding at the Awesome Adventures Park, skydiving, kayaking on the Virgin River, hiking in Gold Butte, dining, hotels, the Mesquite Toes-Tap Team practicing, gambling and more.
The production is packed with local people

The video is available on the chamber's new website, www.mesquitechamber.org. It's planned to be on the MRB website; NCOT, travelnevada.com; and Las Vegas Convention and Vistiors Authority's (LVCVA), www.lvcva.com, website as well.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/23/chamber-shows-new-video/26268453/

The Spectrum

Protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Richard Cooper
Published April 23, 2015

I am writing to voice my disagreement with the Mesquite City Council's decision to discuss repealing their resolution to support Gold Butte.

Events of the last year have made it obvious that local control and local ownership of our wild lands is not always in the best interest of the public and the taxpayer. Many times local control disrespects our land and our public will for the sake of an individual's profits.

A local rancher has used the public's land and refused to pay rent. Why should we trust this rancher to pay rent to the state or county or respect any other form of law and order. Especially when he can bully and intimidate local officials with his gang.

Please support free access to and protection of our federal, state and local public lands that support tourism and economic development for all Americans.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/04/23/letters-editor/26268097/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Tuesday Council Meeting to revisit Gold Butte Resolution

Writer: Stephanie Frehner
Published: April 23, 2015

According to Tuesday's Technical Review Meeting, the Mesquite City Council will revisit the potential Resolution 867 that would replace Resolutions 649 and 669, which supported designating Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area.

Through discussions, it was clear that there is still some fine-tuning that will need to take place, but the council will be addressing the new verbiage at the April 28 meeting. On the cover sheet for the item, it states that "The proposed resolution resolves that 649 and 669 be repealed and that Gold Butte be designated a National Conservation Area subject to: (1) no wilderness designation; (2) the roads remaining open; and (3) access to water not being restricted."

However, there are other areas in which the council will need to decide if they wish to have it included in the resolution including, but not limited to, a possible advisory council, location of a visitor's center (if one is built for Gold Butte), core values, designated roads and the "expression of a position relative to the Virgin Valley Water District." As per Aaron Baker, the City Liaison, an email received from VVWD Manager Kevin Brown stated that the VVWD was against the designation of Gold Butte as an NCA as the language exists in the current bill. The language that Brown and the VVWD would like in the Federal Bill will be provided in the Regular Agenda on the City's website, www.mesquitenv.gov, on Thursday morning. Council will also discuss specific road issues.

Other items on the agenda include a presentation from the Colorado River Commission (CRC) regarding power from the Hoover Dam and consideration of Resolution 866, supporting their draft establishing allocations from a resource pool for the Boulder Canyon Project (Hoover Dam).

Currently, the City of Mesquite uses two megawatts of power per month at $95 per megawatt hour (MWH). Reaching an agreement with the CRC could drop their fees to $65 per MWH. The CRC could approve the agreement, if reached, for up to 50 years, saving the city a substantial amount of money over time.

In other business for the next meeting, council received sufficient materials and information to move forward with an agreement and establishment related to Nevada Institute for Autonomous Systems (NIAS). The Institute will have access to 1400 acres near the Exit 112 area for testing.

Council will also hold a Public Hearing for the adoption of Bill No. 491 as Ordinance 491 which would amend Chapter 8 Elections application fees. Currently, the applicants for Council and Mayor pay a nominal $25, which is the minimum allowed by the State of Nevada. While there is no requirement to raise the fee, council will be discussing the possibility of doing so, bringing Mesquite up to the levels of other municipalities in the state that charge upwards of $100 per application.

The April 28 Council Meeting will begin at 5 p.m. at City Hall, 10 E. Mesquite Boulevard.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/tuesday-council-meeting-to-revisit-gold-butte-resolution/

The Spectrum

Gold Butte full of treasures

Writer: Brandon Mullens
Published: April 20, 2015

The next time you hike or travel to Gold Butte, Red Rock, Whitney Pocket or any other prehistoric, or historic locations be cautious of its resources and treasures.

During a Friends of Gold Butte education series last week, Rayette Martin, executive director of Nevadans for Cultural Preservations, explained the cultural resources in Southern Nevada and how you can help protect them.

Martin, a cultural anthropologist with more than10 years of experience exploring the Nevada outdoors, said she has 18 years of supervisory and volunteer management experience. She enjoys working with the public.

Some prehistoric cultural resources that can be found throughout the southern end of the Silver State include rock shelters, hunting blinds, pottery, stone tools, rock art and agave roasting pits, Martin said. Historic cultural resources include mines, ghost towns, purple glass and even rusty cans.

"Pretty much anything that's been there for 50 years or more is a cultural resource," Martin said. "There's evidence that people have been here over 12,000 years or longer, (but) it's debatable. Some of the things that tell us this are the rock shelters, roasting pits that are quite common and the petroglyphs and pictographs found in Gold Butte."

There are lots of resources that people don't seem to notice or look interesting to them, such as arrowheads, Martin said. Cans that are scattered throughout desert are also very important to anthropologists.

"They tell us how many people were in the area, how long they stayed and what time frame they were there," she said. "You can also track the can scatters to see where people moved. You can also tell the diets of miners that were there."

Martin also said people like to collect the purple or blue glass they find scattered around but there's lots of new glass being manufactured and people don't know whether the glass is new or old.

"When in doubt, leave the glass there," she said.

A major reason why cultural resources and artifacts are important to Nevadans is because it belongs to all of us, she said. It's where future generations are going to live. It also belongs to the Native Americans.

"I've actually heard from some Native Americans that nature is a museum," Martin said. "That coming across those items and those places is part of the experience. They don't see museums the way we do, by having them in a building. So when you take an item away from its context, from the rock shelter, heat or landscape, it doesn't have the same meaning or significance."

Sadly, some artifacts are stolen; rock shelters are marked with graffiti. Some use rock sculptures for target practice or trash is burned, Martin said. The audience gasped when Martin showed rock art with more than a hundred sketched figures inside of a cave in the Red Rock area near Las Vegas that had been scratched out.

"They took so much time to scratch it out that they lost a finger nail," Martin said. "That's intentional, pre-meditated angry-type destruction."

Martin gave the crowd some tips and advice to protect historic areas and their resources.

- Take pictures not things.

- Stay on trails. Many cultural resources are very close to jeep and hiking trails. Leaving the trails in vehicles can cause damage to sensitive cultural areas.
- Enjoy the rock art without touching it. Oils from your hands can damage the art.
- Use extreme caution when visiting mines and buildings; many of them are unstable.

"The 'trash' is a part of us all, Native Americans and families of the pioneers," Martin said. "If you want to know about the treasure back then, you can tell by the trash."

If you see any suspicious activities in these historic sites, or damages, contact the NVFCP at 702-466-3013, or info@nvfcp.org. For more information, visit www.NVFCP.org.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/20/gold-butte-full-treasures/26096187/

A monumental push: Reid plans to designate two more areas for protection

Wrtier: Amber phillips
Published: April 19, 2015

Until late last year, environmentalists' and tourism officials' dream of Congress bestowing a national monument outside Las Vegas seemed like a long shot.

A bill to protect almost 23,000 acres of prehistoric fossil beds outside North Las Vegas had languished in Congress for several years.

But thanks in part to Sen. Harry Reid's behind-the-scenes jockeying in 2014, Tule Springs National Monument is becoming a reality.

Now Reid is pushing for two more national monuments in Nevada to protect more than 1 million acres of desert outside Las Vegas.

Three national monuments within a four-hour drive from the Strip would be beyond tourism officials' wildest dreams. But such a turn of events would be a nightmare for many Nevada Republicans, and they may not be able to stop it from happening.

What is a national monument?

Designation as a national monument offers one of the highest levels of federal protection for a swath of land in America. Congress or the president create monuments to protect land with historical or cultural significance. Examples include Mount Rushmore in South Dakota and Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C., where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

National monuments differ slightly from national parks in that the parks, such as the Grand Canyon, are created to protect educational or scenic land.

What does Reid want to protect?

Reid reintroduced a bill in January that would create a conservation area over 350,000 acres of desert scrub near Gold Butte, the mining ghost town northeast of Lake Mead. The area's colorful rocks, canyons and petroglyphs are popular with hikers, bikers and off-roaders.

Reid also reintroduced a bill that would withdraw 800,000 acres of land in Lincoln and Nye counties from oil and gas drilling. The move would ensure that Nevada artist Michael Heizer could protect "City," a miles-long Earth sculpture he has carved and built in the desert over decades.

Democratic Rep. Dina Titus recently introduced two similar bills in the House of Representatives. But the bills have almost no chance of advancing in Congress during Reid's remaining 21 months in office. His next-best option is to convince President Barack Obama to protect the land by designating it part of two new national monuments.

Why is this controversial?

The Republican-controlled Congress is reluctant to hand the federal government control of so much land and close it off to development, particularly energy development in rural Clark, Lincoln and Nye counties.

The Gold Butte proposal is particularly contentious because it covers the land where Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed standoff with federal officials last year.

Republican Sen. Dean Heller introduced legislation with Nevada's three House Republicans to take away the president's power to create national monuments.

"If it's something the state government wants, the local government wants, the federal government wants, that's fine," Heller said. "I just want things to go through the process."

But Reid appears to be forging ahead, making his case in public meetings and letters to administration officials. In February, he and Titus invited a high-ranking official from the Department of the Interior to a public meeting in Southern Nevada filled with supporters in favor of protecting the land.

"Legislation has always been Reid's priority, but he's not opposed to designations," Reid spokeswoman Kristen Orthman said.

What will happen?

There's a very real chance Reid could get his wish and see Obama designate two new national monuments in Southern Nevada before both leave office in January 2017.

Reid has gathered a diverse and powerful group of supporters: the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Nevada Resort Association, wilderness activists, MGM Resorts International CEO Jim Murren and Barrick Gold Corp.

The president, whose administration has designated 16 national monuments since 2009, tends to choose projects that have strong local support and a clear public input process, said Matt Keller, of the Wilderness Society.

"It's a challenge to move these things, and lawmakers have to find openings when they have them," Keller said.
Reid already is credited with creating Northern Nevada's Great Basin national park and more than 60 protected wilderness areas. Leaving a 30-year career in the U.S. Senate with three national monuments to his name would be the capstone of Reid's environmental legacy.

"These are our lands," he told KNPR. "They are federal lands. They belong to everybody in America."

http://m.lasvegassun.com/news/2015/apr/19/reid-making-monumental-push/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Protecting Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Kathryn McQuade
Published: April 16, 2015

When I first moved to Mesquite from the east, I really did not have an appreciation of the desert environment. I felt it was dry and baron and lacking diversity. Since moving here, I have made an effort to study and explore our area through reading and hiking. I now realize how very fragile our desert ecosystem is, and how difficult it is for the plants, animals and insects to survive and thrive in our harsh conditions. This appreciation for the fragility of our environment is why I am asking you to continue to support the protection of Gold Butte.

I have hiked through many portions of Gold Butte, and have seen first hand some of the destruction of the area through people's irresponsible littering of paper, plastic, home articles, tires, also going off trail with ATVs, shooting holes in ancient artifacts and leaving shotgun and bullet casings on the ground.

