

Public and Private Lands

Nevada stands out among its peers in the Union for its extensive federal, public lands. According to the American Planning Association's 2017 Nevada Planning Guide, a staggering 86% of Nevada's land area is federally owned. Washoe County, located in the northwestern part of the state, is a prime example, where approximately 71.8% of the land is federally owned. The breakdown of federal ownership in Washoe County includes 64.3% managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 2.6% by the U.S. Forest Service, 4.6% by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and 0.3% by other federal agencies. Washoe County also participates in the largest special recreation permit, known as the Burning Man Festival annually held in the Black Rock Desert, which is managed by the BLM.

The federally managed land in Nevada is divided among various federal agencies, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Fish and Wildlife Services, Forest Service, and National Park Service. This complex web of federal land management agencies underscores the diversity of land uses and responsibilities in the state.

State land management in Nevada is coordinated by the Nevada Division of State Lands (NDSL), which serves as the state's "real estate" agency for all state entities except the Legislature, the University System, and the Department of Transportation. NDSL is mandated by NRS 331.110 (4) to provide an inventory of all real property owned and leased by the state. The inventory classifies real property as actively used, not actively used, held for strategic future use, or actively used as a park or wildlife area. As of the latest data, NDSL manages 283 properties throughout Nevada, encompassing a total of 335,221.31 acres. In Washoe County alone, there are 40 state-managed properties, covering 22,210.59 acres, equivalent to 6.63% of the county's land area.

Another aspect of Nevada's land history is the school trust land grants, which were established under the Northwest Ordinance of 1785. Nevada received land grants for Sections 16 and 36, amounting to approximately 4 million acres, with the goal of supporting common schools. However, these lands were initially located in arid and remote areas with low demand from settlers. As a result, only about 60,000 acres were surveyed and sold by 1879, despite being granted to the state for educational purposes. To address this, Congress granted Nevada the unique opportunity to exchange the remaining 30,000 acres for a 2 million-acre "state selection" grant in areas where there was demand by settlers. These exchange acts successfully encouraged settlement and generated revenue for the Permanent School Trust Fund.

Today, Nevada's school trust lands have almost all been disposed of, with only 2,914 acres remaining, of which 1,860.73 acres are located in Washoe County. These remote parcels include the Flannigan Area and Vya Area, which have limited economic potential due to their isolated locations.

Another key aspect of Nevada's land management is the state's ownership of sovereign lands. Upon statehood, Nevada gained title to the bed and banks of navigable water bodies. However, it is essential to note that not all of Nevada's lakes and rivers are considered state-owned, and ownership typically extends only to the ordinary and permanent high-water mark. State-owned sovereign lands, such as Lake Tahoe, the Truckee River, and Washoe Lake in Washoe County, are subject to authorization for any use or

disturbance, including structures like piers, buoys, irrigation diversions, and bridges, which are subject to annual use fees.

Recent legislative proposals also play a key part in federal and public lands in Washoe County. In January 2040, U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen introduced the Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act (TMPLMA) to expand economic development and affordable housing opportunities in Washoe County, support local Tribal communities, increase conservation, protect public lands and outdoor recreation, and keep proceeds from land sales in Nevada for priorities like education and restoration around the Truckee River. This Bill follows the Nevada model, created by the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA), and would open up federal land for a variety of uses including: to be made eligible for disposal, create permanent land conservation areas, convey land to local government entities for recreation and public purposes, and transfer land into trust for local tribes.

Essentially, the TMPLMA is divided into two categories, lands for conservation and lands for disposal/conveyance. Majority of the land identified in the proposal are identified for conservation and will be designated as either Wilderness Areas or National Conservation Areas (NCA). Wilderness Areas are designated in the 1964 Wilderness Act which created the National Wilderness Preservation System and allowed Congress to protect pristine wild land, untamed by humans. This is the highest level of protection for federally managed public lands and are managed by the National Park Service (NPS), United States Forest Service (USFS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). National Conservation Areas are areas designated by congress to be set aside for scientific, cultural, historical, and recreational purposes and are managed by the BLM.

The rest of land identified is for disposal/conveyance which are further defined as being for conveyance to local government entities, held in trust for local tribes, or for economic disposal. Lands identified for conveyance to local government entities are lands that have been identified by a government entity (i.e. City of Reno, TMWA, etc.) for the creation of recreation opportunities, such as parks, or other public purposes, such as cemeteries. The proposal expands the land held in trust for the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California by 21,007 acres.

The remainder of lands for disposal/conveyance are for economic disposal. The lands acknowledged as being for economic disposal are eligible for sale and subsequent development, as appropriate, to support sustainable growth in the region. All lands that are eligible for sale must be nominated and undergo an environmental review by the Federal agency that manages that land to determine if sale of the parcel is appropriate. Under the current proposal, if the federal land manager determines sale to be appropriate, Washoe County would also need to give their approval before development can occur. The county is first required to assess the parcel for its suitability for affordable housing first. Land that will be used for affordable housing will be sold for less than fair market value, and all other development parcels must be sold for at least fair market value. Additionally, the development of the land would also need to comply with all current zoning and planning requirements, including review by the jurisdiction that the land is to be developed in and ultimately by TMRPA. Revenue from the sale of these federal lands will be divided between the State of Nevada General Education Fund (5%), Truckee River conservation projects

(10%), and a special account available to the Secretary of the Treasury (85%). The special account can be used for things such as:

- Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Wildfire Prevention
- Conservation Initiatives
- Acquisition of Environmentally Sensitive Lands

This means that the proceeds from the sale of land in Washoe County will stay in Washoe County to benefit the residents here, rather than those funds going back to the U.S. Treasury.

Relevant Agencies:

- Bureau of Land Management
- Nevada Division of State Lands
- UNR Extension, College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources
- U.S Forest Service
- Washoe County

Relevant Data:

- U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Humboldt-Toiyabe
 - National Wilderness Areas
 - NEPA Project Area Boundaries - Timber Sale
 - NEPA Project Area Boundaries - Sale Area Improvement (SAI) Plan
 - NEPA Project Area Boundaries - NEPA
- Washoe County
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - TRMA Paths (hard surface)
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - TMRPA Trailhead
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - TMRPA Paths (soft surface)
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Sierra Club Trail Head
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Parcels
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - NDOW Trail Head
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Local Constraint: Slope 30% or more
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Local Constraint: Infrastructure Open Space
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Land Transfer Request
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Land Eligible for Sale and Development
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Jurisdictional Boundary
 - Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Gerlach Economic Development Boundary

- Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Federal Land
- Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act WebMap - Federal Constraints
- Nevada-Tahoe Conservation District Land Boundary