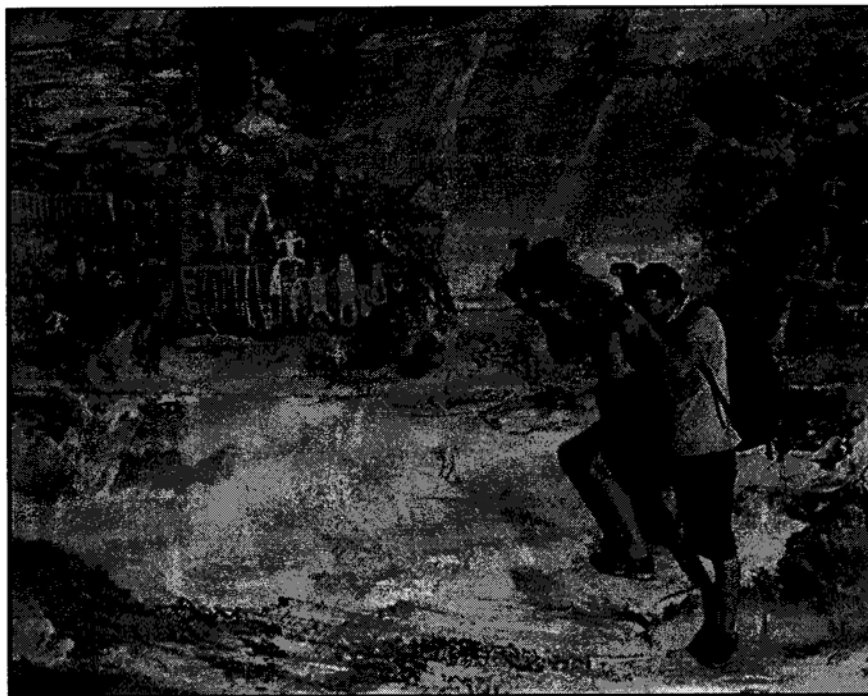


Gold Butte Media Clip Book

January 2015 – August 2016



Petroglyph Panel in Gold Butte (T. Rylander)

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Reid, Titus, & Vegas Heavy Hitters Go All In For Gold Butte

Writer: Andrew Davey

Published: August 19, 2016

Yesterday, something incredible happened at The Foundation Room. And no, it had nothing to do with any illicit affairs involving any Hollywood celebrities.

Rather, US Senator Harry Reid (D), Rep. Dina Titus (D-Paradise), & other key Southern Nevada community leaders made it clear where they stand in the ongoing saga over Gold Butte & the Bundys. Yesterday, they made it clear they want President Obama to #ProtectGoldButte before he leaves office.

In front of an audience of local media & Gold Butte advocates, Senator Reid threw down. After sharing a personal story of a favorite hiking spot near Searchlight that would later be lost to development, Reid vowed to everything in his power to ensure the same fate wouldn't fall upon Gold Butte. He then excoriated Congressional Republicans, such as Reps. Crescent Hardy (R-Bunkerville) & Joe Heck (R-Henderson), for blocking nearly every bill aiming to protect environmentally sensitive public lands. And even though Reid didn't mention them by name, it wasn't too difficult to figure out how Senator Reid feels about the #BundyRanch "Range War" against the federal government.

Just before Reid took to the podium to read #BundyRanch to filth, Titus sang the praises of Gold Butte.

But wait, why would the Congresswoman who represents the Fabulous Las Vegas Strip care at all about a plot of open space near the Arizona state line? Titus explained the importance of public lands like Gold Butte for all of Nevada. For one, some of those 42 million tourists who visit Las Vegas every

year want to go out and actually experience "The Wild West" for themselves. Why not welcome these visitors with open arms to our beautiful open spaces?

This sentiment was echoed by none other than Virginia Valentine, President of the Nevada Resort Association. She noted how protecting special places like Gold Butte is good for business.

Former Nevada Sheriffs & Chiefs Association President and current Mesquite resident Frank Adams chimed in with another important perspective. Not only does Adams live just a short drive away from Gold Butte, but he's also a registered Republican. So what on earth was he doing at The Foundation Room? For Adams, this isn't a partisan issue.

And that wasn't the only show of unity on top of Mandalay Bay yesterday. Former Chair of the Nevada Band of Paiutes William Anderson explained the significance of Gold Butte for Native Americans. He spoke just after Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA) President Rossi Ralenkotter reiterated the economic significance of protecting critical public lands. Both asked for bold action to #ProtectGoldButte before it's too late.

At the end of the program, we were asked to look outside. From a distance, there was Gold Butte. Way out there was the land we were talking about over here. It's way out there, yet it's only about 100 miles away. And as "out there" as it seems, it's a part of our story here.

So how will this story end? Will Gold Butte continue to be the plagued by #BundyRanch lawlessness? Will it be stuck in some sort of odd legal purgatory? Or will it be saved? Will there be a brighter future for “Nevada’s Piece of the Grand Canyon”?

<http://letstalknevada.com/author/andrew-davey/>

Much has been said about the “divisive rancor” that’s come to define this election season. Perhaps not enough is being said about what brings Nevadans & Americans together. One such issue is protecting public lands like Gold Butte. So why are certain elected “leaders” treating it like it’s “controversial”? And how much more public outcry must there be until The White House takes action?



Tribes push for national monument at site of Bundy standoff

Writer: Kirk Siegler
Published: August 19, 2016

With President Obama's term in office set to draw to a close, Native American tribes are ramping up pressure on the administration to designate several national monuments on federal land in the West to protect archaeological and cultural resources that they consider sacred.

Vernon Lee, a former tribal councilman for the Moapa Band of Paiutes, scoffed when rancher Cliven Bundy began claiming that his family of pioneers had ancestral rights to land on Gold Butte, Nev.

The tribe was granted the land in the 1800s, but the U.S. government has since shrunk its land holdings tenfold. Now, the tribe's reservation is just a small sliver near a coal-fired power plant, north of where Bundy made a standoff against Bureau of Land Management officials in 2014.

"To be quite candid, I wish they would give it all back," Lee said. "But realistically, that probably won't happen."

Instead, the tribe is urging Obama to designate a national monument at Gold Butte, where cow pies and gunshot holes pepper ancient petroglyphs, pottery and arrowheads on the BLM land the tribe was once able to protect.

Tribal activists, however, are pessimistic, especially given the controversy surrounding the administration's national monument proposal at Bears Ears in Utah.

"I can't help but think we're just playing political football," Lee said. "I don't think anybody wants to move and do anything for Indian Country because it's not a popular thing to do, and it's all about the votes" (Kirk Siegler, NPR, Aug. 18). — NS



Pressure for a new national monument

Writer: Steve Sebelius

Published: August 18, 2016

Senator Reid and Congresswoman Dina Titus are applying the pressure this week. Both want President Obama to declare the Gold Butte area a national monument before he leaves office. Reid says he has talked with the president about it multiple times. the land has been a flashpoint in the

debate over who should control public lands. this week on politics now. Dina Titus tells Steve Sebelius about their efforts: "You not only have to designate it, you have to put some resources behind it so you would have some fences, so surveillance, be able to really protect it"

<http://my.tvey.es/f4WRj>



Jon Ralston interview with Rep. Dian Titus

Writer: Jon Ralston

Published: August 18, 2016

Interview from 0.0 to 5:03

<http://www.ktnv.com/ralston>



Reid: Gold Butte National Monument "will happen before the first of the year"

Writer: Jud Burkett

Published: August 18, 2016

LAS VEGAS — Sen. Harry Reid is sure of it: Gold Butte will soon become a national monument.

The Senate Minority Leader, along with Nevada Democratic Rep. Dina Titus, William Anderson, former chairman of the Moapa Band of Paiutes, and representatives from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority and the Nevada Resort Association, held a press conference on Thursday to announce the release of a new report detailing damage done over the past year at Gold Butte near Mesquite.

Reid told reporters and supporters of the effort to provide greater protection to Gold Butte that he would continue to push President Obama to designate Gold Butte as a national monument and that "it is going to happen before the first of the year."

Reid, who introduced legislation in 2013 that would have designated Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area, said the only reason Gold Butte hadn't already received greater protection was because "Republicans hate public lands."

Gold Butte is an area of about 350,000 acres of public lands that sits between the Overton Arm of Lake Mead National Recreation Area and the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument just west of Mesquite. Most of the area is currently designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern in order to protect the habitat of endangered desert tortoise and bighorn sheep, along with significant cultural resources in the area like petroglyphs, historic mining sites and pioneer-era artifacts.

Gold Butte is currently under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management but was left

unmanaged and unpatrolled for more than two years following the 2014 standoff between Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy and BLM officials who sought to remove Bundy's cattle from the area.

Bundy has since been arrested in connection with the standoff and his illegal grazing of cattle in Gold Butte, but his livestock still roam the area.

One of the most significant signs of damage detailed in the new report produced by the Friends of Gold Butte, a non-profit group dedicated to achieving permanent protection for the land, is an intensive system of irrigation trenches and livestock watering tanks that have been placed in Gold Butte.

"The appalling thing about it is it's 22 miles of trenching and laying water pipe in the ground," said Jaina Moan, executive director of Friends of Gold Butte. "That's like the width of the Las Vegas Valley. It's a pretty significant thing for somebody to do on a landscape that's designated as an area of critical environmental concern to protect a species that is threatened with extinction."

Other damages detailed in the report include illegal incursions of off-highway vehicles into sensitive areas destroying vegetation and tortoise habitat and significant damage to cultural and historical artifacts in the area, including petroglyph panels that have been riddled with bullet holes.

"For thousands of years, our people have roamed this area. We don't have books. We don't have documents that show where we're from and what we're about," said Anderson. "What we did was we'd tell stories, and we also had other signs like petroglyphs, and we'd pass it on from generation to generation."

"To find out that things are being done there to desecrate the land, to have skeletal remains removed, to have pottery removed, Indian paint removed, to have people actually shoot at the petroglyphs — they have no respect for our culture."

Anderson was particularly upset at vandals who completely removed the ancient rock writing from the area.

"People are cutting into the rock and removing the petroglyphs from the rock. It leaves this empty space where once our people had something that we'd share. To me, I want to share that with my son, and hopefully other generations will be able to share that and say, 'This is our culture; this is our tie to where we're at.'

Titus said the need to protect Gold Butte from further damage is gaining traction, not just among environmentalists but in the Las Vegas business community.

"This is not some new frivolous effort; it's not just a few little greenies wanting to save a patch of the desert out there that's not significant. This is our piece of the Grand Canyon," she said. "This is a place that deserves to be protected. Our business and our industry (leaders) are recognizing it, too. This is about quality of life, and it also brings economic income to the area, especially as we appeal to international tourists who want to come here and visit."

Titus added that greater protections for Gold Butte are favored by a majority of Nevadans, as well.

"A poll shows 71 percent of people across all party lines think this is a good idea," Titus said. "So as we look at the damage done — 22 miles out there of trench that's been dug — we've got to protect it now. We cannot wait another year for another report."

When asked if she felt a monument designation might lead to another standoff and what the government's response might be, Titus said "I think that's already in progress."

She added, "You've seen arrests made; you've seen charges filed; you've seen public opinion shift, even in the neighborhood where the Bundys were in Mesquite. The legitimate ranchers and industry here in Nevada did not support the Bundys because they pay their fees, so I don't think you're gonna have the kind of standoff that you had before. I think those days are over."

While Republicans in Congress have blocked his attempts to legislate further protections for Gold Butte, Reid said, the land deserves to be preserved.

"That little place — a lot of people think is not worth the trouble, not far from Las Vegas — it is stunning in its uniqueness, and it's something we have to preserve and protect," Reid said. "Why hasn't it been done up to this time? I'll tell you why: Republicans hate public lands. They have done everything they can to destroy our ability to work on public lands. Things that used to be routine like naming places, changing boundaries of places, we don't do that now. There's a group of people in the House and the Senate who hate public lands, and they're able to stop everything."

Reid pointed out that there is a way around the GOP and their hatred of public lands, however.

"Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican president, had the same problem a long time ago, and he did something about it," said Reid. "His people checked on it, and there was a law on the books, the Antiquities Act, and he said, 'I'm going to use that. I'm going to go around Congress and do it on my own.'"

Reid said President Obama can and should use that same Antiquities Act.

"I've talked with the president; I'll continue to do so; I'm going to see him again on Thursday," Reid said. "He knows how I feel about this. I've talked to the Secretary of the Interior. We're going to continue pushing this. It's going to happen."

And Reid encouraged those in attendance to continue the push to protect Gold Butte.

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“I’m here today to protect part of America, part of Nevada; that is so meaningful that we all should care, as I know we do. So let’s be missionaries.

Let’s tell others how important this is. We need to tell people: Keep your damn hands off of public lands.”

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/2016/08/18/reid-gold-butte-national-monument-happen-before-first-year/88973730/>



Reid says he's 'confident' Obama will designate Gold Butte a national monument

Writer: Michael Scott Davidson

Published: August 18, 2016

U.S. Sen. Harry Reid said Thursday he's "confident" that President Barack Obama will designate Gold Butte as a national monument before leaving office in January.

"It's going to happen," Reid, D-Nev., the Senate minority leader, said to an audience of more than 50 gathered inside Mandalay Bay's Foundation Room.

"We just want it to happen before the first of the year."

Such a designation would be the president's second in Nevada, and would widen federal protections to maintain Gold Butte's historic significance.

Gold Butte lies south of Mesquite near the Arizona border. It is roughly 350,000 acres of government-protected conservation land and wilderness managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management.

The property is home to the desert tortoise, a historic mining town and ancient Native American petroglyphs and artifacts.

But those natural and historical resources are being threatened, a local conservation advocacy group reported.

Reid's remarks came during a press conference to announce the release of the second damage report created by Friends of Gold Butte.

The nonprofit group's executive director, Jaina Moan, said the report documented vandalism, illegal incursions by off-road vehicles and 22 miles

of illegal trenches through habitats to lay a water pipe.

"We felt like it was important for people to realize and understand the extent of the damage that was happening out there," Moan said. "We don't believe this is the way you treat our public lands." Neither does Reid.

In 2013 and 2015, he proposed legislation to protect Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area. But the bills did not come to fruition.

On Thursday, Reid made it clear he blamed the Republican Party for the efforts' failures.

"They have done everything they can to destroy our ability to work on public lands," he said.

But Obama can bypass Congress using executive authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate Gold Butte as a national monument. Doing so would allow the property to be managed more like a national park.

Obama has used the power in Nevada before.

In 2015 he designated the 704,000-acre Basin and Range National Monument in remote areas of Lincoln and Nye counties.

Expanding protections for Gold Butte could limit further development and commercial use of the property.

Now with defiant Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy and some of his anti-government militia backers in jail, it seems like a prime opportunity for

the Obama administration to step in. In April 2014, Bundy and law enforcement had an armed standoff after federal officials began rounding up Bundy's cattle that were grazing in Gold Butte.

Speaking at Thursday's press conference, Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., said it's time for the government to protect the area.

"We cannot wait another year for another (damage) report," she said.

Other lawmakers, including U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., and Congressman Crescent Hardy, R-Nev., have opposed a national monument designation.

"The establishment of any new national monument in the State of Nevada, regardless of location, ought to be considered in the public Congressional

process," Heller wrote in an April letter to Obama. "Only through this type of process, not unilateral action by the executive, can we ensure all parties, including those who support and oppose a given measure, have an equal opportunity to voice their opinions."

On Thursday, Heller spokesman Neal Patel said Heller's position has not changed.

Hardy offered a similar view on the issue.

"The Gold Butte stunt we saw on the Strip today further peddled the false narrative that designating a national monument is the only way to protect our public lands," he said in a statement. "I think there's a better way to protect our natural heritage, and it starts by allowing Nevada's elected representatives to have a vote in Congress."

<http://m.reviewjournal.com/news/nevada/reid-says-he-s-confident-obama-will-designate-gold-butte-national-monument>



In Nevada, Tribes Push To Protect Land At The Heart Of Bundy Ranch Standoff

Writer: kirk Siegler

Published: August 18,2016

When rancher Cliven Bundy claimed his family of Mormon pioneers had "ancestral" rights to the federal land in and around Gold Butte, Nevada, Vernon Lee scoffed.

"As a native, and as the tribe that actually had that land granted by the federal government back in the 1800s, he really doesn't got a right at all," Lee says. "If anybody's got a right it would be the Moapa Band of Paiutes."

A former tribal councilman, Lee is sitting on a lawn chair in the shade of his mobile home on the Moapa River Reservation.

An air conditioner hanging from a side window hums. He swats away flies as he recalls how the tribe's land once included all of Gold Butte, but was later shrunk tenfold by the US Government. Today the reservation is just this small sliver of desert north of Cliven Bundy's place and adjacent to a coal-fired power plant.

"To be quite candid I wish they would give it all back, but realistically that probably won't happen," Lee says.

So the Southern Paiute tribes in Nevada are proposing another plan. Now that Bundy and many of his militia followers have been arrested by federal authorities, they sense a small window of opportunity before President Obama leaves office. They want him to designate Gold Butte as a national monument.

"We want to protect the lands, we want to protect the animals and we want our sacred sites protected," Lee says. "Right now the best thing we can think of is to go on the side of this creation of a monument."

Vandalism of Sacred Sites

Such a designation would be a bittersweet end to an especially rough few years for the tribes. After the armed standoff on the Bundy Ranch, the federal government stopped managing Gold Butte entirely due to safety concerns. Until recently, it was lawless.

Kenny Anderson, cultural director for the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, recounts a recent walk through Gold Butte with a group of elders.

He noted that the Bundy family's cows are still trespassing in the area.

"There was petroglyphs that they were walking on, there was cow patties everywhere," Anderson says. "And I'm saying, dang, what the heck?"

It's not just the cows that Anderson and other tribal members are concerned about. They've documented evidence of people shooting bullets at ancient petroglyphs carved into rocks, theft of pottery and arrowheads. There are photos of off-road vehicle tracks cutting across plants native people have gathered for centuries to make paint and baskets.

"I don't know if it's because of they weren't told about things like this or maybe they weren't concerned with what history is," Anderson says. "It's a mystery."

Thursday in Las Vegas, tribal leaders joined U.S. Senator Harry Reid and other conservationists to issue a more detailed report of what they say is extensive damage and vandalism in Gold Butte. The event followed a recent announcement that the federal Bureau of Land Management has resumed its field work in the remote area east of Las Vegas, after a more than two year absence.

Seizing the Moment

In the end, the irony is that the Bundy standoff may end up helping the tribes' cause. There's a lot more public attention being paid to these historical lands than in recent memory. And not just in Nevada either. There's a plan to transfer ownership of the National Bison Range to tribes in Montana. In Utah, five tribes that want to create a massive, jointly-managed national monument have the ear of the Obama Administration.

National monument designations that bypass Congress are hugely controversial. University of Colorado historian Patty Limerick says it's not uncommon for a president to wait until the very last minute.

"Bill Clinton and his secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt had quite a realistic recognition that the Democrats were not going to be carrying Utah in the 1990s," Limerick says. "So they could go ahead with national monuments, whether or not the people of Utah thought that was a cool idea or not."

In this presidential election year, the politics in a state like Nevada are even more sensitive. And that has a lot of tribal activists like Vernon Lee feeling pessimistic.

"I don't think anybody wants to move and do anything for Indian Country because it's not a popular thing to do," Lee says. "And it's all about the votes."

Lee says in Indian Country, justice is slow to come, if it comes at all.

<http://kvcnews.org/post/nevada-tribes-push-protect-land-heart-bundy-ranch-standoff#stream/0>



Grazers, campers, ATVs damaging Nev.'s Gold Butte — report

Writer: Scott Streater

Published: August 18, 2016

Sensitive federal lands in southeast Nevada near the site of a federal showdown two years ago with rancher Cliven Bundy continue to be damaged by illegal grazing activity, vandals and all-terrain vehicles, according to a report by a conservation group that is pushing for the area to be designated a national monument.

The report, conducted by Friends of Gold Butte and released today at a Las Vegas ceremony attended by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Nevada Rep. Dina Titus (D), documents widespread damage to "virgin desert terrain" caused by, among other things, a 22.5-mile network of water tanks, troughs and pipelines that appear to be associated with illegal livestock grazing activity.

The group, which documented the damage during site visits and "field observations" conducted from September 2015 through April 2016, also reports finding "numerous illegal vehicle" tracks from ATVs crossing into environmentally sensitive areas of Gold Butte.

In some instances, fences designed to protect sensitive wildlife and their habitat have been "cut or taken down," apparently by ATV users forging new pathways through the desert. There are so many of these tracks, the report says, "it would be impossible to photograph, catalogue, and maintain data for them all."

All of the damage outlined in the report was documented within the Gold Butte Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The 350,000-acre area — located about 50 miles northeast of Las Vegas, between the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument and the Lake Mead

National Recreation Area — is comprised mostly of formally designated ACECs to protect desert tortoise and bighorn sheep.

But the Bureau of Land Management, which designated the Gold Butte ACEC in 1998, has not actively managed the area since the armed standoff between BLM and ranchers in early 2014 "due to safety and security concerns," the agency said in June.

"In the absence of a land management presence, Friends of Gold Butte has witnessed an increasing level of damage near historic and cultural sites as well as disturbance to sensitive desert areas that are habitat for threatened and endangered species," the report says.

The group argues the ongoing damage underscores the need for President Obama to use his authority to designate the area a national monument. Reid has also asked Obama to consider designating Gold Butte a national monument before he leaves office.

"We released this report because we think people need to know the threats to our natural and cultural resources in Gold Butte," said Jaina Moan, Friends of Gold Butte's executive director. "The need to protect Gold Butte is urgent. It needs and deserves a national monument designation."

Moan said Nevada residents for 15 years have been asking that elected officials "find a legislative solution to protect the nationally significant cultural, historic and natural treasures in Gold Butte."

Titus last year sponsored legislation to designate the 350,000-acre Gold Butte National Conservation

Area, designate a portion of those lands as wilderness, and establish a visitor center and field office in Mesquite, Nev. Reid sponsored a companion bill in the Senate.

The bills stalled last year in both Republican-led chambers.

Reid, who described the Gold Butte area as "stunning in its uniqueness," said at the Las Vegas ceremony that he will continue to push Obama to designate the area as a national monument.

"He knows how I feel about this," Reid said. "We're going to continue pushing this. It's going to happen."

The Friends of Gold Butte report hints that the area is a lawless expanse of federal land where people do as they please, much to the detriment of the region's natural resources.

Indeed, the 1,000 or so head of cattle from Bundy's 160-acre ranch in Bunkerville, Nev., are still roaming on federal land in and around the Gold Butte region.

Bundy is currently in jail facing federal felony charges for the 2014 standoff.

BLM has said it has no plans to round up the illegally grazing cattle as the agency works with the Justice Department on the Bundy legal matter.

But the group reports finding "22.5 miles of illegal trenching" used to connect water tanks and troughs across the area.

Construction of this watering network on federal land along the northern and western edges of the Virgin Mountains required the "use of heavy equipment to trench into virgin desert landscape," which the report says "destroys tortoise burrows and habitat" in the conservation area.

"In addition, rusted fuel tanks and large tires serve as water tanks and troughs and have created a trail of toxic, industrial trash across the desert," the

report says. That can be seen on Google Earth in one area, the report notes.

A cut fence designed to protect the Horse Spring has allowed "feral burros and cows" to trample the riparian vegetation, the report says. The fence cutting was intentional, it suggests, noting "a salt block has been placed" in the area "to encourage cattle."

At one location on Gold Butte Road near Juanita Springs, the livestock brand "VO" that is used by the Bundy Ranch was "painted on the asphalt." At least five information and direction signs in the area were painted with the "L-V" brand used by the Finicum Ranch.

Ongoing trouble

Today's damage report is the second in the last year; Friends of Gold Butte released the first damage report in August 2015.

That report found a large water tank, a trough and pipelines had been illegally installed in the area, apparently associated with Bundy's illegally grazing livestock (Greenwire, Aug. 19, 2015).

"More water tanks and troughs have been discovered," today's report says.

The second report comes just two months after BLM Director Neil Kornze toured the Gold Butte area for the first time since the 2014 standoff with armed ranchers led by Bundy (Greenwire, June 17).

Kornze wanted to "get a firsthand look" at the damage done by the illegal grazing and other activities, an agency spokesman said, and to assess what needs to be done to repair the lands.

Kornze and other BLM officials touring the area in June found that in addition to the illegal grazing, vandals have caused significant damage to the area, specifically to some of the region's red sandstone formations.

Much of the Whitney Pocket camping area, where Kornze hiked in June, "is littered with toilet paper

and human waste," according to the Friends of Gold Butte report.

Members of the group visiting Whitney Pocket also witnessed a camper dumping "black water with toilet paper from their [recreational vehicle] holding tanks before leaving camp; they also dumped what appears to be motor oil at their campsite."

The report also notes extensive damage to Cabin Canyon Corral — a large stock corral built by ranchers using closely spaced upright posts. Campers, according to the report, "have removed

most of the upright posts and used them for firewood, leaving little of the original corral."

At another site, the group found a "freshly chopped down" Joshua tree.

"This damage is egregious and ranges from persistent vehicle incursions into pristine habitat to vandalism to illegal trenching across 22 miles of desert to lay pipe for unauthorized water systems," Moan said. "Protection is the only way for us to truly address all of these issues."



Tribal Activists Push White House To Make Gold Butte A National Monument

Writer: Kirk Siegler

Published: August 18, 2016

RENEE MONTAGNE, HOST:

Today in Las Vegas, tribal leaders will join Nevada's senior senator, Harry Reid, in releasing their latest report tracking the widespread vandalism of ancient cultural artifacts on a piece of federal land there. NPR's Kirk Siegler reports the tribes are pressuring the Obama administration to permanently protect the area known as Gold Butte, a place they consider sacred.

KIRK SIEGLER, BYLINE: When rancher Cliven Bundy claimed his family of Mormon pioneers had ancestral rights to the land in Gold Butte, Nev., Vernon Lee scoffed.

VERNON LEE: As a native and as the tribe that actually had that land, you know, granted by the federal government back in the 1800s, he really doesn't got a right at all. If anybody's got a right, it would be the Moapa Band of Paiutes.

SIEGLER: Lee, a former tribal councilman, is sitting on a lawn chair in the shade of his mobile home on the Moapa River Reservation. An air conditioner hanging from a side window hums. He swats away flies as he recalls how the tribes' land once included all of Gold Butte but was later shrunk tenfold by the U.S. government. Today, the reservation is just this small sliver of desert north of Cliven Bundy's place and adjacent to a coal-fired power plant.

LEE: To be quite candid, I wish they would give it all back. But realistically, that probably won't happen.

SIEGLER: So the Southern Paiute tribes in Nevada are proposing another plan. Now that Bundy and his militia of followers are in jail, awaiting a federal conspiracy trial, they sense a small window of

opportunity before President Obama leaves office. They want him to designate Gold Butte as a national monument.

LEE: We want to protect the lands. We want to protect the animals. And we want our sacred sites protected. And right now, the best thing we can think of is to go on this side of this creation of a monument to get those protections.

SIEGLER: Now such a designation would be a bittersweet end to an especially rough few years for the tribes. After the armed standoff on the Bundy ranch, the federal government stopped managing Gold Butte entirely, due to safety concerns. Until recently, it was lawless. Bundy's cows are still trespassing. Kenny Anderson is cultural director for the Las Vegas Paiute tribe.

KENNY ANDERSON: We were out there a while back with a bunch of elders. There was a lot of cattle roaming this area, stomping on stuff. There was petroglyphs that they were walking on. There was cow patties everywhere, and I'm just, like, dang - what the heck?

SIEGLER: It's not just the cows that Anderson is concerned about. He shows me a thick stack of documents detailing evidence of people shooting bullets at petroglyphs and theft of ancient pottery and arrowheads. There are photos of off-road vehicle tracks cutting across plants his people have gathered for centuries.

ANDERSON: I don't know if it's because of they weren't told about things like this, or maybe they weren't concerned with what history is. It's a mystery.

SIEGLER: But the irony here is that the Bundy standoff may end up helping the tribes' cause. There's a lot more public attention being paid to these historical lands than in recent memory - and not just here in Nevada either.

There's a plan to transfer ownership of the National Bison Range to tribes in Montana. In Utah, five tribes that want to create a massive, jointly managed national monument have the ear of the Obama administration. National monument designations that bypass Congress are hugely controversial. Western historian Patty Limerick says it's not uncommon for a president to wait until the very last minute.

PATTY LIMERICK: Bill Clinton, I guess - and his secretary of interior, Bruce Babbitt - they had quite a realistic recognition that the Democrats were not going to be carrying Utah in the 1990s. And so they would go ahead with national monuments whether

or not the people of Utah thought that was a cool idea or not.

SIEGLER: Now in Nevada, in a presidential election year, the politics are even more sensitive.

LEE: (Unintelligible) Just go in - over the left.

SIEGLER: And you'll meet a lot of tribal activists, like Vernon Lee, who are still pretty pessimistic.

LEE: I can't help but think we're just playing political football. I don't think anybody wants to move and do anything for Indian country because it's not a popular thing to do, and it's all about the votes.

SIEGLER: Lee says, in Indian country, justice is slow to come, if it comes at all. Kirk Siegler, NPR News, Las Vegas.

<http://www.npr.org/2016/08/18/490449974/tribal-activists-push-white-house-to-make-gold-butte-a-national-monument>



Obama's environmental legacy: Some 24 national monuments

Writer: Kevin Freeking

Published: August 15, 2016

WASHINGTON - The race is on to win President Barack Obama's attention as he puts some final touches on his environmental legacy.

Conservation groups, American Indian tribes and federal lawmakers are urging his administration to preserve millions of acres as national monuments. Such a designation often prevents new drilling and mining on public lands, or the construction of new roads and utility lines.

The flurry of activity is creating enthusiasm — and tensions — in several parts of the country.

Efforts are underway in Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Maine and elsewhere to get Obama to designate new national monuments. Proponents aren't just focused on land. They're also looking to greater protections for vast swaths of ocean bottom off the coasts of New England, California and Hawaii.

Obama has created or expanded 24 national monuments during his seven-and-a-half-year tenure, the most of any president. Almost nobody thinks he's done yet. Environmental groups are urging him to go big as he leaves office.

"What he's done in terms of protection has been good, but what he does next is how we measure whether his legacy is great or not," said Sharon Buccino of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Proponents of the various monument proposals know that the next administration will have other immediate priorities. Some presidents, including Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, never exercised their powers to designate national monuments through the 1906 Antiquities Act. The proponents recognize the window of opportunity could be closing for several years.

They're also aware that Obama's immediate predecessors, Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, waited almost exclusively until their final months in office to designate national monuments, so there is a chance Obama will become even more active.

That's disconcerting for many members in Congress, particularly Republicans, who say the Antiquities Act wasn't designed to bolster a president's legacy.

"Presidents are starting to abuse this authority as they leave the office. If they actually tried to do this on the first day so that Congress had some ability to respond to it, and the people did, I'd be more comfortable about what their motives are," said GOP Rep. Rob Bishop of Utah, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Christy Goldfuss, managing director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, won't discuss specific national monument possibilities, but said Obama "certainly feels we have more to do to protect this planet from climate change, so we'll see how this plays out."