The current violations are evidence that Gold Butte will continue to be abused if we don't move to protect it. While the Federal Government is not always seen as the perfect custodian, it has far more resources available than State and Local Governments that are struggling today to balance budgets.

All the various outdoor constituents should be able to enjoy this wonderful area, but each must do it in a responsible and thoughtful manner, to preserve its beauty and health for everyone today and into the future... not just for the benefit of a few special interests. National Parks and federally protected areas receive the publicity and are drawing more and more tourist each year, particularly millenniums who prefer active vacations. This of course would be good for Mesquite, the city that is the gateway to Gold Butte.

So in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, an avid sportsman, a good businessman and exceptional leader:

"We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields and obstructing navigation."

"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

"Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us."

Your vote today is not just for the people in this room, but for future generations and how we as a city will be defined in the future. I ask you to vote to support protecting our area.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/protecting-gold-butte/

The Spectrum

City supports NCA for Gold Butte

Writer: Jesselyn Bickley
Published: April 15, 2015

After being bombarded with comments for nearly 90 minutes Tuesday night on making Gold Butte a National Conservation Area (NCA), the Mesquite City Council voted to support the designation as long as there is no wilderness area connected to it.

City Councils in 2009 and 2010 had previously approved the support for the NCA "with wilderness," but this Council has a problem with the wilderness designation.

"These support virtually any legislation with a NCA designation," Councilman George Rapson said. "My problem is not with NCA, it's with wilderness."

Council passed a motion to draft a new resolution that supports legislation for a NCA designation but with no wilderness, no road closures and no restrictions on Virgin Valley water rights.

The old resolutions will be officially repealed should the new resolution be approved at the next City Council meeting, April 28 at 5 p.m.

Mesquite Mayor Al Litman prefaced the public hearing on Gold Butte by saying it had nothing to do with Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy and his battle with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over unpaid grazing fees.

Bundy last week held an anniversary celebration in Bunkerville to commemorate the group's alleged "victory" over the BLM.

However, several speakers brought Bundy into the discussion Tuesday night include two members of the Moapa Band of Paiutes.

Vickie Simmons of the Moapa Band disputed Bundy claim that his family has ancestral rights to the land and he shouldn't have to pay grazing fees.

"This is not Bundys' ancestral land; it is my tribe's ancestral land," Simmons said. "I support protection of Gold Butte. This will be no place to be should you turn these resolutions backward."

Former Mesquite City Councilman Karl Gustaveson said it's unfortunate that Gold Butte and the Bundys can't be separated into separate items because of the situation that attracted national attention last year.

"The Bundy situation was a real step backward for the community," he said. "I voted on both these resolutions as a positive. I'm very disappointed. People are going to look at it and think they (the City Council) agree with what happened a year ago. I don't agree with it and I hope the rest of you don't either."

Resident John Williams questioned why the item was even being considered.
"Who wants to overturn it?" Williams asked. "Today is the wrong day to do it. There is no worse PR move for the city than to be attached to Bundy."

Tony Barron agreed and said Gold Butte is not just the backyard of the city's pioneers. He said Gold Butte deserves protection.

"We can be known as the gateway to Gold Butte, or the gateway to Bunkerville," Barron said.
For more on Tuesday's Mesquite City Council meeting see Friday's edition of the Desert Valley Times online at www.thespectrum.com/Mesquite.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/15/city-supports-nca-gold-butte/25823187/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#MesquiteNV City Council Speaks on #ProtectGoldButte

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 15, 2015

More than 100 people packed Mesquite City Council Chambers Tuesday night. The majority of citizens were there to weigh in on whether the city should continue its support for Gold Butte to obtain National Conservation Area with Wilderness federal protection.

Mesquite City Council passed Resolution 649 in 2009 and Resolution 669 in 2010 affirming support. Resolution 669 was voted on again and approved in 2012. The resolutions were brought up for discussion because only one current council member, Geno Withelder, was on council when the resolutions were passed and the Bureau of Land Management is preparing its Lands Management Plan.

Currently Gold Butte is designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) but more resources to better manage the land will become available if it obtains the National Conservation Area with Wilderness federal designation.
Gold Butte is at the center of the federal government's conflict with Cliven Bundy over his illegal use of the land to graze about 900 head of cattle. BLM officers began a court ordered roundup of his cattle last spring which led to an influx of armed militia into the area to defend Bundy's claim to grazing rights. BLM officers were forced to withdraw from the area after a standoff closed the I-15 freeway and nearly led to a shoot-out on April 12, 2014. Reportedly, BLM officers no longer enter the area because of threats.

I counted 41 people who spoke on these resolutions, with 31 in favor of keeping them in place and 10 opposed. When someone asked how many people in the room were from Mesquite, more than ¾ of the audience raised their hands. Several others had traveled from Las Vegas and Henderson.

Speakers pointed out that hiking, camping and off road riding along with enjoying the beauty of Gold Butte is what brought them to the area. Several pleaded for the desert ecosystem to be protected and ancient artifacts be safeguarded.

Jaina Moan, Executive Director of Friends of Gold Butte, emphasized the importance of Gold Butte to Mesquite's local economy because communities within close proximity to federal lands see a boost in visitors and new residents.

Opponents to the resolutions largely complained about restrictions that would be imposed if Gold Butte was designated National Conservation Area with Wilderness. Brian Haviland of the Bunkerville Town Council reminded Mesquite City Council that Bunkerville opposes these resolutions. He stated that Gold Butte is part of Bunkerville's township, not Mesquite's.

Vicki Simmons of the Moapa Band of Paiutes told the crowd "it is not (Cliven) Bundy's ancestral land, it is my (family's) ancestral land." The crowd cheered.

Former Mesquite City Councilman Karl Gustavson said he is disappointed these resolutions were being re-visited during the one year anniversary of the Bundy-BLM conflict and he reiterated his support for Gold Butte's federal protection.

Upon completion of comments, each city council member made a statement about Gold Butte's designation as National Conservation with Wilderness. In 2012, Councilmen Kraig Hafen and

George Rapson voted to rescind Resolution 669. Each one explained why they had problems with the Wilderness Area but did not entirely oppose it being a National Conservation Area.

Councilman Rapson made a motion that these resolutions be rescinded and replaced by a new one that supported Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area, however specifying that no additional wilderness be added, all existing roads remain open and ensuring water rights be protected. Councilman Rich Green clarified that the existing resolutions would remain in place unless and until the new resolution passed. The second was made by Councilwoman Cindi Delaney.

Here is a video of each council person's statement. Councilman Geno Withelder participated by phone, so the video is audio. This is a hand-held camera from the audience.

During Closing Public Comments, Jaina Moan clarified what was in the NCA proposal and offered to work with City Council so the process of establishing Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness could move forward. She expressed confidence that everyone's concerns can be met.

http://letstalknevada.com/mesquitenv-city-council-speaks-on-protectgoldbutte/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Long meeting agenda draws out-of-towners

Writer: Stephanie Frehner
Published: April 15, 2015

Tuesday's City Council meeting brought a completely packed house, with over 130 in attendance. But it wasn't filled with locals concerned about the new library proposal or sale of land around Exit 118. No, it was out of town residents who claim to visit Mesquite for its location adjacent to Gold Butte.

The item on the agenda was to discuss the council's position on existing resolutions that showed support for turning Gold Butte into an NCA, or National Conservation Area. The existing Resolutions, #649 and #669 have been in effect since October 2009 when signed by then-Mayor Susan Holecheck. Five and a half years have passed without changes to the area, and with the recent developments with the Bureau of Land Management, city staff determined that it would be good to bring the resolutions back to council to discuss. There was no mention in the materials that any action would be taken, but the possibility was there.

For more than 90 minutes, attendees stood up and spoke for three minutes, sometimes more, of why they want Gold Butte protected and what it means to them. Some even went so far as to threaten that they would never come back to Mesquite if the council were to overturn the resolutions.

But then there was one tall gentleman who stood up and spoke his opposition to making Gold Butte an NCA. Brian Haviland, a member of the Bunkerville Town Board stated that "The BTAB is against wanting to have an NCA dedication in our area. The Gold Butte area is within the Bunkerville Township, it is our town... we do not feel it will help us." He was one of only a few who spoke in opposition of the support.

After the comments were finished each council member stated their position and concerns, most citing that they don't have a problem with the NCA portion on protection, but more with the wilderness aspect. That section allows for some unclear lines and undesirable regulations that would hurt those who want to enjoy the area.

Ultimately, the council voted unanimously to rescind the two resolutions once a new resolution with more specific details was approved, potentially at the next meeting.

Other business of Tuesday's meeting included approving talks with the Library District in how to proceed with building a new library at 105 W Mesquite Boulevard. Dr. Ronald Heezen, the Library District's Executive Director, was in attendance and stated that building the new 16,000 square foot library could be the boost that the city needs to bounce back from the recession. The land, which was purchased for $1.7 million dollars in 2009, is now only worth about $500,000. With it being empty, it's considered one of the 'eye sores' of the town.

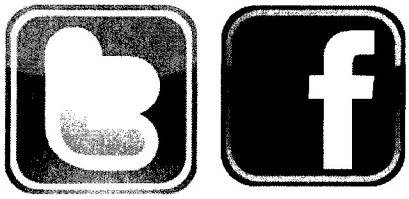
If things move along with the city and the Library District, the new $7 million library could be finished in as little as 1 ½ years. Heezen noted that newer libraries usually see a 200% increase in usage and that both the old and new buildings would be staffed by the district through their Outreach Services Division. He also noted that there are many possibilities for the design of the new building, which the community may have some part of. For now, though, it looks like more talking is in store. With Councilman Rich Green's motion to

approve, the rest of the council approved 5 – 0 to move forward with the talks.

The council also approved a new employment agreement with City Manager Andy Barton, which would increase his salary by 6% over a two-year period, or $3450 per year. Cited in the agenda materials, "there are sufficient funds in this year's CMO budget to accommodate this expense. This will be a budgeted expense for fiscal year 2015-2016." This is Barton's first raise since he was hired in April 2012, and there would be no changes to his benefits or duties.

The next regular City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28 at 5 p.m. Among agenda materials, were public notices of a City Council Budget Workshop on May 13 and 14 at 3 p.m. each day at City Hall and public comments will be accepted at those times. A copy of the tentative budget will be on file at the City Clerk and Treasurer's offices as well as the City's website at www.mesquitenv.gov. A formal Public Hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 19 at 3 p.m. at Council Chambers

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/long-meeting-agenda-draws-out-of-towners/



Social Media Coverage: April 14, 2015 Mesquite City Council

https://storify.com/jackieomdb/nevadans-speak-up-for-protectgoldbutte-in-gomesqui

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#MesquiteNV – The Gateway to Gold Butte

Writer: Jaina Moan
Published: April 13, 2015

On Tuesday, April 14, the Mesquite City Council will reexamine their support for protecting the Gold Butte region as a National Conservation Area (NCA). There are many reasons why this beautiful place should be protected, but the economic benefit of protecting Gold Butte should resonate with everyone who cares about Mesquite. As the "Gateway to Gold Butte," Mesquite will attract both new visitors and new residents and the economic gains to the community will be sustaining for generations.

