This year has marked an unprecedented and aggressive assault on America’s public lands. Here in Nevada, state legislators and members of Congress have sought measures to undermine bedrock conservation laws and transfer the management of public lands to state ownership, thereby opening them up to development and private use. Friends of Nevada Wilderness has kept a close eye on the emergence of these anti-public lands bills and we have rallied our supporters every step of the way to join efforts to keep Nevada’s public lands in public hands. Thank you to the hundreds of public land enthusiasts who’ve attended rallies, press conferences, and hearings, those who’ve contacted their legislators letting them know that public lands matter, and those who’ve penned letters to the editor to get the word out in the media.

As efforts to take over public lands gain momentum on the state and federal levels, our collective voice must remain strong. With recent studies illustrating the importance of public lands - polls show that 78% of Nevadans want to keep public lands in federal ownership\(^1\) while fiscal studies point to the $14.9 billion in consumer spending that public lands generate for the state\(^2\) - it is clear that our Republican legislators are not acting in Nevada’s best interests. Although the fight for public lands may seem overwhelming at times, the cost of remaining on the sidelines could be the permanent loss of our most precious landscapes and outdoor heritage.

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FRONTLINES

By Shaaron Netherton / Executive Director

This session of the Nevada Legislature clearly shows what happens when the rural Republicans take the lead with bill after bill trying to dismantle and sell off America’s public land heritage. First we had AB 408 (the Bundy Bill) that would have privatized all of Nevada’s public lands in a Wild West free-for-all. Then SJR 1, a more insidious bill that recently passed the Nevada State Legislature and asks Congress to give Nevada nearly all of the public lands within the state for free. Americans should be outraged! These lands are located within the boundary of Nevada but they belong to ALL Americans, not just the small percentage living in Nevada.

This resolution is flawed financially and morally. Nevada has sold off the majority of the lands it received at statehood and now it wants more to sell off. Our state will never have the financial resources to pay for land management, wildland firefighting, and wild horses. Lands will quickly be up for sale. I am saddened that public lands have become such a partisan issue but am proud of the state’s Democrats for standing up for America’s public land heritage and opposing these terrible bills. It’s unfortunate that the Republicans who know SJR1 is flawed financially didn’t have the courage to oppose it in the end.

SJR 1, a bad idea in the Nevada Legislature, has now been introduced into Congress by Congressman Mark Amodei (HR 1484). The fight to defend public lands across the country has escalated. I hope I can count on all of you to help keep public lands in public hands.

We have an ambitious stewardship schedule for 2015 and look forward to seeing many of you giving back to our wildlands with your sweat equity. Our volunteers did over 100 on-the-ground projects in 2014 and gave back over $200,000 of in-kind labor. That is making a difference – thank you.

Lastly, I’d like to bid farewell to a few staff members, Katie Sanchez and Renee Aldrich, who have moved on to other opportunities and welcome Dan Alvey and Nora Kaufmann. We also have some great AmeriCorps volunteers helping us this year: Grace Larsen, Andrea Welsch and Chris Cutshaw. Welcome!

Mother of Nevada Wilderness Is At It Again

Marge Sill, founding member of Friends of Nevada Wilderness, was recently awarded the Washoe County Democratic Party’s Virginia Cain Progressive Leadership Award on May 31st for her work on wilderness in Nevada. We love you, Marge!
Nevada’s Big Give...Gives a Lift

A BIG thank you to all of our amazing supporters for their generous contributions during the 2015 Nevada’s Big Give, a 24-hour fundraising event held in March to rally community support for local charitable causes. You helped us achieve our goal to raise funds for a stewardship truck for our Southern Nevada volunteers. We placed 9th overall for most dollars raised at $11,000 which was matched by an anonymous donor - making a grand total of over $22,000! We are still in the process of purchasing the truck but keep an eye out on our social media pages for photos. This truck will play a valuable role in our organization of transporting our passionate volunteers and all of the necessary gear to remote stewardship sites and packing trash out. Thanks to you, we are able to continue our work in stewarding Southern Nevada’s wild lands.

Americorps on Public Lands

Over the years, Friends of Nevada Wilderness has become truly indebted to AmeriCorps, a national civil society program supported by the federal government to engage young adults in intensive community service work. Through our partnership with the Nevada Outdoor School AmeriCorps program, members receive a monthly stipend, a robust educational award, and invaluable work experience for their chosen fields. Those who have served with Friends of Nevada Wilderness have gained insight into the nuances of project management, natural resource science, and volunteer recruitment. They’ve also gained a true sense of ownership that comes with being a good steward of public lands.

