

Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman
Hearing Memorandum

May 22, 2017

To: All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Aniela Butler,
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x 6-7736)

Hearing: Legislative hearing on **H.R. 1107 (Rep. Mark Amodei)**, To promote conservation, improve public land management, and provide for sensible development in Pershing County, Nevada, and for other purposes.
May 23, 2017 at 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth HOB.

H.R. 1107 (Rep. Amodei), “Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act”

Bill Summary

H.R. 1107, introduced by Rep. Mark Amodei (R-NV-02), is a bipartisan bill that consolidates checkerboard land previously identified for disposal by the Bureau of Land Management, conveys land for mining and public purposes, creates new Wilderness Areas and releases certain Wilderness Study Areas, to benefit conservation, recreation, and economic development in Pershing County, Nevada.

Cosponsors

Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV-01), Rep. Jacky Rosen (D-NV-03), Rep. Ruben Kihuen (D-NV-04)

Invited Witnesses

Panel I

The Honorable Mark Amodei
Member of Congress, Nevada’s 2nd District

Panel II

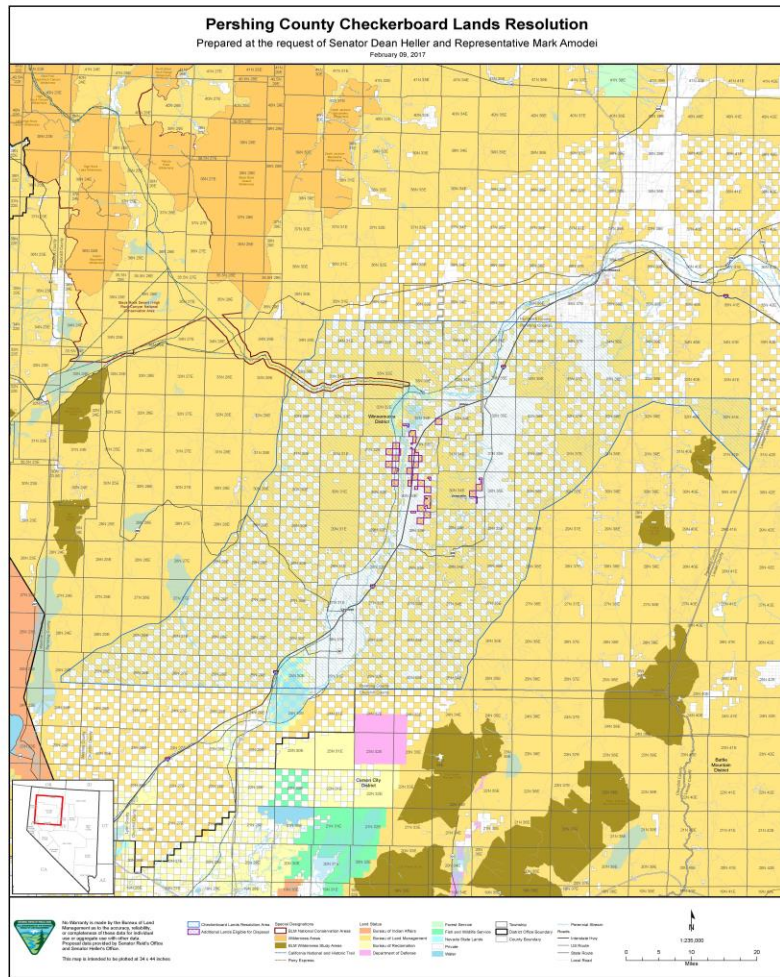
Mr. Robert McDougal
Commissioner
Pershing County, Nevada
Lovelock, Nevada

Ms. Shaaron Netherton
Executive Director
Friends of Nevada Wilderness
Reno, Nevada

Background

H.R. 1107, “Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act”, is the result of over a decade of negotiations between locally-elected officials, miners, conservationists, sportsmen, ranchers, and residents in Pershing County, Nevada. The bill consolidates 150,000 acres of checkerboard federal land previously identified for disposal by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); conveys land for mining and public purposes, including the transfer of a cemetery to the County; creates 160,590 acres of new Wilderness Areas and releases roughly 48,600 acres Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), to benefit conservation, recreation, and economic development in Pershing County, Nevada.

In Pershing County, 75% of the land is federally-owned, with over 300,000 acres identified for disposal under the BLM’s Winnemucca District Resource Management Plan.² H.R. 1107 allows for the sale of up to 150,000 acres of checkerboard land previously-identified for disposal by the BLM. The County will work jointly with BLM to identify high-priority land sales along the I-80 corridor, lands east of the Rye Patch State Recreation Area, land near the Humboldt River Ranch and West Humboldt Range to resolve the checkerboard pattern of ownership throughout the County.³ The sale and transfer of lands will streamline BLM’s management of the area and provide the County and State with additional revenues to jumpstart economic development.