The first boost Mesquite will see are the direct benefits from increased numbers of tourists who will travel to the area to visit Gold Butte. These initial, curious visitors will have heard about the recent national recognition and permanent protection for Gold Butte and will be drawn to the excitement of exploring its natural and cultural resources. Most of these visitors will pass though Mesquite. They will buy gas, food, drinks and gear as they prepare for a day of exploration. Some visitors will stay the night or several nights. They will combine a visit to Gold Butte with a round of golf on Mesquite's picturesque courses and enjoy the gaming opportunities in Mesquite casinos. They will buy souvenirs and leave with fond memories of their visit. Some will likely return to explore more areas in Gold Butte.

Over time, as more people hear about Gold Butte and its beauty, more visitors will be attracted to the region, generating additional economic gains for the City of Mesquite. Jobs will be created to support more tourists, new businesses and restaurants will open, and tax revenue will increase.

A permanent protection for Gold Butte will also attract new residents. People like to live in areas that are surrounded by natural beauty. All Mesquite residents appreciate the dramatic landscapes such as Flat Top Mesa and the Virgin Mountains. Permanently protecting Gold Butte will safeguard these dramatic vistas and open spaces, providing one more compelling reason to call Mesquite home. A study released in March 2014 by the Center for Western Priorities reported that retirees are three times more likely to move to counties that have a higher percentage of protected lands. The report further estimated that between 2000 and 2010, over 65,000 jobs have been created in Nevada to support retirees—these jobs were created in a range of industries including health care, housing, construction, banking, and entertainment (http://westernpriorities.org/goldenrush/).

Are you skeptical about the promise of such economic gains? Studies have shown that Americans love to spend time outdoors and our passion for hiking, camping, hunting, OHV riding, and birding contributes significantly to our economy. The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that consumer spending in the U.S. outdoor recreation industry in 2012 totaled 646 billion dollars and supported 6.1 million jobs. In Nevada alone, the outdoor recreation industry contributed 14.9 billion dollars, supported 148,000 jobs, and raised 1 billion dollars in tax revenue (http://outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/recreation/economy.html).

There are many examples of how other gateway communities have benefited by proximity to protected lands. Headwaters Economics, an independent non-profit research group, has been tracking the economic performance of seventeen western communities that are located adjacent to newly created national monuments (designated

between 1982 and 2011). Their analysis looks at four indicators of economic growth: population, employment, personal income, and per-capita income. Their results show that all seventeen communities experienced economic growth in these areas following the designation of the national monument in their region (http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/reports/national-monuments).

Protected lands are also attractive to international tourists. Earlier this year, the *Las Vegas Review Journal* reported that the Nevada Commission of Tourism is focusing its outreach efforts to attract more international visitors to rural Nevada (http://www.reviewjournal.com/business/tourism/rural-nevada-seen-growing-international-tourist-draw). Travelers from other countries appreciate the unique attractions that Nevada offers and protected lands are at the top of the list. It is easy to see why. Open, wild land is becoming increasingly rare in or world. The United States is one of only a few countries that has set aside land for the purpose of preservation. Our decision to protect Gold Butte today will result in a sustainable economic benefit as more people travel to experience land in its pristine state.

Permanent protection of Gold Butte will provide a reliable and sustaining economic benefit for the City of Mesquite and its residents. It is an important resource for our community. We have the opportunity to ensure that it stays that way for our future generations to benefit from and enjoy. Please attend the Mesquite City Council meeting on Tuesday evening to voice your support for permanently protecting Gold Butte.

Jaina Moan is the Executive Director for Friends of Gold Butte, a non-profit organization working to achieve permanent protection for Gold Butte's biological, geological and cultural resources through education, community outreach and advocacy. www.friendsofgoldbutte.org

http://letstalknevada.com/mesquitenv-the-gateway-to-gold-butte/

Desert Valley Times
Virgin Valley's Independent Newspaper

City may flip on Gold Butte designation

Writer: Staff Writer
Published: April, 12, 2015

The Mesquite City Council is scheduled to vote Tuesday on whether to continue supporting Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area or withdraw previously approved backing for the designation. Written as "Discussion and Possible Action on Resolution 649 and Resolution 669," it's easily missed on Tuesday's regular council meeting agenda.

Resolution 649, passed in October 2009, shows support for legislation deeming Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with wilderness.

"Now, therefore, it is hereby resolved by the mayor and City Council (that) the City of Mesquite, Nevada, supports the designation of the Gold Butte Complex as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness," the resolution says. "The city further urges Congress to enact these designations and mandate that an effective management plan be implemented that secures the interests of neighboring jurisdictions."

Resolution 669, passed in May 2010, also supports the NCA designation but includes a list of inclusions seeking a committee to start drafting legislative language for the NCA designation as well as other things.

The council doesn't have to alter any previously-passed resolution Tuesday night. It can amend them, leave them alone or change the opinion.

In other business, the Council has scheduled a public hearing on a bill that would change the residency requirement to be eligible for the office of mayor or city council from one year to two. The bill is designed to ensure candidates for mayor or City Council are "thoroughly familiar with the City of Mesquite, its issues and its citizens," according to background documents.

The Council has also scheduled a public hearing Tuesday on whether there should be an increase in candidacy filing fees. The fees haven't been reviewed or adjusted since 1999, making them among the lowest in Clark County, said background documents.

City staff recommends raising the filing fee to $100 from its present $25.

This bill also changes the time when candidates must file to run to the first two weeks of March in the election year. The statute now says no more than 70 days, but no less than 60 days before the primary election.

In other agenda matters, the Council will hear from Las Vegas-Clark County Library District representatives on building a new library on the vacant lot in front of the current library and vote for or against supporting a new facility.

The vote will not bind the city in any way.

The new facility would come at no cost to the city.

The meeting begins at 5 p.m., at City Hall, 10 E. Mesquite Blvd.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2015/04/13/city-may-flip-gold-butte-designation/25734699/

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

Bye, Bye BLM?

Writer: Elaine Hurd
Published: April 10, 2015

The Mesquite City Council will vote on Tuesday to withdraw the city's support for Gold Butte to be federally protected as a National Conservation Area.

This is a big deal.

I'm guessing you missed the discussion on what it means for our community, which you'd think we should have since the Virgin Valley has gained national notoriety for armed civilian militia driving out the federal government from Gold Butte. Not to mention that BLM officers continue to be threatened if they enter the area.

"Yo, Cliven Bundy, we're with you, bro."

It was listed on the City Council's administrative agenda on Tuesday as *"Discussion and Possible Action on Resolution 649 and Resolution 669."* When it came up for a brief discussion, no one whispered the words "Gold Butte" and it seemed a little cryptic. So I stopped City Attorney Bob Sweetin as he was leaving the technical review meeting to confirm that these were the Gold Butte resolutions and asked which city council persons requested it be put on the agenda. He wouldn't name names but explained that only Geno Witthelder was on the council when these resolutions passed and it is part of the record used by the Bureau of Land Management in its recent Land Management Plan. Hence, these initiatives are being re-visited.

Yes, new people get elected each go-around when voters decide who to support based on candidates' positions. Four of six city council persons and mayor were on the ballot in 2013. I'm guessing you missed the candidates debate on whether the city should continue its support for Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness. I did. That's because it was old news, a done deal. But that was before Cousin Cliven led an armed civilian insurrection against the federal government to keep this land all in the family. Now Mesquite City Council will decide – again – on whether to rescind these resolutions.

"We've got your back, buddy Bundy."

On October 27, 2009 Resolution 649 HERE was adopted that says City Council of the City of Mesquite supports federal legislative designation of Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness. Read Minutes HERE. It was a unanimous vote in favor with Councilpersons Donna Fairchild, Geno Witthelder, Karl Gustavson, David Bennett and Randy Ence voting yes.

On May 11, 2010 Resolution 669 HERE was passed which updated the city's preferences on the management of this land. It re-affirms the City of Mesquite's support for Gold Butte to be protected as a National Conservation Area. Read Minutes HERE. City council members who voted in favor of Resolution 669 were Geno Witthelder, Randy Ence, Donna Fairchild and David Bennett. Karl Gustavson voted no.

You might remember another vote, whether to rescind Resolution 669, when Mesquite City Council voted on April 24, 2012. Mayor Mark Wier cast the deciding vote keep the resolution in place. Councilmen Kraig Hafen and George Rapson voted to rescind it. Councilmen Karl Gustavson and Al Litman voted to let it stand. Councilman Geno Witthelder was absent. You can read the minutes from that meeting HERE.

What has changed since 2009, 2010 and 2012? Cliven Bundy's shameful militia showdown with the federal government, and thus Councilman Kraig Hafen has rounded up the votes on City Council to rescind these two resolutions. This is the local component in an apparent overall land grab strategy at the state and federal level.
"Our great grand pappies settled this land – its ours!"

This is how we got here. The great reservoir of support for Gold Butte to be federally protected, as reflected in that unanimous city council vote in 2009, was drained through a misinformation campaign and intense lobbying effort by the opposition. Pioneer family politicians like Cresent Hardy, Kraig Hafen (and others) were infuriated by those resolutions and have lobbied against Gold Butte federal protection ever since.

Mesquite used to call itself "The Gateway to Gold Butte." Festivals and hiking tours were organized to draw tourists and educate locals about the unique beauty and history of the area. It is a positive attribute to promote our city. Supporters did not effectively re-gain support of business leaders or citizens in response to that relentless opposition campaign. Gold Butte became a contentious issue and more than one person told me they were tired of arguing over it. People became confused.

The backdrop to this was Cliven Bundy who continues to defy court orders to remove his cows from Gold Butte. He has considerable support in Bunkerville and Moapa Valley ... but we're talking about Mesquite where golf course owners, casino owners, businesses and homeowners have made a tremendous economic investment. Mesquite is the economic driver of the Virgin Valley.

The prudent and conservative thing to do is keep Resolutions 649 and 669 in place ... which was re-affirmed as recently as 2012. That was only one city council election ago.

Why does this argument matter? Either our Open Land is protected under the jurisdiction of the federal government for future generations to enjoy – to camp, to ride, to hike, to visit. Or it isn't. We choose to protect its historical value, its art and artifacts, its wildlife, its ecological balance. Or we don't. Gold Butte is particularly critical to a gateway city like Mesquite that relies on tourism, families and retirees to keep the economy humming along. Without Gold Butte, we lose a unique treasure that draws increasing numbers of visitors and new residents to our city.

When people say to me, "well, I don't like the federal government and its restrictions," I explain that local control will lead to private ownership and the land will be taken away from everyone. Like ... DUH! The federal government has been preserving open space for more than a century now. It's a tourism magnet, revenue enhancer and property value builder.

Now, dear reader, you have a choice. You can retreat into your cocoon of apathy and let Cliven Bundy win this one without debate, or you can send emails to our city council and mayor and tell them that Gold Butte is a natural treasure and must be protected, and that the city should keep Resolutions 649 and 669 in place. And/or you can call and/or you can show up at City Hall Tuesday at 5 p.m. and speak during public comments at the beginning of the meeting — you've got three minutes max.

