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MOL.20070712.0051

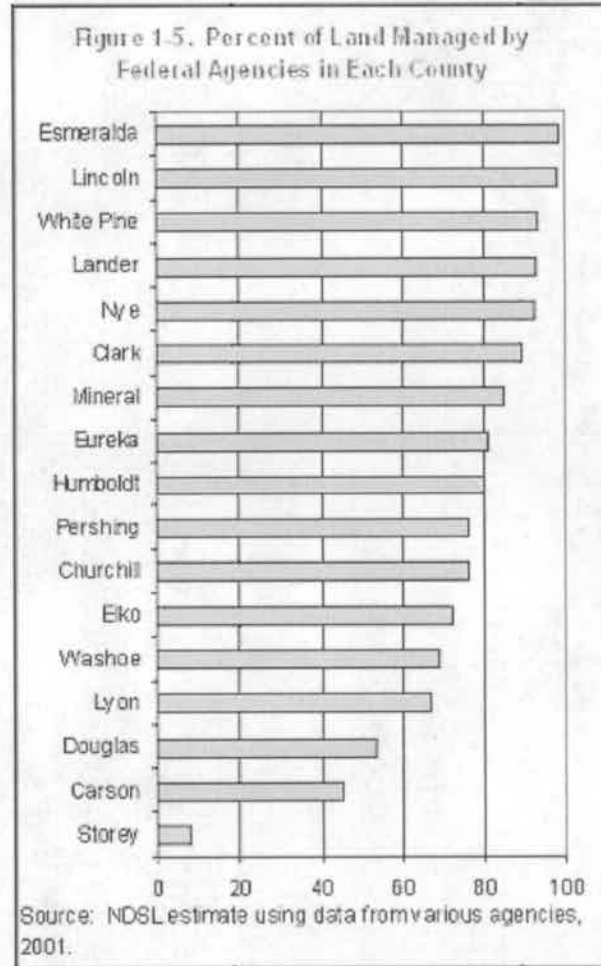
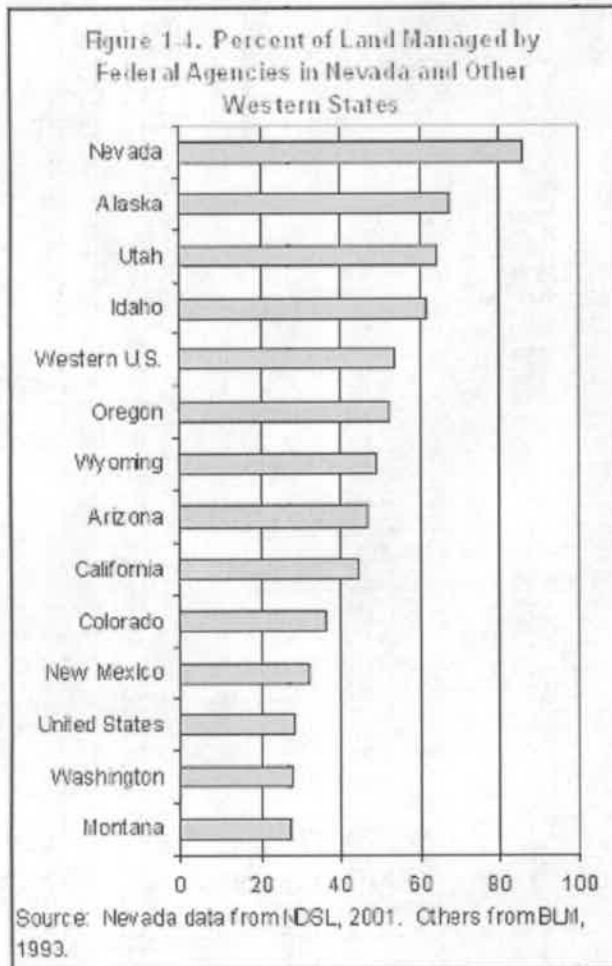


Nevada Natural Resources Status Report



Land and Management Status

Nevada's borders enclose about 70,745,600 acres, making it the seventh largest state. The federal government controls 60,863,345 acres, or 86.1 percent of the land (See Table 1-3 below) Of the remaining 13.9 percent (or 9,882,250 acres), 11.5 percent is privately owned, 1.6 percent tribal, 0.4 percent local, and 0.4 percent state government owned.