Bishop said lawmakers would work with the administration on additional protections for some public lands, but environmental groups and others are less willing to compromise knowing they can go to the president to get a national monument designation.

"It actually impedes the ability of bringing everyone together knowing the president has this power to

create a monument whenever he wants to,” Bishop said.

Goldfuss said the administration works to get extensive local feedback before making any monument determination. She and others such as Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack feed the president information, but in the end, it’s his decision.

“It is all about taking the long view here and recognizing there are things of importance to future generations, and the president is in a good spot to make that determination,” Goldfuss said.

Bishop’s state is home to perhaps the most talked about effort, the proposed Bears Ears National Monument.

Utah’s Republican-dominated Legislature overwhelming voted for a resolution opposing the monument. Republican Gov. Gary Herbert said a monument designation would bring more visitors

but not necessarily more resources, leading to an increase in vandalism and environmental degradation.

Bishop wants instead additional protections for about 1.4 million acres of the Bears Ears area and opening up other lands for gas and oil exploration and recreation.

Matt Keller, the national monuments campaign director for the Wilderness Society, said he believes the prospects for a monument designation in Bears Ears are promising. Jewell’s fact-finding trip to the region last month shows the administration is serious about protecting the thousands of artifacts and rock carvings documenting how Native Americans lived through the centuries.

“A big priority for them is protecting lands that are inclusive of diverse populations and tell the story of the American people a little more broadly,” Keller said.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/2016/08/16/obamas-environmental-legacy-national-monuments/88815464/>



Obama pressed to establish new national monuments in Nevada, elsewhere

Writer: Henry Brean

Published: August 15, 2016

WASHINGTON — The race is on to win President Barack Obama’s attention as he puts some final touches on his environmental legacy. Conservation groups, American Indian tribes and federal lawmakers are urging his administration to preserve millions of acres as national monuments, including an embattled swath of federal land in northeast Clark County known as Gold Butte.

Efforts also are underway in Utah, Arizona and elsewhere to get Obama to flex his presidential authority to set aside land under the 1906 Antiquities Act.

The flurry of activity is creating enthusiasm — and tensions — in several parts of the country.

Obama has created or expanded 24 national monuments during his seven-and-a-half-year tenure, the most of any president.

Twice he has acted to preserve land in Nevada. In December 2014, he signed into law a bill passed by Congress creating the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument on 22,650 acres at the northern edge of the Las Vegas Valley. In July 2015, he invoked the Antiquities Act to designate the Basin and Range National Monument on 704,000 acres in Lincoln and Nye counties.

Almost nobody thinks he’s done yet. Environmental groups are urging him to go big as he leaves office.

“What he’s done in terms of protection has been good, but what he does next is how we measure whether his legacy is great or not,” said Sharon Buccino of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Proponents of the various monument proposals worry that their window of opportunity could be closing for several years if not longer.

Some presidents, including Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, never exercised their powers to create national monuments. Obama’s immediate predecessors, Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, waited almost exclusively until their final months in office to designate monuments, so there is a chance Obama will become even more active.

That’s disconcerting for many members in Congress, particularly Republicans, who say the Antiquities Act wasn’t designed to bolster a president’s legacy.

“Presidents are starting to abuse this authority as they leave the office. If they actually tried to do this on the first day so that Congress had some ability to respond to it, and the people did, I’d be more comfortable about what their motives are,” said GOP Rep. Rob Bishop of Utah, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Christy Goldfuss, managing director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, won’t discuss specific national monument possibilities, but said Obama “certainly feels we have more to do to protect this planet from climate change, so we’ll see how this plays out.”

The proposed Gold Butte National Monument has its share of support, opposition and complication.

Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Dina Titus, both Nevada Democrats, back monument protection for the

remote, 350,000-acre landscape of desert plants, pastel-colored sandstone and ancient rock art. Republican members of Nevada's congressional delegation generally oppose the idea of restricting more land use in a state already under so much federal control.

Meanwhile, cattle belonging to jailed rancher Cliven Bundy still roam the Gold Butte area in defiance of three federal court orders and two failed attempts by the Bureau of Land Management to round up the animals.

Dispute also swirls around the proposed Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, where thousands of Native American artifacts and rock carvings recently prompted a fact-finding visit from Interior Secretary Sally Jewell.

The state's Republican-dominated Legislature overwhelmingly voted for a resolution opposing the monument. Republican Gov. Gary Herbert said a monument designation would bring more visitors but not necessarily more resources, leading to an increase in vandalism and environmental degradation.

Bishop instead wants additional protections for about 1.4 million acres of the Bears Ears area while opening up other lands for recreation and oil and gas exploration.

Review-Journal writer Henry Brean contributed to this report.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/nevada/obama-pressed-establish-new-national-monuments-nevada-elsewhere>



Gold Butte needs our protection

Writer: Terri Robertson

Published: August 13, 2016

My father, George Potter, would have been 114 years old on July 27. He was a miner, a hunter and an explorer and had a great love for the earth.

Thanks to him I have had a life rich in nature and the beauty of wilderness.

In the late 1960s, human beings began to use Red Rock as a home. Small groups began living in two spring areas. They created large trash piles and numerous fire rings, and used the rock landscape as a shooting gallery.

Thus began our family's efforts to save Dad's favorite places. Thanks to people like Mary Koslowski, Howard Booth, Jeff Zucker and Fred Noll, the Bureau of Land Management began the process to create the Red Rock Recreation Area. It was the only land designation available in 1970. Our community then worked to change the

designation from recreation area to national conservation area in the 1980s.

Through the years I have written many letters to the editor on land-preservation issues. I am hoping this will be the last one I have to write. All my dad's favorite places have received permanent land designation except Gold Butte.

I urge the creation of the Gold Butte National Monument. How wonderful it would be to visit my father's grave site next July 27 and know that our work was done.

Thank you to each and every one in the land-preservation community who heeded the call these past 60 years. Thank you to all who continue to work on Red Rock, Sloan Canyon and Tule Springs. May we begin 2017 grateful in the knowledge that another of our most beautiful of places will be known as Gold Butte National Monument.

<https://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/aug/13/gold-butte-needs-our-protection/>



Update on Gold Butte Provided by BLM

Writer: Mike McGeer

Published: August 12, 2016

Gayle Marrs-Smith, the Field Manager for the Las Vegas Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), was in Mesquite on Tuesday seeking cooperation for the return of BLM personnel to the Gold Butte Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) south of the city.

The BLM removed their personnel from the area for safety reasons in April 2014 after federal officials were met with armed resistance while enforcing a court order to remove illegally grazing cattle owned by Bunkerville cowboy Cliven Bundy.

This was not her first trip to Mesquite. On March 3, 2015, Ms. Marrs-Smith visited Mesquite to discuss the BLM Management Plan with the Mayor, City Council, and interested citizens. At that meeting, Cliven's sons, Ryan and Dave, harassed and threatened her and fellow BLM employee, Lee Kirk, during the council meeting.

Ryan Bundy told the council "the people will not allow the [Gold Butte] roads to be closed." He then turned to Ms. Marrs-Smith and Kirk, saying "take note of that. We have enjoyed a year of freedom since you have been gone. We want you to stay gone. Don't come back. Not for a while."

Brian (Boda) Cavalier, the self-designated bodyguard for Cliven Bundy, told the audience that he did not recognize those pushing the [BLM] plan. "If the BLM wants to go to the field to play ball, then my crew and I will come play ball too," he said.

Dave Bundy, another of Cliven's 14 children, said, "As a responsible citizen, it is my right, my duty to

oppose any such government and/or bureaucracy that attempts to impose rules that violate the liberties afforded me by the supreme law of the land and the constitution." He challenged elected officials to join him in opposing the government. He told elected individuals that as representatives of "we the People, you will do the same. I would like to encourage that you find the courage." [i],[ii]

On the same day, City Councilman Kraig Hafen asked his peers to revisit two previous resolutions supporting initiatives to make Gold Butte a National Conservation Area. [i] The council eventually voted to weaken the city's support for Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area with Wilderness [iii] and to allow unlimited vehicle traffic in the area of critical environmental concern. [iv]

Tuesday's briefing by Ms. Marrs-Smith and favorable comments by Jaina Moan, Friends of Gold Butte Executive Director, were respectfully considered without disruption or comment from the three members of the City Council Kraig Hafen, George Rapson and Cindi Delaney (on the phone). Two other council members, Geno Withelder and Rich Green, were absent.

Ms. Marrs-Smith discussed the role of the BLM in protecting the public health and safety, providing recreational opportunities and maybe most importantly fire management.

The BLM Field Manager reminded the mayor, council, and citizens that Gold Butte is at risk of a lightning strike igniting the non-native grasses in that fire-prone ecosystem and mentioned the BLM's role in fire management in the Gold Butte area.

Following the meeting, Ms. Marrs-Smith was asked about the status of Bundy's cattle.[v] She confirmed that the cattle were being sold by Bundy family members. I asked about the revenue from the sale as an offset to the debt owed by Bundy for years of illegal grazing. She said that the BLM has discussed the issued with the Nevada Brand Inspectors office.

According to Rebecca Allured, Public Information Officer, Administration Division | Nevada Department of Agriculture, "Revenue from the sale of Cliven Bundy's cattle would only revert to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) if a lien had been filed on the cattle. Our staff has shared this information with all parties involved, including the BLM, numerous times over the past four years. Per Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 564.110, cattle are considered personal property and are subject to liens."

"Regarding brand inspections," Ms. Allured said, "Nevada is a brand inspection state. Per NRS 565, we have a clearly defined role in the sale or transfer of livestock. However, per NRS 565.125 1.(a), the Bundy cattle that were gathered in 2014 by BLM were in trespass on the federal ground and were subject to the court order provided to the state of Nevada. Any cattle sold by the Bundy family since then were inspected on their private property and were not subject to the court order."

Nonetheless, Ms. Allured said "A lien (if filed) would require revenue from the sale of his cattle would go directly toward Bundy's debt, including to the BLM grazing fees. Filing a lien would be a straightforward step in this ongoing process." Ms. Marrs-Smith said that lien issue was in the hands of the Justice Department.

Endnotes:

[i] McGreer, Michael M., "Bundy's Harass, Threaten BLM Personnel," at: <http://letstalknevada.com/bundys-harass-threaten-blm-personnel/>

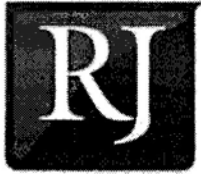
[ii] Today the father, sons Ryan and David Bundy, along with Brian (Boda) Cavalier have been indicted, and remain in jail, facing federal felony charges related to the April 14. Ryan, his brother Ammon, and Cavalier have also indicted on charges stemming from the 41-day armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County earlier this year. Cavalier has pled guilty to the Malheur charge but sits in jail to face the Nevada charges.

[iii] Hurd, Elaine, "Bye-Bye, BLM,": at: <http://letstalknevada.com/bye-bye-blm/>

[iv] Hurd, Elaine, #MesquiteNV City Council Votes To Weaken Support to #ProtectGoldButte at: <http://goo.gl/qEkxpL>

[v] McGreer, Michael M., (Welcome Back BLM). See comments about Bundy cattle at: <http://letstalknevada.com/welcome-back-blm/>

<http://letstalknevada.com/update-gold-butte-provided-blm/>



Jenna Morton: Looking for love in Las Vegas? Here is where you'll find it

Writer: Jenna Morton

Published: August 11, 2016

Editor's Note: After a glorious nearly month-long family vacation in the Italian and Sicilian countryside, Robin Leach is back and resuming his new daily columns today with a report of the mental health wellness clinic that singer Demi Lovato is hosting at MGM Grand Garden Arena before her Saturday night concert with Nick Jonas. We'll continue guest columnists in August while Robin works from the cooler climes of La Jolla near San Diego in advance of our newly designed website launching soon. On Friday in his debut Friday Neon column, Robin has a preview of the Magic Live! Convention here next week for 1,600 worldwide illusionists, conjurors, magicians and wizards. Today, one of the guest columns is by Las Vegas VIP socialite, philanthropist and restaurant czarina Jenna Morton, owner and co-founder of The Morton Group that runs Crush at MGM Grand, La Cave at Wynn Las Vegas and La Comida downtown. The other is by Branden Powers, who owns the "shrunken head" trademark The Golden Tiki in Chinatown. Here's Jenna ... looking for love?

Love is real. Love is not endangered or scarce, and it's self-generating. Las Vegas has a surplus. That's why this is the greatest place on the planet. I could tell when I first came here. This is a place where you can skip or twirl, and it's encouraged.

Heck, people will cheer or join in! But having stayed in Las Vegas to work and raise a family, the depth of that spirit is sustenance for the psyche. Looking for love in Las Vegas? Here is where you'll find it:

Electric Daisy Carnival last month was one big lovefest. It will be back, but that kind of energy lingers, so you might still be able to feel it. The knife sliding into a tender filet so that the flavor fills the nose before the first bite, that's love.

The laugh tumbling out of the mouth of The Gazillionaire at ABSINTHE is love. Lurking around the edges, in and through all of the Cirque du Soleil shows, especially LOVE, is love. When Teller rolls his eyes at Penn, that is a special kind of love.

When Britney Spears or J.Lo, Celine, Rod Stewart or every rock star who performs in Las Vegas

points to the sky, look up. It's love. Why do you think Carlos Santana chooses to live here? That one long note that draws you right into his guitar that won't let you go? That is love.

Nevada Ballet — the arabesque. In Red Rock Canyon at the top of Turtlehead Peak, when there is exactly one cloud in the sky, above the breathtaking view, it's there. In Basin and Range, Nevada's newest national monument, it's there, as free as the air that goes on forever out there, past Michael Heizer's City.

Ugo Rondinone's Seven Magic Mountains, bursting out of nowhere on Las Vegas Boulevard south of town, is love all stacked up. In Gold Butte, the art created by millennia naturally is love in essence. The imagined memories in the old neon signs lining Fremont Street downtown, love.

The Center, where people held hands in solidarity with the victims of the tragedy in Orlando. The After School All Stars Showcase at Springs Preserve, where ASAS children let it all hang out onstage and cheered for one another with abandon.

The Teaching Garden at the Springs Preserve. Social Cirkish giving the joy of Circus Arts to children. The plate of food that Three Square provides to a hungry girl. The siblings who stay together because of St. Jude's Ranch. Veteran's Village in the home they create. The job that For an Independent Tomorrow will find for the woman on her last dollar. Validation from The

Human Rights Campaign. An Opportunity Village scarf.

Make-a-Wish, of course. It's not a wish — it's love. Humans thrive where there is love. Las Vegas has a lot, and we are happy to share, so if you find some, take it with you and pass it on.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/robin-leach/jenna-morton-looking-love-las-vegas-here-where-you-ll-find-it>



LV Groups Celebrate Diversity And Land Conservation

Writer: Rachel Christiansen

Published: July 20, 2016

In Nevada, most of the entertainment centers around casinos and fancy restaurants. But, the vast amount of public lands surround the city presents the opportunity for a more rugged variation of entertainment. That is, for some.

As the National Park Service turns 100 this year, it has done some soul searching. As it turns out, more than 80 percent of all national parks visitors, volunteers and staff are white.

People have noticed this lack of diversity. The National Park Service now has a whole department dedicated to it.

Hilerie Patton is a former public information officer for the Bureau of Land Management.

She told KNPR's State of Nevada that sometimes natural resource agencies like the Park Service or the BLM look at the African-American community has a monolith.

"A lot of times when they're going to do a lot of outreach, it's what I call 'check the box,'" Patton said, "There will be the cases of we're just going to serve the underserved community of kids. Where there are a lot of people who have money to travel."

For example, she said reaching out to traditionally black fraternities and sororities to have them add conservation and public lands to their platforms would be a way to connect with a more diverse group of people within the African-American community.

<https://knpr.org/knpr/2016-07/lv-groups-celebrate-diversity-and-land-conservation>



Preserve our ecological treasures and ensure future generations can discover and enjoy them

Writer: Senator Harry Reid

Published: July 20, 2016

Nevada is known for its rich natural heritage. From Lake Tahoe, our treasured Jewel of the Sierras, to the mountains and high deserts of the east; the seas of sagebrush of the north to the red rock canyons of the south, Nevada is as beautiful as it is unique. Millions of Americans and visitors from all around the world come to Nevada to hike our mountain ranges, hunt and fish, and enjoy our stunning wild landscapes.

I can't think of a more perfect and peaceful place than the Nevada wilderness. I still remember how as a little boy growing up in Nevada, I would spend countless hours enjoying its picturesque landscapes and vast array of exotic wild life. These experiences fueled my determination to preserve our ecological treasures and ensure future generations can discover and enjoy their magnificence.

Over the past thirty years I have worked vigorously to protect areas that represent Nevada's stark beauty, culture and history. I have led efforts to: protect millions of acres of public lands for future generations; make our state a leader in renewable energy and close the toxic Reid-Gardner coal plant; protect and restore Pyramid Lake and Lake Tahoe; and conserve our state's limited water supplies. I have also secured hundreds of millions of dollars of

investments in clean energy, and for restoration and conservation projects in the Silver State.

Last year, I was honored to work with President Obama on his designation of Basin and Range National Monument in eastern Nevada. And while there is no guarantee that we will get this done, I have asked the President to build on the successful protection of the Basin and Range National Monument and use the Antiquities Act to preserve one of the most incredible, at risk places in our state: Gold Butte.

As Nevadans, it is our duty to protect the environment for future generations, and there is no better time to start than during Latino Conservation Week. We can do so by making simple changes in our daily lives – by recycling and saving electricity and protecting special outdoor places – but also, by demanding that our leaders in Congress take action against climate change.

I hope Latinos and all Nevadans will join me in my life-long effort to actively support commonsense policies that reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, promote clean energy choices, and protect our beautiful lands. We owe it to our children and grandchildren.

<http://noticias.entravisision.com/las-vegas/2016/07/20/debemos-preservar-nuestros-tesoros-ecologicos-y-asegurar-que-futuras-generaciones-puedan-disfrutarla-harry-reid/>



Latino Conservation Week Celebrations Ongoing in Nevada

Writer: Suzanne Potter
Published: July 20, 2016

LAKE MEAD, Nev. — This week is Latino Conservation Week – and local groups are putting on half a dozen events to draw more people to the outdoors. The Hispanic Access Foundation, the Sierra Club, Conservation Land Foundation and Chispa are helping organize different events in Nevada. On Saturday, teenagers from the Centro de Adoracion Familiar, part of a Las Vegas-area church, will be pulling invasive tamarisk trees from Lake Mead National Recreation Area, and then going on a float trip in Black Canyon.

Church organizer Cristina Espinosa said the Colorado River, which feeds into Lake Mead, is part of Nevada's cultural heritage.

"It's important to have everybody go out the park, each new generation to go out in nature," Espinosa said. "God has created everything and I think it's really important for us to take care of it."

Water levels at Lake Mead are dangerously low and water may have to be rationed in future years. This is the third year Latino Conservation Week has been celebrated nationally, with more than 100 groups

working to inspire children to become environmental stewards.

Chelsea Kennedy with the Lake Mead National Recreation Area said they're always happy to teach kids about this special place.

"Las Vegas has a huge Latino community, and it's probably one of our most underserved communities. And a lot have never been out here," Kennedy said. "A lot of it is transportation issues. So by doing this we're providing them the transportation and the opportunity to get out and actually see the areas."

The other events this week include a visit to Gold Butte tonight, and a float trip at Clark County Wetlands Park on Saturday.

"For way too long the environmental movement has not been diverse," said Christian Gerlach with the Sierra Club. "The environment belongs to absolutely every single human being. Latino Conservation Week is the platform to engage Latino youth in conservation."

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/2016-07-20/environment/latino-conservation-week-celebrations-ongoing-in-nevada/a53092-1>



Gold Butte should get designation

Guest Writer: Alan O'Neill

Published: Tuesday, July 19, 2016

I have been involved with conservation work professionally for 50 years, including 34 years with the National Park Service, 10 years as executive director of the Outside Las Vegas Foundation and six years as a private consultant. This work has allowed me to experience some of this country's most significant natural and cultural heritage sites.

We have an incredible resource in our backyard: Gold Butte. A 350,000-acre scenic wonderland, Gold Butte is truly one of this country's most beautiful and culturally diverse landscapes. Visitors are treated to such sights as native desert wildlife, brilliantly colored and sculptured sandstone formations, slot canyons, Joshua Tree and Mojave Yucca forests, sinkholes, ancient petroglyphs and fantastic formations such as the Virgin Mountains,

Tramp Ridge and Lime Ridge. The area is a desert lover's paradise and is rich in history. Native Americans have been connected to Gold Butte for more than 3,000 years. The area is scattered with artifacts and ancient writings telling the stories of their past. The unfragmented habitat of the region provides an important connection to the adjacent protected areas of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area and Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument.

Gold Butte needs protection commensurate to the significant values found here. Therefore, I am hopeful President Barack Obama will designate this as a national monument under the provisions of the Antiquities Act of 1906.

<http://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/jul/19/gold-butte-should-get-designation/>



One View: Obama must act to protect Nevada's Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Dr. Bonnie Eberhardt

Published: July 15, 2016

Nevada has a deep history of using our desert landscapes for development purposes. Austin, where I live, is considered a "living ghost town" with our well-preserved mining history from the 1860s. About 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas, the area "Gold Butte" is named for a ghost town where miners prospected for gold, mica, magnesite, copper and zinc in the early 1900s.

Today, Nevada's economy is more diverse, with agriculture playing a valuable role in addition to mining and tourism. I am with the Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, and we connect grass-roots promoters of sustainable agriculture in the West to each other and to the nation. For example, WSAWG works with ranchers who respect indigenous rights and who recognize that some federal lands are not suitable for grazing.

Some have said that protecting our public lands is bad for ranching. I support using public lands to graze cattle if the cows stay out of sensitive areas, don't damage the land, and are able to find enough to eat to stay healthy. The recently designated Basin and Range National Monument protects grazing rights; however, grazing is not appropriate in a place like Gold Butte. Generally, cattle are just fine to be left to graze across the West without having regular human contact; I have friends who let their cattle roam and don't know exactly where they are at all times. What concerns me though is that the cows roaming illegally on Gold Butte are scrounging for food and water. Gold Butte's landscape just is not suited to support a herd of cows. And that leaves the herds struggling and less productive.

What also concerns me deeply is the vulnerability of Gold Butte's Native American artifacts. In April, members of Nevada's Paiute tribes embarked on a "culture walk" through Gold Butte. They found petroglyphs peppered with bullet holes and ancient burial and campsite artifacts destroyed or stolen.

In order to safeguard Gold Butte's unique cultural history, the area needs to be permanently protected as a national monument. Such a designation would help preserve archaeological resources dating back at least 3,000 years, including rock art, caves, and campsites. Creating a national monument will also help the public learn about Gold Butte's more recent history, including pioneer mining camps dating back to the 1700s. Without protection, Gold Butte is left vulnerable to vandalism and unregulated tourism.

Like Republican and Democratic presidents before him, President Obama has the authority through the Antiquities Act to designate existing federal lands as national monuments. Using the Antiquities Act to protect Native American history can help us right a wrong that took place in 1876 when the federal government removed 1 million acres from the territory of the Moapa Band of Paiute Indians. Since Congress is not making progress these days, I hope President Obama protects Gold Butte before he leaves office, so that this valuable portion of Nevada's history is protected. A May poll of Nevadans from both sides of the political aisle shows that I'm not alone — 71 percent support designating Gold Butte as a national monument.

Across the West, agricultural providers of equipment, supplies and services benefit from public lands. Some portions must be provided

permanent protection for future generations and to maintain our agricultural heritage and rural lifestyle. Gold Butte in Nevada is one such place.

<http://www.rgj.com/story/opinion/voices/2016/07/14/one-view-obama-must-act-protect-nevadas-gold-butte/87101268/>



Welcome Back BLM

Guest Writer: Geoffrey Frasz, PhD
Submitted: June 26, 2016

I am pleased to read in the RJ that BLM staff will be returning to the Gold Butte area in the very near future. This return comes not a moment too soon since there has been an uptick in vandalism and destruction in this beautiful wild area. Hiking with friends there on Monday I could see evidence of bullet holes in the kiosk at the start of the Gold Butte Scenic Byway and then, as we wandered further into the area we saw more bullet holes on some of the petroglyph sites.

I hope the presence of more BLM staff will help decrease the terrible damage that unfortunately

continues to increase. Nevertheless, hostility for the important work done by the BLM staff continues to grow. The proposed legislation co-authored by Reps. Amodei and Hardy, as reported in the media, would strip the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service of their law enforcement powers at a time when BLM staff are at risk and often outgunned. The article in the RJ of the attempt by a Utah man to bomb a BLM cabin in the Arizona Strip not far from Gold Butte underscores the need to continue BLM presence, including law enforcement. Gold Butte is a marvelous place of fragile beauty that is under assault and I welcome the BLM back to it.



'Experience the joy'

Guest Writer: Byron George

Published: June 25, 2016

I read Haven Scott's story, "preservation groups rejoice in Gold Butte". Indeed!

My wife and I retired from Oregon and chose Mesquite because of the many recreational opportunities. We have lived here for nearly nine years.

Early on we were delighted to discover Gold Butte, its beauty and solitude. We did so for many years until the BLM was made unwelcome on our own public lands. They were pushed out by a few

extremists that wanted to claim the land as their own. These radical extremists left garbage in their wake along with vandalism to Native American art panels, bullet holes, off-road damage, illegal watering stations, and at least one chopped down Joshua tree.

We are grateful for the return of the BLM to Gold Butte! We are hopeful that this area can again return to normalcy, so that, all Americans can experience the joy of this special place.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/2016/06/25/experience-joy/86336818/>



BLM to resume operations in Gold Butte 2 years after Bundy standoff

Writer: Julie Applegate

Published: June 21, 2016

BUNKERVILLE, Nev. – The Bureau of Land Management is planning to resume work in the Gold Butte region in northeastern Clark County, Nevada, after two years of absence.

BLM employees have not been working in the field in Gold Butte since early 2014 because of safety concerns following an armed standoff with Cliven Bundy and others which triggered serious safety concerns for the BLM workers.

Cliven Bundy is now in jail along with several others on federal charges relating to the 2014 standoff near Bunkerville, Nevada.

Cliven Bundy's sons Ammon and Ryan Bundy and others are facing charges for the armed takeover of a national wildlife refuge in Oregon in 2016 in which Robert LaVoy Finicum was shot and killed.

Court documents accuse Cliven Bundy and others of leading more than 200 followers into an armed confrontation in Nevada that forced federal Bureau of Land Management agents and contract cowboys to abandon an effort to corral and remove Bundy cattle from federal lands where he was accused of letting them graze for decades without paying federal fees.

Read more: [More Bundys indicted along with 11 others for 2014 standoff](#)

Whitney Pockets in the Gold Butte region, Jan. 3, 2016 | Photo courtesy of Don Mirjanian, St. George News.

BLM officials have now determined that the conditions are right to resume work, a press statement said. BLM archaeologists, law

enforcement officers, and local agency leadership have all visited the area over the past month.

BLM Director Neil Kornze and BLM Nevada State Director John Ruhs toured Gold Butte last week, along with a Clark County commissioner and a captain of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

“We had an excellent visit to Gold Butte and we’ll be increasing our presence there in the months ahead,” Kornze said in the statement.

“This area is a real treasure. We look forward to working with our local partners to restart the many important efforts we had underway.”

Now that BLM Southern Nevada District Office employees will be getting back in the field in Gold Butte, they will be assessing damage to cultural heritage sites, repairing communications infrastructure, working with Clark County on road maintenance and establishing a route numbering system, the statement said.

The Gold Butte region is home to world-renowned rock art and other cultural sites and provides important habitat for desert tortoise and other species. The area is also popular with hikers, campers and others interested in exploring the area’s unique geology.

Kornze and others visited the Whitney Pockets area, which is popular with visitors who come to hike and view the unique geological features, rock art and other cultural resources.

Some of the area’s famous red sandstone formations have been impacted by vandals, the statement said,

and a large Joshua tree has been illegally cut down and left onsite.

The group found evidence that cattle have trampled and overgrazed certain areas; a complete assessment of the condition of the Gold Butte region will take time.

The Gold Butte region is designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, or ACEC; vehicles are limited to designated routes.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Friends of Gold Butte and the Nevada Wilderness Coalition have proposed permanent protection as a national monument for the 350,000-acre Gold Butte region.

The conservation groups believe the move would conserve wildlife habitat, historic and prehistoric resources, scenery, exploration and discovery that enhance the heritage and tourism economy of southern Nevada.

<https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2016/06/21/jla-blm-to-resume-operations-in-gold-butte-2-years-after-bundy-standoff/#.V21-jvkrLX4>

THE INDEPENDENT

— *A voice for Utah* —

BLM returns to work in Gold Butte

Writer: Staff Writer

Published: June 21, 2016

The Bureau of Land Management is moving forward with plans to resume work in southern Nevada's Gold Butte region. The Gold Butte area is an important habitat for desert tortoises and other species and is home to rock art and other ancient cultural sites. The region is also a popular destination for recreation enthusiasts who enjoy hiking, camping, and exploring the area's unique geology.

Due to safety and security concerns, BLM employees have not conducted field work in the Gold Butte area in northeastern Clark County since early 2014. With the support of the local community, BLM officials have determined that the conditions are now right to resume work. BLM archaeologists, law enforcement officers, and local agency leadership have all visited the area over the past month.

BLM Director Neil Kornze and BLM Nevada State Director John Ruhs toured Gold Butte yesterday along with Clark County Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick and Captain James LaRochelle of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

"We had an excellent visit to Gold Butte and we'll be increasing our presence there in the months ahead," Director Kornze said. "This area is a real treasure. We look forward to working with our local partners to restart the many important efforts we had underway."

The group visited the Whitney Pockets area, which is popular with visitors who come to hike and view the singular geologic features, rock art, and other cultural resources. Some of the area's famous red sandstone formations have been impacted by vandals. Nearby, a large Joshua tree had been

illegally cut down and left onsite. There was also evidence that cattle have trampled and overgrazed certain areas. The group also explored the famed Falling Man petroglyph site as part of their tour of the broader area. Time will be needed to make a complete assessment of the condition of the Gold Butte region.

Kornze praised the BLM Southern Nevada District Office staff for their patience while field work was suspended and for their ongoing collaboration with local partners to plan and develop projects focused on the restoration of key areas and the protection of ancient rock art sites and other irreplaceable cultural resources.

Some of the immediate project work that is envisioned includes assessing the damage to cultural heritage sites, partnering with the National Park Service on critical repairs to communications infrastructure, coordinating with Clark County on road maintenance, and establishing a route numbering system on designated roads to help visitors map their location and destinations. The BLM will continue to collaborate with nearby communities to develop plans for future projects that address the spread of noxious weeds and reducing the potential threat of wildland fire through hazardous fuels reduction projects.

"BLM employees in southern Nevada have been hard at work developing restoration plans for some of Gold Butte's extraordinary resources," said BLM Nevada State Director John Ruhs. "We look forward to continuing this important work with our partners and creating a positive future for this incredible area."