You will hear each one of our council members say this has nothing to do with Cliven Bundy. WRONG. It has EVERYTHING to do with Cliven Bundy. His destructive crusade is a visible backdrop to this vote on Tuesday.

My goodness! Look at the calendar! It is one year THIS VERY WEEK when armed militiamen chased BLM federal officers through the streets of Mesquite when they agreed to stand down to avoid a shootout with civilian militia along the I-15. All because Cliven defied court orders, wouldn't remove his cattle from Gold Butte and called in armed civilians to protect him. I heard excuses from elected Mesquite officials that this was a Bunkerville issue and a federal issue and the City couldn't do a thing. Now they will vote on whether to join the Bundy choir of anti-government zealots right after Cliven's big celebration party out at the ranch.

Is this furthering Mesquite's positive reputation? I'm guessing you missed the condemnation of Bundy's actions by our city council and mayor. I did, too.

http://letstalknevada.com/bye-bye-blm/

"Happy Anniversary, Cliven. We've got a present for you in honor of your victory over the feds." Will that be the message Tuesday night? Or will wiser heads prevail?

LAS VEGAS WEEKLY

Bird and Hike's Jim Boone on exploring—and championing—Nevada's wilderness

Writer: Kristen Peterson
Published: April 1, 2015

It's inevitable that searching the Internet for Southern Nevada hikes, geology or birding will land you on Jim Boone's birdandhike.com. The same can be said for online hunts regarding snakes in Nevada or bristlecone pine on Mount Charleston. Need to navigate Wilson's Pimple Loop Trail at Red Rock? Bird and Hike can help with that, too. Boone is ubiquitous. A birder with a Ph.D. in ecology, he's covered much of the region's wilderness areas, studied its mammals, vegetation, geology and vistas, then shared his findings online, providing anything from GPS coordinates and access routes to bird species and trail levels of difficulty. Launching the site in 2002 to counter the lack of web-available public information, the former senior scientist with the Yucca Mountain Project comes with a background in biology, rock climbing and park rangering. Most recently, he's assisted the Conservation Lands Foundation on informative tours to Basin and Range as part of the effort to promote conservation there.

You pretty much have this Valley covered. Is there any hike you haven't done? All the places in between. There are an infinite number of places to hike. Every ridge, every canyon, every wash and every mountaintop.

What's your favorite? There are so many ways to judge your favorite. If your favorite is the place you go back to the most, Goldstrike Hot Springs would probably fit. But I think the area I like the most is the Sheep Range. It's wild and remote, and it's well-managed, so you don't have people driving their ATVs all over the desert. And it's quiet. It's the kind of the thing we would hope could happen at Gold Butte.

What is the status of Gold Butte? Gold Butte has been on the radar for conservation for quite some time. There are a lot of nice, wide-open spaces out there, but it's a pretty heavily used area by off-roaders. While most off-roaders are responsible people, there are a few that will go out there and drive wild, run over the bushes and break up the soil crust, run over tortoises and damage rock art sites and other cultural sites.

Is it a matter of educating or enforcing? It's both. Part of the goal of protecting Gold Butte is to get some small amount of monitoring out there by some land management agency people. There are vast, open spaces with grand scenery and tall mountains and broad valleys and wild erosional patterns in the rocks and world-class archeological sites with just amazing amounts of rock art. It's just pristine

Who are you trying to reach with your website? Those who have never gone out and have no idea what is out there. The way I write the descriptions is far more detailed than your average hiker might need, but I'm trying to demystify the outdoors for the people who haven't been there before.

Do crowds at these geographic and prehistoric cultural sites concern you? It's a conundrum that you've got to have people that get out and see it so they'll fall in love with it and be willing to protect it. But on the other hand, huge crowds of people just by their simple presence degrade the area.

I'm guessing Basin and Range is too distant and remote to be adversely affected by recreation? That's the same thing people said about Central Park. When Central Park was developed it was way out in the sticks, and who would ever go out there? It's that really, really long-range vision. We've got to get out in these faraway places and set them up as conservation lands so they don't just get whittled away over time.

How do visitors respond to Basin and Range?
They stand in the basin, they look this way and see forever into the distance, they turn that way and see forever into the distance and they come away with, 'Ya know, I never thought a basin could be so beautiful,' because usually a basin is what you're driving through to get somewhere else.

http://lasvegasweekly.com/as-we-see-it/weekly-qa/2015/apr/01/bird-and-hike-jim-boone-hiking-las-vegas/

What's in store for Nevada after Harry Reid retires

Writers: Yesenia Amaro, Ben Botkin, Henry Brean, Jennifer Robison, Howard Stutz, Steve Tetreault and Richard N. Velotta
Published: March 28, 2015

U.S. Sen. Harry Reid's Friday announcement that he will not seek re-election in 2016 left many Nevadans wondering what the future holds for the Silver State after its most powerful voice at home and in Washington passes from the scene.

In ways big and small, Reid was known to bring home the bacon for Nevada projects he liked — and to work tirelessly to kill those he did not.

Here's a look at Reid's role in key Nevada issues, and what the future may hold without him:

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

Reid's announcement sets off a 22-month race between those who hope he can drive the final nails into the coffin of Yucca Mountain before he leaves, and those who see an opportunity to revive the mothballed nuclear waste project after his departure, or even before.

Making use of his seniority and clout, Reid almost singlehandedly relegated the proposed industrial site and underground disposal system for radioactive material to the dustbin of history. On Friday, he repeated that "Yucca Mountain is dead," a disposal plan now outdated and too expensive to revive.

The emergence of Republican majorities on both sides of Congress has sparked talk of a Yucca comeback but it remains to be seen whether that has legs or is merely a dead-cat bounce.

"I can well imagine somebody deciding that money should be spent for the license to go forward," opening years of new technical battles and litigation, said Mary Olson, Southeast director of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, an environmental advocacy group.

"We are ready, willing and able to go more rounds on this," Olson said.

But without Reid, she said, "We'll have to go to 10,000 hammers instead of one."

David Blee, executive director of the U.S. Nuclear Infrastructure Council, said Reid may be tested anew on Yucca Mountain before he leaves office.

"He's been a polarizing force on the nuclear energy front," Blee said. "The way he has operated was by sheer power. The fact he is a lame-duck leader is going to have a bearing."

Bob Halstead, director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, said the state will maintain a vigorous fight against a project it views as unsafe and threatening to the Nevada economy.

"Sen. Reid's announcement does not change the state's strategy on legal and regulatory matters and it does not change our chances of winning on the safety issues" in any license proceeding, Halstead said.

WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Reid used his clout in Washington to help keep water flowing to constituents and money flowing to water agencies back home.

"Sen. Reid has been a champion for water issues not only in Southern Nevada but across the state," said

John Entsminger, general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

Entsminger said Reid's "seminal" achievement for water and the environment in the state was the 1998 passage of the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. The legislation, since attacked by critics as classic pork-barrel politics, freed federal land for sale to developers and directed the proceeds to state-level conservation and other initiatives.

Ten percent of that money was earmarked for new water infrastructure to serve the growing community. To date, the authority's share of SNPLMA totals roughly $288 million.

Reid has also pushed legislation to protect Lake Tahoe, settle disputes on the Walker and Truckee rivers, untangle lawsuits blocking conservation work on the Colorado River, and, most recently, pump federal money into a pilot project aimed at keeping more water in Lake Mead.

Entsminger doesn't expect Reid's focus on water to change over the next 22 months.

"I think we can count on the senator to continue to call attention to the drought on the river and in California," he said.

As for life after Reid, the valley's top water manager remains hopeful that Nevada's loss of political clout won't hurt its standing on the Colorado River.

PUBLIC LANDS

Conservationists had a strong ally in Reid.

The 22,650-acre Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument became a reality in December, when President Barack Obama signed legislation protecting the fossil-rich area that Reid had championed.

He also had a hand in designating millions of acres as wilderness.

Reid's role extended well beyond Nevada. He also took a strong stance against efforts to weaken or scrap the federal Antiquities Act, which allows the president to declare an area a national monument without congressional approval.

"I am certain that after the announcement phones were ringing among conservationists about Sen. Reid's announcement of retirement," said Lynn Davis, senior program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association's Nevada field office. "There is no question this reverberated not only among Nevadans, but also among conservationists around the country."

Conservationists hope Reid's successor will inherit his approach of getting all parties at the table on public lands issues.

Reid may also leave some unfinished business, including legislation to designate 350,000 acres in Gold Butte northeast of Las Vegas as a national conservation area. The vast swath of land has petroglyphs, sandstone ridges and shuttered mine sites. Republicans in Congress oppose the designation, but longtime conservationist John Hiatt said he wouldn't be surprised if Reid uses the coming 22 months to end-run his opposition.

"It could happen," Hiatt said. "It could be designated as a national monument by the president. I'm sure that's still in his bag of tricks."

GAMING

The American Gaming Association told its members Friday the casino industry can't wait until Reid's last day in Washington to find a "new champion."

A few hours after Reid's announcement, AGA CEO Geoff Freeman sent a missive touting Reid's leadership, but also addressed key imperatives with the pending retirement.

Freeman said one person can't replicate Reid's efforts.

"This is going to take 30 people to protect and promote the industry," Freeman said. "We can always count on the Nevada delegation, but it's also time for champions to emerge from other gaming

states, such as Pennsylvania, Iowa, Ohio and Illinois. There are 1.7 million jobs tied to gaming and we need to protect those jobs."

During Reid's 2010 re-election campaign, MGM Resorts International executives credited him with saving the financially troubled CityCenter development and the 22,000 construction and resort jobs associated with the project. Reid used his influence as Senate majority leader to help keep the CityCenter's financial backers from walking away from the Strip development during the financial industry's meltdown.

Las Vegas Sands Corp. Senior Vice President of Government Affairs Andy Abboud agreed with Freeman's assessment.

"I think it spreads out among several people," Abboud said. "He was the most respected member in either the House or the Senate on gaming issues. In that regards, he's irreplaceable."

Freeman said Reid helped "transform gaming" into today's industry. But with casinos in 40 states, the stakeholders have grown.

"Sen. Reid has been an instrumental champion of gaming and it will require a much larger group of casino proponents to rival his passion and effectiveness," Freeman said.

On Friday, Reid indicated during an interview on KNPR's State of Nevada that he "wouldn't stand in the way" of the Senate considering legislation that would ban online gaming during his final months in office.

IMMIGRATION

Luz Marina Mosquera, director at Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional in Las Vegas, said Reid's retirement could have an impact on immigration reform.

Mosquera credits Reid with playing a role President Barack Obama's actions on immigration, such as his November executive action that would prevent millions of people in the country illegally from being deported. In 2012, Obama also used his executive power to allow young people in the country illegally, known as DREAMers, to stay and work in the country without fear of deportation.

Reid was always pressing for immigration reform, Mosquera said.

"He was someone who aside from representing us as Nevada, he was advocating for immigrants," she said Friday. "We all got very sad. Now who is going to help us? We are no longer going to have him there for our state and for our immigrant community."