In return, they’ve contributed a tremendous amount of enthusiasm, hard work, and fresh ideas in service of Nevada’s public lands and to the organization as a whole. Whether it’s living and working in the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge to complete habit restoration work or assisting our Northern and Southern staff on volunteer projects – the AmeriCorps program has contributed more than 8,000 hours of service for Friends of Nevada Wilderness. And since several of our service members have hailed from back East, they’ve gone home with a new appreciation of the open space and wildness that marks what it means to live in Nevada.
Public Lands: A Heritage Worth Defending

What Are Public Lands?

Well, as the name implies - they are lands that belong to the public for the public. Held in trust for the American people by the federal government, the majority of public lands are open for recreational use. From the undeveloped wide open spaces of BLM land to the more developed campsites of National Parks, here in Nevada access to recreational opportunities seem boundless and the fees are minimal - if not completely absent. The agencies are federally mandated to manage for multiple use and sustained yield, meaning that they must ensure our outdoor recreational opportunities, natural resources, and scenic values remain intact for the benefit of all citizens.

A Short History of Public Lands

When the United States started to enfold the territories of the West into the Union, land grants were negotiated. Upon Nevada’s statehood in 1864, a clause was included in our state constitution guaranteeing the existence of public lands. As the nation’s homesteaders settled the West, the states’ lax rules were starting to lead to the degradation of what are now America’s most iconic landscapes. In response to such rampant disregard, early conservationists like John Muir and President Theodore Roosevelt advocated for placing a portion of America’s lands under permanent government ownership to ensure these stunning landscapes would remain intact. Despite heavy waves of anti-government sentiment growing in the West, President Roosevelt worked to create National Parks, Monuments, Forests, and Wildlife Refuges.

The Federal Land Agencies That Manage Nevada’s Public Lands

The National Park Service manages The National Park System protecting areas like Great Basin National Park as well as National Recreation Areas like Lake Mead National Recreation Area.


The U.S. Forest Service administers the National Forest System and balances resource protection, extraction, and outdoor recreation use for National Forests like the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest.

The Bureau of Land Management manages the portions of Western lands left over from the homesteading era for outdoor use, grazing, energy leasing, and mining. The BLM also manages our National Conservation System, a public lands system unifying a variety of conservation units like Wilderness and National Conservation Areas.

1 - Polling conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, Sept. 2014
2 - Outdoor Industry Association, 2012
“For clerks and students, factory workers and mechanics, the outdoors is freedom, just surely as it is for the folkloric and mythic figures. They don’t have to own the outdoors, or get permission, or cut fences in order to use it. It is public land, partly theirs, and that space is a continuing influence on their minds and senses.”

- Wallace Stegner

The President also established more stringent hunting and fishing laws - enforcing one federal law as opposed to a state-by-state basis ensured the long term survival of wildlife species and habitat corridors. Over the course of the next hundred years, our nation has worked to improve conservation measures on public lands while balancing mineral and energy extraction, outdoor recreational use, and urban interfaces as populations exponentially expand. The system is in no way perfect yet the proponents of state land transfers would rather throw away our nation’s collective efforts to protect, preserve, and manage for multiple use rather than seek to improve it.

So What’s the Big Deal?

It was only a few years ago that the state of Nevada faced a crippling deficit and the first thing up on the chopping block was our state parks. And now the state of Nevada, relying on a shaky economic report that uses as its model other Western states that have much more timber, coal, and oil than us, believes it can afford the management of more than 60 million acres of public lands including the cost of putting out wildfires (the Carpenter 1 wildfire in Mt. Charleston cost the Forest Service $25 million) and managing wild horses. Forcing Nevada taxpayers to foot the bill is foolish. The numbers just don’t add up and it is clear the state of Nevada can’t afford it. The majority of our public lands would be leased, sold off, and privatized. Here in Nevada, we enjoy amazing access to our public lands - let’s not gamble all of that away.

Types of Public Land Protections

**Wilderness Areas** protect America’s wildest places with Congressional designations under the Wilderness Act. There are currently 70 wilderness areas protected in Nevada managed by the BLM, Forest Service, and the National Park Service.

**Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)** primarily are BLM lands identified as having wilderness character and are managed to protect their natural integrity until Congress either designates them as Wilderness or releases them for other non-wilderness uses.

**National Conservation Areas (NCA)** are Congressionally designated areas that protect exceptional ecological, cultural, historical or scenic values. Two of Nevada’s best known NCAs are the Black Rock Desert and Red Rock Canyon.

**Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)** are areas identified during BLM land use planning efforts as lands needing special management. ACECs can be created, changed, or eliminated by the BLM. Some Nevada examples are extensive ACECs in southern Nevada to protect desert tortoise habitat.
Volunteers in Northern and Southern Nevada are off to a great start in continuing their work taking care of our public lands. We would like to thank the 225 volunteers who have already come out this year - without you, the work we do would be impossible.

Seedlings Off to a Fresh Start

This season, volunteers have planted over 6,500 sagebrush seedlings in a small pocket of Northwestern Nevada affected by the 2014 Coleman Fire and over 1,400 bitterbrush seedlings in a portion of the Santa Rosa Range affected by the 2012 Hansen Fire. Boyd Hatch, the Range Conservationist for the Forest Service, has let us know that the seedlings are doing really well, especially with the addition of the recent rain! Way to go, Northern Nevada volunteers!

Improving Wilderness Access

Friends’ volunteers have been busy installing “Easy Pass Throughways”, U-shaped openings in fences that keep cattle out but allow hikers to easily pass through without having to open and close a gate. By building these passes, our volunteers have ensured safe and easy access for all into the unique and amazing Santa Rosa-Paradise Peak Wilderness.

Saving the Desert Dace

A new population of Desert Dace has been discovered living in an isolated spring within High Rock Lake Wilderness. There are about 300 fish living in a small springhead but previous use from wild horses and cattle have led to the trampling and erosion of its critical habitat. We helped the BLM construct an exclosure around the springhead to ensure survival of the fish through the upcoming dry season.

Invasive weed removals in Mt. Rose Wilderness are well underway. Volunteers kicked off the season in joining the Great Community Clean Up to remove a grand total of 1,500 musk thistle. Efforts in Mt. Rose will continue throughout the summer so there are tons of opportunities to get out and help!
The fifth annual Alternative Spring Break in Southern Nevada was bigger and better than ever! Thirteen students from UNLV, six volunteers from the public, and four Clark County high school students from the National Park Service’s Diverse Outdoor Leadership Institute camped out for four nights and five days in the Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge.

The majority of their efforts were spent planting willows and restoring vehicle trespasses off of the main road in the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. The PBS show Wild Nevada joined them for a portion of the trip and were impressed that these students chose to volunteer during Spring Break. Keep an eye out for the episode this fall!

More than thirty employees from Ralph Lauren came together to celebrate and restore their public lands in the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. Several employees brought their kids who also had a great time on the project! This great group of stewards planted 175 salt grass, wolfberry, and astragalus plants around the pond and picnic area and removed invasive weeds. The employees learned a lot about wilderness, asked questions about future involvement, and were overall a very fun and positive group!

Friends is looking for volunteers to join our spring monitoring team this summer. This is a great opportunity to get out and explore the remote forests of the Spring Mountains while making a valued contribution for our public lands. We will provide the equipment and training for you to make science happen.

For more information and to sign up, contact Jose Witt at: (702) 515-5417 or jose@nevadawilderness.org.

Volunteers like UNLV student Aurelia Walsh planted over 600 willow trees in Upper Pahranagat Lake to help restore habitat for the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

Photo by Minas Mkhitarian

Volunteer Dorothy Hudig samples the quality of a spring.

Photo by Brian Beffort
Public Lands - How Are They Managed?

We’ve been hearing a lot from rural stakeholders and legislators in particular about how our public lands should be managed by the State of Nevada and not the federal government. The federal land management agencies that are tasked with managing our public lands are required by law to keep inventories of important resources out on the land and to have a very public process for deciding how our public lands should be managed.

