

**S. 3772 – White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of
2006
Senators Ensign and Reid**

Title I

This title expands economic opportunity in White Pine County by allowing up to 45,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands to be made available for disposal through a joint selection process between the county and the BLM. A small portion of this total acreage will be available for sale each year, providing a long term opportunity for managed growth. Currently more than 94% of the land in White Pine County is managed by federal agencies, including more than 4,300,000 acres managed by the BLM.

The bill distributes 5% of land sales proceeds to the state education fund; 10% to White Pine County law enforcement, fire protection, transportation and natural resource planning; and 85% to fund protection of wilderness areas in White Pine County, to support a three-year study for a potential extension of the Silver State OHV trail, to inventory and protect unique archeological resources, and to carry out other provisions of the bill.

Title II

The bill resolves wilderness study areas throughout White Pine County by designating roughly 545,000 acres of wilderness in 13 new areas. Additionally, more than 68,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management are released from wilderness study designation. Important adjustments are also made to the Mt. Moriah and Currant Mountain wilderness areas originally designated in 1989.

Title III

This title makes two important transfers of land between federal agencies that will improve public land management in White Pine County. It transfers about 645 acres from the Bureau of Land Management to the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge and about 117,000 acres of land surrounding the Great Basin National Park from the Forest Service to the Bureau of Land Management, of which approximately 70,000 will be designated wilderness and roughly 47,000 will be withdrawn from land disposal and mineral laws to further protect the area and ensure popular hunting areas remain open and accessible.

Title IV

The bill conveys land for two existing state parks and one state wildlife management area to expand and improve the management of these areas. The Charcoal Ovens State Park will receive about 650 acres of Bureau of Land Management land they currently manage as part of the park; Cave Lake State Park will receive a conveyance of land, although the

exact boundaries have not been finalized; and Steptoe Valley Wildlife Management area will receive approximately 6,200 acres to expand this popular waterfowl and wetlands area.

The bill also conveys two small parcels of land for the expansion of the airport and industrial park to support future economic development in White Pine County.

Title V

This title authorizes a 3-year study for the possible extension of the Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail into White Pine County. It authorizes a route designation only if the Secretary determines that such a trail would not significantly impact wildlife habitat, natural or cultural resources.

Title VI

Currently the Ely Shoshone Tribe holds 100 acres in two separate parcels within the city limits of Ely. This title transfers approximately 3,500 acres in four separate parcels to be held in trust for the Tribe. The largest parcel and majority of the land is designated for traditional and ceremonial uses only while the other parcels are for residential and commercial development, allowing the Ely Shoshone Tribe to be a partner in the growth and economic development of White Pine County.

Title VI

The threat of catastrophic fire and the loss of habitat for key species is a critical issue in eastern Nevada and the larger Great Basin area. This bill provides funding through the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act for federal agencies, in cooperation with the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition and the Great Basin Institute, to carryout landscape-scale restoration projects that reduce the risk of fire and improve critical watersheds.

Title VII

This title significantly amends the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act of 1998 (SNPLMA) to improve the effectiveness of the Act, while proposing new conservation-oriented expenditure categories from the Special Account.

Specifically, for SNPLMA Special Account expenditure categories, the bill provides new authority for (1) the expansion of the Southern Nevada Water Authority's water saving "Cash for Grass" program to public entities for permanent turf removal; (2) the implementation of the Clark County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, as was intended by the authors of SNPLMA; (3) the Clean Water Coalition's Lake Mead and Las Vegas Wash water quality pipeline project; (4) two comprehensive, ten-year hazardous fuels and fire prevention plans for the Spring Mountains and the Lake Tahoe Basin (including adjacent areas in Nevada along the Carson Range); (5) Nevada State

Parks in Clark County to access parks and trails funding from the Special Account; (6) the Bureau of Land Management to clear and protect public lands in the Las Vegas Valley, alleviating problems with dumping; and (7) authority for Washoe County to access parks and trails funds from the Special Account to purchase available Ballardini Ranch lands for use as a passive park and natural area.

For SNPLMA improvements, the bill streamlines SNPLMA's existing provisions so that the BLM can sell federal land in Nevada below market price if the land is used for affordable housing for people earning up to 120 percent of the median income, which will benefit more working families in Nevada. The bill also requires local governments to create rules which ensure that, for future BLM land auctions in southern Nevada exceeding 200 acres, at least five percent of the units constructed on the acreage will be set aside for affordable housing. The bill also speeds the progress of local governments' parks and trails projects by replacing a cumbersome reimbursement system, which constrains the financial ability of local governments to finance projects, with a requirement that local governments be paid up front.

Title VIII

The final title of this bill establishes the Great Basin National Heritage Route. Legislation designating this National Heritage Route has previously passed both the Senate and the House, but has not reached President for final approval. Designation of the corridor in this bill will ensure protection of key educational and recreational opportunities in White Pine County and the Great Basin.