And the work on immigration is not done.

"The battle continues," she said. "The battle isn't done."

TRANSPORTATION

Southern Nevada transportation leaders say they'll continue to enjoy the relationship they've had with other members of Nevada's congressional delegation, but the loss of Reid and his seniority will make securing infrastructure funding a little harder.

Tom Skancke, a member of the Nevada Transportation board and an advocate for a high-speed rail network, said state officials probably won't realize until he's gone how valuable Reid has been as an advocate for state projects.

"His influence will be substantially missed," Skancke said. "He's been an advocate for infrastructure of all kinds throughout his career and he's been a supporter of high-speed rail for more than 30 years. It's not going to be easy to fill those shoes."

In an interview aired by Nevada Public Radio on Friday, Reid said he's still hopeful that he could help secure a Federal Railroad Administration loan for construction of a high-speed line between Southern California and Las Vegas. But if it doesn't happen by September, he said, "I'm afraid we've lost it."

Tina Quigley, general manager of the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, said Reid has been an example for other members of the state's congressional delegation on how to advocate on behalf of a constituency on transportation matters.

"It's going to be a big loss," Quigley said. "But regardless of your politics, you can't deny that Harry Reid brought millions of transportation dollars to Southern Nevada throughout his career."

Quigley said Reid and four other members of the delegation will be speakers at next month's groundbreaking for the I-11 Boulder City Bypass project. Noting the support and help from other members of the delegation, Quigley said, "We'll be in good hands."

GREEN ENERGY

Nevada's clean energy industry has had no stronger supporter than Reid, who often said the Silver State's rich solar, geothermal and wind resources could make it the "Saudi Arabia of renewable energy."

But it's taken the senator's own brand of power to push the state toward green energy.

Most notably, Reid challenged NV Energy's plans to build or buy as much as 4,500 megawatts of coal generation in 2006, said Lydia Ball, a Las Vegas-based consultant to the Clean Energy Project and a former Reid aide. That included fighting NV Energy's $5 billion, 1,500-megawatt Ely Energy Center, which the utility put on indefinite hold in 2009.

"Sen. Reid was the one who was willing to lead that conversation and say, 'This isn't the direction Nevada should be going,' " Ball said. "He really opened it up to allow solar in particular to develop."

Reid's efforts didn't always work out.

After claiming in 2012 that NV Energy hadn't "done enough to allow renewable energy to thrive," Reid pressed the utility to buy power from a proposed $5 billion solar project that Chinese company ENN planned near Laughlin. But the utility already exceeded the state's requirements on its renewable portfolio, and there was no guarantee the Public Utilities Commission would allow a purchase agreement. The ENN plant never materialized.

Still, Nevada's solar-industry jobs more than doubled in 2014, making it the country's fastest-growing state for solar employment, the Solar Foundation reported in February. Nevada ranked No. 7 for solar jobs, with 5,900 positions, and No. 1 for jobs per capita.

What's more, NV Energy got 18 percent of its generation from renewables in 2013, up from less than 5 percent in 2003, and is on track to receive at least 25 percent of its power from green energy by 2025.

"We're all feeling bittersweet. We owe Sen. Reid a debt of gratitude for his leadership," Ball said. "You can't help but think about how we're losing our strongest, biggest, oldest champion."

Ball and NV Energy officials agreed the sector is now strong enough to support itself after Reid retires.

"Sen. Reid has been a champion of Nevada's energy independence. He's been an advocate for Nevada's investments in renewable energy and efficient natural gas generation," said Paul Caudill, NV Energy's president and CEO. "His leadership was instrumental in bringing the One Nevada transmission line to fruition, which is yielding daily benefits to our customers. These projects are among his legacies, and will ensure that our state continues to pursue a thriving sustainable energy future for all Nevadans."

Reid will use his remaining months in office to advocate for clean energy. He's scheduled to speak on the topic at an April luncheon of the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas/what-s-store-nevada-after-harry-reid-retires

What now? Here's how Harry Reid will likely spend his last months in the Senate

Writer: Amber Phillips
Published: March 28, 2015

For Sen. Harry Reid, it's legacy time. In announcing his retirement Friday, Nevada's senior Democrat said he wanted to leave while he was ahead.

"I want to go out at the top of my game," Reid said in an interview the same day with Nevada Public Radio.
These final two years in the Senate are critical for Reid to ensure that's what happens. Without a grueling 20-month campaign, Reid has a chance to cement his legacy in the state in everything from transportation to wind farms.

Here's some of what he's likely to focus on in the final two years of a 34-year career in Congress:

Renewable energy
The same day Reid announced his retirement, another announcement circulated in Las Vegas: In two weeks, Reid would be headlining a talk there on the clean energy economy.

It was a sign of Reid's continued commitment to shutting down Nevada's coal economy while building up its wind, solar and geothermal industry.

He helped secure hundreds of millions of dollars in the 2009 economic stimulus bill to build renewable projects in the state and has helped upgrade Nevada's grid through transmission lines to ship solar, wind and geothermal energy generated in the desert to cities like Los Angeles.

Reid said Friday he planned to fight in Congress to maintain tax cuts for the renewable energy industry. "I am going to continue doing everything I can to have a cleaner source of energy for electricity production, and one really good way to do that is with solar," he said.

For his work in renewable energy and much more, Reid "deserves a monument," said Nevada Democrat and confidante Billy Vassiliadis.

Public lands
Reid is an environmentalist at heart, and he's worked to secure hundreds of thousands of acres of wilderness in Nevada for federal protection.

"I am so moved by what he's done for Nevada," said Neil Kornze, a former Reid aide and the director of the Bureau of Land Management, the agency that manages most of the public land in the state. "I look at the maps of the West, specifically the map of Nevada, and I see Harry Reid's mark in every county, in every community."

And the entire Colorado River basin can thank Reid, who helped maneuver a behind-the-scenes water treaty with Mexico, said former Las Vegas water czar, Pat Mulroy.

"There wouldn't be a reservoir on the All American Canal if it wasn't for Sen. Reid," she said.

The job's not over: Reid has filed two bills in the Senate — not without controversy — that would protect thousands more just a few hours in and around Clark County.

One is the Gold Butte Basin and Range, which Reid waxed about Friday:

"Gold Butte is a beautiful place not far out of Las Vegas at all. I have been there, such wonderful archaeological wonder with hieroglyphics on those rocks it is really a beautiful place and we need to protect that because with the tremendous growth in Las Vegas area that will be destroyed."

Yucca Mountain
"Yucca Mountain is dead," Reid also declared Friday. "It will never be a high-level nuclear repository."

As talks to restart the project gained momentum in Congress, this was one of several times in the past few weeks Reid has felt compelled to declare dead a 1980s law consigning the Nevada desert to store the nation's commercial nuclear waste.

Reid has been influential in putting the brakes on Yucca Mountain, and he indicated Friday he would continue serving as a roadblock for it. Even as he was planning his retirement announcement, Reid said he had lunch with the Secretary of Energy this week, who also "doesn't want it to happen."

Reid pointed out he would still be able to block legislation in the Senate for the next two years.

"So there is going to be no legislation passed to either create Yucca Mountain or do anything to change how it now exists."

The Economy
As President Barack Obama mentioned when he phoned into KNPR to surprise Reid, the then-Senate majority leader helped stop the nation from spiraling into a depression in the 2008 economic meltdown. Back home, Reid was part of boardroom-level negotiations back home to save CityCenter, the $9.2 billion MGM Resorts development project that threatened to implode and take Las Vegas down with it.

As Nevada's economy is on the rebound, Reid said Friday he believed a critical component of protecting its growth was protecting collective bargaining rights and labor power in the workplace.

"I think that we need to strengthen the middle class, and one reason to do that is through organizing workers so that they get good working conditions, good wages, good benefits," he said.

In fact, Reid's relationship with organized labor was a cornerstone in building the state's Democratic Party. Unions were the foundation of his 2010 re-election win against Sharron Angle. They bused voters to the polls and funneled money to his campaign.

Reid's relationships with unions weren't always affectionate.

National trade groups urged Reid and Senate Democrats to approve the Keystone XL pipeline project. Reid blocked Keystone legislation from passing while he was majority leader. Unions also slammed him for his role in passing the Affordable Care Act, health care reform that Reid's staff was influential in crafting. This month marked the fifth anniversary of the law, known as Obamacare. Reid was one of few lawmakers who publicly praised the law for helping more than 8 million Americans enroll in health care plans.

Politics
The godfather of the modern-day Nevada Democratic Party doesn't appear to be stepping down from one of his favorite roles anytime soon.

He made sure Friday to come out with an endorsement of who he wants to replace him: former Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto.

And he promised he'd do everything he could to raise money for her, as well as for Nevada Democrats, Senate Democrats and for Hillary Clinton, should she run for president.

Speaking of presidential politics, Reid's one paragraph will likely include his ability to push Nevada's presidential primary to the top of the list; the first in the West and first four overall.

Now, the nation's eyes are expected to be on Nevada in 2016.

"We're what most refer to as a flyover state," said Chris Miller, the chairman of the Clark County

Democratic Party. "If it weren't for Sen. Reid being the majority leader in U.S. Senate, there's a lot of things we wouldn't have in Nevada."

Assessing his own legacy

In interviews, Reid normally shies away from talking about his legacy. But he ended his public comments Friday on Nevada Public Radio with a thought on that subject:

"I want people to remember me as someone who never forgot where he came from," Reid said, "and who fought every day of his life to make sure that the kids like Harry Reid — these little boys from Searchlight and these kids in these teeming big cities — that we could look to me and say, 'You know, if Harry Reid could do it, I could do it.'"

http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2015/mar/28/what-now-heres-how-harry-reid-will-likely-spend-hi/

NEVADA APPEAL
nevadaappeal.com

Another trip to the state's scenic back roads

Writer: Rich Moreno
Published: March 28, 2015

Last week I wrote about the Bureau of Land Management's Back Country Byways in Northern Nevada so this week I'll take a look at the program's scenic back roads found in the rest of the state. Nevada has a total of eight National Back Country Byways, which are roads off the beaten track that have been selected by the BLM for their scenic beauty and natural attractions. Most of these routes are not paved so a high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended.

In addition to the five I previously mentioned (California Trail Byway, Lovelock Cave Byway, Fort Churchill to Wellington Byway, Mountain Wilson Byway, and Lunar Crater Byway), the others include:

• Bitter Springs Trail Back Country Byway—This scenic drive begins at Valley of Fire State Park and winds 28 miles along the foothills of the Muddy Mountains, through several dry washes, past a handful of abandoned mining operations and ends on North Shore Drive in Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The byway intersects with the Old Spanish Trail, a pioneer route traveled by Spanish explorers as early as the 1770s. For more information, contact the BLM Las Vegas office, 702-647-5000.

• Gold Butte Back Country Byway—This 62-mile ride begins about 90 miles northeast of Las Vegas and five miles south of Mesquite. The road offers magnificent views of red and white sandstone cliffs and rock formations as well as plenty of desert wildlife. If you stop along the way, you can find petroglyph sites, sinkholes and the ruins of the historic mining camp of Gold Butte, established in 1908. For more information, contact the BLM Las Vegas office.