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The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate

throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In fiscal year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.

<http://suindependent.com/blm-gold-butte/>



Writer: AP staff writer
Published: June 20, 2016

LAS VEGAS (AP) — More than two years after an armed standoff with rancher Cliven Bundy prompted a pullout of researchers from Gold Butte, federal land managers are returning to the scenic, historic and ecologically fragile area.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management says work is resuming toward opening the area across the Virgin River from the Bundy ranch for hiking, camping and geological and archaeological exploration.

It says agency national chief Neil Kornze and state director John Ruhs toured the area last week with a Clark County commissioner and a Las Vegas police captain.

Bundy's lawyer is deriding the effort as misplaced.

Bundy doesn't recognize federal jurisdiction in the area where he's accused of illegally grazing cattle.

His attorney, Joel Hansen, maintains that the state owns Gold Butte, not the federal government.

<http://mynews4.com/news/local/2-years-after-bundy-standoff-blm-returns-to-gold-butte-area>



With Cliven Bundy In Jail, BLM Moves To Reassert Authority Over Disputed Land

Writer: Aluren Fox

Published: June 20, 2016

The federal Bureau of Land Management has announced it plans to return to work, clean up and access the Gold Butte region near Cliven Bundy's Nevada ranch for the first time since Bundy and his brigade led a standoff against BLM officials in 2014.

Bundy – who stopped paying federal grazing fees on the land near his ranch more than two decades ago– had become an icon for anti-government extremists with his outspoken denouncement of the federal government. His declaration against federal officials in 2014 and refusal to stop grazing his cattle on the federal land attracted armed anti-government types to face off against federal authorities in 2014.

With Bundy and his four sons behind bars and awaiting trial related to the 2014 standoff as well as the Oregon Malheur Refuge standoff from earlier this year, BLM officials will finally move in to work on Gold Butte, according to a report flagged by the Salt Lake Tribune.

"Due to safety and security concerns, BLM employees have not conducted field work in the Gold Butte area in northeastern Clark County since early 2014. With the support of the local community, BLM officials have determined that the conditions are now right to resume work," a release from the agency stated. "BLM archaeologists, law enforcement officers, and local agency leadership have all visited the area over the past month."

The 2014 Wild West-style standoff was a flash point in the fight between anti-government types and the BLM that had raged for decades. The standoff brought together hundreds of Bundy sympathizers after federal officials attempted to round up hundreds of Bundy's cattle that were grazing illegally. Bundy was able to rally armed supporters and ultimately federal officials backed down.

The list of to-dos for the BLM include "assessing the damage to cultural heritage sites," which may have been damaged after the standoff or related illegal grazing in the area. The BLM will also be "partnering with the National Park Service on critical repairs to communications infrastructure" and conducting road maintenance.

In recent days, BLM Director Neil Kornze and staff accessed a section of Gold Butte and reported some vandalism on red sandstone formations as well as the removal of "a large Joshua tree" that "had been illegally cut down and left onsite."

"There was also evidence that cattle have trampled and overgrazed certain areas," the BLM director reported in the press release.

Senate Minority Leader Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) has made preserving the Gold Butte area a major priority, lobbying hard for the Obama administration to make the area a national landmark, which would further protect the area.

<http://talkingpointsmemo.com/dc/blm-to-return-to-site-of-nevada-standoff--2>



2 years after Bundy standoff, federal land managers return

Writer: Ken Ritter

Published: June 20, 2016

LAS VEGAS — More than two years after an armed standoff with followers of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy prompted a pullout of researchers from Gold Butte, federal land managers are returning to the scenic, historic and ecologically fragile area.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management said work is resuming toward opening the area across the Virgin River from the Bundy ranch for hiking, camping and geological and archaeological exploration.

"Very limited work continued after April 2014," bureau spokesman Craig Leff said Monday. "Then, in the summer of 2015, the BLM fully suspended work in the Gold Butte region after multiple gun shots were fired in the vicinity of student contractors."

No one was injured in the June 2015 shooting near researchers from the Reno-based nonprofit Great Basin Institute. They had been monitoring water seeps and springs in the area about 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas. They reported the gunfire came at night, after they were first approached by two men who asked what they were doing.

Agency national chief Neil Kornze and state director John Ruhs toured parts of the area last week with a Clark County commissioner and a Las Vegas police captain, cataloging apparent vandalism and damage during stops at the scenic Whitney Pockets sandstone formation and the archaeologically significant Falling Man rock art site, according to the BLM.

Nevada Sen. Harry Reid wants federal lawmakers to designate almost 550 square miles of the remote land northeast of Lake Mead as the Gold Butte National Conservation Area.

<http://www.wral.com/2-years-after-bundy-standoff-blm-returns-to-gold-butte-area/15793361/#y8LmDGJ1c5ZISfYg.99>

The return by federal officials to the area comes months after Bundy, four of his sons and 14 other men were arrested on federal charges in the gunpoint standoff that stopped government agents from rounding up cattle on public land. All 19 men remain jailed, with trial scheduled in February. Each has pleaded not guilty to various conspiracy, obstruction, weapon, threat and assault charges.

Bundy doesn't recognize federal jurisdiction in the area where he's accused of failing to pay more than \$1.1 million in fees and penalties while illegally allowing his cows to roam.

His lawyer, Joel Hansen, said the BLM has no authority in Gold Butte. He suggested that boundary shifts after Nevada became a state in 1864 left the federal government with no legal claim in the area where Bundy is accused of trespassing.

"The Bundys are in full support of preserving the archaeological treasures of the Gold Butte area," Hansen said. "However, that work should be undertaken by the state of Nevada. The state of Nevada owns Gold Butte, not the BLM."

Hansen also blamed federal land policies for problems including invasive weeds and wildfires, and alleged that designating the area as critical habitat for the endangered desert tortoise and other plant and animal species is a Reid effort to please political backers.

The BLM said agency efforts will include projects to address the spread of noxious weeds and to reduce the threat of wildfire. Plans also include road maintenance, communication line repairs and the establishment of a route numbering system to help visitors find their way around.



Preservation groups rejoice in Gold Butte

Writer: Scott Haven

Published: June 18, 2016

It's been two years since the Bureau of Land Management suspended work in the artifact-rich region of Gold Butte in Nevada.

That drought has ended.

A recent tour of Gold Butte by BLM Director Neil Kronze, BLM Nevada Director John Ruhs, Clark County Commissioner Marilyn Fitzpatrick and Capt. James LaRoche of the Las Vegas Metro Police Department was followed by a news release stating restoration and preservation efforts in the area will be restored.

"Due to safety concerns, BLM employees have not conducted field work in the Gold Butte area since early 2014," according to the release. "With the support of the local community, BLM officials have determined that the conditions are now right to resume work."

The area is rich in Native American petroglyph and archaeology sites, as well as early pioneer ruins.

Gold Butte is also home to the threatened desert tortoise and desert bighorn sheep herds, among other species.

Many people in the United States had never heard of Gold Butte until the April 2014 standoff between BLM officials and Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy.

One year later, BLM contractors claimed to be camping in the area for study when shots were allegedly fired toward their camp — Bundy denied any involvement in a 2015 interview with The Desert Valley Times.

Since the departure of BLM presence in the Gold Butte area, Friends of Gold Butte, a nonprofit volunteer organization, has documented several acts of vandalism in the area that covers nearly 350,000 acres in the southeastern part of Nevada.

From petroglyphs pockmarked with bullet holes, early pioneer grave robbing and "pristine desert being destroyed," the acts of vandalism increased dramatically, said Jaina Moan, executive director of Friends of Gold Butte.

"For us, we are ecstatic," she said. "We appreciate the BLM and everything they do to protect the land, archaeology and wildlife in this rare part of the world. This was definitely needed."

On Thursday, national and state officials toured the Whitney Pockets area known for peculiar geological figures and rock art, according to BLM officials.

"Some of the area's famous red sandstone formations have been impacted by vandals," according to the release. "Nearby, a large Joshua tree had been illegally cut down and left onsite. There was also evidence that cattle have trampled and overgrazed certain areas."

Kronze praised local staff and volunteers for their patience and said the focus will now be placed on monitoring and protection of ancient petroglyphs and other irreplaceable cultural resources.

Ruhs said it's a day his employees have been looking forward to for a while now.

"BLM employees in southern Nevada have been hard at work developing restoration plans for some of Gold Butte's extraordinary resources," he said.

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“We look forward to continuing this important work with our partners and creating a positive future for this incredible area.”

And those “partners” vow to be in the thick of restoration efforts wherever the BLM may need them.

“We will be there picking up trash, replacing signage if needed, hauling off junk — wherever they need us,” Moan said. “The BLM helps the Friends of Gold Butte as much as we help them. We are just excited to help preserve these great assets for future hikers and outdoor enthusiasts.”

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/cedar-city/2016/06/18/preservation-groups-rejoice-gold-butte/86087882/>



BLM returning staff to Gold Butte after 2014 standoff with Bundy family

Writer: Henry Brean and Kimber Laux

Published: June 17, 2016

Two years after its hasty retreat from the Gold Butte area, the federal government is moving back into the remote corner of northeastern Clark County for the first time since its confrontation with the Bundy family in 2014.

BLM spokesman Craig Leff said Friday that the BLM's decision to return came after Southern Nevada residents said they wanted the agency back out there managing the resources.

"Our local folks had been having meetings with local representatives and the community," Leff said. "It was time."

BLM employees have not conducted field work in the Gold Butte area, 110 miles northeast of Las Vegas, since early 2014 "due to safety and security concerns," BLM officials wrote in a release Friday.

Those concerns stemmed from the armed standoff with Cliven Bundy, his sons and their supporters, including militia and patriot groups that had gathered on the family's Bunkerville ranch in April 2014.

BLM Director Neil Kornze and the agency's state director, John Ruhs, toured Gold Butte on Thursday with Clark County Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick and Metro Capt. James LaRochelle. The visit was not announced until after it occurred.

BLM archaeologists, law enforcement officers and local BLM officials have also visited the area in the past month, the BLM wrote in the release.

The BLM plans to increase its presence at Gold Butte in the coming months.

"This area is a real treasure," Kornze said in Friday's statement. "We look forward to working with our local partners to restart the many important efforts we had underway."

Those efforts include assessing the damage to cultural heritage sites, repairing communications infrastructure, maintaining roads and establishing route signs to help guide visitors. They also plan to work with nearby communities to address the spread of weeds and reduce the threat of wildfires.

Conservationists are happy to see the BLM back on the job in Gold Butte.

The area has suffered a great deal of damage from vandals and off-road vehicles since 2014, according to the Friends of Gold Butte, a local nonprofit group whose members monitor the area and advocate on its behalf.

"People creating their own roads by driving into the pristine desert habitat is a huge problem," said Jaina Moan, the group's executive director. "We're excited to partner with (the BLM) on the stewardship of the land."

"It's about time," said Rob Mrowka, a senior scientist for the Tucson, Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity. "I think the BLM fears were overblown once the militia left. It's going to be good to have the sheriff back in town out there."

Mrowka's organization is part of a coalition of nine environmental groups that have called on the BLM to finish what it started two years ago: the roundup and removal of Bundy's cattle from public land as ordered by a federal judge.

But Mrowka said he is willing to “leave talk of a roundup” for another day. “I would be satisfied if they just did their normal protect-the-resource job,” he said.

A year ago, Cliven Bundy told the Review-Journal that things were pleasantly quiet in the Gold Butte area without federal workers around. “We’ve gotten along just fine without the BLM,” he said. “We’re done with them, and we’re not going to let them come back.”

Today Bundy finds himself in federal custody awaiting trial on charges in connection with the 2014 standoff.

Though BLM officials did not cite it as a reason, their return to Gold Butte comes four months after Bundy was indicted with four of his adult sons and 14 others.

Bundy’s wife, Carol, who continues to oversee the ranch while her family members await trial, could not be reached for comment Friday.

Some have speculated that the increased federal presence could be a precursor to another government cattle roundup, a presidential

declaration establishing Gold Butte as a national monument, or both.

Advocates have called for permanent protection of the remote, 350,000-acre expanse, which is filled with ancient rock art, sweeping desert vistas and twisted pastel-colored sandstone formations.

Nevada’s congressional delegation remains divided on the proposed monument, so Sen. Harry Reid has been pressing President Barack Obama to protect Gold Butte using his authority under the Antiquities Act.

Reid plans to continue that push until he and Obama leave office, said Kristen Orthman, spokeswoman for the Democratic senator from Searchlight.

Moan, Mrowka and other advocates see the next six months as their best — if not last — chance to win monument protection for Gold Butte.

But Moan sees no connection between that campaign and the BLM’s announcement on Friday.

“It was always their plan to return,” she said of bureau officials. “They’re just doing their job.”

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/politics/government/blm-returning-staff-gold-butte-after-2014-standoff-bundy-family>



BLM chided tours possible monument area where Bundy cows roam

Writer: Scott Streater
Published: June 17, 2016

The head of the Bureau of Land Management yesterday visited an area of federal land in Nevada for the first time since a tense standoff with armed ranchers two years ago blocked the agency from removing Cliven Bundy's illegally grazing livestock there.

BLM Director Neil Kornze yesterday visited the Gold Butte area to "get a firsthand look" at the damage done by the illegal grazing and other activities, an agency spokesman said, and to assess what needs to be done to repair the lands.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) has asked President Obama to consider designating Gold Butte a national monument.

The 1,000 or so head of cattle from Bundy's 160-acre ranch in Bunkerville, Nev., are still roaming on federal land in and around the Gold Butte region, but Bundy is in jail facing federal felony charges for the 2014 standoff.

BLM has not actively managed the area northeast of Las Vegas since the standoff "due to safety and security concerns," the agency said today in a statement.

Kornze hiked yesterday in the Whitney Pockets area with BLM Nevada State Director John Ruhs, Clark County Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick and Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Capt. James LaRochelle.

"We had an excellent visit to Gold Butte and we'll be increasing our presence there in the months ahead," Kornze said today in a statement. "This area is a real treasure. We look forward to working with

our local partners to restart the many important efforts we had underway."

In addition to the illegal grazing, the agency says vandals have caused significant damage to the area, which includes world-renowned rock art and other ancient cultural sites, and is a popular destination for hiking, camping and exploring.

Specifically, vandals harmed some of the area's red sandstone formations, though BLM did not detail the extent or type of damage.

BLM has estimated that the Bundy cattle trampled sensitive soils, devoured native saplings and bedded down against Native American artifacts (Greenwire, Feb. 26). One of Bundy's bulls attacked a Nevada wildlife official, while others have run roughshod over a community garden and a golf course (Greenwire, April 11).

While Kornze toured the site to survey the damage, a BLM spokesman said there are no plans to round up the illegally grazing cattle as the agency "continues to cooperate with the Department of Justice on the ongoing legal matters related to the Bunkerville situation."

A coalition of green groups last month urged Kornze to direct the agency to round up Bundy's trespassing cattle now that Bundy and his sons are behind bars (E&ENews PM, May 9).

In the last month, BLM archaeologists and officials with the agency's state office, as well as law enforcement officers, have visited the area, the agency said.

Meanwhile, Reid has said the illegally grazing cattle have thwarted his legislative proposal to designate a Gold Butte National Conservation Area.

It's not clear whether a national conservation area designation through congressional action or a monument designation by Obama under the Antiquities Act would require restoration work to be completed.

BLM said it plans to partner with the National Park Service on critical repairs to communications infrastructure, as well as coordinate with Clark County on road maintenance.

The bureau will continue collaborating with the nearby communities to develop plans for future projects that address the spread of noxious and invasive weeds, as well as reduce the potential threat of wildland fire through hazardous fuels reduction projects, the agency said.

"BLM employees in southern Nevada have been hard at work developing restoration plans for some of Gold Butte's extraordinary resources," Ruhs said in a statement. "We look forward to continuing this important work with our partners and creating a positive future for this incredible area."

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NV Conservation Advocates in D.C. to Urge Protection of Ancient Sites

Writer: Suzanne Potter
Published: June 15, 2016

RENO, Nev. -- The petroglyphs at Gold Butte and in three northern Nevada counties must be protected because they are priceless works of art, according to one argument Silver State conservation advocates are making this week in Washington, D.C. They're part of a large contingent traveling to the nation's capital in an effort organized by the nonprofit Pew Charitable Trusts.

Tygel Pinto, a Navajo musician and artist, would like to see Gold Butte, Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon near Mesquite, declared a national monument. He said the move would benefit all Nevadans, not just the Paiute people.

"This is part of your history as well," he said. "To take away history itself is for you not to fully understand where you come from. It affects all of us. Not just one type of peoples. It hurts all of us."

Pinto said the famous red-rock formations at Gold Butte are threatened by illegal cattle grazing and some of the rock art has been shot at and scratched

off by vandals. Supporters are hoping President Obama will issue an executive order to declare a national monument there before he leaves office.

Diana Miranda, whose family has owned Bertha Miranda's Mexican Restaurant in Reno for decades, is going on the trip to push for wilderness designation for parts of Douglas, Washoe and Pershing counties, saying they are the backbone of the local outdoor economy.

"My perspective is unique," she said. "I serve families that come in before they go on a trip out into the desert, and then after they come back. I always get to hear these great stories of what they saw, where they went with their family."

A bill has been introduced to give permanent wilderness designation to the Burbank Canyons Wilderness Study Area in western Nevada's Pine Nut Range. The Douglas County Conservation Act is online at govtrack.us.

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/2016-06-15/public-lands-wilderness/nv-conservation-advocates-in-d-c-to-urge-protection-of-ancient-sites/a52334-1>



Now is the time to protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Jocelyn Torres
Published: June 10, 2016

For many years Southern Nevadans, like Fawn Douglas and myself, have worked with Representative Dina Titus in an effort to protect Gold Butte. Through the years, those efforts have been stalled in Congress, but the destruction of what Rep. Titus called a “gateway to one of the most beautiful, serene spots in the Mojave Desert” has persisted.

While on a hike in late April, I saw the chopped down Joshua tree Senator Harry Reid mentioned on the Senate floor. It was a sad sight surrounded by so much beauty in a popular campsite. Joshua trees take decades to grow to maturity and are resilient despite the harsh conditions they grow in. It will take at least 50 years before a Joshua tree of similar height replaces it.

Unfortunately, the chopped down tree wasn't the only damage we saw. In the popular Falling Man site, we saw stick figures carved into a rock that was covered by petroglyphs left by those who called the site home. The damage to the petroglyphs was especially troublesome because unlike the tree, which can be replanted, damage to petroglyphs is difficult and in some instances impossible to repair.

Seeing damage like this really highlights the need to protect our piece of the Grand Canyon sooner rather than later. That is why I applaud Representative Titus for her efforts to protect Gold Butte via legislation and her call on President Obama to protect Gold Butte. We cannot continue to wait, the time truly is now.

<https://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/jun/10/now-is-the-time-to-protect-gold-butte/>



Protect our piece of Grand Canyon Ecosystem

Guest Writer: Heather Witt

Submitted: June 2, 2016

Over Memorial Day weekend, Representative Dina Titus wrote about the need to protect Gold Butte in “Please join in effort to protect our piece of Grand Canyon ecosystem.” As a local teacher and native Nevadan, I’m grateful that Rep. Titus is asking congress to protect this amazing piece of our state. Everyday more and more acres of the pristine west are lost to development and degradation. As I think about how our city has grown and the lessons I want to teach my students about the value of ecosystems and biodiversity, about the history of our state and its people, I can't help but worry that soon these

special wild places will no longer exist to provide an opportunity for scientific or cultural exploration.

The geology, wildlife, cultural history and beauty are worth preserving not only as an outdoor classroom, but as a sacred refuge and peaceful retreat. Common sense rules must be put into place to ensure Gold Butte will be enjoyed by future generations. I agree with Rep. Titus that Congress should move forward with legislation to designate it a National Conservation Area. If unwilling to do so, President Obama needs to proclaim it a National Monument to ensure its lasting protection.



Poll: Nevada voters support solar energy, preservation of public lands

Writers: Megan Messerly and Daniel Rothberg
Published: June 2, 2016

Across the political spectrum, Nevada voters generally support renewable energy, taxing mining companies and preserving public lands while taking a collaborative approach with the federal government on land-use issues, according to a poll released on Wednesday.

The survey, prepared for the Center for Western Priorities, a nonpartisan conservation organization, asked 700 likely voters in the November election their opinions on an array of issues that affect land rights, the environment, energy policy and economic development.

The issues have drawn significant attention amid the February arrest of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy in connection with a 2014 armed standoff over grazing rights and a regulatory decision in December that prompted several solar companies to cease sales in the state. With the election looming, such actions have placed issues involving public land and renewables in the spotlight.

The poll's respondents were relatively split between Republicans and Democrats, with a slight lean toward Democrats. The poll, conducted by Purple Strategies in May, has a 3.7 percent margin of error.

Here are some highlights from the poll:

Land rights and Bundy

The issue of public lands has long divided Nevadans, traditionally along political lines. Typically, Democrats tend to favor keeping Nevada's public lands in the hands of the federal government, while Republicans support transferring oversight of them over to state agencies.

To that end, the poll asked respondents whether they would prefer a Democratic candidate who "believes recreation and renewable energy should be priorities on our public lands" or a Republican candidate who supports selling public lands to close the budget deficit and "(prioritizes) the development of public lands to help grow our economy." Fifty-five percent of respondents chose the Democrat, while 29 percent favored the Republican.

The poll also delved into attitudes toward Bundy and his supporters in light of the 2014 standoff, summarizing the positions of Bundy's supporters and opponents and then asking respondents for their take. Fifty-one percent of respondents said they disagreed with Bundy while 33 percent agreed with him. Still, more than half of Republican voters tended to agree with Bundy, while independent voters and Democrats tended to disagree. About three-fourths of respondents said Nevada should prioritize collaboration with the federal government over public lands issues rather than engage in all-out conflict.

Land use for recreation

Meanwhile, less than half of respondents had a favorable impression of the Bureau of Land Management, which oversees the vast majority of federal lands in Nevada and was the main agency on the other end of the Bundy standoff.

However, 84 percent of them expressed positive views of the National Park Service, which has purview over Lake Mead, Great Basin National Park and Tule Springs Fossil Beds.

The Grand Canyon National Park, Lake Tahoe, and Red Rock Canyon were the three most important public land sites in the state, according to respondents. Tule Springs, the newest national park, came in last with only 28 percent of respondents saying it was very important to the state's economy and cultural heritage.

The poll also showed support among both Democrats and Republicans for designating Gold Butte as a national monument, though there was stronger support among Democrats — 78 percent of them supported the designation compared to 59 percent of Republicans.

Some of the top priorities for public land use included preserving access to the lands for outdoor recreation, expanding the state's outdoor tourism economy, and protecting wildlife.

Solar and renewables

The poll found that Nevada voters appear to support renewable development.

A majority of respondents — 66 percent — had a favorable view of solar energy companies. After the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada approved rates that increased bills for rooftop solar customers, national companies like SolarCity and Sunrun halted their operations here. In the wake of the decision in December, those companies have worked to undo the rates with a vocal public campaign, lawsuits and a proposed ballot measure.

The poll found that Nevada voters have a poor opinion of the utilities commission that crafted those rates. Only 35 percent of respondents had a favorable opinion of the commission. Oil companies and coal companies also had favorable ratings hovering just below 40 percent.

Western states should prioritize solar over the next decade, a majority of respondents said. Only 21

percent said natural gas, which comprises most of Nevada's energy supply, should be a priority. When asked how public land could best be used to spur the state's economy, a plurality of respondents — 43 percent — chose increasing renewable development projects.

Regardless of their politics, respondents said they would support pro-renewable candidates. A majority of Democrats, Republicans and independents said they would be more likely to support a candidate who favored investment in renewables and supported policies that would effectively restart the rooftop solar industry.

Oil and mining

About half of respondents said they would be more likely to support a candidate who favored increased oil drilling and mining on public lands — provided proper environmental protections were in place — while a quarter said they would be less likely. A majority of respondents also favored mining companies having to pay extra fees and taxes for extracting minerals on public lands.

Questions on mining on public lands and mining taxes typically enjoyed more support from Republican respondents than Democratic ones.

Yucca Mountain

Nevadans still, by and large, don't want nuclear waste stored at Yucca Mountain. Fifty-five percent of respondents said they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who supported storing waste at Yucca.

On the other hand, 19 percent said storing waste at Yucca would make no difference in their vote. Democrats expressed more support for blocking waste storage at Yucca than Republicans did, though Republicans still tended to favor blocking storage over allowing it.

<https://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/jun/02/poll-nevada-voters-back-solar-energy-public-lands/>



Poll shows Nevadans favor balanced approach to public land issues

Writer: Sandra Chereb
Published: June 2, 2016

CARSON CITY — Nevadans love their open space and public lands, favor renewable energy and are less likely to vote for a candidate who supported Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy in his 2014 standoff with federal authorities.

Those were the findings of a poll released Wednesday by the Center for Western Priorities, a nonpartisan conservation and advocacy group. The survey found Nevadans overwhelmingly agree public land issues use should be prioritized collaboratively rather than through conflict with the federal government.

“With each election cycle we’ve seen the growing influence of states like Nevada, Montana and Colorado in national elections,” Jennifer Rokala, director of the center, said in a conference call with reporters.

“Voters in these states and throughout the region care deeply about access to the outdoors and public lands,” she said.

“Regardless of political party, voters in Nevada ... favor balance and pragmatism and reject the extreme public lands agenda of Cliven Bundy and his supporters,” Rokala said.

Bundy and armed supporters confronted the Bureau of Land Management and law enforcement when agents moved to confiscate his cattle in April 2014 over unpaid grazing fees. The BLM later abandoned the roundup over fears of violence. Bundy, four of his sons and 14 others are under federal indictment on standoff-related charges.

The telephone survey of 700 likely Nevada voters was conducted May 2-5 by Purple Strategies, a national research firm. The survey has a margin of error of 3.7 percentage points.

Brian Gottlieb, the firm’s managing director, said 57 percent of those surveyed disagreed with a statement that Nevada has too much public land, while 31 percent agreed.

Forty-six percent disagree with the rancher and his supporters, based on what they’ve heard, while 34 percent agree and 20 percent said they don’t know. Negative responses rose to 51 percent when the question was asked after explanations of the dispute over public lands and the role of the federal government.

Additionally, 71 percent support national monument status for Clark County’s Gold Butte, with 11 percent opposed.

Other key findings show:

- Nevadans, by a 74 percent to 12 percent margin, are more likely to support candidates who encourage development of solar, geothermal and wind energy on public lands.
- Respondents favor continuing mining and oil and gas drilling on public lands, 55 percent to 24 percent, but with added environmental protections. Additionally, they are less likely to support candidates who propose prohibiting energy development on public lands.
- Nevadans are evenly split when asked if they are more or less likely to support a candidate espousing

opening of wilderness areas to motorized vehicles, though Republicans, by a margin of 45 percent to 34 percent, view the idea more favorably.

■ Half of all respondents are less likely to support someone who proposed selling off public lands to reduce the national deficit.

■ Voters, regardless of party, were more likely to vote for a candidate who espoused blocking the storage of nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain by an overall margin of 51 percent to 23 percent.

<http://m.reviewjournal.com/politics/elections/poll-shows-nevadans-favor-balanced-approach-public-lands-issues>



Surprise! Nevadans Prefer #ProtectNV Over #BundyRanch Extremism

Writer: Andrew Davey
Published: June 2, 2016

This week, the Center for Western Priorities & Purple Strategies released a new poll of Nevada voters that sheds some light on the years worth of political spin we've endured. For all the hype over how popular Cliven Bundy's "Range War" is in "libertarian Nevada", the actual numbers paint a very different picture.

How different, you ask? Let's examine these new numbers below the fold.

The new research shows that Nevadans are widely supportive of the state's public lands, that they want to see their public lands heritage protected, and that they are opposed to selling of public lands. A few key findings include:

- Nevadans are frequent visitors to the state's open spaces, with nearly 9 in 10 visiting public lands in the state at least once last year.
- While some have proposed selling off national public lands, Nevadans are not supportive of this idea—in fact, 50 percent of Nevadans are less likely to support a candidate who proposes selling off public lands to reduce the budget deficit.
- By a nearly two-to-one margin, voters overwhelmingly rejected the idea that there are too many public lands in Nevada.
- 72 percent of Nevadans support protecting the red sandstone canyons and cultural heritage sites in the Gold Butte region as a national monument.

The coveted "split ticket voters," those that vote for candidates of both parties, in particular supported balanced policies to increase recreation access and

protections for public lands. For example, 54 percent of split ticket voters preferred a Democratic candidate seeking to promote recreation and renewable energy on public lands, compared to 27 percent that preferred a Republican candidate who supports selling some public lands and opposes new national monuments.

This is just a part of the extensive survey conducted by Purple Strategies last month. It reveals to us how much Nevadans across the political spectrum value public lands. In addition, this proves policies like permanent protection for Gold Butte are anything but "controversial" among most Nevada voters, regardless of what Senator Dean Heller (R) and Reps. Joe Heck (R-Henderson) & Crescent Hardy (R-Bunkerville) spin to the media.

The poll also highlighted public lands issues that do not move Nevada voters. Only 19 percent of Nevada voters were more likely to support a candidate who supported Cliven Bundy and his cause. Further, after hearing more about Cliven Bundy's actions, all groups of Nevada voters, including Republicans and independents, were more likely to disagree with his agenda. In contrast to Cliven Bundy and his family's agenda, the poll found a strong majority of voters (72 percent) support collaborating on public lands issues over conflict with the federal government.

While the poll only tested "Generic Democrat v. Generic Republican", it still provides some useful information about what turns on Nevada voters. In a trial heat of "generally moderate Democrat with 'balanced' land management approach" versus "Ted Cruz/Rand Paul like hard-core, anti-government, pro-Bundy Republican", the moderate Democrat

beats the hard-right Republican 55%-29%. What's perhaps even more fascinating is the trial heat of "progressive #KeepItInTheGround climate hawk Democrat" versus "more moderate Brian Sandoval style Republican", where the progressive Democrat beats the not-so-hard-right Republican 46%-39%. This in and of itself shows environmental justice is anything but a "losing issue".

On the issues themselves, Nevadans seem to care about good environmental stewardship. Nevadans overwhelmingly support increased investment in

renewable energy, restoring policies that encourage more rooftop solar, and a permanent ban on storing nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain. Most Nevadans oppose Cliven Bundy's "Range War" against the rule of law, and they only oppose the #BundyRanch agenda even more when they learn more about it.

So why are climate action & public lands protection still considered "controversial" in certain parts... Or should I say, in a certain political party? Think about it.

<http://letstalknevada.com/surprise-nevadans-prefer-protectnv-bundyranch-extremism/>



Nev. voters at peace with size of federal estate -- poll

Writer: Jennifer Yachnin

Published: June 1, 2016

Criticizing the size of the federal estate might not prove a good way to sway Nevada voters in November, according to a new study that finds a majority of the Silver State's residents don't believe the state is home to "too much" public land.

The poll, conducted for the Center for Western Priorities, found that 57 percent of Nevadans disagree that "there is too much public land in Nevada," while only 31 percent of those polled supported the assessment.