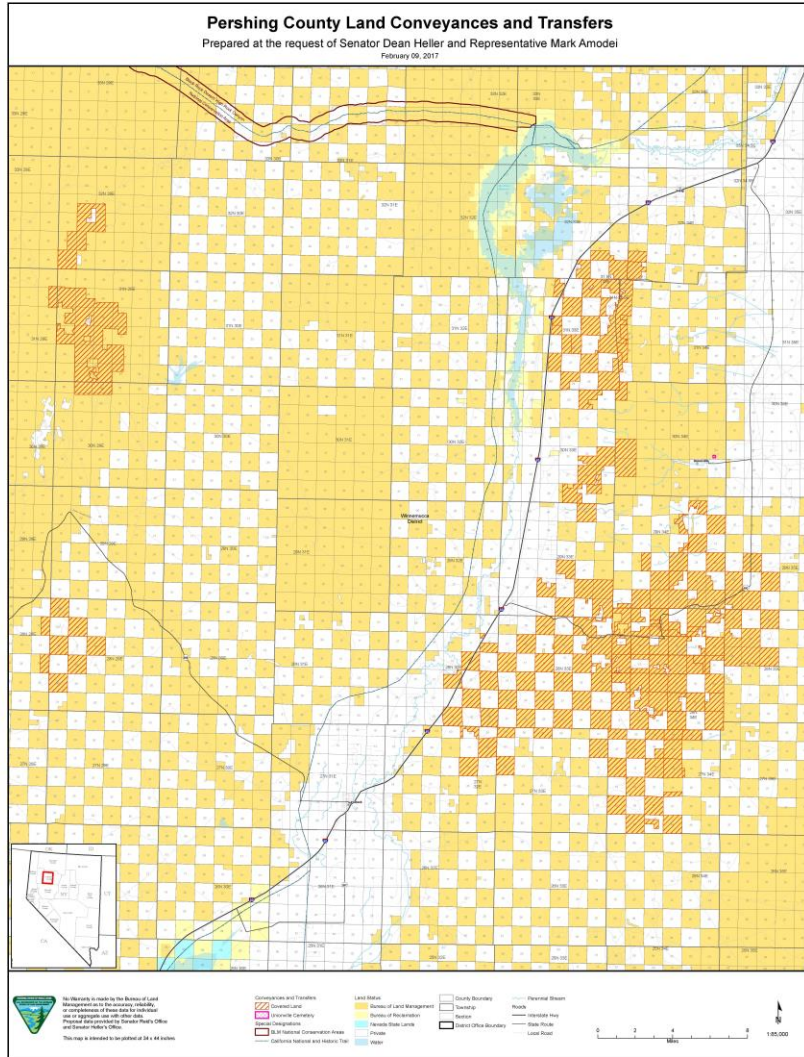


Of the proceeds from the sale, 5% will go to the State for educational purposes and 10% will go to Pershing County. The remaining 85% of the proceeds will be deposited in the Pershing

¹ Map provided courtesy of the BLM on February 9, 2017 to Senator Dean Heller and Representative Mark Amodei.
² Karen Wesner, “Pershing County Lands”, Pershing County, 06/14/16, <http://pershingcounty.net/index.php/Lands-Information/pershing-county-lands.html>.
³ Senator Dean Heller, “Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act”, <https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=pershing-county-lands-bill>.

County Special Account and fund reimbursements for land sales; wildlife habitat conservation projects; reimbursements for County drought projects; wildfire pre-suppression and restoration projects; future acquisition of environmentally sensitive land or lands that secure recreational access for the public; and surveys related to wilderness designations.

4



H.R. 1107 includes several land conveyances for public purposes and to consolidate mining operations in Pershing County. Solidus Resources, Coeur Mining, Pershing Gold, and EP Minerals will all have the ability to acquire land from the BLM where they own mining claims, millsites, or tunnel sites. According to Coeur Mining, allowing the consolidation and expansion of mining operations will lead to “greater investments, additional development and production from these lands, and important for Pershing County – economic development and jobs.”⁵ The bill will benefit several mining sites, including the Rochester gold and silver mine, which generates over \$14 million alone annually in taxes, employment, and labor-related income in Pershing County.⁶

The bill also conveys the Unionville Cemetery to Pershing County. Established in the 1870’s, the 10-acre cemetery is still in use, although the BLM currently prohibits any additional burials.⁷ Transferring the land would ensure its continued use and allow residents of the County to bury their loved ones.

H.R. 1107 also designates 160,590 acres of Wilderness and releases approximately 48,600 acres of WSA. The new wilderness designations include 11,855 of the Mt. Limbo WSA; 13,875 in North Sahwave; 24,900 acres in the Bluewing Mountains; 22,822 acres in the Selenite

⁴ Map provided courtesy of the BLM on February 9, 2017 to Senator Dean Heller and Representative Mark Amodei.
⁵ Coeur Mining, “Economic Development and Conservation Act Proposal – Pershing County, Nevada”, 06/27/16.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Senator Dean Heller, “Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act”, <https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=pershing-county-lands-bill>.

Mountains WSA; 14,942 acres in Fencemaker; 35,339 acres in Grandfathers' encompassing the majority of two WSAs; and 12,339 acres known as Cain Mountain in the Augusta Mountain WSA. The bill also releases 48,600 acres of WSA studied since the early 2000's in Augusta Mountain, China Mountain, Mt. Limbo, Selenite Mountains, and Tobin Range.

The bipartisan bill garnered support from the entire Nevada Congressional delegation during the 113th Congress and is supported by the entire House delegation in the 115th Congress. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) introduced a companion bill, S. 414, on February 16, 2017. The bill is supported by Pershing County, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, the Nevada Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife, and several Nevadan mining companies including Clover Nevada, Coeur Mining, EP Minerals, Gold Acquisition Corp., and Solidus Resources.⁸

Administration Position

The Administration position is unknown at this time.

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

⁸ Information provided courtesy of Rep. Amodei's office.