Think of public land management as zoning - some areas are protected for their wildlife and archaeological sites, some are developed for solar and geothermal, and some are open for OHV use, while others go to local communities for sewer plants or libraries. Resource management plans (RMPs) are developed by the BLM with close public involvement and direction as to how our public lands are managed. It’s not perfect but it is a system based on democratic principles; everyone with an interest can be involved. If the state acquired our public lands, there wouldn’t be a law requiring public involvement like we currently have under federal management. Much of the land transferred to the state would fall to the highest bidder for sale or development. The state’s objective for transferring these lands is to increase revenue not to manage for multiple use, including long term protection.

Our supporters have weighed in heavily during the RMP processes for the Southern Nevada and Carson City BLM Districts. Collectively, these plans will guide management of about 8 million-acres of our public lands. Thanks to all of you, we have gotten over 800 letters and petitions into the BLM to support protection of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.

Live Monumental

Friends of Nevada Wilderness will be partnering with KEEN and Zappos.com to highlight the importance of permanent protection for Gold Butte. Friends of Nevada Wilderness has been advocating for Gold Butte for over 15 years yet legislative efforts seemed stalled. A National Monument designation by President Barack Obama would be welcome and we applaud KEEN for bringing the importance of monument protection to the giant Outdoor Retailers show in Salt Lake City this summer. We will keep you updated as the campaign develops.

Meanwhile, activists have been hard at work on-the-ground to continue grassroots efforts for Gold Butte protection. In May, a group of committed supporters joined us in Gold Butte for a weekend advocacy training. Their efforts will prove to be critical as the campaign for permanent protection of this stunning area continues ever onward.

Collaborative Efforts Protect the Bi-State Grouse

Largely due to the extensive conservation efforts by local working groups, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the Bi-State Sage-Grouse will not be listed as an endangered species. Similar conservation efforts are underway across the west for the Greater Sage-Grouse, including here in Nevada. A listing decision is scheduled to be made this September while Environmental Impact Studies from the BLM and Forest Service should be released in mid-2015. Potential wilderness designation in northern Nevada would also help provide regulatory certainty for long-term habitat protection.
Terry Tempest Williams writes often of what she calls “the open space of democracy.” I think any of us involved in public lands issues, especially in these days of increased pushes for development and privatization, understand that powerful forces want to transform these open landscapes for short-term interests. Rhetoric grows intense; passion runs high.

Clearly we are lucky to live in a state with so much open space. It’s awe-inspiring to walk through areas that haven’t changed in thousands of years - to stand in wonder under a night sky free of light pollution, stars rippling the great ocean of space and to consider the countless generations of stories written in the sand and sagebrush, some by creatures who’ve been around since the dinosaurs walked here. If you look closely enough, you can still see their unique penmanship. It’s much harder to read on concrete and asphalt. And we’re lucky enough to be able to participate in processes that keep these places wild and free. One of the geniuses of American democracy, when it works properly, is this public voice—our voice, especially for the life that cannot vote nor speak for itself. And if ever there was a time when the land needed a voice to speak in its defense, it’s now.

That said, it’s important to consider other words by Williams: “If we cannot engage in respectful listening there can be no civil dialogue and without civil dialogue we the people will simply become bullies and brutes, deaf to the truth that we are standing on the edge of a political chasm that is beginning to crumble....Democracy is an insecure landscape.” With the political polarization of our great country, especially over issues like public lands, perhaps it’s these open spaces that could bring us together in conversation again and remind us that these special places are something we all have in common. Building walls and fences only create limitations, confined boundaries within which to work. The open space of democracy presents limitless possibilities, creative potential, and an ability to see how so many different species come together to create something ecologically beneficial to all. Our politics would be better if it reflected a diversity of voices and opinion, because ecology shows us that monocultures never flourish.

Next time you’re lucky enough to step into one of our wild areas, take a moment to stop, sit, let the silence wrap itself around you, work a stillness through your skin, into your lungs, into your blood. The rhetoric ebbs away and you’re part of everything that surrounds you. That’s what we need to convey, that feeling of our America. And when you get there, you’re in the open space of democracy.

DONATE TODAY, AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME.