On a percentage basis, Nevada has more federal land than any other state (Figure 1-4). Tribal land is not federally owned, but is held in trust by the federal government for the tribes. Federal land status by county is shown in Figure 1-5. At least 90 percent of the land in Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, Nye, and White Pine counties is federally managed. Fifty percent or more of the land in each county is federally managed, except the two smallest counties (i.e., Storey and Carson City).

At the time of statehood in 1864, Nevada was granted 3.9 million acres, consisting of the 16th and 36th sections of each township. However, most of these sections of land were isolated from the state's 30,000 residents and were not surveyed. Under the Exchange Act of 1880, Congress agreed to let Nevada exchange its 3.9 million acres for 2 million acres selected by the state. Thus, Nevada relinquished about half of the state grant land in order to

Category	1985	1995	2000	2001
State Land	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Federal Land	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Private Land	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Local Government Land	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000

Table 1-3
Nevada Land Status 1985 and Recent
(1995/2000/2001)
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select surveyed land and more desirable locations. The selected land generally was located near existing settlements and reliable surface water resources. Almost all state grant lands were patented to private landowners. Additional private land for Nevada was obtained in the 1860's when the federal government granted the Central Pacific Railroad Company the odd numbered sections (each about one square mile) in a corridor extending twenty miles on each side of the railroad. This public land transfer totaled 5,086,683 acres, making this the primary source of private land in Nevada.

The "checkerboard pattern" is evident on land status maps as a 40-mile wide corridor of alternating private and public sections of land that meanders from the eastern to the western borders of the state. The corridor straddles the Humboldt and Truckee rivers, and generally follows present day Interstate Highway 80. The checkerboard pattern of public and private land complicates land development and natural resource management. Development has been somewhat limited,

favoring livestock grazing and farming. Several productive farm districts lie within the checkerboard lands.

There are approximately 8,182,000 acres of private land in Nevada today, an area close to the size of New Hampshire. Assuming all Nevada residents live on private land, the estimated population density is about 150 persons per square mile of private land. (New Hampshire's statewide population density is about 137 persons per square mile.) Data from the Nevada Department of Taxation indicate that local government entities (municipal, county, and schools) own approximately 264,600 acres (Nevada Department of Taxation, 2001).

Land ownership patterns in the state have changed little since 1985. Since then, the federal public land base and state owned land base increased about 0.2 and 0.1 percent, respectively (Table 1-3.) An assumption in Table 1-3 values is that the federal land increase resulted in reduction of private land. Therefore, the decrease in private and local government owned land is calculated to be 0.3 percent, or about 212,000 acres.

Two of the most significant single land ownership changes involve federal government transactions. In 1989, approximately 660,000 acres was transferred from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) under the Nevada National Forest and BLM Enhancement Act. In 1985, the Navy added 177,000 acres to the Fallon Naval Air Station land base to accommodate an expanded military mission. Today, land transactions are focused mainly on consolidating private and public lands to more effectively and prudently conserve, manage, and develop land and water resources. The level of activity involving public and private land sales and exchanges has intensified in recent years, primarily in and around cities and urbanizing towns. The BLM, through the normal land disposal process (authorized by the federal Recreation and Public Purposes Act) and through a special process provided for in the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) of 1998, has undertaken the most land transactions of any federal agency. In addition to the disposal (i.e., land sale and transfer to a nonfederal owner) of public land for development in Las Vegas Valley, the SNPLMA process involves acquisition of environmentally sensitive private parcels throughout the state.

Other federal agencies participating in the SNPLMA land acquisition process are the USFS, National Park Service (NPS), and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). State and local governments are participating as well by advising the federal agencies during the SNPLMA process. Recent and upcoming land transactions involving BLM are summarized in Table 1-4. The Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act of 2000 is also expected to increase the amount of federal agency disposals and acquisitions in Nevada. The Act will create a new funding source and allow federal agencies to recover land transaction costs.

Location	Transaction	Acres
Clark County, Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA)	Disposal	8,773
	Acquisition	914
Lincoln County and Northern Clark County (Nevada)	Disposal	25,000
	Disposal	400
Nye County	Disposal	720
	Acquisition	11,800
Inyo and Shirey Counties, California	Disposal	8,200
Transfer of Nevada National Forest, Esmeralda and Nye Counties	Transfer	5,000

Note: Transactions approved by Congress, 1999-2000 session, for implementation in the near future. Source: BLM-Clark BLM, 2001.

