

NACO NATURAL RESOURCES AND PUBLIC LANDS ACTION PLAN
Approved 12.18.2020

Nearly eighty-seven percent of Nevada’s land is managed by the federal government. That is the largest percentage of any state in the lower forty-eight. Nye, Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln, Mineral and White Pine have 90 to 98 percent of their total county acreage administered by the federal government, and all but two others have over 50%. Nevada’s counties’ economies, quality of life, and ability to provide mandated county services are considerably impacted by federal land management decisions and regulations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Harness the knowledge, ingenuity, and energy of local government through local input that emphasizes cooperation, collaboration and coordination with state, federal and tribal stakeholders.

Ensure that federal and state agency interpretation of laws and regulations are tailored to and fulfill their legislative intent while not interfering with vital county functions, services and administration.

Ensure that counties have input in all agency management decisions including the implementation of new policies or the modification of existing regulations.

Guarantee appropriate funding for counties.

Advocating for Healthy Lands

The scale and scope of natural resource and public land management requires coordination, cooperation and collaborative conservation. Moving forward NACO will continue to facilitate and encourage collaborative conservation which has been instrumental in the conservation efforts leading to the Bi-State Sage-grouse no longer being considered a candidate for listing under the ESA, and the conservation of the Greater Sage-grouse.

NACO encourages improving rangelands, forests, and protecting wildlife by advocating for practical, science-based analysis, and solution-oriented policy. Supporting thriving ecosystems means demanding proper management of Nevada’s free-roaming Wild Horses and Burros. Proper management means reducing their population to BLM’s prescribed appropriate management level within 10 years by using fertility control, adoption, and gathers as proposed in “The Path Forward for Management of BLM’s Wild Horses and Burros.”

Nevada is the most arid state in the nation and our counties bear immediate and long-lasting socioeconomic impacts from wildfires in the Great Basin. Counties are often the first to respond when a wildfire breaks out. Wildfires threaten both lives and livelihood, resulting in major negative economic impacts including the cost of first-line response, repairs to county infrastructure, and secondary impact to county economies from damage to resources. For instance, we support the use of targeted grazing, use of non-native, non-invasive vegetation, and other appropriate management tools that aim to restore range resilience and resistance to fire.

Whether through recreation, agriculture, mining or tourism, county economies are deeply connected to the health and vitality of the lands managed by all federal land management agencies including, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Military. NACO supports practical, science-based approaches to protecting, restoring, and prioritizing healthy lands in Nevada.

Regulatory Certainty and Local Expertise

County services that are tied to natural resource decisions include but are not limited to: county roads (75% of Nevada's roads overall), water and sewer systems, landfills, fire protection, emergency response, weed treatment, airports, and public transit. Federal agencies should recognize and understand the importance of county services including that access to roads and infrastructure and the availability of nearby land is critical for land use planning, economic sustainability of rural communities, and to carry out the mandated and critical services counties provide. Counties also provide important services on public lands. It is vital, therefore that Nevada's counties have a strong and durable voice in the development and implementation of federal and state regulations, and designation of public lands. NACO will engage on changes to interpretation or implementation of federal laws, regulations, and policies that impact county authority and the ability of counties to engage as partners with federal agencies. Counties are heard when they participate as cooperating agencies in rulemakings, submit comments, participate in collaborative conservation efforts, or ensure that future laws and policies are consistent with county land use plans.

Counties can contribute crucial knowledge and expertise to help inform and influence agency decision-making. We advocated for modifications to NEPA and the ESA that would recognize and utilize county expertise as well as already-existing data and scientific analyses and will continue to do so in future rulemakings. The use of preexisting analysis, whether conducted by counties or the University of Nevada, should be an early step in the rulemaking process and should help mitigate or eliminate negative impacts to county plans and functions. For example, the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Nevada's Economic Assessment Project (NEAP) in which NACO participates, will provide crucial baseline socioeconomic data that should be used for agency rulemaking and reviews going forward.

NACO will always advocate that agencies interpret regulations in a manner that fulfills their legal mandate, such as the BLM's multiple use mandate under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. National monument designations must be made in consultation with the county government in which the monument is located, and must include adequate funding so that counties can provide services for those who wish to visit. Additionally, a decision should be made regarding the management of Wilderness Study Areas or other special designations and any acres not selected as wilderness or for special designation should be released to their previous multiple use status. Lastly, NACO supports the transfer of some federal land to states, at the state's request and in consultation with the counties and that such disposals be carried out in an efficient and timely manner