Your tax-deductible gift to Friends of Nevada Wilderness is an investment in the future of Nevada’s air, water, healthy wildlife, community health and quality of life, and opportunities to explore and discover for the children of the future. Please consider Friends of Nevada Wilderness in your charitable giving and estate planning. Tax ID: 88-0211763 Contact Connie Howard for more information: e-mail connie.howard.nv@gmail.com.
Films to Ignite and Inspire

Friends of Nevada Wilderness is thrilled to bring the Wild and Scenic Film Festival to Las Vegas for the third year in a row! We’ve hand selected an incredible line-up of films to celebrate all things wilderness, adventure, and activism. Our non-profit and business partners will join us for a Community Reception before the films and we’ll be giving away tons of great prizes throughout the evening. All proceeds of the event, including ticket and raffle sales, will support our extensive stewardship and advocacy programs in Southern Nevada.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.nevadawilderness.org/wsff2015 or call (702) 515-5417

Celebrate Art’s Wild Side

Since we just love celebrating America’s public lands and the beauty and grandeur of Nevada’s most stunning landscapes, we are so excited to once again transform our Northern Nevada office into an art gallery for the month of July. As part of Reno Artown (a month-long event that seeks to promote the arts in Northern Nevada), our “Wild Nevada” art exhibit will feature the breathtaking work of noteworthy painters and photographers who have been inspired by Nevada’s public lands.

We’ll kick off the exhibit with a very special reception at the office where you’ll catch the first glimpse of the artwork and the chance to meet several of the artists. Since all of the artwork will be for sale with 20% of the proceeds being donated to Friends of Nevada Wilderness, you’ll be able to bring a piece of wild Nevada home with you while making sure our state stays that way!
In an attempt to continually inspire and inform new discussions on conservation and public land issues in Southern Nevada, we've commenced the “Wild Speaker Series” which features a new guest speaker to lead each month’s discussion topic. Guest organization Protectors of Tule Springs kicked off the series in March with a presentation on Nevada’s latest National Monument, Tule Springs Fossil Beds, recently protected in December of 2014 (along with Wovoka and Pine Forest Range Wilderness).

The U.S. Forest Service joined us for our second event where they provided updates on the 2013 Carpenter 1 wildfire that consumed nearly 28,000 acres in Mt. Charleston. Earlier this month, the Nevada Department of Wildlife’s Herpetologist, Jason Jones, shined some light on the elusive Gila Monster – even bringing one along to show attendees! The Wild Speaker Series has proven to be a wonderful collaboration with federal and state land management agencies and the public to share information, experience, and stories of Southern Nevada’s public lands – we hope you join us!

Mark Your Calendar!
- Every first Thursday of the month
- 7pm
- REI Boca Park
710 S. Rampart Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89145
UPCOMING TRIPS AND EVENTS

Mt. Rose Weed Pulls: May 30, June 3, June 13, & June 17
Spend gorgeous days in the Mt. Rose Wilderness to remove invasive weeds and help the native plants gain ground.

Wild Speaker Series, June 4
Nevadans for Cultural Preservation will join us to discuss cultural resources in Southern Nevada at REI Boca Park.

National Trails Day, June 5-7
Join Friends of Nevada Wilderness, the BLM, and other partner organizations while we work to improve Steven’s Camp and the Upper High Rock Canyon Trail.

High Rock Development Removal, June 12-14
A weekend of epic views, metal hauling, and great food await you as you help keep the canyon as wild as when John C. Fremont first mapped it in 1843.

Bonanza Trail Day, June 20
Come out for a day of trail maintenance on the Bonanza Trail in Mt. Charleston. We’ll spend our morning working on trail drainage and installing a new wilderness sign.

Wild Nevada Reception, July 11
Help us kick off the 2015 Wild Nevada art show with an evening of art, friends, and refreshments! 20% of the proceeds will go to Friends; festivities will start at 4pm at our Sparks office located at 1360 Greg St., Suite 111.

Sage-Grouse Fence Marking, July 24
Join Friends of Nevada Wilderness and the Forest Service as we work to help protect sage-grouse in the beautiful Santa Rosa Mountains. We will be placing reflective markers on fences to help prevent sage-grouse injuries.

Wild & Scenic Film Fest., Nov. 13
Save the date for a night of adventure and outdoor films with Friends of Nevada Wilderness. Help support our programs in wild Nevada and have a great night out with the family!

More events to be added in the upcoming months. All dates subject to change. Please call or e-mail to verify dates and time.

For info on Northern events, call (775) 324-7667 or e-mail richie@nevadawilderness.org. For info on Southern events, call (702) 515-5417 or e-mail minas@nevadawilderness.org.

Check Website For More Events!
Updated Schedules Posted At
www.NevadaWilderness.org