Table 1-4
Recent and Pending BLM Land
Transactions in Nevada
[Click to Expand View](#)

Land Management Status

All levels of government - federal, state, local, and tribal - are involved in the management of natural resources in Nevada. Each agency has statutory authorities that specify jurisdictions, and a range of responsibilities and duties. Intergovernmental coordination and cooperation is essential because watersheds, wildlife habitat, and many other natural features overlap political boundaries. State of Nevada policy promotes collaborative resource management planning and coordination with federal and local agencies.

Land Administered by Federal Agencies

The BLM and the USFS are the most prominent federal land management agencies in Nevada, managing about 68 percent and 8 percent of the state, respectively. Each agency prepares comprehensive resource management plans, and conducts environmental studies related to issuance of permits for mining, grazing, utility corridors, and other land use activities. The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) is the largest national forest in the country, outside of Alaska. About 92 percent of the HTNF land base is in Nevada. The remaining portion, which lies in California, consists of high elevation watersheds in the Sierra Nevada that are a major source of western Nevada water supplies.

The majority of BLM and USFS land in Nevada is managed under multiple use and sustained yield policies mandated by federal statutes. Multiple use requires federal agencies to manage the public lands and natural resources for a combination of diverse uses while balancing long-term needs for renewable and non-renewable resources, including recreation, rangeland, timber, minerals, watershed, and wildlife, along with scenic, scientific, and cultural values. However, neither the courts nor government have interpreted implementation of the "multiple use" policy to require that all federal public land must simultaneously allow and be managed for all possible uses. Sustained yield means maintaining the continuous and productive output of the various renewable resources on the public lands consistent with the multiple use policy. In Nevada, the BLM and USFS manage multiple use lands for grazing, mining, timber harvesting, outdoor recreation, scientific study and ecological function. Resources that are receiving considerable attention in USFS forest plans and BLM resource management plans include wetland and riparian resources, wild horses, biodiversity, forage production, forest health, watershed conditions, wildlife habitat, motorized recreation, wildlife habitat, and noxious and invasive weeds.

A number of wilderness areas, national recreation areas, and other special management units have been established on BLM and USFS managed public lands (Table 1-5.). The special area designations are granted through Congressional or federal administrative actions. Specially designated areas are established to protect and preserve the ecological, natural, and cultural resources of specified areas. Grazing, mining, and other permitted activities existing at the time of the official designation often are allowed to continue.

The most recent wilderness area designation occurred in 2000, the result of a Congressional act creating the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (NCA). The Act specifies protection and preservation for "historical, cultural, paleontological, scenic, scientific, biological, educational, wildlife, riparian, wilderness, endangered species and recreational values and resources associated with the Applegate-Lassen and Nobles Trails corridors and surrounding areas." The Act recognizes permitted livestock grazing as a use that is expected to continue in accordance with the management plan for the conservation area and other applicable laws and regulations. The BLM is preparing a new management plan for the NCA and ten wilderness areas that will review permitted grazing, mining, off-highway vehicle use, and other activities. The Act set aside approximately 815,000 acres as national conservation area and about 752,000 acres as wilderness area, of which approximately 380,000 acres are included in the NCA acreage (Bureau of Land Management, 2002).

Wilderness study areas (WSA's) cover 4.5 million acres. WSA's make up the largest category of specially

Table 1-5. Special Designations on Federally Managed Resources Land in Nevada

Management Designation	Agency	Number of Management Units	Total Acres in Nevada	Created By
Wilderness Area	BLM	11	37,326	Act of Congress
Wilderness Study Area	USFS	13	767,700	Act of Congress
Wilderness Study Area	BLM	102	4,344,000	Administrative Designation
Wilderness Study Area	USFS	8	100,000	Administrative Designation
Wilderness Area	USFS	64	1,743,000	Administrative Designation
National Conservation Area	BLM	Black Rock Desert	798,000	Act of Congress
		High Uintah	176,000	
Area of Critical Environmental Concern	BLM	30	17,400,000	Administrative Designation
National Trail	USFS	Capitol Hill	270,000	Act of Congress
		Playa	80,000	
Historic Preservation Area	USFS	Lassen	700,000	Act of Congress
		Spring Mountain	210,000	
Wilderness Study Area	USFS	16	64,000	Administrative Designation
Latter-day Mormon Trail National Area	BLM	1	52,000	Administrative Designation
Natural Resource Antiquities and Objects	NHTS	8	4,200,000	Administrative Designation
National Monuments	USFS	2	170,000	Act of Congress
Natural Resource Management Study Areas	USFS	Little Lake	30,000	Act of Congress
		Equity Management Unit	30,000	