The survey likewise found overwhelming support for designating a new 350,000-acre national monument at Gold Butte in the southern part of the state, with 71 percent of those polled endorsing the proposal.

The conservation group released the findings today as part of a survey of 700 Nevada voters that focused on public lands and land management, as well as energy development.

"In Nevada, we found that voters understand public lands are important to the state's economy and that the natural beauty and recreation opportunities help define a way of life in Nevada," said CWP Executive Director Jennifer Rokala.

In recent years, federal ownership of Western lands has drawn attention due to incidents like Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy's April 2014 armed standoff with the Bureau of Land Management. Bundy refused to pay grazing fees, and the BLM had sought to confiscate his trespassing cattle.

The federal government owns about 60 million acres in Nevada, or 85 percent of the state's landmass.

The survey also found that among the 83 percent of those polled who were at least somewhat familiar with Bundy's activities, nearly half disagreed with his actions.

The survey found 46 percent said they disagreed with Bundy and his supporters, while 34 percent endorsed the Nevada rancher, who is currently in prison awaiting a February 2017 trial (E&ENews PM, May 25). An additional 20 percent of those polled did not agree or disagree with Bundy's stance.

"Regardless of political party, we're finding that voters in Nevada and across the West favor balance and pragmatism and reject the extreme anti-public lands agenda of Cliven Bundy and his supporters," Rokala said.

The survey also found voters supporting renewable energy development, including wind, geothermal and solar energy, in the state. Seventy-three percent of those polled said they would be more likely to support a candidate who endorsed that position, while 10 percent said they would be less likely to do so.

Similarly, 49 percent of those polled said they would be more likely to support a candidate who endorsed an increase in domestic oil and gas development, while 26 percent said they would be less likely to vote for that candidate.

Voters also endorsed candidates who vowed to block the storage of nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, with 51 percent stating they would be more likely to support a candidate who opposed the

site and 23 percent saying they would be less likely to vote for that candidate.

The survey marks the second in CWP's Winning the West campaign. It released a similar survey about Colorado voters in February (Greenwire, Feb 25).



Kudos to Congresswoman Titus

Guest Writer: John Hiatt

Submitted: June 1, 2016

Kudos to Congresswoman Dina Titus for her op-ed piece on Gold Butte (May 29, 2016) and legislative efforts to protect this area of outstanding natural and cultural history here in Clark County.

As one who has advocated for a permanent level of increased protection for Gold Butte for more than two decades I am optimistic that we will see either Congressional designation as a National Conservation Area (NCA) or National Monument designation by Executive action before years end.



We cannot continue to wait

Guest Writer: Jocelyn Torres

Submitted: June 1, 2016

For many years Southern Nevadans, like Fawn Douglas and myself, have worked with Representative Dina Titus in an effort to protect Gold Butte. Through the years, those efforts have been stalled in Congress, but the destruction of what Rep. Titus called a “gateway to one of the most beautiful, serene spots in the Mojave Desert” has persisted.

While on a hike in late April, I saw the chopped down Joshua tree Senator Harry Reid mentioned on the Senate floor. It was a sad sight surrounded by so much beauty in a popular campsite. Joshua trees take decades to grow to maturity and are resilient despite the harsh conditions they grow in. It will take at least 50 years before a Joshua tree of similar height replaces it.

Unfortunately, the chopped down tree wasn't the only damage we saw. In the popular Falling Man site, we saw stick figures carved into a rock that was covered by petroglyphs left by those who called the site home. The damage to the petroglyphs was especially troublesome because unlike the tree, which can be replanted, damage to petroglyphs is difficult and in some instances impossible to repair.

Seeing damage like this really highlights the need to protect our piece of the Grand Canyon sooner rather than later. That is why I applaud Representative Titus for her efforts to protect Gold Butte via legislation and her call on President Obama to protect Gold Butte. We cannot continue to wait, the time truly is now.



It is our responsibility to protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Sabreena Hassim

Submitted: June 1, 2016

I visited the proposed monument a few weeks ago and was amazed by the beauty and tranquility within. Representative Dina Titus is right we have a lot to gain from protecting the 350,000 acres that make Gold Butte.

During my trip, I was only able to see a glimpse of what's out there. In Whitney Pockets, I got to sit on a dam, one of the remaining structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corp. While in Falling Man, I spent an afternoon attempting to interpret what the

petroglyphs that decorate the red rocks meant. Before I knew it, the sunset had caught up to us and it was time to head home.

There is so much more in Gold Butte that I haven't explored, and I'm thankful that leaders like Rep. Titus are working to keep it amazing. Together we must prevent Gold Butte from being completely trashed. It is our responsibility to protect Gold Butte and all its treasures, and we can do that by designating it as a National Monument.



Please join in effort to protect our piece of Grand Canyon ecosystem

Guest Writer: Congresswomen DinaTitus

Published: May 29, 2016

The graffiti, trash and bullet holes at Gold Butte have a way of spoiling a getaway to one of the most beautiful, serene spots in the Mojave Desert. Illegal cattle grazing there threatens native wildlife, including bighorn sheep, desert tortoises, coyotes, foxes and endangered birds and plants.

While many visitors just come away disheartened, for Fawn Douglas, the tally of damage is a call to action.

Douglas is a member of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, whose heritage is inextricably linked to the area its members know as Mah'ha ga doo, or "land of many bushes."

Douglas' great-great-grandfather was born within the present-day boundaries of Gold Butte, a 1 1/2-hour car drive northeast of Las Vegas, along the Arizona border south of Mesquite. Stories about the area have been passed down from generation to generation.

Today, Douglas often slips away to Gold Butte to escape the noise and pressure of city life in Las Vegas and to connect with nature. She also has devoted considerable time and effort to raising awareness about what is at stake if we do not protect this land. She often takes students to the site and organizes cultural activities there. On each trip, she picks up trash along the roads and trails.

She hopes that in the near future, this incredible landscape will be free of garbage, graffiti, tire tracks and cattle.

For years, I have shared Fawn Douglas' vision of Gold Butte and tried to make it a reality.

Accordingly, I have worked with federal agencies, local tribes, conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts to protect the area from further damage.

Many people do not realize Gold Butte is an extension of the Grand Canyon's greater ecosystem. If the injustices at Gold Butte were to occur at the national park, there would be public outrage.

As a community, we must treat our piece of the Grand Canyon just as they do in Arizona.

We have a lot to gain from protecting Gold Butte's 350,000 acres. The 170 million-year-old fossil tracts, 12,000-year-old petroglyphs, striking geology and wildlife are all artifacts that Americans can respectfully embrace and enjoy for generations to come.

Protecting the area would also provide economic benefits for Nevada.

Some studies suggest that new protections would provide an additional \$2.7 million to \$3 million to our state while improving the quality of life in nearby communities along the Nevada-Arizona border.

Douglas and groups like Friends of Gold Butte are leading the charge to educate the public on this issue, repair damage at the site and lobby government officials to ensure something happens soon. Now is the time for all of us to join forces so the Bureau of Land Management, which administers the site as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, has the tools it needs to safeguard this precious piece of the planet.

FOR COMMITTEE USE ONLY

Toward that end, I am urging you to join me in calling on Congress to pass my bill to establish Gold Butte as a National Conservation Area. Barring that, let us implore President Barack Obama to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to set aside this land as a national monument.

Until that happens, Gold Butte's visitors will continue to see trash on the roadways, all-terrain

vehicles destroying archaeological and historic sites, graffiti defacing ancient rock formations, and cattle illegally running rampant over environmentally sensitive areas.

I do not believe that is how we want to leave this natural treasure of Nevada for our children and our children's children.

<https://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/may/29/please-join-in-effort-to-protect-our-piece-of-gran/>

Social Media Tracking March 28th - May 19th

https://storify.com/GoldButteNV/livemonumental-and-protectgoldbutte

Real-time Tracker: #ProtectGoldButte

Date Range

Mar 28 - May 19

1,804

posts

312

users

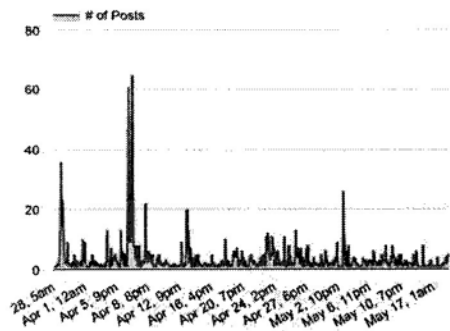
1,230,842

reach

4,536,024

impressions

Timeline



Top Posts

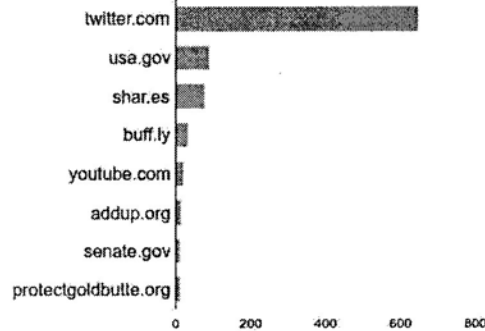
RTs/Likes Klout Recent

Tip: Click on a post's date to be taken to original post

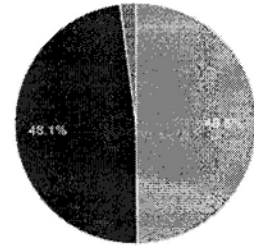
- KEEN** @keen May 9 **612**
Gold butte is at the end of the rainbow.
#livemonumental #roadtrip #publiclands
#protectgoldbutte
- Sea to Summit** @seasummitgear Apr 4 **299**
The campaign to @protectgoldbutte is one of many conservation projects we support through our The @conservationalliance membership. The proposed 350,000-acre Gold Butte National Monument would protect...
- The Conservation Alliance** Apr 19 **175**
@conservationalliance
The proposed 350,000-acre Gold Butte National Monument would protect rich archaeological treasures and outstanding backcountry recreational opportunities in Southeast Nevada. Gold Butte is

Top Sites

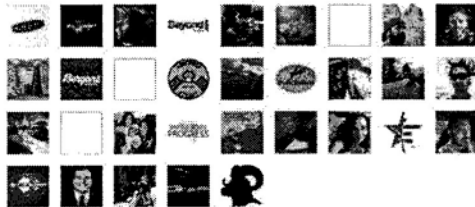
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Gold Butte National Monument Campaign Takes a Big Step

Guest Writer: Shevawn Von Tobel

Published: May 19th, 2016

The southern Nevada campaign to gain permanent protection for Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon, Gold Butte, hit an important milestone last month. Nevada's Gold Butte champion, Senator Harry Reid, made an impressive speech on the Senate floor calling on President Obama to declare Gold Butte as a National Monument. The Senator also pointed out the extensive damage that has been occurring in the area such as graffiti of petroglyphs, destruction of Joshua trees, and construction of illegal developments and ended his speech with the poignant quote, "When we preserve our lands, we preserve America."

Senator Harry Reid also pointed to the tremendous impacts protected public lands have on local and state economies. He highlighted a recent study done by the Small Business Majority which looked at ten of the twenty-two National Monuments President Obama has designated. The ten monuments studied in the report have a total economic impact of \$156 million per year, drive approximately \$58 million in labor income per year, and support approximately

1,820 jobs annually. It is no wonder then that more and more local businesses in southern Nevada are also calling on President Obama for protection of Gold Butte – they understand that protecting Nevada's public lands means protecting Nevada's economy.

Senator Reid has made big conservation gains in his thirty years in office – designating 69 wilderness areas (3.4 million acres), three National Conservation Areas, one National Park, and, his most recent achievement, Basin and Range National Monument. The Gold Butte National Monument will make for a valuable addition to the Senator's conservation legacy. This new chapter of the Gold Butte campaign would not be possible without the tremendous support of the Conservation Alliance and its outdoor business members. We'd like to especially thank Conservation Alliance member, KEEN Footwear, for amplifying the Gold Butte message to a national level through their innovative Live Monumental campaign.

<http://www.conservationalliance.com/gold-butte-national-monument-campaign-takes-big-step/>



Indian Country
TODAY MEDIA NETWORK.com

Southern Paiutes 11-Mile Culture Walk to Protect Gold Butte

Writer: Jacelle Ramon-Sauberan

Published: May 10, 2016

In celebration of Earth Day, Southern Paiute activists from Moapa and Las Vegas hosted an 11-mile culture walk into Gold Butte in an annual attempt to spread awareness about the need to establish a National Monument for Gold Butte, a sacred area to the Southern Paiute people.

Over 100 people participated in a cultural walk to Gold Butte, Nevada which is 15 miles northeast of Las Vegas and 60 miles from the Moapa Band of Paiutes Reservation. In the early 1900's Gold Butte became a mining town but today it is long abandoned and visitors come to the area for recreational purposes.

However, according to tribal residents, visitors have been desecrating the area.

"It is such a beautiful place and people are over-running it," said Annette Magnus-Marquart, Executive Director of Battle Born Progress who helped promote the cultural walk. "People are making their own trails, cutting down Joshua trees, shooting things that shouldn't be shot at like petroglyphs and stealing them."

"We want to keep on spreading the word as much as we can," said Fawn Douglas, a tribal member of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe and one of the event organizers. "I think people need to speak up, tell their stories, tell why it (Gold Butte) is special and, why it needs to be protected."

Gold Butte is a sacred site to the Southern Paiute Tribes due to the petroglyphs, rock shelters, large roasting pots, middens of charcoal, pieces of pottery, discarded stone tools and Mojave Desert Tortoises.

Gold Butte was once part of the Moapa Band of Paiutes Reservation which in 1874 consisted of two million acres. However, in 1876 it was reduced to a thousand acres. In December 1980, under Jimmy Carter's Administration, an additional 70,000 acres were provided and today their total land base is 71,954 acres, according to Moapa Paiutes' website.

There has been an on-going effort for about 10 years to get Gold Butte protected. Douglas and William Anderson, former chairman of the Moapa Band of Paiutes have started helping with the movement to let the Native voice be heard.

Douglas, Williams and three other individuals came up with the idea to have the cultural walk to Gold Butte. In previous years Anderson has organized other cultural walks but this was the first to Gold Butte.

The walk was 11.5 miles long and there were 66 individuals who made the trek while others were bussed into Gold Butte. There was also a group of Maori people from New Zealand who came to the cultural walk to show their support.

"To me it was a huge success to have all different tribes represented including the Maori," Anderson said. "I thought it was so cool they showed up, it was very unexpected. Also, the Friends of Gold Butte, Sierra Club and people who have been following our story came to see how they can show us support which was great."

The walk started with a morning prayer before people were taken to the starting location and they began their walk. Individuals carried their tribal flags and Koda Anderson who is a Shivwits Tribal youth member was the only child to carry a flag

start to finish, according to Douglas. Douglas also carried her tribal flag for about nine miles before her daughter Sol Martinez took over.

Once everyone came together at the end of the walk, there were Indian Tacos served, round dancing and Chemehuevi Bird Singers sang for everyone. There were also elders who shared stories.

“There was an elder who told us about a Paiute that was born at Gold Butte and from start to finish there were positive energy,” Douglas said.

Douglas, Anderson and Magnus-Marquar all want to make sure Gold Butte will continue to be here for future generations.

“It is our land, it is all Native land,” Anderson said. “It is up to us to let the politicians, the President and people understand that.”

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/05/10/southern-paiutes-11-mile-culture-walk-protect-gold-butte-164439>



**BATTLE BORN
PROGRESS**

Walking to protect Gold Butte: A family tradition

Writer: Sol Martinez

Published: May 7, 2016

On April 23, my mother Fawn helped organize an 11-mile culture walk in Gold Butte to celebrate Earth Day, and raise awareness of the need to protect this amazing area.

I woke up that morning only expecting to help cook. I had volunteered with my friend Chad who was preparing Indian tacos for the event. After making the frybread dough, meat, and vegetables, we left Las Vegas to make the 80-mile drive to the area where people were going to be gathering at the end of the walk. After getting off the I-15 and driving several miles into Gold Butte, I saw my mom walking, carrying the flag of our Las Vegas Paiute Tribe. She had been carrying the flag for several hours over almost 9 miles. I could tell the flag was weighing heavy on her shoulders, and I wanted to help.

It was neat to be able to take the responsibility of holding the flag of my tribe. I walked the last two miles alongside my mother while carrying our flag.

After crossing the finish line, I rushed over to the frybread station to help prepare lunch for the walkers and attendees. It was especially nice to cook for the people who did the entire 11-mile walk; they deserved a reward for participating in this important event.

While we were serving food to the attendees, traditional singers from the Chemehuevi Tribe started to perform. I spotted my grandmother getting up to dance to the music. Soon my mother and several other elders were up and doing traditional dances to the music.

Our ancestors also danced and sang in Gold Butte.

Even though I was too busy serving food to dance myself, my mother has taught me those dances, too. Gold Butte was once home to the Paiute people, and it has lots of cultural artifacts, petroglyphs, and sacred areas.

This event was important because it got people walking out in nature, and away from the city. Being able to see the petroglyphs and learning what we can do to protect our culture is crucial. Just like my mother and grandmother taught me, I hope to be able to help educate the next generation of our Southern Paiute people these traditions of our culture.

Just like with our songs and dances, we need to protect Gold Butte to help pass this unique part of our culture on to the next generation.

<http://battlebornprogress.org/walking-to-protect-gold-butte-a-family-tradition/>



Heller misguided on Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Barbara Hartzell, Henderson

Published: May 6, 2016

“I want to take this opportunity to underscore that while nearly everyone agrees Gold Butte is a natural treasure, there are strong differences of opinion among Nevadans on the conservation policies best suited to ensure future generations can camp, hike, hunt, and enjoy the cultural resources in the region.”
— Sen. Dean Heller

Is Sen. Heller stating that the future generations of the tribes here in Nevada are not best suited to decide if the petroglyphs should be preserved so that others may continue to enjoy the cultural resources of Gold Butte?

As a Native American enrolled in the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe and a direct descendant of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, I find this statement insulting and degrading. While Sen. Heller personally may

see no reason to protect the petroglyphs of Gold Butte, I, as a child of mass genocide, forced removal to reservations, boarding schools and assimilation, just to name a few, find the need to preserve what little we have left of the Native American culture that survived to be of the utmost importance.

Seeing bullet holes and phalluses drawn onto these beautiful drawings etched into stone by the indigenous people of the area is disgraceful. These art pieces cannot be preserved in a museum, and once they are destroyed they will be nonexistent forever, and that is unacceptable.

The difference of opinion here is that the voices of Nevadans are not important to the very senator who represents us and our state.

<http://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/may/06/heller-misguided-on-on-gold-butte/>



Get out and enjoy avoiding the Ironman

Writer: Jud Burkett

Published: May 6, 2016

As the sun rises over Sand Hollow Reservoir Saturday morning the first wave of triathletes will wade into water, the gun will go off, and the St. George Ironman 70.3 will begin.

Wave after wave, hundreds of athletes will swim, bike and run for hours as the day wears on.

For many Southern Utahns, the resulting traffic congestion will have us wishing we'd been smart enough to get out of town and head for the hills rather than attempt to make our way through the traffic nightmare

Alas, I will be covering the Ironman and will be right in the thick of the congestion. However, I thought I'd offer a few suggestions of places to go, sights to see and hikes to enjoy that are a little further afield and perhaps help others enjoy the day far away from a crowded downtown St. George this Saturday.

While state Route 9 will be narrowed to two lanes for the Ironman, the interstate won't be impacted at all. That means two fantastic places that lie to the north and south of us on Interstate 15 offer fantastic opportunities to escape the crowds.

To the north, there's hiking to be found in the Kolob Canyons of Zion National Park, and at Kanarrville Falls but a little-known and fairly challenging hike to the top of Valentine Peak in Parowan would be at the top of my list of places to go.

I wrote about the hike in detail just a few weeks ago and you can find the story online at thespectrum.com. It's not a trek I would recommend for the faint-hearted hiker but if you're

up for the challenge of climbing a few thousand feet vertically while hiking three and a half miles each way, Valentine Peak offers some amazing views.

If Parowan is too much of a drive, Robert Schuyler, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania who completed an archaeological survey of Silver Reef in 1985, will be leading a lecture and walking tour of the ghost town Saturday at 10 a.m.

The Museum at Silver Reef is always a fascinating place to visit and with Schuyler there to add to the wealth of knowledge available at the site, it would make a wonderful way to spend the morning. For information, call the Museum at Silver Reef at 435-879-2254.

To the south on I-15, Gold Butte beckons. Just off of the Bunkerville exit on the other side of Mesquite, there are petroglyphs, hiking and solitude to be found in abundance.

I wrote about hiking among the petroglyphs in Gold Butte recently as well, and there are plenty of other resources available online, including the Friends of Gold Butte's website at friendsofgoldbutte.org if you decide that's the direction you'd like to plan your escape.

Alternatively, you could head a little further south and check out the ruins of St. Thomas or Valley of Fire State Park.

St. Thomas was a Mormon settlement that was flooded by the waters of Lake Mead until recent droughts left the reservoir's water levels low enough to expose the town site.

Nevada's Valley of Fire is an amazing park filled with blazing red sandstone formations very similar to those found in Snow Canyon State Park. The major difference between the two state parks this Saturday will be that Snow Canyon will have hundreds of triathletes riding their bikes though the park.

Another state park in Nevada, Cathedral Gorge, lies west of Beryl Junction and offers yet another spectacular place to escape the Ironman crowds. The gorge is filled with sedimentary spires, caves and other formations created by wind and water over millions of years. If you can manage to get past the road closures on state Route 18 on Saturday, an exploration of Cathedral Gorge and the surrounding historic towns of Southern Nevada like Pioche and Panaca is worth the drive.

If you really want to escape and roam even farther afield, you can always head for the north rim of the Grand Canyon or head out beyond that and go to

Page. Take a ride on the tour boat at Lake Powell and hike to Rainbow Bridge National Monument; take a guided tour of Antelope Canyon; enjoy the guided tours of the Glen Canyon Dam, or even take a hike down Cathedral Wash in the Lee's Ferry section of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

It's easy to sit at home feeling shut in and trapped by the crowds when large events like the Ironman or the St. George Marathon shut down roads and bring thousands of visitors to town, but with a little planing and few gallons of gas in the tank of your vehicle, it's pretty easy to find places to get away from the hustle and bustle.

We're surrounded by hundreds of spectacular spots in which we can enjoy the natural beauty of the desert southwest here in Southern Utah and there's no better excuse for getting off the couch than the chance to avoid getting trapped by the Ironman.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/life/outdoors/2016/05/05/get-out-and-enjoy-avoiding-ironman/83930498/>



Gold Butte, the Bundy Family, And Desecration Of Sacred Artifacts

Writer: Carrie Kaufman

Published: May 2, 2016

Gold Butte is a 350,000-acre swath of land on the northeast side of Lake Mead, just south of Mesquite.

It is the home of ancient native petroglyphs and other artifacts, and has been under the protection of the Bureau of Land Management for many years.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid wants to make it a national monument.

But there's some private land near Gold Butte. Land run by a ranching family named Bundy. Perhaps you've heard of them?

A couple of weeks ago, the day after Earth Day, many of Nevada's Paiute tribes and supporters held a "culture walk" through Gold Butte. What they found there was dismaying.

Much of what they hold sacred has been destroyed.

Ancient petroglyphs had bullet holes through them. Some had been defaced with graffiti. Many burial and campsite artifacts were trampled or stolen. And a Joshua Tree - which had been used as a marker by hikers - was chopped down.

The Bureau of Land Management is in charge of this land. But since the 2014 standoff on the Bundy ranch, the BLM has pulled back in the face of threats.

Annette Magnus of Battle Born Progress said she has also been threatened, simply for writing about dead cows she has found on the site of the road. These are the same cows that the federal government tried to take from the Bundy family in

2014 because they had refused to pay more than a \$1 million in grazing fees.

Magnus said the cattle are emaciated and dying, trying desperately to live off of the desert.

The answer, say Gold Butte supporters, is to designate the land as a national monument - something President Barack Obama can do under the Antiquities Act. But it's unclear what might be different if that designation was made.

The local Paiute tribes want to be able to help administer the area, but William Anderson, former chairman of the Moapa Band of Paiutes, says that at this point, the tribes would not be part of a coalition to take care of the land.

"I reached out to the Department of Interior in D.C. to let them understand that this is something we could work together with," Anderson said.

Magnus points out that within the last two years, Nevada has gotten two national monuments - Tule Springs here in Clark County and Basin and Range in Lincoln County.

She thinks it should be a slam dunk to name Gold Butte as a monument as well. But she points out that both Congressman Crescent Hardy R (NV) - who represents the district - and Congressman Mark Amodei (R) NV are against the idea, as is Senator Dean Heller R (NV).

Jaina Moan of Friends of Gold Butte said that the majority of Nevadans support public lands, and encourages people to voice that support.

Both Magnus and Moan are optimistic that before he leaves office, President Obama will designate a third national monument in Nevada in as many years. Who will run it, though, and whether they will have any power to overcome threats of violence of those who would rather keep the federal government out, remains to be seen.

Statement from the Bureau of Land Management:
"The Bureau of Land Management has been working closely with local officials and stakeholders on future management plans for the Gold Butte area. Due to concerns over employee safety, the BLM has not been able to actively manage public lands in Gold Butte over the past two years."

<http://knpr.org/knpr/2016-05/gold-butte-bundy-family-and-desecration-sacred-artifacts>

THE
HUFFINGTON
POST

Gold Butte, Nevada: A Cultural Environment Under Threat

Writer: JK Russ

Published: May 2, 2016

Before the sun has risen, a line of vehicles crosses rural Nevada's Virgin River heading to a gravel parking area at the head of narrow and winding New Gold Butte Road. Coinciding with Earth Day, the indigenous Moapa Band of Paiute along with local environmental protection groups have organized an 11-mile Culture Walk to raise awareness of the damage being done to the culturally important and environmentally sensitive area of Gold Butte.

There is still an early morning chill in the air as flag standards are lined up representing the Moapa Band of Paiute, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, Shivwits Band and Paiute Indian Tribes of Utah. The Maori Tino Rangatiratanga flag from Aotearoa (New Zealand) is also present in support, along with a kiwi contingent.

After a dawn prayer, former Moapa Band Chairman William Anderson speaks of the importance of the Gold Butte area, previously inhabited by the Paiute's nomadic ancestors, the Tudinu, known as the Desert People. The indigenous name for the area is Mah'ha ga doo, (Many Bushes) due to the abundant vegetation found there. Amongst the towering sandstone formations are numerous

examples of ancient petroglyphs, telling stories of a deep spiritual connection with the land.

The area is currently in the hands of the Bureau of Land Management, but in part due to disputes over land use and an intimidation campaign of BLM staff, the environment is under threat on numerous fronts. Petroglyphs have been graffitied and used as target practice, with some sections cut out and removed altogether. Burial sites have been violated and delicate vegetation on the desert floor crushed by off-road vehicles. Armed with images showing both the natural beauty of the area, and the damage being done to its cultural sites, Senator Harry Reid is using the Antiquities Act to petition President Obama to designate National Monument status.

With the assistance of support crews supplying water, snacks, copious sunscreen and Band-Aids for blisters, all the walkers reach the final tent at First Rock by noon. A Paiute youth group cooks up frybread tacos, and a trio of musicians perform traditional bird songs that have echoed through the Gold Butte valleys for centuries. The descendants of the Desert People are showing the way forward to a harmonious co-existence with the natural environment and the cultural treasures it contains.

http://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/gold-butte-nevada-a-culture_b_9811026.html



Fourth Paiute culture walk

Writer: Heidi Kyser
Published: April 26, 2016

High winds that had shaken the valley all night broke just before sunrise Saturday, April 23, the day of the fourth Paiute Culture Walk to be held in Southern Nevada. Previous walks, organized by the Moapa Band of Paiutes, focused on the now-successful effort to have the nearby Reid-Gardner coal-fired power plant shut down and replaced with a tribe-owned solar generating station. Rather than rest on their laurels, former Moapa Band Chairman William Anderson and a small group of his fellow Paiutes started thinking about what they could tackle next.

They settled on protection of Gold Butte, a contested area northeast of Las Vegas that, soon after being proposed for federal protection, was the scene of the standoff between Bunkerville cattle rancher Cliven Bundy and government officials in 2014. Anderson says the rolling orange hills filled with petroglyphs and sandstone formations, along with the adjacent Valley of Fire and Lake Mead, were the stomping grounds of his and other Paiutes' nomadic ancestors. He and his friends joined with local nonprofits working to shield Gold Butte from development and vandalism, and put together Saturday's event.

Support comes from nine tribes were represented; four of them took flags to be carried by members. One flag-carrier, Fawn Douglas (above, second from right), was the only member of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe to do the entire 12-mile walk, a moderately difficult, mostly uphill trek on a chewed-up asphalt road. The contemporary artist talked to Desert Companion about her experience.

I UNDERSTAND IT WAS JUST YOU AND YOUR MOTHER FROM THE LAS VEGAS PAIUTE TRIBE?

Yeah, at first. My mother couldn't walk because she has a bad leg. But then, for the feast at the end, we had more members who came. We had a really good turnout, actually, five on the food team to feed participants; and our cultural committee leader, Kenny Anderson, brought four tribal members and the elders group, because we didn't want them walking.

SO, JUST YOU WALKING?

Yes.

THAT MEANS YOU HAD TO CARRY YOUR TRIBE'S FLAG FROM BEGINNING TO END?

My daughter came with the food team, and she showed up when I had two miles left. So she carried the flag the last two miles.

I BELIEVE THERE WERE 60 PEOPLE WALKING. WHERE WERE YOU?

(laughs) At the end. There may have been four other people behind me, but I was the last flag carrier. I stopped at four of the tents and made sure I rested, had some water, a banana, and relaxed for a bit.

THE WALK SEEMED DIFFICULT. HOW DID YOU FARE?

You know what? I don't know, because I don't have anything to compare it to. But towards the end, mile 8 or so, I was feeling it in my feet. I was like, "Wow, my feet really hurt." But the weather was good. There were times when I would just put the flagpole across my shoulders and smile, because it was such a good day.

WHAT WAS GOOD ABOUT IT?

My mom was talking about how, at the start of the walk, everyone from all the different tribes was laughing and sharing stories with each other. It was a really a good vibe from beginning to end.

WHAT MESSAGE DID IT SEND TO THE COMMUNITY?

When we come together, we can accomplish anything. Having the different tribes that were all there, it needs to happen more often, really. Tribal people don't get together enough on issues, and when we did, it was really powerful. It wasn't just the flags that you saw. There were other tribal members there from other places: Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, Moapa Band of Paiutes, Shivwits Band, Paiute Indian Tribes of Utah — those were the four flags — and then there were also people from Chemehuevi, Colorado River Indian Tribe, Navajo, even the Maori (of New Zealand), who came to support us.

WHAT WAS THE MOST MEANINGFUL PART FOR YOU?

<http://knpr.org/dc-blog/standard-bearer>

During the celebration at the end of the walk, some people were singing bird songs with gourds, and the elders were the first to get up and dance. My mother was one of them who got up and danced with them. It felt so positive, I was sitting there watching like, wow this is really good.

WAS ANY POLITICAL STATEMENT BEING MADE, ABOUT THE BUNDYS, FOR INSTANCE?