• Red Rock Canyon Back Country Byway—This 15-mile loop actually winds through the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, which is about a half-hour west of Las Vegas. One of the few paved byways, the one-way road offers self-guided trails with interpretive signs, picnic areas, and scenic vista pullouts. The Red Rock Visitor Center offers guided tours and programs. There is a $5 charge per vehicle. For more information, contact the BLM Las Vegas office.

Two final Back Country Byways worth mentioning that aren't in Nevada but skirt the border between Nevada and California are located in the state's Northwestern corner. They include:

• Surprise Valley/Barrel Springs Back Country Byway -This 93-mile road begins and ends in Cedarville, California, which is about 23 miles east of Alturas (northwest of Reno). This lengthy journey passes through historic communities, like Lake City and Fort Bidwell, and crosses into Nevada's wide-open Great Basin country. For more information, contact the BLM Cedarville office, 530-279-6707.

• Buckhorn Back Country Byway—This rustic byway begins on Nevada State Route 447 on the edge of Duck Flat, about 40 miles northeast of Gerlach. The single-lane gravel road climbs to a high plateau of sagebrush and pinon-covered hills and passes several small lakes. It ends at Ravendale on U.S. 395, between Susanville and Alturas. For more information, contact the BLM Cedarville office, 530-279-6707.

http://www.nevadaappeal.com/news/local/15632310-113/another-trip-to-the-states-scenic-back-roads

The Spectrum

BLM Working to Restore Gold Butte

Writer: Brandon Mullens
Published: March 19, 2015

JJ Smith, restoration project manager at the Bureau of Land Management, informed an audience of the ecology of the Gold Butte area and its issues of endangered species and plants at the Friends of Gold Butte Education Series Wednesday at the Community Theatre.

When studying ecology, ecologists focus on four things, Smith said:

- The interactions of organisms between them and the environment.
- Movement and materials of energy through ecosystems.
- Succession of ecosystems over time.
- The abundance of distribution of organisms.

Smith said he and his restoration crew do quite a few restoration projects in desert environments.

"They're very difficult and it takes a lot of time and money," he said. "The chances of success are sometimes very low. Mainly because there's not much water, making restoration here more difficult than anywhere else I've worked. And because we have pre-major challenges like red brome grass."

Red brome is a big problem in the desert because it uses a lot of water; it crowds out other species; and it causes wildfires, Smith said.

"Wildfire is the perhaps one of the biggest problems in the deserts," Smith said. "and most of the trees and bushes and other species cannot sustain a fire. It's a real problem."

Smith said they've tried many ways to try and prevent wildfires, or grow the native plants that used to inhabit the area.

One way is an aerial seeding study where they flooded areas with many different native seeds to try and regrow the stuff that died. However, 85 percent of the seed gets eaten, mostly by ants, birds and other animals.

"It's a big waste of money, most of the time," Smith said. "It also doesn't take care of the red brome grass that remains there and grows back."

Another way of bringing back the native plants to the desert is growing them in greenhouses and having volunteers plant them out in the desert, but the problem with that is that it's incredibly expensive and takes a lot of time, he said.

A third option is using the technology to pinpoint the areas to focus on, such as where red brome is and where the burn areas are and where it starts.

"We've been using satellite data and satellite imagery and modules to figure out where are the best targets to look at," he said. "We also use satellites to measure the reflectance so we can see when the red brome comes up."

The final way is using a lot of herbicides, which Smith has not done yet, to try and reduce patches of weeds at least to keep adjacent areas from burning.

"This is something we're looking into but it's not a popular idea," Smith said.

Smith also noted that there are animals like spring snails and the Moapa dace are becoming part of the endangered list because some plants and other predators are infecting their habitats.

"We are a hot spot full of endangered species."

Smith said they have worked to restore the Muddy River, and the BLM started acquiring land to help keep the Moapa dace alive because talapia was becoming an invasive species.

"It worked its way up into Lake Mead and it started eating the dace," Smith said. "What we did was put a fish barrier, or dam, to keep fish from coming upstream, and then we started restoring the surrounding habitat to make the conditions in the water better for the fish."

The testing they've done has worked out well, and they think they have a good chance of restoring the native species back into the system, Smith said.

He said the Virgin River is having the same problems as the Muddy River, which they hope they can get working on within a couple of years.

LAS VEGAS SUN

Encourage Efforts to Preserve Lands

Guest Writer: Brian DiMarzio, Las Vegas
Published: March 19, 2015

To the Editor:

While we celebrate the amazing achievement realized late last year with the designation of Tule Springs Fossil Beds as a national monument, we must remember we cannot stop our efforts.

Sen. Harry Reid and Congresswoman Dina Titus have introduced companion bills to protect two other Nevada treasures: Gold Butte and Basin and Ridge. They need and deserve our appreciation and support. These lands need immediate protection for open space, wildlife, art and cultural resources. We know achieving these goals will not be easy.

Please take the time to call or email Reid and Titus to say thank you and to let them know we are behind them. Perhaps even more important, contact the other members of our Nevada delegation to let them know how important these areas are, not only for our enjoyment of these beautiful areas, but also to our tourist economy. As a Realtor in Las Vegas, I am concerned about doing all we can do to make Southern Nevada a place people want to make their home.

More National Parks

Guest Writer: Jim Boone, Las Vegas
Published: March 17, 2015

To the Editor:

California, Arizona and Utah have large federal conservation lands that attract tourists from around the world. In Las Vegas, visitors from around the world use our city as a hub to visit Death Valley, the Grand Canyon and Zion — all of which are in other states. We could keep these visitors in Nevada, and keep their tourist dollars here, if we developed park areas of similar quality.

With Red Rock Canyon, the Spring Mountains, Lake Mead, Valley of Fire and Great Basin as our base, we could add Gold Butte and Basin and Range to create our own grand circle of parks in Nevada. By keeping tourists in our state, or even just connecting our parks with those in other states, Nevada could develop an energetic outdoor tourist economy in gateway communities on par with our neighbors.

Gold Butte (Clark County), with its many wonders, is well-known to local outdoor enthusiasts, but Basin and Range (Lincoln and Nye Counties) is little-known. Basin and Range offers grand vistas, from enormous unspoiled basins to snow-capped mountain ranges, with a cultural history spanning the last 11,000 years and remarkable geologic formations. Conserving Basin and Range would also enable Nevada ranchers to stay on the land as they have for generations, keep open miles of back roads and conserve the unspoiled view from Michael Heizer's land art project, "City."

Basin and Range is already federal land, so enormous benefit could be gained in Nevada by drawing a line on a map, changing the name of the enclosed area and constructing a couple of campgrounds. This seems like a no-brainer for rural economic development.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters-uncooperative-gop-drags-down-us

The Spectrum

Environmental Issues

Guest Writer: Bon Kruder, Mesquite
Published: March 9, 2015

To the Editor:

I attended Hardy's town hall meeting and he was quite confident, perhaps arrogant, that "his people" were taking very good care of the land around here, speaking on Gold Butte.

I could include scores of additional photos of dumped couches, appliances, carpet and heaps of garbage all over the Virgin Valley, particularly out in the Bunkerville wilderness, which is Cresent's backyard — so to speak.

My hiking friends and I pack out garbage every time we visit our desert wilderness. Mr. Hardy should be ashamed to claim he's an environmentalist, which he did, at his latest public forum at Mesquite City Hall.

http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2015/03/09/letters-editor/24668065/

Protecting Nevada Lands

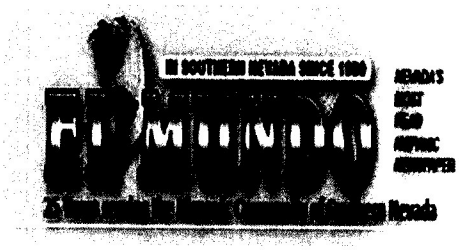
Guest Writer: Tim Castille, Mesquite
Published: March 8, 2015

To the Editor:

Thank you for the article about the public lands meeting hosted by Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Dina Titus ("Lands bill could hamper Yucca Mountain Project," Feb. 20 Review-Journal). I attended the meeting, and the room was packed with Southern Nevada residents who expressed overwhelming support for public lands protection.

It was heartening to see people of all ages and backgrounds attest their love and appreciation for Gold Butte, Tule Springs and the Great Basin. Given the turnout at the meeting, the numerous testimonials made by people in support of public lands and the noticeable lack of opposition, I believe that this is not an issue that has two sides. It seems to me that all Nevadans love their public lands, and there is overwhelming support for protecting these treasured places.

http://m.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters-construction-defect-law-full-flaws



"Nevada is working to conserve its natural lands"

Writer: Valdemar González
Published: February 28, 215

Everyone knows Las Vegas for its hotels and casinos, shows and entertainment services. Although many also know the beauty of surrounding natural areas like Lake Mead or Red Rock Canyon, few know that work is continuing to protect more public lands.

The major national parks like the Grand Canyon were not established overnight, nor easily, and this is also true for smaller areas like the new Tule Springs in Southern Nevada. At the end of last year, Congress passed a law protecting Nevada's lands which created the Tule Spring Fossil Beds National Monument. El Mundo covered the ceremony where Senator Harry Reid, Representative Dina Titus and now former Representative Steven Horsford established this national monument.

According to information from the office of Senator Reid, Tule Springs, with more than 22,000 acres, contains the greatest number of animal fossils from the Ice Age in the Southwest area of the country.

Thanks to the legislative work of Reid, Titus and Horsford, who voted to pass this law, Southern Nevada now has a natural area protected for its archeological and scientific value, but which is also available for recreation, which means tourism, which drives the largest sector of the local economy.

In this vein, the struggle continues for a law designating the Gold Butte area a natural monument in North Las Vegas. Senator Harry Reid and then Representative Steven Horsford – both Democrats – brought the bill for federal protection of Gold Butte, a site which must be protected for the enjoyment of the people now and for future generations according to North Las Vegas Councilman Isaac Barrón, perhaps its strongest supporter.

If Congress approves the bill to protect Gold Butte, it will put Gold Butte on the tourism map, so that visitors from afar will have another reason to visit Las Vegas. Councilman Barrón has also said that he considers it an ideal place for residents of North Las Vegas and the rest of the valley to spend time outdoors with their families.

On February 18, 2015, Senator Reid and Representative Titus held a public forum regarding conservation of Nevada's natural resources, where Barrón championed the necessity for a law to protect Gold Butte.

http://issuu.com/elmundolv/docs/em-lv_20150228_a

Protect Nevada's future by securing our past, preserving our lands

Guest Writer: Isaac Barron
Published: February 27, 2015 2 a.m.

There is true economic and communal value in protecting public lands.

Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Dina Titus recently held a public meeting to gather our community's input on the opportunities to preserve Nevada's public lands. Our diverse community attended the meeting in numbers demonstrating our shared love for open spaces and public lands. I appreciated this opportunity to speak on behalf of the community I represent in North Las Vegas and the students I teach and advise at Rancho High School. I want to thank our national leaders for hosting this discussion and protecting our community's interests.