Source: BLM, USFS, and National Park Service, 1998 and 2003

Table 1.5
Special Designations on Federally
Managed Resources Lands in Nevada
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designated public land in Nevada (Table 1-4). The newest category of management designation is the USFS Roadless Areas, potentially applicable to 3.1 million acres. Roadless area unit boundaries and management plans have yet to be established at the local forest district level. Inventoried roadless areas contain important environmental values that warrant protection, including drinking water sources, threatened and endangered species, biodiversity, dispersed outdoor recreation, barriers to the spread of noxious and invasive species, and scientific research. Until a forest-scale roads analysis is completed and incorporated into a forest plan, inventoried roadless areas shall, as a general rule, be managed to preserve roadless characteristics. However, the policy provides guidance on exceptions, in which case the decision to approve a road management activity or timber harvest is reserved to the Chief or the Regional Forester as provided (U.S. Forest Service, 2001).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) administers about 2.2 million acres of land that includes nine refuges and ranges and one fish hatchery. These public lands are set aside primarily for conservation of wildlife and habitat values and protection of threatened and endangered plant and animal species. Popular sites include the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (Antelope Range) and the Stillwater National Wildlife Complex in northwestern Nevada; Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Nevada; Sheep Range Proposed Wilderness; and, the Ash Meadows Wildlife Refuge in southern Nevada, world renowned for its unique biological diversity (e.g., 24 plants and animals unique to the spring site).

Most national wildlife refuges and ranges are open for limited camping, fishing, hunting, boating, or other outdoor recreation uses that are compatible with the natural resources. The USFWS is the lead agency for implementation of the Endangered Species Act; preparation of recovery plans for threatened and endangered species (e.g., Lahontan cutthroat trout); and development of habitat conservation plans or agreements for sensitive species (e.g., the Clark County Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan).


Land Administered by State Agencies

The Divisions of Wildlife, State Parks, and State Lands are the state agencies with primary authority for management of natural, outdoor recreation, or cultural resources on state-owned land. Other state agencies, also within the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), have resource management responsibilities on public and private land, such as air and water quality (Division of Environmental Protection - NDEP); water use and rights (Division of Water Resources - NDWR); forests and other native plants (Division of Forestry - NDF); fish and wildlife (Division of Wildlife - NDOW); plants and animals threatened with extinction (NDF and NDOW); mined-land reclamation (NDEP); and, cultural resources (State Historic Preservation Office - SHPO, Department of Cultural Affairs).

State land management agencies are mandated to manage resources according to multiple use and sustained yield principles, as defined by state law (NRS 321.0005). The NDOW manages 11 Wildlife Management Areas, for the maintenance and enhancement of fish and wildlife populations, diverse wetland and upland habitat, and wildlife-related outdoor recreation uses and facilities. The Division of State Parks (NDSP) is responsible for 24 state parks, water recreation areas, and historic parks and sites. State Parks contain boating access, campsites, and cultural resources, such as ancient marine fossils, petroglyphs, and settlement era forts, mills, and ranches. NDSP and NDOW prepare and update recreation and resource management plans for the parks and wildlife areas. In addition, NDOW prepares statewide management plans for certain game animals and fishes.

The Division of State Lands (NDSL) manages 500 parcels totaling 224 acres in the Lake Tahoe Basin as open space, emphasizing water quality improvement, wildlife habitat preservation, and forest health. The NDSL also manages 40,646 acres of "sovereign" land. Sovereign land consists of the river channels, lake bottoms, and shoreline areas below the "ordinary" high water marks of Lake Tahoe, Walker Lake, and the Truckee, Carson, Colorado, and Virgin rivers.

▶ **Related Information - See State of Nevada Public Land Policy Update**

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