

Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman
Hearing Memorandum

November 2, 2015

To: All Federal Lands Subcommittee Members

From: Aniela Butler and Spencer Kimball, Subcommittee Staff, x 6-7736
Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Hearing: Legislative hearing on **H.R. 1815 Cresent Hardy (R-NV)**, To facilitate certain pinyon-juniper related projects in Lincoln County, Nevada, to modify the boundaries of certain wilderness areas in the State of Nevada, and to provide for the implementation of a conservation plan for the Virgin River, Nevada.
November 4, 2015 at 10:00 AM; 1334 Longworth.

H.R. 1815 (Rep. Cresent Hardy), “Eastern Nevada Land Implementation Improvement Act”

Bill Summary

H.R. 1815, introduced by Congressman Cresent Hardy (R-NV), authorizes hazardous fuel reduction projects and wildfire planning for rangeland and woodland restoration projects in Lincoln County, Nevada; reduces the size of three Wilderness Areas; and provides for the development and implementation of a Virgin River, Nevada conservation plan.

Invited Witnesses

The Honorable Cresent Hardy (R-NV 4th)
Member of Congress

Steve Ellis, Deputy Director
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

Cosponsors

Rep. Mark Amodei (R-NV-2), Rep. Joseph Heck (R-NV-3) and Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV-1)

Background/Major Provisions of the Bill

The bill makes a technical correction to help implement a multiple species habitat conservation plan (MSHCP) to benefit the economic development and expansion of Mesquite, Nevada. In 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) required the city to create a MSHCP to protect several species in the Lower Virgin River Basin before moving ahead with two land acquisitions. The city planned to use funds from the Mesquite Lands Act, a law passed by

Congress in 1986 that allowed the city to acquire and develop lands from the federal government, to complete the MSHCP. FWS signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Mesquite.

This agreement expired in 2014 and the FWS refused to sign a new MOA or allow the city access to necessary funding because it did not feel that current legislation enabled them to implement the MSHCP. This meant that all work previously done to advance the MSHCP and expand the city has been at a stand-still. This bill remedies the problem by making a technical correction to the Mesquite Lands Act of 1988 that will provide the necessary authority to FWS to implement the conservation plan after signing a new MOA with the city of Mesquite.

Another provision of the bill assists rangeland and woodland restoration projects by authorizing the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to use a portion of proceeds from land sales to conduct hazardous fuel reduction projects and wildfire planning in pinyon-juniper landscapes. Under the Lincoln County Land Act (LCLA) and Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act (LCCRDA), 85 percent of proceeds from the sale of federal lands are managed in special accounts with prescribed uses by BLM.¹

This bill provides BLM with flexibility to determine which projects can be funded for pinyon-juniper landscape restoration projects using existing funds in the special account. Thinning of pinyon-juniper stands will help to prevent catastrophic wildfires and protect and enhance habitat areas for the Greater Sage-Grouse.

Lastly, the bill makes several boundary adjustments that collectively reduce three Wilderness Areas in White Pine and Nye counties by approximately 50 acres. The bill reduces the Mt. Moriah Wilderness Area by 23 acres to improve public access to the Big Canyon Trailhead main road and facilities. The bill also reduces the High Schells Wilderness Area by 11.7 acres to adjust a road and provide land to an existing Girl Scout Camp. Finally, the bill reduces the size of the Arc Dome Wilderness Area by approximately 10 acres to release a small dam owned and operated by the Yamba Tribe.

The bill is supported by the entire Nevada delegation as well as Lincoln County, White Pine County, and the City of Mesquite.

Cost

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

Administration Position

Unknown at this time.

[Effect on Current Law \(Ramseyer\)](#)

¹ Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-424).