The recently designated Tule Springs National Monument will be an economic catalyst for our region. The unique urban nature of Tule Springs will support local economic growth by attracting more tourists to our region as well as enticing tourists to stay longer to explore our newest national treasure. Tule Springs provides a unique border by surrounding the northern edges of North Las Vegas and the greater Las Vegas Valley. This protective border to our community will attract more families and increase the quality of life for our residents.

These economic benefits also can be experienced in cities such as Mesquite and Alamo as they fight to permanently protect the spectacular lands and cultural resources in their communities. Nevada has been blessed with a bounty of natural beauty and archeological artifacts; it has a wealth of places worthy of permanent protection as administratively designated national monuments.

I love to be outdoors. I try to get out every hunting season with my family to bond and grow together. We have loved to fish, camp and get outdoors for years now. The open spaces surrounding our valley offer the chance to unwind, find oneself, and commune with nature and family. I want to see the same opportunity to enjoy the natural and historical resources afforded to our future generations.

As a teacher at Rancho High School and as a father, I know the experience of recreation on public lands can positively influence a child's development and life. Witnessing the awe-inspiring beauty of rolling hills and majestic mountains can give a child a new perspective and help them overcome the adversity faced in their day-to-day lives. As an educator, I know firsthand the issues that some of our youths face, and helping them is my passion.

We need to ensure everyone has the opportunity to enjoy our public lands today and that the future generations I have the pleasure of educating every day do too. Protecting areas such as Tule Springs, Gold Butte, and Basin and Range Province will not only preserve traditions of hunting and camping, but will also serve to recognize the importance of public lands to our culture, our families and our economy.

Isaac Barron is a teacher at Rancho High School and a North Las Vegas councilman representing Ward 1.

http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/feb/27/protect-nevadas-future-securing-our-past-preservin/

MESQUITE
LOCAL NEWS

Hardy needs to protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Bryon George, Mequite
Published: February 26, 2015

To the Editor:

Representative Hardy was quoted as saying, "I think it's time the federal government got out of our state." *(Rep. Hardy expects to see some action on federal land issues, MLN Feb. 19, 2015)* What is not clear from the article is how he proposes to protect our public lands for future generations. Our treasured places, like Gold Butte, cannot be protected with good intentions alone and the state/city/county does not have the financial resources to effectively manage a 350,000 acre habitat without bankrupting us.

Hardy also noted that he views these lands as "laboratories of industry." I urge Hardy to consider the sustainable economic gains that can be realized by protecting Gold Butte and other Nevada lands for the enjoyment of future generations. Protected lands are good for rural, local economies – certainly better than extractive and exploitative industries that privatize and destroy the land.

We all want to see this special place that is our backyard in Mesquite protected. Congressman Hardy, as a freshman in Congress, should work with the rest of the delegation to work to make that happen, or he should move out of the way so Gold Butte gets the permanent protection it deserves and that the majority of us here in Mesquite support.

http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/02/hardy-needs-protect-gold-butte/

Greenwire

Obama flexes muscles on resources with eye on legacy

Writer: Phil Taylor, E&E reporter
Published: February 23, 2015

President Obama has quickly built a hefty portfolio on natural resource issues.

In the last two years, Obama has designated or expanded a dozen national monuments, preserved more than 1.1 million acres in the West and moved to permanently ban drilling in the oil-rich Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

And in the last month he's proposed the biggest expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration in a generation, paving the way for drilling rigs to plumb mostly virgin waters from Virginia to Georgia, while permitting the first oil production in the nation's largest petroleum reserve. Last Friday, his administration unveiled major rules governing Arctic oil exploration.

While Obama still has nearly two years left in the White House, his allies and critics are already sizing up his record on resources -- and thinking about what's to come.

If history is any indication, Obama's pace of executive actions on lands and waters could accelerate.

Consider that President Clinton in his last year in office designated or expanded 18 of his 19 national monuments, permanently setting aside more than 3.3 million acres, according to National Park Service **data**.

Obama last week designated three new monuments covering 22,000 acres in Illinois, Colorado and Hawaii, calling parks, monuments and waters the "birthright of all Americans."

Other major land and energy decisions are fast approaching:

- The administration will decide in coming months whether to permit Royal Dutch Shell PLC to drill in the relatively pristine Chukchi Sea off Alaska's North Slope, where there are an estimated 15 billion barrels of oil.
- The Bureau of Land Management will write or finalize major rules governing hydraulic fracturing, methane venting and flaring, and royalties.
- And BLM will finalize unprecedented new protections for sage grouse across tens of millions of acres of Western rangelands, an effort some conservationists are comparing to Clinton's sweeping 2001 roadless rule.

"What Obama is doing is setting a platform for action over the next two years," said Bill Meadows, former president of the Wilderness Society. "There's so much more that can be done, and I think he's enjoying it."

Not enjoying Obama's action: Republican lawmakers.

"This White House has shown once again its utter and complete disdain for the public process, Congress and the communities most impacted by these unilateral, unchecked land designations," House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) said after Obama's monuments announcement last week. "Obama has sidelined the American public and bulldozed transparency."

While Republicans accuse Obama of flouting Congress and putting a regulatory muzzle on the nation's energy renaissance, they appear powerless to stop him.

The 1906 Antiquities Act gives presidents almost unchecked powers to ban oil drilling, mining and logging across enormous swaths of the American West. Clinton famously used the law in 1996 to designate the 1.7-million-acre Grand Staircase-

Escalante National Monument in southern Utah, blocking development of a massive coal deposit and enraging lawmakers in the Beehive State.

Obama has so far used the law more diplomatically, designating monuments only where there is broad political support and, incidentally, only in states that voted for him in 2012.

He's used the act 16 times, setting aside land at a faster clip than Clinton, but with fewer acres. But it's tough to draw comparisons, since every acre conserved is not equal.

A big test will be whether Obama will protect landscapes in hostile territory -- such as the half-million-acre Boulder-White Clouds in central Idaho and nearly 2 million acres surrounding Canyonlands National Park in Utah. Republican lawmakers in those states are urging Obama to stand down as they seek legislative protections.

But top Obama aides say the president has plenty of ink in his pen for creating monuments if Congress fails to act.

Green groups are also seeking protections of 1.7 million acres surrounding the Grand Canyon, more than 1 million acres in the Southern California desert and 350,000 acres of Nevada's Gold Butte, a vast desert of multihued rocks, petroglyphs and slot canyons.

Obama getting 'the hang of it'

Conservationists say Obama has gone from timid to bold on resource issues.

They point to Obama's proposal last month to designate some 12 million acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness -- barring access to an estimated 10 billion barrels of oil that Alaskan officials badly want to supply the depleted Trans-Alaskan Pipeline System.

The move was symbolic, since only Congress can decide whether the refuge is opened to drilling. But it reversed a Reagan administration plan seeking full oil and gas development in the 1.5-million-acre coastal plain -- a major policy stamp for the next 15 years.

And in contrast with the Fish and Wildlife Service's draft ANWR wilderness proposal -- which was quietly unveiled in August 2011, barely getting noticed in the media -- Obama and his advisers touted the final wilderness plan with gusto. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Chief of Staff Tommy Beaudreau stopped by the Washington, D.C., headquarters of the Alaska Wilderness League to celebrate the proposal.

It was a poke in the eye to the Alaska congressional delegation, including Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska).

"He's growing more comfortable using the administrative powers at his disposal," said Mike Matz, director of U.S. public lands for the Pew Charitable Trusts. "His administration has gotten ... the hang of it."

Matz credited John Podesta, the president's senior counselor on global warming, who founded the liberal Center for American Progress, for prodding Obama to act. Podesta in summer 2012, while at CAP, called monument designations "good politics," arguing they could burnish Obama's re-election bid in key Western battleground states. The ANWR announcement came at a politically advantageous time, given that gasoline prices were plunging as domestic oil production in the Lower 48 soared.

Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt played a similar role with Clinton by challenging the 42nd president to match the conservation achievements of past commanders in chief, Matz said.

"In Obama, you had another instigator in John Podesta," Matz said. "You need someone who can make the administration comfortable up and down the ranks."

Greens question whether Obama will keep up the momentum as key staffers depart and the administration heads for the home stretch.

Podesta left the White House this month to join Hillary Clinton's political team as she considers

jumping into the 2016 presidential race. And Mike Boots, the acting chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, who is viewed as another champion for land protections, plans to leave the administration in March.

In addition, Obama is already laying claim to protecting more land and waters than any other president. The claim is true if you count the president's decision last September to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument to more than 490,000 square miles.

Some conservationists fear he'll rest on his laurels. But others see new allies arriving at the White House.

A fresh arrival hailed by green groups is Christy Goldfuss, a former National Park Service political appointee who worked under Podesta at CAP, who is being groomed to take the helm at CEQ, sources said.

Environmentalists are also enthusiastic about Michael Degnan, a former Sierra Club representative, and Angela Barranco, who are both at CEQ, as well as Jewell's Deputy Chief of Staff Nikki Buffa, BLM Director Neil Kornze, and Agriculture Department Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie.

Last Wednesday, Interior Deputy Secretary Michael Connor attended a public meeting in Las Vegas with Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev.) to discuss their proposals to protect more than 1 million acres at Gold Butte and at Garden and Coal valleys, which include remote archaeological sites and a massive public art project.

Connor's attendance suggests the administration could be considering the area for a future monument. Jewell and Bonnie in December also visited Northern California's Berryessa Snow Mountain region, where conservationists are clamoring for a 350,000-acre monument designation.

'Not a love fest'

Douglas Brinkley, a history professor at Rice University who has written extensively on land conservation, said Obama must act with more pluck to rival Clinton's conservation legacy.

Neither president will rival the achievements of Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson or Jimmy Carter, who make up the "Mount Rushmore" of land conservation, according to Brinkley.

But Obama, who has already earned the title of "the climate change president," faces few political risks in pushing the conservation envelope, Brinkley said.

"The political atmosphere couldn't be better for the president to be brave in using the Antiquities Act."

The administration has put its stamp on public lands in more subtle ways, too, by implementing controversial oil and gas leasing reforms in 2010 that were followed by a steep drop in BLM lands leased for drilling, and by yanking 77 George W. Bush-era oil and gas leases that former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar argued were too close to national parks in Utah.

BLM issued 1,157 oil and gas leases in fiscal 2014, a 20 percent drop from the previous year and the lowest amount in at least a quarter-century, according to agency statistics released last month. Over the past five years, the agency has leased an average of 1.5 million acres annually, down significantly from the 4 million acres the George W. Bush administration leased annually during its final five years in office.

Oil production has grown steadily on Western federal lands, but nowhere near as fast as on private tracts overlying shale plays in states like North Dakota and Texas. The administration's critics blame BLM red tape, while others attribute the discrepancy to geology.

Natural gas production has dropped steadily on federal lands -- even as it has soared elsewhere -- and oil production has fallen under Obama's watch in the Gulf of Mexico, though some of the drop can be attributed to the halt in drilling following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill.