We talked a little bit about that, but it wasn't a big part of the day. It was a little side topic. When we were driving, we were talking about what would happen if they (the Bundys) were there. And I was like, "You know what? I think I'd invite them to walk with us, and then they could see and feel why this area means so much to us."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

That land is sacred to our people. It's sung about in our "Salt Song," in a ceremony. I feel really at one with the place. Plus, I'm an artist, I paint, and it's like you're walking through a huge historical gallery. I'm working on a Gold Butte collection now.



Ahora y para futuras generaciones

Guest Writer: Sandra Gamez

Submitted: April 26, 2016

Gold Butte nuestro pedacito del Gran Cañón está a solo unas horas de las luces de Las Vegas. Las casi 350,000 acres son un tesoro de maravillas culturales, históricas y naturales. Algunas de sus maravillas incluyen miles de petroglifos pero desafortunadamente estos tesoros han sido víctimas de la destrucción y vandalismo. Cada día que Gold Butte no está protegido seguimos perdiendo estos valiosos recursos.

Recientemente el Senador Dean Heller publicó una carta pidiéndole al Presidente Obama que no proteja Gold Butte. Su oposición a la designación desafía amplio apoyo para proteger estas tierras y sus riquezas. Curiosamente en esa misma carta al Presidente también dice el Senador Heller que "casi todos están de acuerdo que Gold Butte es un tesoro nacional". ¿Si él cree que Gold Butte es un lugar especial, entonces por qué esperar otra década para protegerlo? Nevadenses que han abogado por Gold Butte han trabajado por años junto con el Senador Harry Reid y la Congresista Dina Titus. Juntos hemos tratando de convencer a funcionarios como al Senador Heller que aprueben legislación que proteja Gold Butte.

Ya hemos esperado al Senador Heller mucho tiempo. Además de las cartas urgiendo al Presidente que no haga nada, no ha mostrado que está dispuesto a proteger contra la destrucción adicional a nuestro tesoro nacional. La designación de Gold Butte como monumento nacional protegería abundantes recursos culturales e históricos. Ya es el momento de proteger Gold Butte. No podemos esperar hasta que haya daño irreversible. Juntos con la ayuda del Presidente Obama podemos proteger Gold Butte como monument nacional, ahora y para futuras generaciones.



Time to protect Gold Butte land

Guest Writer: Grace Larsen

Published: April 26, 2016

In his recent letter to President Barack Obama, Sen. Dean Heller wrote that “nearly everyone agrees Gold Butte is a national treasure,” then continued to discourage its permanent protection as a national monument. Heller backed his stance by writing that he “strongly believes in working in a collaborative nature” and that designation of any national monument in Nevada “ought to be considered in the public Congressional process.” Yet, in the same letter he touted the presidential designation of Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument.

I’ve explored the red sandstone formations and scrambled over jumbo granite boulders found in Gold Butte. I love taking visitors there to show them the thousands of ancient petroglyphs. I’ve also seen the damage to these petroglyphs and to wildlife habitat in Gold Butte. Heller has had years to permanently protect Gold Butte, and we can’t continue to wait. Now is the time for Obama to permanently protect Gold Butte as a national monument.

<http://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/apr/26/time-to-protect-gold-butte-land/>



Bundy on Trial: Whose Land Is It, Anyway?

Writer: Andree Davey

Published: April 25, 2016

Last Friday, I embarked on a pilgrimage. I had to see for myself the scene of the crime. I also wanted to speak with the local “stakeholders” who are often overlooked when we report on Cliven Bundy’s “Range War” and its aftermath.

On Saturday, that all changed for me when I experienced for myself the wonders of Gold Butte... And the people who call this place their spiritual home.

Not long after Friday’s epic courtroom battle, I left Las Vegas on what promised to be an epic road trip. Later that evening, our group arrived in Mesquite and stayed in town for the night. We had to prepare for an action-packed day ahead.

Early Saturday morning, we arrived at the very edge of Bunkerville. Just a short drive away from the #BundyRanch, the starving cattle, the armed showdown locations, the alleged “cattle mass graves”, and the “Range War” that dramatically altered America’s conversation about public lands, regional Paiute Tribes, allied Native American Tribes, and other local Gold Butte supporters joined for prayer and quiet reflections before embarking on an eleven mile culture walk to the area known as the Whitney Pockets.

I must admit I had doubted my ability to do the entire 2016 Gold Butte Culture Walk. I’m glad I ultimately threw my doubt by the wayside, as I was able to meet some amazing people who have important stories to tell.

As we walked on, I ran into Southern Nevada Paiute Tribe members who spoke about their families’ history with this land. The Paiutes are the descendants of the Tudinu people whose history of

living in the Colorado River region of Southern California, Northern Arizona, Southern Nevada, & Southern Utah can be traced back to at least 1100 CE. In 1874, the US Government seemed ready to formally recognize this by approving the zoning of this land in the Moapa Paiute Tribal Reservation.

Yet in 1876, the federal government backtracked and designated a smaller reserve of land for the Reservation. That meant Gold Butte was left in federal hands, and that it would eventually fall under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) when President Harry Truman ordered the consolidation of two public lands related agencies into the BLM in 1946.

In 1877, the Leavitts were among the families who settled in what are now Riverside & Bunkerville. They were attempting to succeed in their “religious communal” experiment that had previously failed in Santa Clara, Utah. In 1948, David & Bodell Bundy purchased a 60 acre plot of land at the edge of Riverside/Bunkerville from Raoul & Ruth Leavitt. Their son, Cliven Bundy, would also claim maternal familial lineage to the Leavitt family years later.

Sometimes I wonder if the Bundys truly understand the can of worms they open whenever they discuss their “ancestral land & water rights”. During Saturday’s walk, I ran into an attorney who explained at great length the struggle sovereign tribal nations have endured just to secure what’s always been rightfully theirs. I also spoke with a couple Paiute Tribal members who described the importance of this land to their tradition and their lives.

Ancestors are buried here. Petroglyphs telling the stories of Paiute generations from long ago are found here. Throughout the region, the landscape triggers memories of the Paiute experience that makes Southern Nevada's cultural tapestry so rich.

During the walk, a young man began playing his flute. He not only added a moving musical soundtrack to our walk, but he also made me think of the many layers of history found here. At least for a moment, I wasn't thinking about this most recent layer that involves the Bundys and their "Range War" against the rule of law.

Eventually, I had to return to the present. And after several hours of walking through the Mojave Desert, we reached the wondrous terrain of the Whitney Pockets. Flag bearers who marched nearly the entire time while holding the tribal flags were warmly greeted. Children were playing among the red rocks. And everyone was eagerly awaiting some tasty frybread...

And an energizing song & dance program.

Once more, I thought about the rich history of this land and the people who call this land home as I witnessed some of these people share their musical heritage with all of us.

Now, these people want to share their land with us. After a complicated history of "ownership", this land now belongs to the entire American people. And now, local Paiute Tribes are fighting to ensure this public land stays in public hands.

Tribal leaders are hoping that once Gold Butte is declared a National Monument, a cultural center that tells the story of the Paiute People and their relationship with this land can be built. They're also hoping a Gold Butte National Monument means more funding for preservation of petroglyphs & burial sites that have been repeatedly violated,

especially since Cliven Bundy's "Range War" drove BLM activity far away from this region. And of course, Paiute Tribal leaders share the hope other Southern Nevada business leaders have that Gold Butte protection will encourage more of the ecotourism that's already contributing \$172 million annually to Nevada's economy.

After the scheduled walk, a couple of friends & I ventured just a little further into Gold Butte. As ATV's (or motorized all-terrain vehicles) were racing past the gathering area, people at the fold-up picnic tables were speculating over the fallen Joshua Tree that Carol Bundy allegedly chopped down herself, and a Jeep Cherokee sped its way onto a pedestrian trail, we walked to the next red rock formation on the trail. Even as we were being as careful as possible in staying on the designated trail, there were abundant signs of human-induced "wear & tear".

Despite those signs of "wear & tear", I could feel the energy emanating from the red rock formation at our trail. And as I looked onward to the site of the Falling Man Petroglyph that's most commonly associated with Gold Butte, I pondered the big picture here. Beyond the court filings, the political jostling, and the media circus that anyone even remotely tied to the #BundyRanch affair has become accustomed to, here lies the root of what it's all about.

As we left the sandstone formation for the picnic area, a friend & walking colleague was explaining how he wanted to be here to reconnect with his heritage. I got it. After taking the time to walk the trail, take in the mesmerizing natural beauty, and listen to the voices of those who call this special place home, I finally got it. I understood whose land this is, and I left Gold Butte with a much stronger appreciation for those who are graciously willing to share this land with all the rest of us.

<http://letstalknevada.com/bundy-trial-whose-land-anyway/>



Southern Paiutes and allies host Gold Butte Culture Walk

Writer: Rebecca Lewis
Published: April 23, 2016

On Saturday, Southern Paiute activists from Moapa and Las Vegas held a culture walk into Gold Butte.

Members of several other Native American tribes and allies of the ongoing efforts to protect Gold Butte were also in attendance.

Organizers of the event are working to spread awareness about the need to establish a National Monument for Gold Butte, which was a part of the

original boundaries of the Moapa River Reservation and still a sacred area to the Southern Paiute people.

Fawn Douglas, one of the organizers of the event and member of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, said, "Gold Butte is sacred land. Our culture walk is a gathering of indigenous people to build awareness for an area that needs to be protected. It's not just for our people, it's for all people."

<http://www.ktnv.com/positivelylv/southern-paiutes-and-allies-host-gold-butte-culture-walk>



Moapa Band of Paiute members march to protect Gold Butte

Writer: Henry Brean

Published: April 23, 2016

One day after Earth Day, members of the Moapa Band of Paiutes and other tribes marched into the heart of Gold Butte carrying a plea for protection.

The activists want the swath of federal land 95 miles northeast of Las Vegas to be designated as a national monument. They staged the 11-mile “culture walk” Saturday to call attention to damage they say the area has suffered at the hands of vandals, rogue ranchers and illicit off-roaders.

In some places, ancient rock art has been shot up, defaced by graffiti or chipped off and stolen.

“I couldn’t believe someone would do that,” said walk participant William Anderson, a former tribal chairman of the Moapa Band of Paiutes. “It was surprising that people had no respect for our culture and our people.”

Saturday’s event began with a gathering and sunrise prayer where Gold Butte Road meets state Route 170 south of Mesquite.

The walk started 8 miles farther down Gold Butte Road, past the home of imprisoned rancher Cliven Bundy. It ended Saturday afternoon with food, songs and speeches not far from the Falling Man site, one of the area’s best-known concentrations of petroglyphs.

Anderson, who traveled to Washington, D.C., last month to lobby for permanent protection of Gold

Butte, said the area has been used by the Paiute people for untold generations. It was originally part of the Moapa River Reservation when its boundaries were drawn in 1873, but the government took the land back two years later, he said.

Now tribal activists and conservationists are seeking federal help to preserve the roughly 350,000 acres of rock art galleries, sweeping desert vistas and fields of twisted sandstone hemmed in by Lake Mead and the western reaches of the Grand Canyon. It’s also where the 2014 standoff unfolded between the Bureau of Land Management and supporters of Bundy, whose cattle still roam the land in defiance of federal law.

This marks the fourth year in a row Paiutes in Southern Nevada have organized a culture walk around Earth Day.

The tradition began in 2012, when Anderson led a group of about 20 people in the first such walk: a 50-mile trek from their reservation on the Muddy River to the Las Vegas federal courthouse to protest the coal-burning power plant near their homes.

All but one unit at the power plant has since been shut down. NV Energy plans to close the facility entirely next year.

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Follow [@RefriedBrean](https://twitter.com/RefriedBrean) on Twitter.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/nevada/moapa-band-paiute-members-march-protect-gold-butte>



Local, National Politicians Differ on Gold Butte Designation

Writer: April 22, 2016

Published: Mike McGeer

Nothing separates politicians in Nevada like ownership of public lands.

In July 2014, Presidential candidate Ted Cruz, R-Texas, became a “Bundy Buddy” and filed an amendment to the Bipartisan Sportsmen Act of 2014 (S.23630) to force the federal government to sell off prize western land to the highest bidder. [i] Fifteen incumbent members of Congress agreed with Cruz that public lands should be seized by the states or sold off for drilling, mining or logging.

Cruz has begun airing his first television ad in Nevada that attacks Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump for being too trusting of the federal government’s power in the West. Cruz quotes a comment by Trump in a Field and Stream article saying:

“I don’t like the idea because I want to keep the lands great, and you don’t know what the state is going to do,” he told Field and Stream magazine last month.[ii] It did not take Trump long to backtrack. During a Trump rally on February 22nd, Trump claimed ignorance. “it’s not a subject I know anything about.”

Nevada supporters of Bundy brought AB408 (aka the Bundy Bill) to the 2015 state legislature. That Bill, had it passed, “would lay claim to almost all federally managed public lands and water rights in the state.”

Locally, the Mesquite Mayor Al Litman and Councilpersons Cindi Delaney, Geno Withelder, George Rapson, Kraig Hafen and Rich Green, used taxpayer dollars to pay former Nevada State Senator Warren Hardy, to support the Bundy Bill.

Chris Edwards, R., Nevada District 19, who represents the Mesquite-Bunkerville area, voted for another folly, SJR 1, a joint resolution that urges Congress to transfer title to certain public lands to the State of Nevada. [iii]

Months before the legislation session, the Mayor and City Council voted to support unlimited motor vehicle activities in the Gold Butte area. The resolution opposed wilderness designation. This thoughtless action has contributed to an increase in damage in the Gold Butte area.[iv], [v] [vi]

Of course, these “Bundy Buddies,” fail to recognize that such an action is far from mainstream, too costly for the states to accept, unconstitutional and an actual deterrent to economic growth.

A report released in February of 2015 by Headwaters Economics outlined the positive relationship between Montana counties with protected public lands and per-capita income. The authors reported that “in 2010, peer-reviewed research showed that western non-metro counties had, on average, a per capita income that was \$436 higher for every 10,000 acres of protected public land within their boundaries.”

Nevada Democrats are clear on the issue. According to Catherine Cortez Masco, the likely candidate to replace Senator Harry Reid, “We need to do everything we can to protect Nevada’s public lands for future generations.” [vii]

To further the support of public lands, U.S. Senator Harry Reid D. plans to ask President Barach Obama to designate the Gold Butte area near Mesquite, NV, as a National Monument under the Antiquities Act of 1906.[viii],[ix],

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In the meantime, The Friends of Gold Butte (FoGB) and others continue to witness an increasing level of intrusion near historical and cultural sites,

increasing damage to sensitive desert areas and a continuing slowdown in economic growth.[x]

<http://letstalknevada.com/local-national-politicians-differ-gold-butte-designation/>



Earth Day Celebrations Planned Across Nevada

Writer: Suzanne Potter

Published: April 22, 2016

LAS VEGAS – Today is Earth Day, time for Nevadans to celebrate the natural world. This weekend, thousands are expected to pack celebrations across the state.

Greenfest Las Vegas is being held Saturday in downtown Summerlin. Reno's Earth Day party takes place on Sunday in Idlewild Park.

Jane Feldman, conservation chair for the Southern Nevada Group of the Sierra Club, says the environmental group will be promoting its Beyond Coal campaign at both celebrations to close the state's last coal-fired power plant – the North Valmy Generating Station in the north central part of the state.

And the Sierra Club is pushing for greater protections of public land, particularly Gold Butte. "We want to protect the Gold Butte area just north of Las Vegas as a national conservation area,"

Feldman states. "We also want to protect the greater Canyonlands area from uranium mining."

Southern Paiute activists from Moapa and Las Vegas are hosting a free 11-mile culture walk in Gold Butte, calling for national monument status.

Feldman says her group regularly leads hikes for inner city youth – a program called Inspiring Connections Outdoors – to pass on a love of nature to the next generation. "It's not just the tree huggers who live in natural areas that are going to be doing this kind of environmental work in the future," she stresses. "It's going to be the people that grew up in the middle of the city, too. And that's one of the things that we're providing these youngsters."

Feldman adds advocates also are working on a campaign to convince people to pull their financial investments from oil, gas and coal companies and utilities.

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/2016-04-22/environment/earth-day-celebrations-planned-across-nevada/a51554-1#sthash.JRSUoRjm.dpuf>



Southern Paiutes to walk in Gold Butte

Writer: Staff Writer:

Published: April 21, 2016

The Southern Paiutes will walk 11 miles at Gold Butte on Saturday in an effort to raise awareness for the sacred and spiritual importance of a place that sits within the original boundaries of the Moapa River Reservation.

The cultural walk, a tradition that began in 2012 with a 50-mile trip over three days from the Moapa Band of Paiute's Reservation to Las Vegas in an effort to shut down a Reid Gardner coal-fired power plant, will include members of several other Native American tribes as well as supporters of the ongoing efforts to protect Gold Butte near Mesquite.

They have a prominent proponent, too. Earlier this month, Nevada Sen. Harry Reid took to the Senate floor and called on President Barack Obama to use the Antiquities Act to take executive action to preserve Gold Butte.

Walkers will gather at 5:30 a.m. at the junction of Gold Butte Road and state Route 170, about 17 miles south of Mesquite. The group will begin its walk to Whitney Pockets following a sunrise prayer.

Event organizers and tribal leaders will speak at the conclusion of the walk. The festivities will also include Indian tacos and traditional Paiute singing and music.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2016/04/21/southern-paiutes-walk-gold-butte/83343758/>



Protecting land preserves water

Guest Writer: Ace Acosta

Published: April 20, 2016

In response to the column “Public land management is fine as is” by Matthew Kirby (Las Vegas Sun, April 8):

This column defended keeping public lands in public hands. I’d like to echo Kirby’s call and those made by Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Raul Grijalva to protect spectacular American treasures such as Gold Butte and the proposed Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument. Public lands have much more to offer our society than just the finite resources from which special interests seek short-term gain. Preserving these archaeological treasure troves of Native American history and early American colonization as national monuments would not only preserve history that needs to be told but protect lands required for the production of

the water we depend on in Lake Mead and the Colorado River.

The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that outdoor recreation activities — such as hiking, rock climbing, hunting, camping and off-roading, just to name a few — contribute \$15 billion to Nevada’s economy. These lands are also made up of mountains whose snow melt feeds aquifers and whose seasonal rains feed into washes, streams and rivers that all end up in Lake Mead. When we finally realize how interconnected protected public lands are with water, and how dependent life is on natural hydrology, only then will we realize the true economic value of the land we borrow from future generations.

<http://m.lasvegassun.com/news/2016/apr/20/protecting-land-preserves-water/>



Writer: Staff Writer

Published: April 18, 2016

Gold Butte speaker series to focus on botany.

The botanical treasures of Gold Butte will be the focus of the monthly Friends of Gold Butte Speaker Series on Wednesday night at the Mesquite Community Theatre, 150 N. Yucca St.

Botanist Gayle Marrs-Smith, field manager for the Las Vegas Office of the Bureau of Land Management, will describe the life histories of common and rare plants of the Mojave Desert. She also will explain the best ways to identify shoots and blooms. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; the presentation begins at 7 p.m.

“Spring is a great time to visit Gold Butte and see the desert bloom,” said Jaina Moan, executive

director of the Friends of Gold Butte, a non-profit organization with a mission to achieve permanent protection for Gold Butte’s biological, geological and cultural resources through education, community outreach and advocacy.

The Gold Butte Speaker Series is a monthly event held September-November and January-April each year. Topics in the series focus on educational, scientific, cultural and recreational issues relevant to the Gold Butte region. All presentations are free and open the public.

For information, go online to <http://www.friendsofgoldbutte.org/events-2/education-program/>.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2016/04/18/virgin-valley-news-brief/83138496/>



Save Gold Butte

Guest Writer: John Dechant

Published: April 18, 2016

Senator Harry Reid's move to ask President Obama to use an executive order to permanently protect the Gold Butte area is spot on. (DVT, 4/8/16) The area in question has languished in conservation limbo for far too long and something needs to be done soon if the artifacts and antiquities existing there are to be saved. Accomplishing this by presidential fiat is the only likely way that the needed restoration and preservation are going to happen. To try to get this done by submitting legislation to our politicized and paralyzed U.S. House and Senate is a ludicrous notion.

Federal lands such as Gold Butte do not belong to persons, cities, counties, or states. These lands belong to every American and are part of every American's birthright. As such, the only logical overseeing entity is the U.S. government. I'm aware that that's not a popular statement to make but rational thinking tells me that statement is true. Having seen some of the vandalism and damage referred to in the article, rescue can't come any too soon.

Gold Butte is well worth saving.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2016/04/18/letters-editor/83189430/>



Thank you ad from KEEN Footwear

Published: April 17, 2016

A black and white advertisement for KEEN Footwear. At the top, a quote from Senator Harry Reid reads: "WHEN WE PRESERVE OUR LANDS, WE PRESERVE AMERICA." - SENATOR HARRY REID. Below the quote is a woodcut-style illustration of a rugged mountain range. The bottom section of the ad is dark with white text. It says: "THANK YOU, SENATOR HARRY REID FOR WORKING TO PRESERVE GOLD BUTTE AS A NATIONAL MONUMENT". Below that is the hashtag "#LiveMonumental" in a large, cursive font, with the KEEN logo to its right. At the very bottom, it states: "IN THE SILVER STATE, OUTDOOR RECREATION SUPPORTS ALMOST \$15 BILLION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY".

Social Media Statistics: April 7-15

Real-time Tracker: #ProtectGoldButte

Date Range

Apr 7 - Apr 15

560

posts

192

users

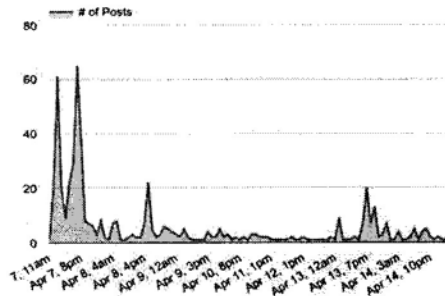
882,758

reach

1,613,035

impressions

Timeline



Top Posts

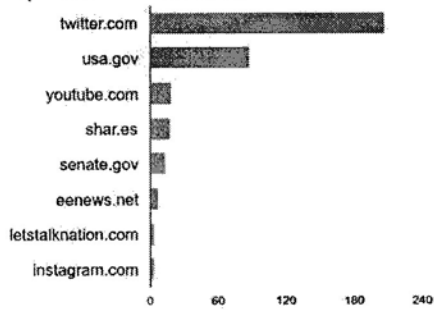
RTs/Likes | Block | Report

Tip: Click on a post's date to be taken to original post

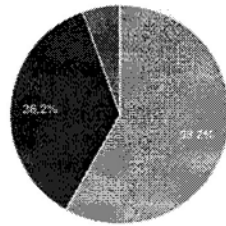
- Protect Gold Butte** @protectgoldbutte Apr 12 **69**
Thanks for joining the campaign to #ProtectGoldButte! Help spread the word by tagging your friends in the comments. #GoldButte #MonumentsForAll #LiveMonumental #ProtectNV #TravelNevada #VisitNevada #...
- Protect Gold Butte** @protectgoldbutte Apr 7 **51**
After years of championing efforts to #ProtectGoldButte, this morning @senatorreid announced his intent to reach out to the @whitehouse to ask President #Obama to designate this amazing area as a n...
- Protect Gold Butte** @GoldButteTV Apr 7 **33**
"When we preserve our lands, we preserve America." - @SenatorReid <https://t.co/HTFZKAXbxq> #ProtectGoldButte <https://t.co/aT1ZeXl9EW>

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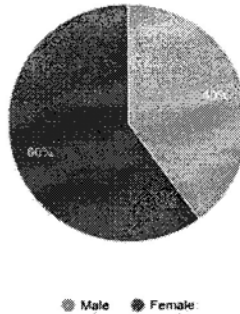
Location

World USA



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Demographics



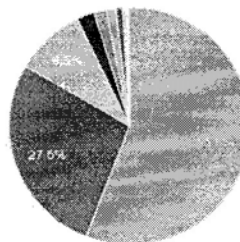
Topics

Hashtags A Keywords

Tip: Click on a keyword or hashtag to see related posts



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Protecting our national treasures

Guest Writer: Michelle Napoli

Published: April 13, 2016

Your recent coverage helped shine some light on the damage being done in Gold Butte (“Ceremony marks pioneer’s return to Gold Butte grave,” March 28). An even brighter spotlight would illuminate many more examples of incontinent destruction of this beautiful area’s cultural, historic and ecological treasures.

Native American petroglyphs riddled with bullet holes. The senseless chopping down of a defenseless, mature Joshua Tree. Vandalism to nearly 100-year-old horse corrals, relics of the area’s pioneer ranching days. These are just a few examples of what is happening in Gold Butte, and the damage is difficult or impossible to reverse. The impact is significant.

But there is another important reason to protect Gold Butte, and it comes down to good old-fashioned economics. The fact is, when our special public lands are preserved and protected, visitorship rises and the surrounding communities benefit financially as a result.

As you noted in your pages last week, a recent study shows that for Nevada’s Basin & Range and nine other national monuments designated by President Obama, “the annual economic benefits ... include \$58 million in labor income per year and roughly 1,820 jobs.” (“Reid praises study on economic impact of new national monuments,” April 6).

For Mesquite, the closest town to Gold Butte, national monument status means visitors will come to take in Gold Butte — and spend money at restaurants, gas stations, motels and other local businesses before they leave.

Gold Butte is already public land that belongs to you, me, all Nevadans and, indeed, all Americans. But if it is to retain its tremendous biological, historic, recreation and economic benefits, the time to protect Gold Butte as a national monument is now.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters/protecting-our-national-treasures>

Desert Valley Times

Virgin Valley's Independent Newspaper

Gold Butte is well worth saving

Guest Writer: John Dechant

Submitted: April 13, 2016

Senator Harry Reid's move to ask President Obama to use an executive order to permanently protect the Gold Butte area is spot on. (DVTNV, 4/8/16) The area in question has languished in conservation limbo for far too long and something needs to be done soon if the artifacts and antiquities existing there are to be saved. Accomplishing this by presidential fiat is the only likely way that the needed restoration and preservation are going to happen. To try to get this done by submitting legislation to our politicized and paralyzed U. S. House and Senate is a ludicrous notion.

Federal lands such as Gold Butte do not belong to persons, cities, counties, or states. These lands belong to every American and are part of every American's birthright. As such, the only logical overseeing entity is the U.S. Government. I'm aware that that's not a popular statement to make but rational thinking tells me that statement is true. Having seen some of the vandalism and damage referred to in the article, rescue can't come any too soon.



Protection not trash

Guest Writer: Iridane Sanchez

Submitted: April 11, 2016

I just recently learned about the Gold Butte area. Two weeks ago I went out there for the first time to help with a trash pickup. I wasn't expecting to find much, but there was a lot of junk on the side of the road. Beer bottles and cans, shredded tires and old car parts, spent shotgun shells and even a fishing rod! It was estimated we picked up 800 pounds of trash on just a mile or so of that road in a few hours.

I also saw things that I, and probably a lot of people, miss speeding down the highway. It's not all brown dirt, and in spring there are beautiful flowers and plants in every possible color. Gold Butte is surrounded by beautiful protected lands: Lake Mead, the Grand Canyon, and Valley of Fire.

Senator Reid is right, this place is beautiful too. Why isn't it protected from the people who are thoughtless enough to trash it? I hope President Obama will make Gold Butte a National Monument so the land can be taken care of the way it should.



Harry Reid Pushes to #ProtectGoldButte

Writer: Elaine Hurd

Published: April 11, 2016

Nevada Democratic Senator Harry Reid took to the U.S. Senate Floor on Thursday (April 7, 2016) to call on President Obama to preserve Gold Butte. Hooray!

Gold Butte is a national treasure which straddles the Virgin and Moapa Valleys in northeast Clark County outside Las Vegas. The area is comprised of about 350,000 acres currently deemed an Area of Critical Environment Concern (ACEC). Harry Reid and Congresswoman Dina Titus have introduced legislation that would designate it a National Conservation Area with Wilderness. Since that legislation has stalled, there has been a push for President Obama to use his executive authority under the Antiquities Act to designate it a National Monument.

On the floor of the U.S. Senate, Reid pointed out that Cliven Bundy and four of his sons are in jail awaiting trial on the April 2014 standoff whereby armed civilian militia stopped Bureau of Land Management contractors from enforcing federal court orders by rounding of Bundy's cattle, which has been illegally grazing cattle there for nearly 20 years.

Reid rightly pointed out that BLM officers have been prevented from protecting the area from vandalism and destruction of delicate desert and ancient Native American petroglyphs. He called the area "stunningly beautiful," which portions of it definitely are.

Reid also condemned the actions of Cliven Bundy and his clan.

You can read the full transcript of Senator Reid's press release [HERE](#). Here are highlights, I encourage you to read the whole speech and view the accompanying pictures:

"Congress created the Antiquities Act to empower the president to protect our cultural, historic and natural resources when and where Congress cannot – or will not. Many of our current national parks were created using this authority... Unfortunately, many Senate Republicans want to undermine the Antiquities Act. They refuse to defend our cultural and historic antiquities that are being systematically destroyed."

"Because of trouble caused by the Bundys and their pals, the federal employees tasked with safely guarding these antiquities were prevented from doing their jobs. These employees have been under constant physical and mental threat for doing what the American people have tasked them to do."

"I've tried to protect Gold Butte for a long time. And the reason we haven't been able to do anything to this point is that the Bundy boys and his pals. So that's why I'm grateful for the Antiquities Act. Because of this legislation and because of the fact that the Bundys are in jail, I'm going to reach out to the White House. And there's no guarantee we'll get it done. We'll see if President Obama will protect this area. He has the authority, as any president does, to stop this sort of destruction and stop it now."

The day before the Senator's Senate Floor Speech on Gold Butte (April 6, 2016), Reid held a press conference about a report compiled by Small Business Majority. President Obama has designated

10 national monuments since 2012 which has had an economic impact of \$156 million a year in the surrounding areas along with 1,800 jobs. You can read their findings [HERE](#).

Now that Cliven Bundy is in jail, along with four of his sons, Carol Bundy has become the spokesperson for the family. Capitalizing on the notoriety of Senator Reid mentioning her family and the blame he cast on the Bundys for destruction at Gold Butte, Carol Bundy answered him by video on the Bundy Ranch facebook page on Friday, April 8. Of course, she challenges Reid's characterization of the Bundys, claims ancestral rights to the land and invites Senator Reid to visit with them.

Court dates are set for Cliven Bundy, Ammon Bundy, Ryan Bundy, Dave Bundy and Mel Bundy over the April 2014 armed civilian standoff between federal officers and the Bundys, along with other co-conspirators also awaiting trial.

Will he or won't he? I guess that is the question. Will President Obama designate Gold Butte as a

National Monument? Frankly, I don't know what the argument is about. These are public lands which belong to THE PEOPLE, not the Bundys or other descendants of settlers of the Virgin and Moapa Valleys. PERIOD. It is a vital area with protected plant and animal species, ancient artifacts and rare rock formations. Why let it be destroyed by those who refuse to be governed by laws?

The positive economic impact and benefit to tourism in Mesquite (in particular) is without question.

