

Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act (Conservation element) Summary of comments submitted by Friends of Nevada Wilderness

We encourage our members and supporters to reinforce and amplify our message by speaking up at the public meeting and/or submitting your comments [here](#).

- We are so fortunate to live in a county with such an amazing array of beautiful landscapes and wide-open spaces. These public lands are owned by all Americans who are free to roam them to hike, camp, hunt, fish, ski, bike, ride off-road, stargaze and so much more. The spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities must accommodate a wide variety of uses, including camping out under the stars in quiet solitude far away from it all.
- Friends has always been and remains committed to securing conservation protections for vast expanses of these public lands. Much of northern Washoe County is critical habitat for a number of species including the imperiled Greater Sage-grouse, pronghorn, mule deer and a wide variety of raptors, songbirds and other species.
- When we look for solutions to any remaining conflicts over public land designations, it is important for us to look to the future, not the past. We must think in terms of what is best for the people, the wildlife, clean air and clean water, and all of the other benefits derived from intact ecosystems. We are fortunate that Washoe County is home to some of the most intact, high-value ecosystems left in the country.
- As the urbanized areas of Washoe County continue to grow, it becomes increasingly critical to conserve the wild lands of northern Washoe. So many of the people who live and visit here come and stay because of the ready access to these amazing places. As growing human populations put more pressure on our resources, it is imperative we protect these places that have such extraordinary conservation value.
- Public lands also help fuel the economy by supporting multiple uses. Outdoor recreation alone creates 87,000 jobs and more than \$1 billion in tax revenue in Nevada.
- Friends appreciates that the latest round of discussions regarding disposition of Wilderness Study Areas in northern Washoe County has been more open and transparent than in previous years. We also appreciate the amount of time and energy county and city staff and all the stakeholders have invested in the process to date.
- Friends is grateful for the active engagement of our Congressional delegation. In the end, they will make the final decisions about the management of these public lands.
- Friends has been working in good faith for many years to reach common sense solutions to wilderness boundaries and other conservation designations. We have had many hours of discussions with various stakeholders over the years and have led numerous field trips for decision-makers and others.
- Our positions and proposals have evolved over the years as we worked with stakeholders to resolve issues and find common ground. Friends has worked very hard to be open to common sense solutions that meet a variety of needs.

Specific recommendations

After many years of research, study, and discussions Friends has submitted a number of maps and other documents to Washoe County and our Congressional delegation outlining our recommendations.

Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Study Area (WSA)

Friends believes it is most prudent to resolve all of the WSA designation in the refuge, on the Washoe County and the Humboldt County sides. This will give the US Fish and Wildlife Service more flexible management options. Friends supports the wilderness proposals the Service proposes as a result of their 2012 public process. The proposal allows for release of some WSA acres to allow for more active habitat management.

Sheldon Contiguous WSA

Because it is contiguous to proposed wilderness in the Refuge, it makes sense to also designate this WSA as wilderness. Due to the high value of the Greater Sage-ground habitat, we recommend an extension of the wilderness boundary to the west.

Massacre Rim and Bittner Triangle

We support the expanded boundary as proposed by tribal nations to protect ancestral lands and the cultural resources there. We also remain firmly committed to preserving the Dark Sky Sanctuary status of Massacre Rim. The designation was granted because this WSA has “exceptional quality of starry nights” and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its natural values. We also propose a special management area, NOT wilderness, for the Bittner Triangle to protect this important sage-grouse brooding area.

Granite Banjo

This area was not originally designated a WSA due to the relatively large number of private holdings within. Since that time, however, proceeds from the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA) have been used to acquire many of those holdings and so Granite Banjo now qualifies as a WSA. We suggest some boundary adjustments to preserve scenic values and protect more of the SNPLMA acquisitions.

Wall Canyon WSA

This area exhibits stunning cultural resources including evidence of a highly complex pre-historic settlement. There is also critical and irreplaceable greater sage-grouse habitat here, as well as more SNPLMA-acquired parcels. Due to the unfortunate creep of unauthorized roads over the years, we propose this area including Wall Canyon and Hays Range be designated a National Conservation Area that will allow more flexibility in addressing management issues. In order to address permittees’ concerns, we agree the NCA language must be clear and specific and draft language be made available for review prior to final adoption.

Buffalo Hills/Poodle Mountain/Twin Peaks/Dry Valley Rim/Burro Mountain WSAs

Rather than moving forward with a series of disjointed NCAs, we propose to create one large National Conservation Area that would tie all of these valuable landscapes together. The NCA could be crafted to allow for more management flexibility for livestock, wildlife habitat restoration, and vehicle travel. Our NCA proposal includes some wilderness designation at the heart of the Poodle Mountain area.

Fox Range

Stunning views in all directions can be seen from the top of this range, a popular hiking area. While we strongly support a conservation overlay for the Fox Range, Friends defers to the wishes of the Pyramid Lake Paiute tribal leaders whose reservation borders the Fox Range.