"[For] people pushing for more government control and less extraction on federal lands, Obama is their savior," said Dan Kish, senior vice president for the Institute for Energy Research, a free-market advocacy group. "He's basically given them all they want and more."

Oil backers offered tempered praise for Obama's decision last month to open the Atlantic Ocean to future leasing, though they blasted his decision to ban development within 50 miles of shore, a restriction some fear will preclude exploration altogether.

The leasing proposal "slams the door on industry and on new jobs, increased economic activity, added revenue and strengthened energy security," said Randall Luthi, president of the National Ocean Industries Association.

But Meadows, the Wilderness Society former president, said Obama is far from a conservationist lap dog. Obama's "all of the above" energy platform has included a heavy emphasis on natural gas drilling, coal leasing in Wyoming and drilling in the Arctic Ocean, Meadows said. "This is not a love fest by any means," he said.

'Very pragmatic'

According to Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton Interior official, Obama has been "bullish" on the future of oil and gas development.

http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060013840/print

The administration has implemented unprecedented safety reforms in the Gulf of Mexico and is preparing two major rules governing hydraulic fracturing and the venting and flaring of methane -- moves that should facilitate continued development of federal minerals, he said.

"The Obama administration has reformed and improved the safety and environmental sustainability of oil and gas development on public lands and waters more profoundly than any other recent president," Bledsoe said. "This administration, in my view, has been very pro-oil and gas development, even while protecting pristine landscapes from development and creating a record area of new national monuments."

Bledsoe said it is politically remarkable that less than five years after the BP PLC oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the administration is poised to open the Atlantic.

Moreover, the administration has taken a flexible approach to conserving the greater sage grouse, Bledsoe said, by taking lessons from the northern spotted owl, whose protection under the Endangered Species Act in the early 1990s led to dramatic reductions in logging.

"They're very pragmatic," Bledsoe said. "It's a window into the adaptability of the Obama administration's view of conservation broadly."

ProgressNow Nevada Thank You Ad

Published: February 20, 2015

Conservation bill could block Yucca rail route, but prospects shaky

Writer: Henry Brean
Published: February 19, 2015 12:27a.m.; Updated: February 19, 2015 6:59p.m.

Though its sponsors insist it wasn't their intent, a Nevada lands bill pending in Congress could throw up another road block to a Yucca Mountain Project.

The legislation, introduced last year by U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, would restrict mining and energy exploration on more than 800,000 acres of federal land in two lonesome valleys straddling Lincoln and Nye counties

The Senate Minority Leader has said he wants to withdraw the land in Garden and Coal valleys to protect "City," noted artist Michael Heizer's sprawling earth sculptor roughly the size of the National Mall. Supporters of the bill want a national monument dedicated to "City" and to the pristine basin-and-range landscape around it.

The designation would also block a future rail corridor for nuclear waste shipments to the proposed Yucca Mountain repository, which Reid spokeswoman Kristen Orthman acknowledged Wednesday while saying Yucca Mountain is not why Reid introduced the bill or decided to target so much land for withdrawal. That's just a welcome side-effect, Orthman said.

Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., who quietly introduced a House version of the bill last week, also said Yucca Mountain has nothing to do with it.

Motivations aside, the legislation faces an uphill battle in a GOP-led Congress already pushing back against such lands bills. Rep. Cresent Hardy, R-Nev., has vowed to fight the bill and a measure, also sponsored by Reid, to designate 350,000 acres at Gold Butte in northeastern Clark County a conservation area. Both areas are in Hardy's congressional district.

The two bills also are drawing opposition from local officials and some rural residents.

And the push for increased protection of Gold Butte is further complicated by the lingering dispute between federal authorities and Cliven Bundy, whose cattle roam the area in defiance of court orders and aborted government round-ups.

Titus said she still hopes to work on the lands bills with Hardy, whom she described as "more open" to protecting Gold Butte than in the past.

On Wednesday, Titus and Reid hosted a "conversation about conservation" in Las Vegas for an audience of several hundred.

The enthusiastic crowd packed the jury assembly room at the Lloyd George U.S. Courthouse to celebrate the new Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument at the northern edge of the Las Vegas Valley and to call for the protection of Gold Butte and Garden and Coal valleys.
The preservation pep rally was for the benefit of Michael Connor, the deputy U.S. secretary of interior, who had just toured Tule Springs.

Gold Butte, less than 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas, is in particular need of preservation, said Reid via video link from Washington, where he is recovering from eye surgery.

"What a loss it would be if we didn't protect it," he said. "If we don't do something, it will be gone in a matter of decades."

Titus, in person, said the lands must be preserved "for us, for the whole country and for generations to come."

Art lovers argue that Heizer's masterwork warrants special protection and could become a World Heritage site one day. "City" has been described as one of the most ambitious pieces of art ever, a network of sculpted berms, plazas and geometric shapes a 1.5 miles long and 900 feet wide inspired by ancient cities of South and Central America.

For a piece like that, "you need the scale of Nevada," said Michael Govan, head of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. "It is almost finished, and that's why its protection is so paramount."

Several dozen people spoke of what Gold Butte, Tule Springs and the lonely valleys of the southern Great Basin mean to them.

Just one person opposed the conservation measures. The man, who called himself "John Q. Public," railed against the treatment of Bundy and criticized the government for trying to kick the public off public land.
The audience hissed and booed and shouted him down, receiving an obscene gesture in return.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/water-environment/conservation-bill-could-block-yucca-rail-route-prospects-shaky

Let's Talk Mesquite
Where Communities Communicate

#NVLeg Special Report: This Land Is Our Land

Writer: Andrew Davey
Published: February 19, 2015

Every so often, I can hear Woody Guthrie singing when I travel to and through the wide open expanses of Nevada (that is, when I'm not hearing "Wide Open Spaces", one of my favorite Dixie Chicks songs). This land is your land. This land is my land. This land was made for you & me.

When did we lose track of this very American dream? When did "this land is made for you & me" become "controversial"?

Ever since Cliven Bundy launched his "Range War" against the rule of law, his extreme "TEA Party" allies have been trying to "shift the Overton Window" and make the concept of public lands seem "controversial". Bundy's buddies in the Nevada Legislature are pushing SJR 1 to demand the federal government transfer wide swaths of federal public land to the State of Nevada so the state can turn the land over to developers and other commercial interests. And US Rep. Cresent Hardy (R-Mesquite) vows to "fight tooth and nail" any attempt by US Senator Harry Reid (D) to secure federal protection for Gold Butte.

Yet when Senator Reid and US Rep. Dina Titus (D-Paradise) held a joint community meeting on the state of Nevada's public lands, the crowd gathered at te Lloyd George Federal Building in Downtown Las Vegas expressed overwhelming support for preserving Gold Butte, Tule Springs, and Garden Valley (in Lincoln County).

Mesquite community leaders, such as Former City Council Member Karl Gustaveson and current Virgin Valley Water District Board Member Sandra Ramaker, spoke in favor of creating a National Conservation Area (NCA) for Gold Butte. So did the Nevada Resort Association's Virginia Valentine. So did Sean Fellows on behalf of Sig Rogich and Rogich Communications. So did local business leader & philanthropist Jenna Morton. So did the Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA). And so did Paiute Nation tribal leaders. And so did many more Southern Nevadans.

Democrats, Nonpartisans, and Republicans all stated their support for federal protection for Nevada's environmental treasures at Lloyd George yesterday. Educators, students, art lovers, history buffs, health care professionals, business executives, sportsmen, hikers, and others from all walks of life professed their love for Nevada's natural wonders... And their desire to keep these wonders public and preserved.

Really, the only opposition came from someone who was referring to himself as "John Q. Public". He spoke of Harry Reid's "BLM goons", being forced into "gay marriage", "abortion on demand", "environmental junk science", "domestic terrorists", and the kind of material one typically hears from the "black helicopter" crowd.

I had heard from several folks at Grant Sawyer who were concerned about Bundy supporters causing a scene at the event. But in the end, only "John Q. Public" rose to make his nonsensical rant before making a dramatic (yet peaceful) exit.

So why are Cresent Hardy and several Republican state legislators behaving as if most Nevadans agree with the Bundy Bunch and "John Q. Public"? Why are they claiming they have some sort of mandate to privatize these critical public resources?

This land is your land. This land is my land. This land is all our land. Nevada was made for you and me.

http://letstalknevada.com/nvleg-special-report-this-land-is-our-land/

Social Media Coverage: February 19, 2015 Public Meeting in Las Vegas

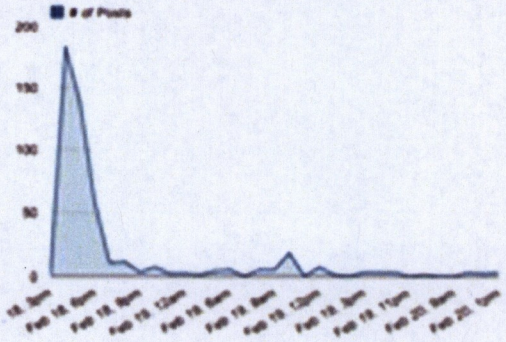
https://storify.com/jackieomdb/southern-nevada-conversation-on-conservation

#ProtectNV Social Media Impressions

February 17 - 20th

510	137	415,594	1,014,968
posts	users	reach	impressions

Timeline



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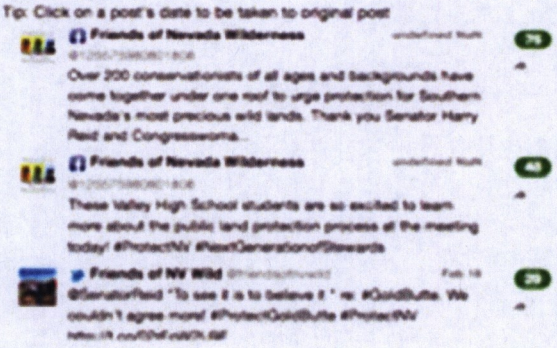
Tip: Click on a post's date to be taken to original post



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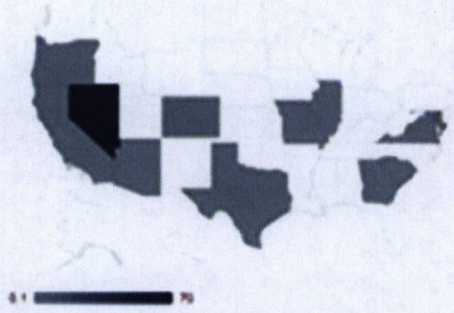

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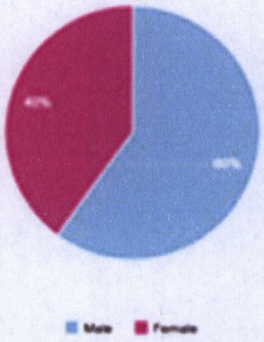

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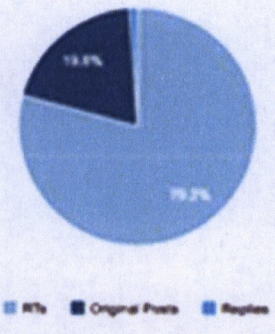

Sentiment

positive	44
neutral	50
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