Gold Butte has been part of the National Monumental Tour, sponsored by Keen. Other Nevada based groups have been pushing for either the National Conservation Area with Wilderness or National Monument designation, including Friends of Gold Butte.

What do the people gain by allowing it to deteriorate? The time to protect Gold Butte is now.

http://letstalknevada.com/harry-reid-pushes-protectgoldbutte/?awt_l=HrLeM&awt_m=3k8ho.sthVJG.Ul



Time to protect Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Jose Witt
Submitted: April 9, 2016

Senator Reid was absolutely right when was quoted as say the "do-nothing Congress led by republicans filibustering everything" has given Obama and congressional Democrats "little opportunity to do things constructively, legislatively."

If Congress won't protect Gold Butte legislatively, like so many locals have been begging for years, then it's time for the President to exercise his executive powers under the Antiquities Act, on behalf of the people and the greater good, and create

Gold Butte National Monument. Gold Butte cannot wait any longer. While politicians bicker the damage to ancient petroglyphs and the sensitive desert habitat continues. It's more than a pretty place. Gold Butte is Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon and our heritage.

Thank you Senator Reid for continuing to fight for our state and for recognizing that land protection is not a partisan issue it's an American one.

theguardian

Harry Reid trades insults with Cliven Bundy's wife in battle over standoff site

Writer: Sam Levin

Published: April 9, 2016

Nevada Senator Harry Reid and the wife of jailed rancher Cliven Bundy traded insults this week as the Democratic politician announced he would be pushing to protect the land near the family's property now that Bundy and his sons are behind bars.

"I've tried to protect Gold Butte for a long time," Reid said on Thursday, referring to the region north-east of Las Vegas where Bundy led an infamous standoff with the government in 2014 after years of refusing to pay federal cattle grazing fees.

"And the reason we haven't been able to do anything to this point is ... the Bundy boys and his pals," Reid continued. "Because of the fact that the Bundys are in jail, I'm going to reach out to the White House ... We'll see if President Obama will protect this area. He has the authority, as any president does, to stop this sort of destruction and stop it now."

On Friday, Carol Bundy, Cliven's wife, fired back in a Facebook videowhile critics of Reid alleged that he was plotting a "federal land grab" by the Bundy ranch.

Reid's previous legislative efforts to create a 350,000-acre national conservation area at Gold Butte have failed, and conservative critics throughout the west have accused him of attempting to steal land from families who have long ranched in the area.

In the 1990s, Bundy, now 69, stopped paying grazing taxes to the federal government, arguing it had no authority to restrict land uses. The conflict culminated in a tense armed standoff and Bundy's

recent arrest. He and four of his sons are facing serious charges, with federal prosecutors alleging that they led a coordinated assault against government employees.

In the 1990s, Cliven Bundy, now 69, stopped paying grazing taxes to the federal government, arguing it had no authority restricting land uses. Photograph: John Locher/AP.

Two of the sons, Ammon and Ryan, are also facing charges for leading an occupation of federal buildings in eastern Oregon in another high-profile standoff in protest of government policies. Dozens of the Bundys' supporters are also in jail.

Carol responded to Reid in her video, saying: "What you're doing to my family and to the state of Nevada is absolutely horrible, and I for one am very angry today."

She continued: "I am angry at Harry Reid for thinking that because my men are in jail, it's OK to come now and take ... the land that my family has farmed and ranched on for generations."

The Bundy matriarch further challenged the senator to visit the family: "I would like to invite you to come to our ranch. I would like you to come look me square in the eye and tell me that my family and I are domestic terrorists. I would love you to come to my ranch and show me where my family has done any abuse of any kind to this land that we love."

Reid, the Democratic Senate leader, has previously called Bundy supporters "domestic terrorists".

In a phone interview on Friday, Bailey Logue, Cliven's 24-year-old daughter, who runs the family's Facebook page, said she was not surprised by Reid's announcement. "He's an evil, evil man," she said.

Still, she said, "I couldn't believe that he actually put it out there like that... It made me angry."

Logue said her mother's invitation for Reid to visit was sincere. If she had a chance to speak to him, Logue said she would appeal to Reid's religious faith, given that they are both Mormons. "He has a father. He has sons. What would he think if we

came out with something like this against his family and his loved ones?" she said.

Obama's designations of national monuments have sparked significant backlash from ranchers and other westerners who say conservation is destroying families' livelihoods. Supporters and environmentalists say the land protections are critical steps in preserving habitats and species and that unregulated cattle-grazing can cause significant damage.

Reid's office did not respond to a request for comment.

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/apr/08/harry-reid-cliven-bundy-nevada-racher-armed-standoff>



Reid touts Nevada's new national monument

Writer: Staff Writer

Published: April 8, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — Harry Reid loves national monuments designated by President Barack Obama.

The Senate Democratic leader on Wednesday highlighted the economic and cultural benefits of monuments, including the 704,000-acre Basin and Range National Monument created last year in Reid's home state of Nevada.

Reid called the area, with its lunar-like landscapes and centuries-old rock art, "stunningly beautiful" and said it "represents the Nevada I love and was born in."

But even as he and fellow Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico recited benefits brought by the 22 national monuments Obama has created since 2009, Reid could not resist partisan jabs at Republicans, who have accused Obama of sneaky land grabs that bypass Congress and ignore the interests of local residents.

"I don't know what people are complaining about. Maybe they have nothing better to complain about," Reid said at a Capitol Hill news conference.

"There are certain things that need to be done," Reid said, but a "do-nothing Congress led by the Republicans filibustering everything" has given

Obama and congressional Democrats "little opportunity to do things constructively, legislatively."

Obama had "no choice" but to step up his use of executive orders — including his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect national monuments, Reid said. "I've been in Congress a long time and there's never been anything like it with this obstruction."

A report released by a business group Wednesday said 10 national monuments created by Obama since 2012 have an economic impact of \$156 million a year and support more than 1,800 jobs. The report was compiled by Small Business Majority, a Washington-based advocacy group.

While he appreciates Obama's designation of Basin and Range, Reid says he hopes the president will create at least one more monument in his state, the Gold Butte area in southern Nevada.

The ecologically fragile area is where Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed standoff against government agents two years ago.

"Now most of them are in jail so maybe we can move forward on that," Reid said.



Nevada senator wants historic site to be designated as a national monument

Writer: Lucas Thomas

Published: April 7, 2016

Nevada Democratic Sen. Harry Reid on Thursday morning resumed his quest to gain permanent protection for Gold Butte near Mesquite.

Speaking on the Senate floor, where he displayed multiple pictures that showed both the area's stunning beauty and signs of graffiti and vandalism to the vibrant sandstone formations and Joshua trees, Reid called on President Barack Obama to use the Antiquities Act to take executive action to preserve Gold Butte. With "the Bundys and their pals" in jail, Reid said he believed the time was right to "reach out to the White House."

"We'll see if President Obama will protect this area. He has the authority, as any president does, to stop this sort of destruction and stop it now," Reid said. "Congress created the Antiquities Act to empower the president to protect our cultural, historic and natural resources when and where Congress cannot — or will not. Many of our current national parks were created using this authority."

The Antiquities Act allows the president to designate any landmark, structure or area of historical significance as a national monument. Obama has already used the Antiquities Act once in Nevada, in 2015, by designating the Basin and Range National Monument.

Reid has long been the face of the effort to protect Gold Butte, an expansive chunk of land that is now classified as a National Area of Critical Environmental Concern. In 2013 and 2015, he sponsored legislation titled "Gold Butte National Conservation Area Act," which would have established the area as a protected site. Attempts to pass legislation have been met by opponents who

believe the federal government already controls too much of Nevada's land.

For that reason, Reid's communications director, Kristen Orthman, said the senator is determined to take his latest effort directly to the president.

"When was the last time a land bill moved through Congress?" Orthman asked rhetorically.

Efforts to protect Gold Butte have been complicated in recent years by Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy, whom Reid described as an "outrageous lawbreaker" who "illegally grazed his cattle" in an area that is supposed to be managed by the Bureau of Land Management. He also blasted the Bundy family's involvement in this year's "armed takeover" of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, equating their actions to "domestic terrorism."

Following a 2014 standoff with federal authorities at Bundy's ranch, which borders Gold Butte, the BLM ceased active management at Gold Butte for fear of violence, according to officials.

"... The federal employees tasked with safely guarding these antiquities were prevented from doing their jobs," Reid said. "These employees have been under constant physical and mental threat for doing what the American people have tasked them to do. Petroglyphs are being destroyed, drawn over, shot at and stolen.

Now, however, Reid said Bundy is "where he should be — in jail."

"I've tried to protect Gold Butte for a long time. And the reason we haven't been able to do anything

to this point is that the Bundy boys and his pals. So that's why I'm grateful for the Antiquities Act. Because of this legislation and because of the fact that the Bundys are in jail, I'm going to reach out to the White House," he said.

When a national monument is designated, the federal government assumes control of that land and can make decisions to control the land without the need for congressional approval. Opponents, including Nevada Republican Rep. Crescent Hardy, view this action as a land-grab; proponents argue it is a necessity to ensure the future use of public lands. A compromise has eluded for more than a decade.

"Sen. Reid has introduced bills in congress, and it just continues to stall out," said Jaina Moan, executive director of the Friends of Gold Butte, a non-profit organization with a mission to achieve permanent protection for Gold Butte's biological, geological and cultural resources through education, community outreach and advocacy. "So having the ability for Obama to designate it a national monument helps us achieve protection."

In recent years, Moan said, the need for protecting Gold Butte has become more urgent.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2016/04/07/reid-calls-obama-protect-gold-butte/82755512/>

A #ProtectGoldButte Twitter campaign had 128 followers on Thursday night.

"We can't wait any longer," she told the Desert Valley Times on Thursday. "More people are going out to Gold Butte now, so the damage we've observed has been steadily increasing."

When asked how Reid felt about the chances of Obama taking action, Orthman said the senator was "hopeful."

Moan took it a step further: "I'm optimistic," she said. "I think there are a growing number of people who support protecting Gold Butte."

While she acknowledged opponents of permanent protection of what the Friends describe as Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon, Moan said "most people who are opposed really don't understand what it means to protect that landscape," but added that there would be an "inclusive democratic process to determine a resource management plan for Gold Butte."

Orthman said there is no timetable for hearing an answer from Obama.



Reid Blasts Bundys On Floor, Wants NV Standoff Site To Be Nat'l Monument

Writer: Lauren Fox

Published: April 7, 2016

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) on Thursday renewed his calls to make a national monument out of Gold Butte, the site of the 2014 Bundy Ranch standoff in Nevada where Cliven Bundy had illegally grazed his cattle for decades.

Reid announced on the floor that he plans to ask President Barack Obama to use his authority granted under the Antiquities Act to protect that land. The minority leader argued the protection could come at a fortuitous time, as several members of the Bundy family are jailed for their roles in both the 2014 standoff and the takeover of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge earlier this year in rural Oregon. Family patriarch Cliven Bundy is also being held in Nevada on assault and federal conspiracy charges tracing back to the 2014 standoff near his family's ranch.

"Because of trouble caused by the Bundys and their pals, the federal employees tasked with safely

guarding these antiquities were prevented from doing their jobs," Reid said on the floor. "It was about 19 of them that have been indicted. Most of them are still in jail where they belong...[workers] have been under constant physical and mental threat for doing what the American people asked them to do."

The national monument Reid is asking for would stretch roughly 100 miles, beyond the site of the 2014 standoff. The land is currently jointly managed by Clark County and the Bureau of Land Management. Grazing is not legal on the land, and if the land is granted monument status it still won't be legal to graze there.

Reid had introduced legislation in the past to protect Gold Butte, as The Las Vegas Sun chronicled, but it faces long odds in a Republican-controlled Congress. Reid has since turned to asking the President to deem the area a national monument.

<http://talkingpointsmemo.com/livewire/reid-bundy-ranch-national-monument>



Harry Reid attacks Bundys on Senate floor, calls for Gold Butte protection

Writer: Jeff German

Published: April 7, 2016

With the “outrageous lawbreaker” Cliven Bundy and four of his sons in custody, U.S. Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada took to the Senate floor Thursday to renew his push to preserve the scenic Gold Butte area northeast of Las Vegas.

Reid proposed a congressional bill in 2013 to create a national conservation area at Gold Butte, a region of rugged mountains, sandstone ridges and Native American petroglyphs.

But the bill has stalled, and the Democratic leader in his Senate speech accused the defiant Bundy family of blocking daily efforts by federal officers to protect the land.

“Because of trouble caused by the Bundys and their pals, the federal employees tasked with safely guarding these antiquities, were prevented from doing their jobs,” he said. “These employees have been under constant physical and mental threat for doing what the American people have tasked them to do.”

The senator still has hopes that President Barack Obama will preserve Gold Butte, something he has the power to do under the law. Obama has made such declarations in the past to protect federal land in Nevada.

Reid also called attention in his speech to the armed takeover of a government wildlife refuge in Oregon earlier this year “by a dangerous group of militants” that included Bundy family members.

“This particular episode of domestic terrorism has roots in Nevada, I’m sorry to say,” Reid told his colleagues. “They were led by the sons of Cliven

Bundy. Cliven who, as we speak, is where he should be — in jail.”

Reid said the Bundy patriarch has been “breaking federal laws for decades,” adding, “I’m disappointed that some of my colleagues supported this outrageous lawbreaker.”

Bundy is in federal custody facing 16 felony charges stemming from the April 12, 2014, armed standoff with law enforcement near his Bunkerville ranch, which is part of the Gold Butte area.

In court papers earlier this week, his defense lawyer, Joel Hansen, called Bundy a political prisoner — like the late South African president and civil rights activist Nelson Mandela — who is being punished for exercising his First Amendment rights.

“Harry Reid’s comments just serve to prove that Cliven and his sons and the rest of the cowboys who came there (Bunkerville) to help are political prisoners,” Hansen said Thursday. “Now we have one of the most powerful men in America, Harry Reid, saying that they ought to be in prison.

“Is Harry Reid the judge in this case or is he trying to improperly influence and poison the jury pool so that they will follow his opinion when they get to the jury box?”

Bundy, 69, and 18 other people, including four of his sons, were charged in a federal indictment in Las Vegas last month in connection with the 2014 Bunkerville showdown.

All 19 defendants have been ordered held without bail as dangers to the community.

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The defendants are alleged to have participated in a “massive armed assault” on Bureau of Land

Management officers trying to round up Bundy cattle being grazed illegally on federal land.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/las-vegas/harry-reid-attacks-bundys-senate-floor-calls-gold-butte-protection>



Reid promises designation where Bundy cows roam

Writer: Phil Taylor

Published: April 7, 2016

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) today said he'll coax President Obama to designate hundreds of thousands of acres of scenic Nevada desert surrounding Cliven Bundy's ranch as a national monument, a move Reid said is now possible thanks to the rancher's recent arrest.

Reid has previously pushed legislation to designate a 350,000-acre Gold Butte National Conservation Area as well as 220,000 acres of wilderness protections within it, but it has stalled without the support of Sen. Dean Heller (R-NV).

"Because of this legislation and now the fact that the Bundys are all in jail, I'm going to reach out to the White House, and I guarantee we'll get it done," Reid said in a speech this morning on the Senate floor. "That's for sure, to see if President Obama will protect this area."

Reid's office later issued a press release walking back the senator's statement, saying there's "no guarantee" the president will act.

"We'll see if President Obama will protect this area," Reid said in the written statement.

Gold Butte, an arid mesa of Joshua trees, creosote bushes and Native American petroglyphs, is a favorite spot for hikers and campers thanks to its proximity to Las Vegas about 80 miles to the southwest.

Bundy for decades has used the lands to graze hundreds of cattle without a permit, stifling government restoration efforts and scientific research. When the Bureau of Land Management tried to remove the cattle two years ago, Bundy enlisted hundreds of supporters -- scores of them armed -- to force the agency to retreat.

Conservation groups, including the footwear company Keen, have been prodding Obama to protect the area using his authority under the 1906 Antiquities Act.

Reid's involvement is notable, given his sway in the Oval Office. Reid took credit for prodding Obama last summer to designate the 700,000-acre Basin and Range National Monument in Nevada, a sweeping expanse of rugged mountains and sagebrush valleys that encompasses artist Michael Heizer's massive "City" project.

Last summer, Reid, who is set to retire at the end of this session, told the Las Vegas Review-Journal he was taking a break from pushing executive protections and would let the Gold Butte proposal "work its way through the system."

It appears that with the FBI's arrest of Bundy on Feb. 10 in Portland, Ore., and separate arrests of four of his sons, his bodyguard and roughly a dozen others involved in the 2014 Gold Butte standoff, Reid has changed his stance.

The monument proposal is clearly on the White House's radar. In February 2015, Interior Deputy Secretary Michael Connor attended a public meeting in Las Vegas with Reid and Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev.) to discuss their proposals to protect Nevada's public lands, including Gold Butte.

Such a designation would be controversial given Republican opposition to the president's use of the Antiquities Act, and particularly given Gold Butte's symbolism as a rallying point for anti-government activists.

An email to a Heller spokesman was not immediately returned this morning, but the senator has long opposed a monument designation.

"The use of your authority under the Antiquities Act would not serve the area well and would escalate anger and frustrations with the Department of the Interior government in a region of our state where tensions are already presently high," Heller said in a letter to Obama in summer 2014.

Republicans are trying to include language in this year's spending bills that would restrict Obama's ability to ban energy development and mining under the act.

Reid this morning argued protections are needed to preserve Gold Butte's tribal sites and its "stunning" Joshua trees. He displayed photos of petroglyphs he said had been drawn over, shot at and stolen.

Obama "has the authority, as any president does, to stop this sort of destruction and stop it now," Reid

said. "Congress created the Antiquities Act to empower the president to protect our culture, our historic and natural resources when and where Congress cannot or will not."

Monument designations do not appropriate more money to federal lands agencies, but they do tend to give protected lands higher priority when agencies allocate funding and personnel like law enforcement.

Obama has used the act 22 times to set aside 265 million acres of federally administered lands and waters, more than any other president. Excluding his ocean monuments, Obama has protected nearly 4 million acres of Western land, more than all other presidents except Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

Reid yesterday touted a report commissioned by the Small Business Majority, a left-leaning advocacy group, that highlighted the local economic benefits of national monuments designated by Obama (Greenwire, April 6).



Senator Reid's Floor Speech: We Must Protect Nevada's Gold Butte, Lands Across America

Speaker: Senator Reid

Published: April 7, 2016

"Congress created the Antiquities Act to empower the president to protect our cultural, historic and natural resources when and where Congress cannot – or will not. Many of our current national parks were created using this authority... Unfortunately, many Senate Republicans want to undermine the Antiquities Act. They refuse to defend our cultural and historic antiquities that are being systematically destroyed."

"Because of trouble caused by the Bundys and their pals, the federal employees tasked with safely guarding these antiquities were prevented from doing their jobs. These employees have been under constant physical and mental threat for doing what the American people have tasked them to do."

"I've tried to protect Gold Butte for a long time. And the reason we haven't been able to do anything to this point is that the Bundy boys and his pals. So that's why I'm grateful for the Antiquities Act. Because of this legislation and because of the fact that the Bundys are in jail, I'm going to reach out to the White House. And there's no guarantee we'll get it done. We'll see if President Obama will protect this area. He has the authority, as any president does, to stop this sort of destruction and stop it now."

Washington, D.C. – Nevada Senator Harry Reid spoke on the Senate floor today about the need to protect and preserve Gold Butte in Nevada and other sites throughout the nation. Below are his remarks:

I'm grateful that the presiding officer today is from the state of Nevada, my friend, the junior Senator

from Nevada. When I think of home, I think of the desert.

You can't talk about Nevada as a desert only, even though the vast majority of the state is a very arid place. We also have the beautiful Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Ruby Mountains. We are the most mountainous state in the union except Alaska with 314 separate mountain ranges. We have 32 mountains over 11,000 feet high. We have one mountain that we share with California that is almost 14,000 feet high. It is a beautiful state.

But today, I'm going to focus on some of those arid places, places where I was born and raised. Having been back here in Washington for such a long time – 37 years – I think of the blue skies that are so prevalent in Nevada. They hover over a canvas. No one could paint a picture as beautiful as that, of these mountains in the middle of the desert, these Joshua trees or of the sagebrush.

It is that beauty that's drawing thousands of visitors to Nevada and Nevada's wilderness every year. Yesterday, the Reno Gazette-Journal wrote an article reporting how important this industry is to our country:

"The big time solitude found in the big empty spaces of the western U.S. generates big money for regional economies.

"That's according to a study that attempts to put a dollar value on 'quiet recreation' on Bureau of Land Management property.

"It found that sports like hiking and mountain biking on BLM land generated more than \$1.8

billion in spending in 2014, that's roughly equivalent to two months of gambling revenue in Las Vegas casinos."

Our public lands are jewels that we must protect.

To its credit, the Bureau of Land Management and their dedicated employees do a remarkable job in safeguarding these national treasures so that Americans can enjoy them.

When I was first elected, the Bureau of Land Management was on par with the internal revenue service. No one liked them. Now they are admired. They've done a remarkably good job to take care of public lands.

John Sterling, the Executive Director of The Conservation Alliance, told the Reno Gazette-Journal, quote:

"The BLM is the final frontier for a primitive experience on our public lands. They represent the future of outdoor recreation."

Most Americans are familiar with what happened earlier this year in Oregon. The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon was taken over. A dangerous group of militants staged an armed takeover of the refuge, they came with their canvas shirts and their camouflage pants and their guns and their all-terrain vehicles to take over the federal property. And they did. They damaged the refuge to

the tune of about, maybe \$20 million: defecating on some of the ruins in the facility and stopping the Native Americans from being able to do their annual fishing.

This particular episode of domestic terrorism has roots in Nevada, I'm sorry to say. They were led by the sons of Cliven Bundy. Cliven who, as we speak, is where he should be – in jail. Two of his sons are in jail, too, having participated in the unlawful takeover. Cliven Bundy is a Nevadan who has been breaking federal laws for decades.

I'm disappointed that some of my colleagues supported this outrageous lawbreaker. Teddy Roosevelt created this national wildlife refuge in Oregon. This radical president, Theodore Roosevelt – and I say that sarcastically because he wasn't. He was a great president. He created this refuge in 1908. Roosevelt used the tools at his disposal as president – including the Antiquities Act – to protect our national heritage so that generations of Americans could enjoy it.

Congress created the Antiquities Act to empower the president to protect our cultural, historic and natural resources when and where Congress cannot – or will not. Many of our current national parks were created using this authority. In fact, 16 presidents – eight Democrats and eight Republicans – have used this authority to protect these lands for the benefit of the American people. Even George W. Bush used the Antiquities Act.

http://www.reid.senate.gov/press_releases/2016-04-07-reid-we-must-protect-nevadas-gold-butte-lands-across-america



Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Brandon Willis

Published: April 6, 2016

I was pleased to read Henry Brean's article about the return of Nevadan pioneer Arthur Coleman's remains to his original grave site in Gold Butte ("Ceremony marks pioneer's return to Gold Butte grave," March 29). In addition to grave robbing, the recent chaos in Gold Butte has led to illegal

development and road building, the vandalism of petroglyphs and the destruction of cultural sites.

Every day that Gold Butte is not protected we are losing valuable cultural, historical and natural resources. Now is the time to protect Gold Butte.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters/letters-don-t-put-blame-retired-workers>



Capitol Hill buzz: Harry Reid talks monuments, jabs at Republicans

Writer: Matthew Daly
Published: April 6, 2016

WASHINGTON — Harry Reid loves national monuments designated by President Barack Obama. The Senate Democratic leader on Wednesday highlighted the economic and cultural benefits of monuments, including the 704,000-acre Basin and Range National Monument created last year in Reid's home state of Nevada.

Reid called the area, with its lunar-like landscapes and centuries-old rock art, "stunningly beautiful" and said it "represents the Nevada I love and was born in."

But even as he and fellow Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich of New Mexico recited benefits brought by the 22 national monuments Obama has created since 2009, Reid could not resist partisan jabs at Republicans, who have accused Obama of sneaky land grabs that bypass Congress and ignore the interests of local residents.

"I don't know what people are complaining about. Maybe they have nothing better to complain about," Reid said at a Capitol Hill news conference.

"There are certain things that need to be done," Reid said, but a "do-nothing Congress led by the Republicans filibustering everything" has given Obama and congressional Democrats "little

opportunity to do things constructively, legislatively."

Obama had "no choice" but to step up his use of executive orders — including his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect national monuments, Reid said. "I've been in Congress a long time and there's never been anything like it with this obstruction."

A report released by a business group Wednesday said 10 national monuments created by Obama since 2012 have an economic impact of \$156 million a year and support more than 1,800 jobs. The report was compiled by Small Business Majority, a Washington-based advocacy group.

While he appreciates Obama's designation of Basin and Range, Reid said he hopes the president will create at least one more monument in his state, the Gold Butte area in southern Nevada.

The ecologically fragile area is where Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed standoff against government agents two years ago.

"Now most of them are in jail so maybe we can move forward on that," Reid said

<http://lasvegassun.com/news/2016/apr/06/capitol-hill-buzz-harry-reid-talks-monuments-jabs/>



Reid praises study on economic impact of new national monuments

Writer: Jim Meyer
Published: April 6, 2016

WASHINGTON — Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid on Wednesday lauded a study linking \$156 million in economic activity to the Basin and Range National Monument and nine other monuments in four states even though figures were not available for those specific sites.

Released by the Small Business Majority, the study focused on economic benefits local businesses enjoy from increased tourism and other activities resulting from designations by President Barack Obama since 2012.

Often the areas are in rural areas, the study stated, adding that some sites have experienced a 500 percent increase in tourism after Obama's action.

Rhett Buttle, president and managing director of Small Business Majority, said information specific to the Basin and Range National Monument and the other areas was not available.

During a press conference with Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., who spoke of monuments in his home state, Reid emphasized the legacy the presidential actions will leave.

"Too often, we only view land as valuable when it is being developed, mined, drilled or logged," he said.

"But, as this report shows, we can protect the most magnificent areas of our nation while also providing real opportunities for local economies."

Reid recalled his initial conversation with the president about the Basin and Range area and the difficulty he had in describing the 704,000 acres — 1,100 square miles — in Lincoln and Nye counties

that include desert valleys, mountain ranges and both ancient and modern art.

"It is just stunningly beautiful," he said, citing the massive sculpture by artist Michael Heizer known as "City."

According to the study, which was conducted by BBC Research & Consulting, the annual economic benefits for the 10 monuments include \$58 million in labor income per year and roughly 1,820 jobs.

Obama's designation of the Basin and Range National Monument was not welcomed by everyone.

Critics not only saw the presidential action as another effort of control by the federal government but also suggested it could end up hurting the local economy.

When asked about such concerns Wednesday, Reid again dismissed them.

"I don't know what people are complaining about," he said, describing the lack of activity in that area since statehood.

Now, Reid said, visitors will be drawn to the area to see Heizer's work as well as the area's unique landscape.

He also defended Obama's action, saying the president had no choice because of the "do-nothing" approach taken by congressional Republicans.

"We need to do more," Reid said.

Before they both leave office in January, Reid expressed hope that the president will take action on the Gold Butte area and blamed the lack of activity on the Cliven Bundy family.

He referred to the family's legal issues and added "so maybe we can move forward on that."

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/politics/reid-praises-study-economic-impact-new-national-monuments>



Reid highlights the economic and cultural benefits of national monuments designated by Obama

Writer: Matthew Daly

Published: April 6, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — Harry Reid loves national monuments designated by President Barack Obama. The Senate Democratic leader on Wednesday highlighted the economic and cultural benefits of monuments, including the 704,000-acre Basin and Range National Monument created last year in Reid's home state of Nevada.

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"Now most of them are in jail so maybe we can move forward on that," Reid said.

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<http://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2016-04-06/capitol-hill-buzz-reid-talks-monuments-jabs-at-republicans>

Small Business Majority Monuments Report: Press Event

Published: April 6, 2016

Link to video: [click here](#). Senator Reid's language on Gold Butte starts @ 19:00.





Reid touts report on monuments' economic benefits

Writer: Corbin Hiar

Published: April 6, 2016

Senate Democrats today touted a report highlighting the local economic benefits of national monuments designated by President Obama. They also used it as a chance to push back on skeptics of public land. "Too often, we only view land as valuable when it is being developed, mined, drilled or logged," Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said during a Capitol Hill news conference. "But, as this report shows, we can protect the most magnificent areas of our nation while also providing real opportunities for local economies."

Conducted by BBC Research & Consulting for Small Business Majority, a left-leaning advocacy group, the report found a strong link between the protection of public lands and economic growth.

The review focused on 10 of the 22 national monuments Obama has designated under the Antiquities Act, a century-old law that allows the president to protect lands or sites without the approval of Congress.

The study classified them as "natural and cultural" monuments that are mainly in rural areas where local economies and small businesses are particularly reliant on income from tourism and outdoor recreation.

One example that Reid cited was the Basin and Range National Monument, 700,000 acres of Nevada desert that sits in an picturesque valley framed by mountains (E&E Daily, July 10, 2015).

Those monuments have a total economic impact of \$156 million per year, drive approximately \$58 million in labor income per year and support about 1,820 jobs annually, the report said.

The economic analysis excluded the eight "historical" national monuments the president has established, such as the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument on Maryland's Eastern Shore (E&ENews PM, March 23, 2013).

"The vast majority of historical national monuments are still in development and are offering only limited programs or limited visitor hours," the report explained. "As such, visitation data for those monuments are unavailable and/or do not provide an accurate account of the full monument visitation."

The report added, "An economic valuation at this stage for those historical monuments is likely to significantly understate the long term economic importance of those monuments."

The document also left out the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument because it offers no opportunities for visitation. And the three California desert national monuments that Obama protected earlier this year came after the report's drafting (Greenwire, Feb. 12).

Senators slam Bishop, Bundys

The report comes amid growing hostility to federal control of lands in the Republican-controlled Congress, and among some leaders and activists in the West.

Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), who joined Reid and members of Small Business Majority at the news conference, pushed back on congressional objections to presidential monument designations by pointing to the local support for the Rio Grande

del Norte National Monument in the northern part of his state.

"Some of the same objections, I would point out Congressman [Rob] Bishop being the lead, said this is a terrible thing, that the president would force this national monument on the people of New Mexico," said Heinrich, referring to the Utah Republican who now leads the powerful House Natural Resources Committee.

But when then-Interior Secretary Ken Salazar visited the community near the Rio Grande monument, no one stood to oppose the designation, Heinrich said.

"I would trust local delegations to be a little more in touch with the facts on the ground than that, and certainly it has been a good thing for my constituents and the people of New Mexico," Heinrich said.

For his part, Reid took aim at the most prominent anti-federal-land activists in the country and went as

far as to advocate for a new monument in their backyard.

"We need to do more. I'm looking at something in Nevada. I hope the president will start looking at it. It's called Gold Butte. It is ... stunningly unique," he said. "The reason the president hasn't had an opportunity to look at that very closely was because that was where the Bundy family raised the hell that they did. Now, of course, most of them are in jail."

In 1993, the Bureau of Land Management restricted Cliven Bundy from using Gold Butte for grazing his cattle, but Bundy refused to comply. He then stopped paying his grazing fees and allowed the cows to run free for decades, despite multiple federal court orders that called for their removal.

Ultimately, Bundy and two of his sons were indicted earlier this year on 16 felony charges for their roles in an armed standoff with BLM at his Bunkerville, Nev., ranch in April 2014, which began when federal officials tried to impound the family's cattle (Greenwire, Feb. 18).



Protecting Gold Butte

Guest Writer: Jim Boone

Published: April 1, 2016

I read with interest Henry Brean's article on Gold Butte ("Ceremony marks pioneer's return to Gold Butte grave," Tuesday Review-Journal). Mr. Brean wrote: "His grave was dug up sometime in April 2014, right around the time of the now-infamous standoff near Bunkerville between the Bureau of Land Management and rogue rancher Cliven Bundy."

While it is nice to see the community come out for this reinterment, it is worth pointing out that the desecration occurred when law enforcement was highly focused on Bunkerville. Acts such as this

desecration and other recent insults upon the land (wanton vehicle damage to signed sensitive plant habitat, chopping down Joshua trees, etc.) go to show that the area needs permanent protection, before all of the historic sites and more of the natural sites are damaged.

Permanent protection will bring financial resources benefiting the landscape (pit toilets, signs, road maintenance) and the surrounding communities (contract jobs in Gold Butte, travel industry jobs, etc.).

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters/letters-answer-taxes-not-good-one>



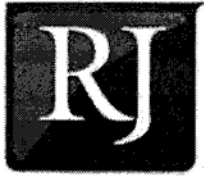
Protections Needed

Guest Writer: Jesy simons

Submitted: March 30, 2016

I was glad to read that the Gold Butte grave vandalism that happened in 2014 was finally made right in this week's article *Ceremony marks pioneer's return to Gold Butte grave*. There so much history in Gold Butte, both ancient and recent. Many visitors are drawn to the breathtaking petroglyphs but the area provides a trip through time at places like the Gold Butte town-site and other spots to witness evidence of our more recent history.

The reinternment ceremony held last week is a step in the right direction to preserve our heritage and set a precedent that this destruction will not be tolerate by Americans. We need to send a clear message that our heritage and our history is precious and worthy of protection. National Monument status is the precise designation Gold Butte deserves. We need to do it now before the pages of the history book found in Gold Butte are ripped away and lost forever.



Ceremony marks pioneer's return to Gold Butte grave

Writer: Henry Brean

Published: March 28, 2016

Almost two years after his grave was disturbed near the ghost town of Gold Butte, Arthur Coleman is back where he belongs.

About 30 area residents gathered at the remote grave site Saturday to remember Coleman and return his remains to the ground about 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas.

His grave was dug up sometime in April 2014, right around the time of the now-infamous standoff near Bunkerville between the Bureau of Land Management and rogue rancher Cliven Bundy.

Authorities still don't know who disturbed the small burial plot or why.

Saturday's gathering was all about setting things right.

Logandale native Lindsey Dalley, who helped organize the reinterment, said the crowd included residents of all ages from the Virgin and Moapa valleys.

People began showing up at about 9 a.m. with shovels and potluck dishes. They lingered until 3 p.m., swapping stories about Coleman and his longtime friend and business partner, William Garrett.

The two men met in Gold Butte around 1916, after the mining camp had seen its post office close and its fortunes fade.

Coleman and Garrett would spend the next four decades there, running cattle, scratching for gold

and brewing moonshine around the home they shared in the ruins of the camp.

They made for an odd team: Coleman, a 5-foot-1 miner, and Garrett, a notorious 6-foot-1 rancher out of Texas whose uncle may have been the famed lawman who shot Billy the Kid. Locals took to calling the pair "the long and the short of it."

The men lived at Gold Butte until Coleman's death in 1958 at age 82. Garrett died three years later, at age 81, and joined his old friend in the ground behind their home.

Years later, their plots were fenced and marked with engraved headstones.

Dalley grew up across the Virgin River from the rugged country Coleman and Garrett called home, and he described the two men as "the hub on the wheel of history" in northeastern Clark County. "It's like the river of time is flowing through there, and these guys were the anchor point for our two communities," he said.

The Clark County coroner's office collected the bones left scattered around the grave site on April 23, 2014, the day after the damage was reported to authorities.

Coroner John Fudenberg said DNA testing was unsuccessful, but investigators were able to determine that the remains belonged to an adult man and had been previously embalmed.

Fudenberg's office released the remains to the BLM in late October, and the BLM turned them over for

burial by the Moapa Valley Mortuary and a local nonprofit called Partners in Conservation.

Dalley said the same “common-sense conservation group” was responsible for filling Coleman’s grave back in after investigators were done with it in 2014.

A church contingent from Bunkerville led Saturday’s graveside service. The mortuary in Moapa Valley donated a pair of thick, concrete burial vault lids that should keep anyone else from digging up the graves at Gold Butte. “If they do, they’ll have to earn it,” Dalley said.

Near the end of Saturday’s ceremony, Dalley spotted a truck rumbling down the dirt road toward them towing a rusted Model A Ford pickup on a trailer.

It turned out to be Coleman’s old Model A. He had left it in his will to a neighboring ranch family almost 60 years earlier, so a member of the family towed it down from St. George, Utah, for the memorial.

“You could have brushed me over with a feather when that thing showed up,” Dalley said. “It was like history had come alive and was standing there in front of you.”

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/nevada/ceremony-marks-pioneer-s-return-gold-butte-grave>



Protect the petroglyphs

Guest Writer: Carlos Torres

Published: March 24, 2016

In "Finding the past in Southern Utah," the story about a gentleman who wants to carve his mark into Gold Butte stood out. We saw actress Vanessa Hudgens get in trouble for carving her name in Sedona recently and new vandalism in nearby Gold Butte happens weekly. Visitors graffiti over ancient petroglyphs, thus preventing others from enjoy them in their intended state.

There are other ways to leave your "mark" without damaging cultural and historic sites. More people knew Hudgens visited Sedona because of her social media post than would have ever known she was

there had she just carved her name into the park's rocks. There are many ways in today's world to leave your mark, from signing your name in a visitor log to posting pictures of your experience on social media. There is no need to damage the land and spoil it for future visitors.

Sadly, not all public land visitors see it this way. That's why if we truly want to protect Gold Butte, we must act now to permanently protect it. We cannot wait as petroglyphs continue to be spoiled by those attempting to leave their mark.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/opinion/mesquite/2016/03/24/letters-editor/82104982/>



Economics, Public Lands, & Tourism We Are Missing Out On

Guest Writer: Christian Gerlach

Submitted: March 16, 2016

The Las Vegas Sun just published an article “The future of tourism: Our fortress of cards” that reveals some amazing insights into the potential economic future of our local economy. Mr. Morris’ article sheds light on what tourists do while on holiday. Among the facts were that fewer tourists are gambling, and are instead relying on alternative forms of entertainment to enjoy Sin City.

Of the premiere forms of recreation now being enjoyed more by tourists is outdoor recreation. The Outdoor Retailers Association, an association of businesses directly benefiting from the American people’s shared ownership of public lands, puts Nevada’s outdoor recreation economy at \$14.9 billion a year. This accounts for some 148,000 jobs

both directly and indirectly created by tourists who love of Nevada’s share of America’s public lands. The fact is that tourists love Nevada for our natural beauty. Who wouldn’t? Las Vegas itself is surrounded by some of the most awe-inspiring natural wonders our world has to offer. Drive only five hours away from Las Vegas and you can be in one of 25 different national parks, wildlife refuges, or national monuments.

We in Nevada have a history of tourism and protecting public lands. That is why it is absolutely vital that we promote further visitation of Nevada and the region by protecting more beautiful landscapes, landscapes like Gold Butte. By preserving these unique places we not only benefit our environment, we benefit our pocketbook.



Gold Butte speaker series to focus on hummingbirds

Writer: Staff Writer

Published: March 14, 2016

Hummingbirds will be the focus of the Friends of Gold Butte Speaker Series on Wednesday night at the Mesquite Community Theatre, 150 N. Yucca St.

Citizen scientists Ned and Gigi Batchelder and wildlife photographer David Boyarski will talk about their adventures of banding and photographing hummingbirds in Southern Nevada during the 45-minute program. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; the presentation begins at 7 p.m.

“In the spring, we start to see hummingbirds zipping about in Gold Butte,” said Jaina Moan, executive director of the Friends of Gold Butte, a non-profit organization with a mission to achieve permanent protection for Gold Butte’s biological,

geological and cultural resources through education, community outreach and advocacy. “We are excited to deepen our understanding of the behaviors and migration of these tiny, fascinating creatures.”

The Gold Butte Speaker Series is a monthly event held September-November and January-April each year. Topics in the series focus on educational, scientific, cultural and recreational issues relevant to the Gold Butte region. All presentations are free and open the public.

For information, go online to friendsofgoldbutte.org/events-2/education-program/.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2016/03/14/gold-butte-speaker-series-focus-hummingbirds/81775642/>



Candidates need to protect public lands

Guest Writer: Sasha Illic

Submitted: March 7, 2016

I appreciated Lucas Thomas's reporting on the candidates discussion in Mesquite ("Democrats make their pitch in CD4" March 2, 2016 The Spectrum). Representative Hardy is the lone sheep when it comes to his stance on Public Lands. Every other candidate has got it right. Places like Gold Butte should be protected before the history & culture found only there are lost forever. Like Kihuen was quoted as saying in the article, we need to make Gold Butte a National Monument before it's too late.

We also need to be clear when we talk about the Senate Joint Resolution 1 from last year. It was not, as Lucas Thomas said in this article, "a resolution that would restore public lands back to the state of Nevada." SJR1 was an attack on America's Public Lands, a ploy to steal land from all Americans and sell it off to the highest bidder to be privatized and lock Nevadans out. Kihuen had it right, Nevada can't afford to get into the business of land management, and we wouldn't, our public lands would be sold, cheaply. Another reason we need a strong supporter of Public Lands in that congressional office



Congressman should care about public lands

Guest Writer: Eric Roberts

Submitted: March 4, 2016

I'm a resident of Congressional District 4 and I think Rubin Kihuen hit the nail on the head in Ben Botkin's "Mesquite's congressman sends memo to Demo challengers while they're in town" (March 1, 2016 Review Journal). My representative, Congressman Hardy, is doing an incredible disservice to my fellow CD4 residents when he could care less about America's Public Lands. They make up a huge percentage of our district. I want to echo and expand on what Kihuen was getting at in regards to Gold Butte.

Gold Butte is a tremendous place worthy of National Park designation in our own backyard! The last few years the BLM and recreationists have been scared off of our Public Lands by a welfare rancher with guns while this sacred place hangs in the balance. Enough is enough. Make Gold Butte a National Monument and give it the protection it deserves.



Democrats make their pitch in CD4

Writer: Lucas Thomas

Published: March 2, 2016

Lucy Flores made it clear why she and three other Democrats are seeking election in Nevada's 4th Congressional District.

"This race is critically important, and we shouldn't have lost it in 2014," Flores said Monday night during the candidates' one-hour forum at the Wolf Creek Golf Club. "So ensuring that one of us makes sure we get it back from Cresent Hardy, I think, is the No. 1 goal."

It's election season, and the Nevada State Democratic Party has its sights set clearly on Hardy's seat in congress — a challenge that the Mesquite Republican welcomes, literally, in his native Virgin Valley. Following Monday's forum, which was organized by Let's Talk Nevada and the Virgin Valley Democrats, Hardy's campaign manager, Ross Hemminger, handed out information to the four Democratic challengers that included a business and visitor guide, a city map and a letter that Flores and State Sen. Ruben Kihuen both described as "snarky."

In front of a partisan crowd of about 100 people, Flores, Kihuen, Las Vegas philanthropist and political newcomer Susie Lee and former Assembly speaker John Ocegüera covered an array of issues, including two issues — the protection of Nevada's public lands, including Gold Butte south of Mesquite, and the potential for economic growth in southern Nevada — that are tied closely together.

"First and foremost, not only in Mesquite, but in all of Nevada, we need to create incentives for good paying jobs. Nevada has notoriously been at the top of the bad lists and bottom of the good lists and for once with renewable energy, we have an opportunity to be at the top of a good list," Lee said.

"That offers a lot of opportunity not only in Mesquite but in many of our rural areas and throughout Nevada with our abundance of solar energy."

A former assemblywoman, Flores noted the importance of Nevada's land capabilities in aiding economic growth, as well.

"It has historical significance, it's got environmental significance, and it's got economic significance," Flores said when asked about permanent protection for Gold Butte, which Hardy has consistently opposed. "Ensuring that all of those interests are met by protecting Gold Butte is critical to the economy and the community here in Mesquite."

Kihuen also tied economic development to local environmental issues.

"I plan on continuing the work Sen. [Harry] Reid started in designating some of to these areas as national monuments," Kihuen said of Gold Butte. "We have all of this open land, particularly the 4th Congressional District, that if it's given back to the state, we cannot afford it," he said explaining why he voted against a resolution that would restore public lands back to the state of Nevada.

The candidates discussed a variety of other issues, including gun control, legalized marijuana and even the potential of professional sports in Clark County. In early April, T-Mobile Arena, a 20,000-seat arena on the Las Vegas Strip, which has been closely associated with businessman Bill Foley's plan to bring an NHL franchise to Sin City, is scheduled to open. The NFL's Oakland Raiders have tentatively explored the idea of relocating the franchise to Las Vegas, as well.

"We've reinvented ourselves in this state many, many times. I think a professional sports team would be the next step," Ocegüera said. "We have to keep reinventing this economy and reinvigorating it, but it's how we pay for that."

He added, "I wouldn't be in favor of public financing."

Despite the candidates' common ground, the forum did get testy at times.

When Flores was unable to recall specific details of a 2011 bill that she voted on, Lee told the audience, "When I vote on something, I will know exactly what I'm voting on."

Immediately, Flores countered, "When you're in the legislature, you deal with hundreds, if not thousands of bills, each session," noting that it's nearly impossible to sift through every detail of every bill.

But, minor differences aside, the four candidates largely toed the Democratic line and reiterated their stance that the 4th Congressional District should not be represented by a Republican.

"I don't think the guy that's representing me in this district is doing a good job," Ocegüera said when asked why he was seeking election. "Whether we're talking about things like Planned Parenthood, whether we're talking about issues with our public land ... [Hardy] votes the wrong way on those issues."

Flores described Hardy as an "extremist," grouping him in with Tea Party Republicans, and Lee noted that Hardy had been named by the Human Rights Campaign as "one of the faces of inequality" in Congress.

"We have a congressman who is part of that wealthy and the elite," Kihuen said of Hardy, adding that "he's part of that system that has rigged the economy against people like you and I."

After distributing what he called a "welcome" packet to the four Democratic challengers, none of

whom live in Mesquite, Hemminger responded to their criticism of Hardy.

"While Congressman Hardy is busy working on behalf of the 4th District, Democrats are recycling their playbook of desperate, negative attacks," he said. "Congressman Hardy's record of fighting for his district speaks for itself, and public polls show that (the people) approve of the job he is doing."

In his note to each Democrat, Hardy wrote, "Welcome to Mesquite. As a life-long resident of the Virgin Valley, I am so proud of all that we have to offer here. I suspect it may take you some time to learn about the area, so I have included a guidebook for your reading pleasure. I hope you enjoy campaigning here as much as I have enjoyed actually living here."

The next day, Kihuen responded with a note of his own, challenging Hardy to a debate on Gold Butte. His note read, "The photo (on the front of Mesquite Chamber of Commerce guide) was taken just north of one of my favorite areas in all of Southern Nevada, Gold Butte. Ironically, in your zeal to score political points you highlighted one of our biggest disagreements, your unconscionable position that we should not protect our public lands."

Preceding the CD4 forum, Commission District B candidates Marilyn Kirkpatrick, the incumbent, and Steve Ross, the challenger, discussed many of the same issues, including public lands and economic development, during a 45-minute session.

"How can we best preserve them so that folks can use them on a regular basis, take pride in them because there are many wonderful things out there, and ensure for the long term that they have the ability to use those 100 years from now?" Kirkpatrick said of the Silver State's open spaces.

On the potential for economic boosters in Mesquite, Ross said, "What I've seen over the past several years is that lack of support that the county has not given the municipalities within its borders. Mesquite, especially, there are so many golden

opportunities I see whether it's economic development or job creation," Ross said.

The primary election is June 14 and the general election is Nov. 8.

<http://www.thespectrum.com/story/news/local/mesquite/2016/03/02/democrats-make-their-pitch-cd4/81213260/>



Mesquite's congressman sends memo to Demo challengers while they're in town

Writer: Ben Botkin

Published: March 1, 2016

The campaigns of U.S. Rep. Cresent Hardy, R-Nevada, and four Democratic contenders for his seat had an unscheduled meeting in Mesquite.

The four Democrats participated in a forum Monday night in Mesquite, which is in the 4th Congressional District. An unexpected guest showed up, bearing a friendly greeting from the congressman. He was Ross Hemminger, Hardy's campaign manager.

Hemminger passed along letters to the candidates welcoming them to Mesquite. Hardy has the distinction of being the only candidate in the race to live in Mesquite. As an added bonus, Hardy tossed in a Mesquite Chamber of Commerce guidebook to the Virgin Valley. The not-so-subtle but friendly dig suggested the candidates might need help getting familiar with the region.

The pool of Democratic candidates includes Lucy Flores, a former state assemblywoman; Ruben Kihuen, a state senator; philanthropist Susie Lee; and John Ocegüera, a former Assembly speaker.

"As a lifelong resident of the Virgin Valley, I am so proud of all that we have to offer here," Hardy wrote in a short letter to Kihuen, obtained by the Review-Journal. "I suspect it may take you some time to learn about the area, not being from the district, so I have included a guidebook for your reading pleasure. I hope you will enjoy campaigning in the 4th District as much as I have enjoyed actually living here."

Kihuen doesn't live in the congressional district, though there's no requirement for congressional

candidates to do so and it's not unusual for candidates to live outside a congressional district.

Kihuen responded swiftly with a letter to Hardy on Tuesday, challenging the congressman to join the four Democratic candidates in Mesquite for a forum to discuss Gold Butte.

Conservationists have called for protections for Gold Butte, a roughly 350,000-acre area two hours northeast of Las Vegas known for wide desert vistas, petroglyphs and other unique landscape features. Hardy has said he would "fight tooth and nail" against proposed wilderness designations for the area.

Kihuen told Hardy that the area's natural resources need protections and urged him to "join the effort to protect Gold Butte," noting the Mesquite guidebook's cover showed the moon rising over a mesa northwest of Mesquite.

"The photo was taken just north of one of my favorite areas in all of Southern Nevada, Gold Butte," Kihuen wrote. "Ironically, in your zeal to score political points you highlighted one of our biggest disagreements, your unconscionable position that we should not protect our public lands."

Hardy's seat is one of a handful of congressional seats that Democrats hope to pick up in the November election. The district stretches across six rural counties and North Las Vegas.

It's unclear if that forum will actually take place, and Kihuen's campaign is still waiting for a response. If it happens, Kihuen's suggested dates

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are the week of March 7 or the week of March 28.
Congress is in recess both weeks.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/politics/mesquite-s-congressman-sends-memo-demo-challengers-while-they-re-town>



UNLV Wilderness Club seeks protection for Gold Butte

Writer: Jacob Lasky

Published: February 29, 2016

Often referred to as “Nevada’s piece of the grand canyon” the Gold Butte area has been subject to neglect and vandalism over the last few years — but one club at UNLV hopes to reverse that harm.

UNLV’s Wilderness Club began last semester as an effort to raise awareness about protecting Gold Butte and other natural wonders in Nevada.

“I wanted to start UNLV Wilderness to get college students, mainly here on campus, knowing about places like Gold Butte...and helping out with the environment,” said Michaela Tomchek, the club’s president and founder.

Gold Butte is about 100 miles northeast of Las Vegas near Mesquite and is designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern by the Bureau of Land Management.

The area consists of 350,000 acres of land that is home to an abundance of rock formations, petroglyphs and wildlife and remnants from the Gold Butte ghost town.

The area received notable media tension in 2014 when rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed standoff against federal forces in a dispute over grazing rights in the area.

Despite some federal recognition, the land has fallen to vandalism.

Bundy was recently indicted on federal charges related the standoff in the area.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) condemned Bundy and his actions in Gold Butte in February during a press conference at UNLV.

“He’s already hurt Gold Butte, he’s hurt a lot of things, but hopefully we can get beyond that,” Reid said.

However the Bundys are not the only people causing serious harm to the area’s petroglyph sites and rock formations with firearms.

The first thing noticed by Sebastian Sandqvist, UNLV Nature Club vice president, while driving to one of the petroglyph with the wilderness club, was a bullet-ridden site map of the area.

“We drove up to one of the petroglyph sites, and those petroglyphs had actually been shot at as well, which is terrible,” Sandqvist said.

Sandqvist feels that area deserves more protection due to its historical value and close proximity. Tomchek is disappointed by vandalism in the area too.

“The carelessness that occurs there is very heartbreaking,” Tomchek said. “People should come there solely to appreciate the beautiful lands that we have.”

The Wilderness Club feels that Gold Butte should receive more protection similar to areas like Red Rock Canyon.

Tomchek and other members collected over 150 petitions last semester to bring attention to protection efforts in Gold Butte. She hopes the club can recruit more signatures and people to the club now that the weather has been warming up.

The club is also affiliated with Friends of Gold Butte, a nonprofit organization in Nevada devoted

to preservation efforts in Gold Butte, and took two field trips out to the area last semester.

The recent media attention concerning Bundy and his family is something that Tomchek would rather not associate Gold Butte with, however.

“Gold Butte should not be looked as a place where the Bundy’s are,” Tomchek said. “We want it to be looked at as our piece of the Grand Canyon, and we want it to be explored and cherished.”

Among state politicians who have been supportive of conservation efforts in the area are Sen. Reid (D-NV) and Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV).

However, the Wilderness Club would like to encourage more political support for conservation efforts.

“Protecting these lands should not be a partisan issue,” Tomchek said. “Our goal is to get both parties on board with protecting these beautiful lands.”

Tomchek said she feels that if the land received more federal recognition it would have a positive impact on Nevada’s economy.

The Wilderness Club has grown to around 50 members since its formation.

The club plans on taking more field trips out to Gold Butte this semester, as well as participating in other conservation efforts in areas like Lake Mead, Red Rock Canyon and Sloan Canyon.

<http://www.unlvrebelyell.com/2016/02/29/unlv-wilderness-club-seeks-protection-for-gold-butte/>



Gold Butte could draw visitors, too

Guest Writer: Dana Higgins
Submitted: February 25, 2016

I read with interest the editorial "The great Lake Mead" (Feb.24). It notes the popularity of Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Red Rock, Valley of Fire "and more" in drawing visitors to the Las Vegas area. If Gold Butte, Nevada's piece of the Grand Canyon, were to be accorded the permanent protection it so richly deserves, it could also be more widely marketed to visitors attracted to the

beauty and cultural heritage of southern Nevada. Let's not just include it in "and more". Let's ask Congress to approve National Conservation Area designation for Gold Butte, so that we can get the resources to protect and market Gold Butte and to provide for a visitors' center and facilities for those who would come.



Indian Country
TODAY MEDIA NETWORK.com

Battle Over Federal Land Surfaces In Presidential Debate

Writer: Mark Trahant

Published: February 24, 2016

Ted Cruz just joined the Sage Brush Rebellion.

A new 30-second spot, “Nevada Land,” says the land belongs to the people of Nevada, “not Washington bureaucrats.” To make his point Cruz features a picture of cattle grazing, presumably on federal lands. “If you trust me with your vote, I will return full control of Nevada’s lands to its rightful owners, its citizens. Count on it.”

Count on it? Rightful owners? The whole Sagebrush Rebel narrative misses the point that tribes in the region have called the area home for more than 10,000 years and if there’s any claim to rightful ownership then it’s the first owners who have the rightful claim.

Indeed as the MSNBC Town Hall on Thursday night, former Moapa Tribal Chairman William Anderson asked Sen. Bernie Sanders about more land that ought to have stronger federal protection.

“My people, the Nuwuvi, the Southern Paiutes here, we’re trying to go ahead work towards Gold Butte as a national monument too. There is a lot of recent issues that came up here, and what I want to really ask is that there are those who oppose the American people’s ownership of public lands, and would see those lands sold to private interest. As president, how would you ensure that our public lands remain in public hands, and preserve our heritage and lives by stopping corporations from destroying Mother Earth?”

Sanders answered the question broadly.

“I don’t have to explain to you, or I hope anybody in this room, or anybody watching the outrageous

way, unfair way, that governments have treated Native Americans from day one. It is a disgrace.

“Number two, I will — you know, you’re raising issues in terms of extraction of fossil fuels, for example. I believe that climate change is one of the great challenges facing this planet, and what I have introduced legislation to do, by the way, is to say that we will not extract fossil fuels in the future from any public lands.

“Number three, I understand that it is absolutely important that the federal government do much more than it is now doing to work with the Native American community in preserving their heritage, and their way of life. And, I will do everything I can to bring that about.”

What is the Gold Butte issue about? It’s already federally-controlled land but a number of tribes, environmentalists, and Nevada cities have called for either presidential or congressional action to give permanent protection to the area’s wildlife, including desert tortoise, desert bighorn sheep, the banded Gila monster, great horned owls and a great variety of reptiles, birds and mammals, as well as protecting archaeological resources, including rock art, caves, agave roasting pits and camp sites that date back some 3,000 years.

Generally Republicans say the land should not have additional protection from the federal government and Democrats want legislation to make the monument status permanent. Nevada Sen. Dean Heller said last year that any federal action would be an escalation “in a region of our state where tensions are already presently high.”

But that's also the point of Cruz' new ad. He says Donald Trump is not sufficiently a rebel. Trump told Field and Stream magazine that he didn't like the idea of the federal government turning over land to the states. "I want to keep the lands great, and you don't know what the state is going to do. I mean, are they going to sell if they get into a little bit of trouble? And I don't think it's something that should be sold. We have to be great stewards of this land. This is magnificent land."

Stewards? Magnificent land? For sage brush rebels those are fighting words. And Gold Butte just happens to be where one Cliven Bundy and his militia supporters forced the Bureau of Land Management to back off in 2014 after threats of violence. Except the federal government was patient. Now it's Bundy who's awaiting trial. Perhaps that's why Cruz tried to capture the spirit of the movement without mentioning any names.

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/02/24/battle-over-federal-land-surfaces-presidential-debate-163527>



Indian Country
TODAY MEDIA NETWORK.com

Bernie Asked at Town Hall If He Will Protect Native Lands

Writer: Jaqueline Keeler

Published: February 22, 2016

During MSNBC's Town Hall last Thursday featuring Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, a tall Paiute man, William Anderson addressed Sanders from the audience: "There are those who oppose the American people's ownership of public lands, and would see those lands sold to private interest. As president, how would you ensure that our public lands remain in public hands, and preserve our heritage and lives by stopping corporations from destroying Mother Earth?"

Anderson, a former Moapa Paiute tribal chairman, told ICTMN that his question had been carefully vetted by the NBC producers, but he did for a moment consider asking whatever he wanted. "This is live TV and they can't edit what I say. I'll say what I have to say regarding Gold Butte."

Sanders replied by calling Native American treatment by the U.S. government a "disgrace" and reminding the audience of his "Keep It In the Ground" act he co-sponsored to "not extract fossil fuels in the future from any public lands" and promising to "do everything I can" to "work with the Native American community in preserving their heritage, and their way of life."

Sanders has also formed a Native American policy committee and promised to convene a climate change summit in the first 100 days of his presidency that will include Native representation. He is also the co-sponsor of the 2013 Violence

Against Women Act which expanded Native American jurisdiction over non-Indians in cases involving domestic violence on Native lands for the first time in over four decades. Sanders has promised to further increase tribal jurisdiction in the next authorization of the bill.

Mah'ha-gah-doo (Gold Butte) in Clark County, Nevada, the traditional homeland of the southern Paiute people, encompasses some 360,000 acres of mountains and Joshua tree and Mojave yucca forests. The highest peaks contain ponderosa pine and white fir and at lower elevations, forests of pinyon and juniper. Ancient petroglyphs and archaeological sites abound.

Gold Butte located east of Lake Mead on the Arizona border has been designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) by the Bureau of Land Management to protect critical habitat for desert tortoise and 77 plant and animal species. However, there is very little enforcement of protections offered by this designation.

A well-known opponent of protection of Gold Butte is Cliven Bundy, the infamous "welfare rancher" who led an armed standoff against the BLM in 2014. He had grazed his cattle on these public lands but refuses to pay copy million in grazing fees in protest of federal land management practices claiming measures to protect the environment and the cultural heritage of tribes is illegal under the constitution.

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/02/22/bernie-asked-town-hall-if-he-will-protect-native-lands-163497>



President Obama's Preservation Plans: What Monument Should He Save Next?

Writer: Patrick Sisson

Published: February 15, 2016

President Obama has placed more land and water under federal conservation protection than any of his predecessors, and he apparently is far from finished. The *Washington Post* reports that Obama designated more than 1.8 million acres of California desert for protection on Friday. The creation of three new national monuments—Castle Mountains, Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow—will create a contiguous preservation area in the state, bridging together Death Valley and Joshua Tree national parks and the Mojave National Preserve to form the second-largest desert preserve in the world. This comes on the heels of his actions last summer, which preserved land in Nevada, Texas, and California, including the Basin and Range National Monument, which includes artist Michael Heizer's massive "City" installation. And, according to the story, he has additional under consideration for federal protection.

Here are some of the sites or structures supposedly under consideration:

Bears Ears

Last July, leaders of five Native American tribes united to press for the preservation of this 1.9 million acre site in southern Utah on the Colorado Plateau. A diverse landscape containing myriad rivers and canyons, Bears Ears has been a traditional site of religious rituals and healing ceremonies.

Stonewall Inn

Considered the birthplace of LGBT rights, this bar on 51 Christopher Street in New York's Greenwich Village neighborhood was the site of the Stonewall Riots of 1969. A year later, the city's first Gay Pride March was held to commemorate the community's response to a police raid. The building was granted

landmark status by the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission last summer.

The New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts

Roughly 150 miles off the coast of Cape Cod, this unique underwater habitat, formed around a series of five large canyons and undersea mountains (or seamounts) that can rise 7,000 feet off the ocean floor, contain a diverse underwater ecosystem as well as coral "forests," some of which grow to lengths of seven feet or more. Conservationists have pushed for a National Monument designation for this area, the first such designation in the Atlantic, to protect it from fishing and other commercial activity.

Sewall-Belmont House

An historic home in the nation's capital, located near the Supreme Court and Senate office buildings, this residence was purchased by the National Woman's Party and used as the organization's headquarters beginning in 1929. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974.

Gold Butte

Named after a local mining town, this 360,000-acre tract of desert land in Nevada consists of rugged mountains, sandstone outcroppings and canyons.

In addition, a group of Hawaiians have been pressing the president to expand the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, created by George W. Bush, to 520,000 acres, nine times its current size.

Obama has been designating these sites using the power granted to him by the Antiquities Act of 1906, and has focused on areas that "help foster resilience to climate change" or are "connected to

people and communities that have not been historically represented in national parks and other federal sites." These designations are not without controversy; some Republican lawmakers and conservative critics have said these actions are

examples of executive overreach, while protests at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon have brought to light tensions over federal control of large tracts of land out west.

<http://curbed.com/archives/2016/02/15/obama-national-monuments-california-desert.php>

The Washington Post

Obama designates new national monuments in the California desert

Writer: Juliet Eilperin

Published: February 12, 2016

President Obama has set aside more of America's lands and waters for conservation protection than any of his predecessors, and he is preparing to do even more before he leaves office next year. The result may be one of the most expansive environmental and historic-preservation legacies in presidential history.

On Friday, Obama designated more than 1.8 million acres of California desert for protection with the creation of three national monuments: Castle Mountains, Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow. The new monuments will connect three existing sites — Death Valley and Joshua Tree national parks and the Mojave National Preserve — to create the second-largest desert preserve in the world.

Obama has unilaterally protected more than 260 million acres of America's lands and waters under the Antiquities Act of 1906, which gives the president wide latitude to safeguard at-risk federal lands that have cultural, historic or scientific value.

The act is among the most powerful tools at any president's disposal. Franklin D. Roosevelt invoked the law more than any president in history; Harold L. Ickes, his interior secretary, kept a pile of potential national-monument declarations in a desk and pulled them out whenever Roosevelt was in a good mood.

Obama's aides do not have a similar system, but they share those earlier aspirations.

"We have big, big ambitions this year, so let's see what happens," said Christy Goldfuss, managing director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, adding that the administration is focused on "local requests for

action. It's really been driven by activities on the ground."

The big question: What next?

Other possible future designations include Bears Ears, a sacred site for several Native American tribes in southeastern Utah; Stonewall, the site of a 1969 inn riot by members of New York City's gay community; the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts; the historic headquarters of the National Woman's Party, Sewall-Belmont House in Washington, D.C.; and Nevada's Gold Butte, an area where rancher Cliven Bundy and his supporters have defied federal authorities.

Officials are weighing these proposals amid protests out West, such as the armed occupation of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which aimed to wrest control of federal lands from officials in Washington. The standoff may have hurt the prospects for increased protections around the state's Owyhee Canyonlands, though the idea is not off the table entirely.

But Jim Messina, a close Obama adviser who worked on conservation issues when he served as White House deputy chief of staff in his first term, said the president is personally committed to the issue and is convinced that most Americans back the idea.

"Protecting public access is a huge political winner across the West. A bunch of extremists in Oregon can't change it," he said. "There's no thought, or no reason, to back off on our agenda."

Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.), who convinced Obama to declare a sizeable monument in Nevada's Basin and Range Province

last year, is still pressing for getting another one at Gold Butte, which is an hour's drive from Las Vegas but has been degraded and largely unpoliced since Bundy and his armed followers confronted Bureau of Land Management officials there in 2014.

Republicans have been trying to curtail Obama's powers to act, but in a year when several senators are up for reelection in swing states, they have fallen short. Last week, the Senate considered an amendment by Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) that would have reversed national-monument designations if Congress and lawmakers in the affected states did not explicitly approve them within three years of designation. Four Republicans — including Kelly Ayotte (N.H.) and Mark Kirk (Ill.) — broke ranks and voted against it, and it was defeated 48 to 47.

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) said in an interview Wednesday that he was not surprised at the vote's outcome. "Most people do not understand what Antiquities does, or can do," he said. "At some point, we have to realize this is a process that is out of control. Whether that actually occurs before Obama leaves is irrelevant."

The Obama administration and Bishop have starkly different readings of the law, which runs just four paragraphs. It dictates that any monument designation "shall be confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected," but presidents have interpreted that broadly over the past century.

The White House has identified two main criteria for naming monuments this year, Goldfuss said: areas that help foster resilience to climate change or are "connected to people and communities that have not been historically represented" in national parks and other federal sites.

That explains new California desert designations, for which Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) has been seeking protection for seven years. David Lamfrom, who directs the National Parks Conservation Association's California desert and national wildlife programs, said connecting the ecosystem across

nearly 10 million acres will help species with large ranges, such as bighorn sheep and mountain lions, as well as imperiled desert tortoises and ones that are taking refuge at higher altitudes where there is more moisture.

The idea is "to link together these large landscapes in perpetuity," Lamfrom said, so species can migrate and have the best chance of survival in the face of human pressures.

Five members — the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, the Ute Indian Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Pueblo of Zuni — have created the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to press for a monument on roughly 1.9 million acres in of Utah that were once inhabited by the Anasazi and, later, the Navajo.

Eric Descheenie, who co-chairs the coalition and serves as executive staff assistant to the Navajo Nation president, said: "We've had the looting and grave robbing and destruction of sacred sites," even as several tribes have continued to gather medicinal herbs and berries, haul wood, hunt and conduct religious ceremonies there.

In some instances, Republican lawmakers have offered their own vision of how to protect these areas, but bipartisan agreements have proven elusive. Rep. Paul Cook (R-Calif.) has introduced a California desert bill that would put more than 1.2 million acres in the region off limits to development, but it would bar the use of the Antiquities Act, open up 100,000 acres of new mining in Mojave Trails and sanction off-road vehicle use in some areas.

It is less clear what Obama will do in federal waters, where nearly all of the strict protections are in the central Pacific. There are a group of Hawaiians lobbying the president to expand Papahānaumokuākea — a monument George W. Bush created a decade ago, whose islands and atolls are home to 1,750 marine species found nowhere else on Earth — to the full extent under the law. That would make it 520,000 square miles, or nine times its current size.

“Some people here are working here to provide the president with a legacy opportunity,” said William Aila Jr., looking down from a rocky outcropping in Oahu as two endangered Hawaiian monk seals nestled below. “It would be the largest marine

protected area for a long, long time. It would be almost impossible to top it.”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-to-designate-new-national-monuments-in-the-california-desert/2016/02/11/5b77db4e-c6be-11e5-a4aa-f25866ba0dc6_story.html



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."



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!



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/>



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 steep 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/>



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>



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 peaks 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 signs, 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 signs, 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.

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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/>



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/>



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>



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.



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.



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 than 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.



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



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/>



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/>



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/>



Reporter: John Ralston

Published: November 18, 2015

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



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/>



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-buttess-beauty-deserves-protection/>



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 your money 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/7489020/>



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 and Muddy 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-whenever-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.csp>



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.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/letters/letters-nothing-the-night-sky-gold-butte>

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.



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

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/water-environment/gold-butte-called-more-vulnerable-vandals>

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."

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 esta 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 unimos 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>



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 Obama asking 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. Crescent 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.

<http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/conservationists-company-rally-protect-gold-butte>

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.

Robertson 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.



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.

"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



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/>



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) Empey 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/>



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/>



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

<http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/06/an-offended-mayor/>

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.



Start acting like real conservatives

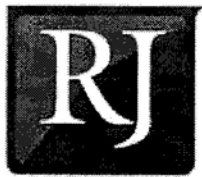
Guest Writer: Tony Barron
Published: June 2, 2015

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
<http://lasvegassun.com/news/2015/jun/02/start-acting-real-conservatives/>

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.



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."

nevada-s-proposed-national-monument-full-artwork-undisturbed-land

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: 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. 115, 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](https://www.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 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 will take another full article, so we will leave it at that for now.

Let's 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.

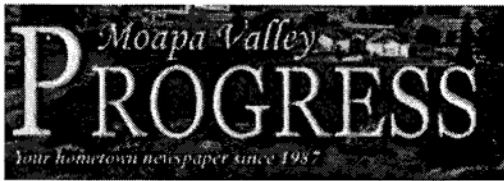
The fact is there are elected officials who are “on board with dumping federal lands off our ledger sheet” to balance the federal budget in the short term. The problem with this line of thinking is one negates the realization that in the long term there are far more profits to be made from preserving 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/>



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/>



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/>



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/>



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

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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/>



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.

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

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.



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/>



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/>



#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

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

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.



#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 slipshod 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 "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

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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.

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

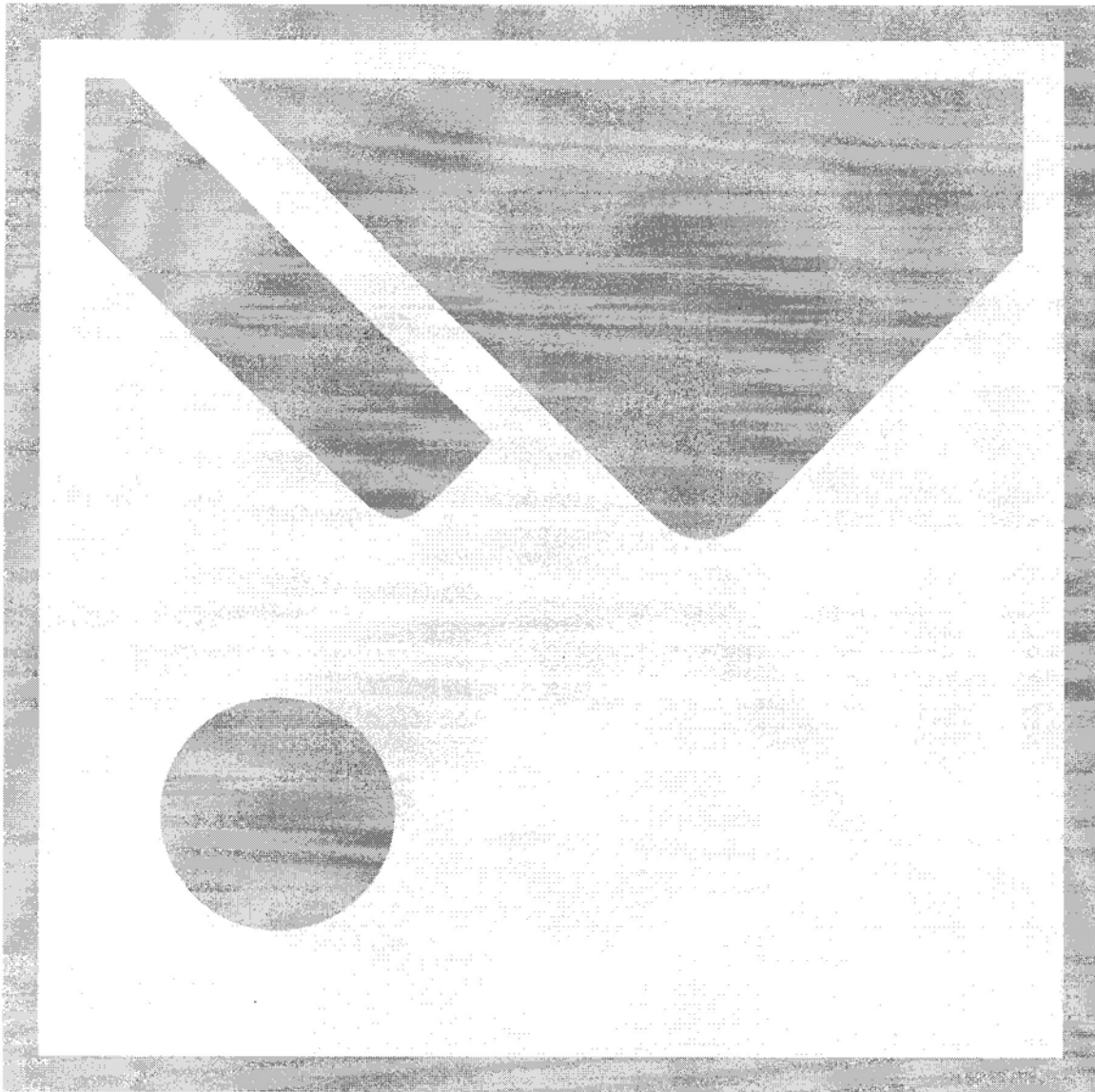
So here we go again. Tuesday at 5 p.m, Mesquite City Hall, 10 East Mesquite Boulevard. Be there to give your public comments on Gold Butte as National Conservation Area with Wilderness.

Phone is 702-346-5295.

Email to Council and Mayor is [HERE](#).

Social Media Coverage: April 28, 2015 Mesquite City Council

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



TWEETREACH SNAPSHOT FOR
#protectgoldbutte

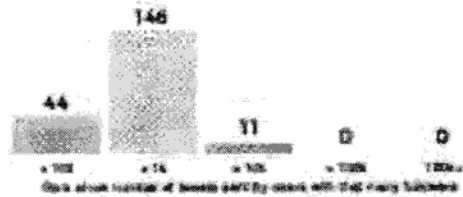
ESTIMATED REACH

18,184

ACCOUNTS REACHED

EXPOSURE

97,395 IMPRESSIONS

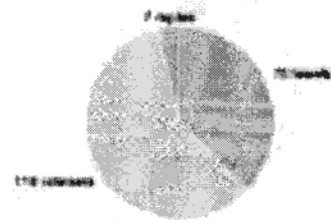


ACTIVITY

201
TWEETS

34
CONTRIBUTORS

8
DAYS



TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- 19.9k** IMPRESSIONS **@DianaSnively**
- 37** RETWEETS **@goldbutts**
- 45** MENTIONS **@goldbutte**

MOST RETWEETED TWEETS

- 7** Friends of Gold Butte **@goldbutte**
"Wilds depends on wilderness areas to survive"
@GoldButteNV The Bryan George is protectgoldbutte
- 6** Friends of Gold Butte **@goldbutte**
Rock sculptures form Life Friends #ProtectGoldButte
actionnow.com/118181481 http://is.gd/m9Cm0K5k
- 5** Friends of Gold Butte **@goldbutte**
Great statement from Jay Simons @TheRockyMtsWild
@GoldButteNV #ProtectGoldButte



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/>



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 will 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 untrammelled 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/>



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 Thursday. 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 Visitors 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/>



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/>



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/>



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 than 10 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.

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- 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@nvfc.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/>



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 barren 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,

<http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/protecting-gold-butte/>

particularly millennials 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.



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/>



#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/>



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

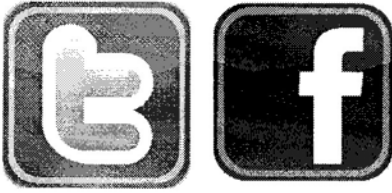
building, which the community may have some part of. For now, though, it looks like more talking is in store. With Councilman Rich Green's motion to approve, the rest of the council approved 5 – 0 to move forward with the talks.

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-townners/>



Social Media Coverage: April 14, 2015 Mesquite City Council

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



#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 through 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

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

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

Desert Valley Times

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/>



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 Crescent 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

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

'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.



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/>



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>



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

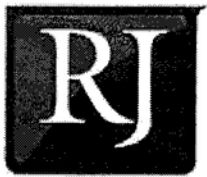
To the Editor:

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.

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

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.



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 Crescent'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

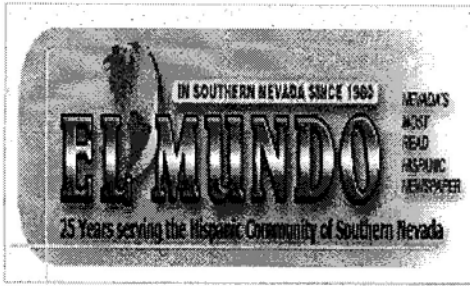
Published: March 8, 2015

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, 2015

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/>



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

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.

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.

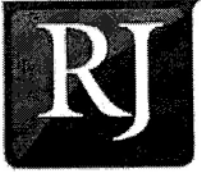
The administration has implemented unprecedented safety reforms in the Gulf of Mexico and is preparing two major rules governing hydraulic fracturing and the venting and flaring of methane -- moves that should facilitate continued development of federal minerals, he said.

"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

Las Vegas Review-Journal Friday, February 20, 2015 • Page 13A

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Thank you for hearing the voices of Nevadans who value public lands like Gold Butte, Basin and Range, and others. Protections for these places are crucial for their enjoyment by all Nevadans, and for our economic future.

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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. Crescent 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>



#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. Crescent 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 the 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 Gustavson 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 Crescent 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?

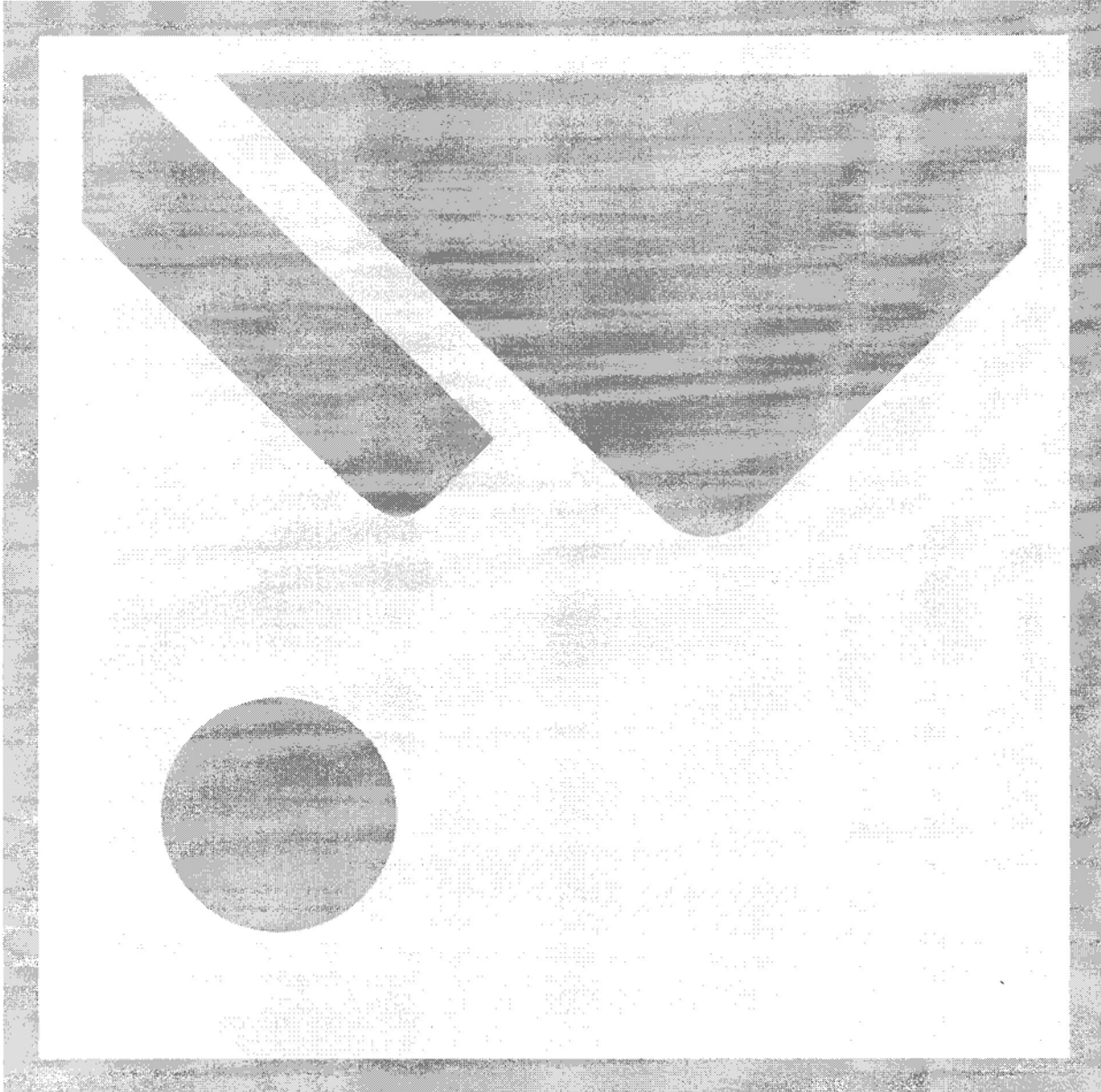
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This land is your land. This land is my land. This land is all our land. Nevada was made for you and me.

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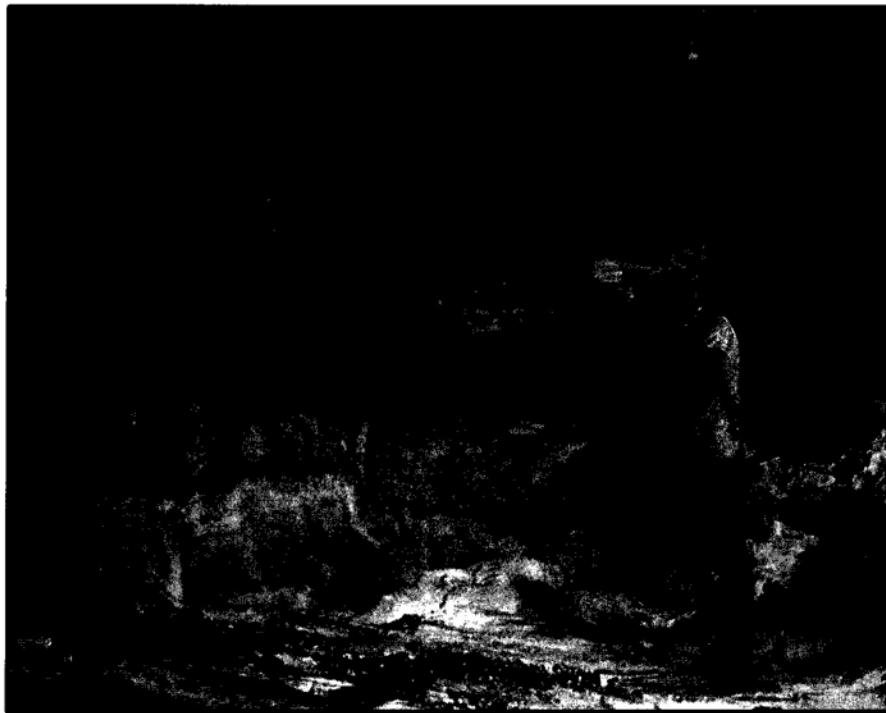
Social Media Coverage: February 19, 2015 Public Meeting in Las Vegas

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



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."



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/>



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 steep 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/>



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 peaks 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 Temp'i'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 signs, 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 signs, 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

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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/>

WEEKLY LAS VEGAS

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 Lola 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.



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.



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 than 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.



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



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/>



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

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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/>



Reporter: John Ralston
Published: November 18, 2015

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



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/>



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-buttess-beauty-deserves-protection/>



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 your money 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 and Muddy 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

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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

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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 graze 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

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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-whenever-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-MswtW6ESAxl34CSXOgw.csp>



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 esta 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, quien 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.

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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.

<http://eltiempolv.com/noticias/buscan-preservar-zona-gold-butte>

“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.



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 Obama asking 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 visit LiveMonumental.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. Crescent 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.

Robertson 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.

"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."

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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) Empey 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/>



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/>



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

<http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/06/an-offended-mayor/>

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.



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/>

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.



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



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. 115, 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 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 will 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

<http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/05/lets-talk-about-gold-butte/>

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.



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/>



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.

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

"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.



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

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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/>



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>



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.

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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/>



#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/>



#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 slipshod 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 "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.

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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>

Date range

Apr 28 - Apr 29

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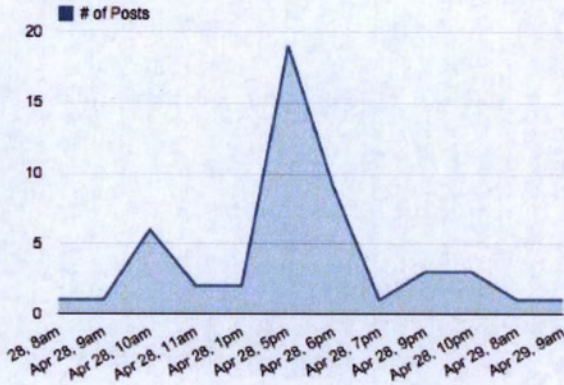
49 posts

16 users

6,515 reach

20,408 impressions

Timeline



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- Jeszy Simons** @Wild_Jeszy Apr 28 5

Tom Cluff clarifies for #MesquiteNV that Wilderness is designated by Congress not by executive order. #KeepItPublicNV #protectgoldbutte
- Protect Nevada** @ProtectNevada Apr 28 5

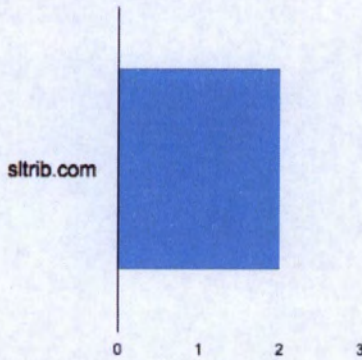
Another packed room of #protectgoldbutte supporters at the @GoMesquiteNV city council meeting! #keepitpublicNV #protectNV
- Friends of NV Wild** @friendsofnwild Apr 28 4

Thanks @LasVegasSun for speaking up for our #publiclands! <http://t.co/47YQUe81R6> #KeepItPublicNV #ProtectNV
- Protect Nevada** @ProtectNevada Apr 28 4

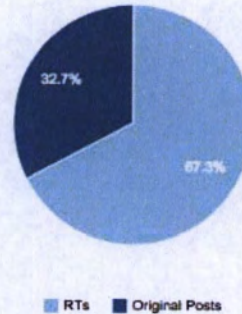
#Publiclands conservation is "a pillar of our American values" <http://t.co/js2rAg52L4> #KeepItPublicNV @MarkAmodeiNV2 @RepHardy

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TWEETREACH SNAPSHOT FOR
#protectgoldbutte

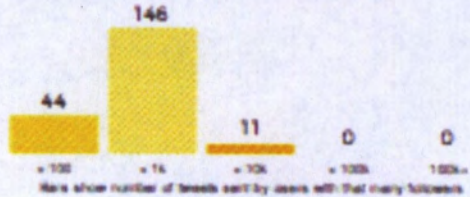
ESTIMATED REACH

18,184

ACCOUNTS REACHED

EXPOSURE

97,395 IMPRESSIONS

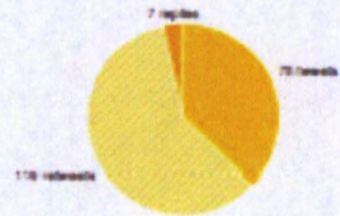
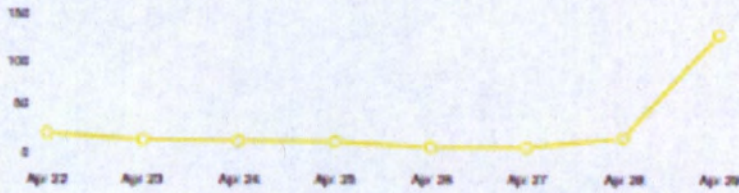


ACTIVITY

201
TWEETS

34
CONTRIBUTORS

8
DAYS



TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- 19.9k** IMPRESSIONS **@DianeSnavelly**
- 37** RETWEETS **@goldbutte**
- 45** MENTIONS **@goldbutte**

MOST RETWEETED TWEETS

- 7** Friends of Gold Butte @goldbutte
"Wildlife depends on wilderness areas to survive"
@GoldButteNY The Byron George #protectgoldbutte
- 6** Friends of Gold Butte @goldbutte
Rock sculptures from Little Finland. #ProtectGoldButte
a.d.s.m.p.s.u.t.s/330480 http://t.co/5ndCqz02e
- 5** Friends of Gold Butte @goldbutte
Great statement from Jessy Simons @friendsofwild
@GoldButteNY #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 will 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 untrammelled 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.

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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 Thursday. 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 Visitors 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/>



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 than 10 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.

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- 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

Writer: 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.

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

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."



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 barren 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,

<http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/protecting-gold-butte/>

particularly millennials 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

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/>



#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 $\frac{3}{4}$ 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

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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.

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

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.



**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

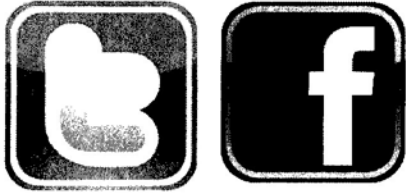
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approve, the rest of the council approved 5 – 0 to move forward with the talks.

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.

<http://mesquitelocalnews.com/2015/04/long-meeting-agenda-draws-out-of-townners/>

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



Social Media Coverage: April 14, 2015 Mesquite City Council

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



#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 through 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 our world. The United States is one of only a few

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

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

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/>



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 Crescent 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.

FOR COMMITTEE USE ONLY

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.

*"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?

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



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,

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

‘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.



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/>



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.



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.

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

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.

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 Crescent'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, 2015

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/>



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

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.

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

Las Vegas Review-Journal Friday, February 20, 2015 • Page 138

THANK YOU

**Senator Reid
Congresswoman Titus**

and the
Department of Interior

Thank you for hearing the voices of Nevadans who value public lands like Gold Butte, Basin and Range, and others. Protections for these places are crucial for their enjoyment by all Nevadans, and for our economic future.

Follow the action at #ProtectNV

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A black silhouette of a mountain range, likely representing the Nevada landscape, positioned at the bottom of the advertisement.



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>



#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. Crescent 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 the 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 Gustavson 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 Crescent 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?

FOR COMMITTEE USE ONLY

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

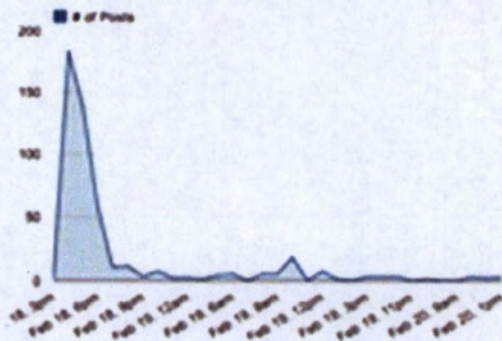
510
posts

137
users

415,594
reach

1,014,968
impressions

Timeline



Top Posts

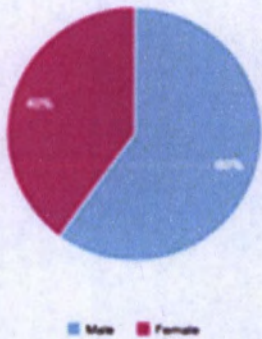
Tip: Click on a post's date to be taken to original post

- Friends of Nevada Wilderness** undefined posts
@120575980801808
Over 200 conservationists of all ages and backgrounds have come together under one roof to urge protection for Southern Nevada's most precious wild lands. Thank you Senator Harry Reid and Congresswoman...
- Friends of Nevada Wilderness** undefined posts
@120575980801808
These Valley High School students are so excited to learn more about the public land protection process at the meeting today! #ProtectNV #NextGenerationOfStewards
- Friends of NV Wild** 1 post Feb 18
@friendsofnvwild
@SenatorReid "To see it is to believe it" re: #GoldButte. We couldn't agree more! #ProtectGoldButte #ProtectNV [http://t.co/2Hfud2Hj6E](#)

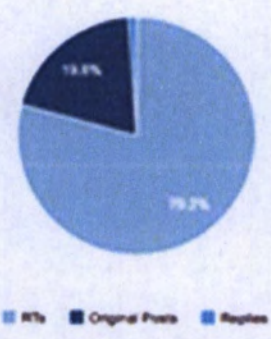
Location



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