

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

A COUNTY-STATE-FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP FACT SHEET 98-43

Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act of 1997

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Introduction

The Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act authorizes disposal, by sale or exchange, of over 25,000 acres of federal land in Clark County, Nevada and provides for the acquisition by the federal government of other environmentally sensitive lands in Nevada. It is recognized in the Act that the Las Vegas metropolitan area is the fastest growing urban area in the United States with a need for orderly development. This act would ensure that land disposal activities are coordinated with the local government and consistent with local land use planning and management.

Disposal and Distribution of Proceeds

This Act authorizes the sale or exchange of lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Las Vegas Valley of Clark County, as depicted on the map entitled "Las Vegas Valley, Nevada, Land Disposal Map" dated April 10, 1997. This map is on file and available for public inspection in the offices of the Director and the

Las Vegas District of the BLM.

The gross proceeds from any land sales will be distributed as follows:

- Five percent to the State of Nevada for use in the general education program of the State
- Ten percent to the Southern Nevada Water Authority to offset a \$1.7 billion water treatment and transmission facility in Clark County
- Eighty-five percent to a special account in the Treasury of the United States to be expended as outlined in the next section (Acquisition and Expenditures)

In the case of a land exchange, the non-federal party will be responsible for payments to the State of Nevada for general education and to the Southern Nevada Water Authority as outlined above. The Act does not preclude compensation by the federal government for these expenditures if both parties agree prior to the exchange.

Acquisition and Expenditures

The federal share of the proceeds of land sales may be used for the following purposes:

- the acquisition of environmentally sensitive land in the State of Nevada, with priority given to lands in Clark County
- capital improvements at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area and other areas administered by the BLM, and the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area. These expenditures are limited to no more than 25 percent of the special account in any fiscal year.
- development of a multispecies habitat conservation plan in Clark County
- development of parks, trails, and natural areas in Clark County
- reimbursement of costs incurred by the local offices of the BLM in arranging sales or exchanges under this Act.

Other Provisions

- *Recreation and Public Purposes Land:* This Act gives the State of Nevada and Clark County the option to acquire lands in accordance with the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, and includes approval for construction of previously requested youth activity facilities.
- *Affordable Housing:* This Act allows the federal government to sell land to the State of Nevada or local governmental entities, including local public housing authorities, for provision of affordable housing.
- *Airport Lands Transfer:* This Act transfers title to all BLM land associated with the McCarran Airport Noise Compatibility Program to Clark County, Nevada. The management of these lands would be subject to Federal Aviation Administration regulations and an existing agreement between the BLM and Clark County.

- *Right-of-Way Grants:* This Act also waives fees for right-of-way grants for canals, ditches, pipelines, and other facilities needed for water provision, wastewater management, and flood control management.
- *Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area:* This Act adjusts the boundary of the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

Impact on Las Vegas and Clark County

Clark County has experienced an increasing burden for provision of infrastructure as a result of past federal land exchanges, which have led to privatization of large tracts of land in the County. This Act will ease that burden in the following ways:

- The revenue sharing provision will result in the Southern Nevada Water Authority receiving about \$34 million over the first five years, according to Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates.
- The Act allows local governments in Clark County to receive right-of-way grants on federal lands without paying fees that may be charged under current law, resulting in avoidance of about \$50,000 of fees per year.
- The provisions for increased federal expenditures on surrounding recreational areas and for state and county purchase of land under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act will help Clark County meet its citizens' increasing demands for outdoor recreation.
- According to County officials, the transfer of certain lands around the airport will help ease the administrative costs of managing their development. In addition, if the county sells these lands, it will be allowed to retain 10 percent of the gross proceeds, with the remainder going to the special fund established by

this Act.

- Finally, this Act will give Clark County joint authority, along with the federal government, to select lands to be offered for sale. This will allow the County to control the pace and direction of private development.

Impact on the Rest of Nevada

This Act contains no intergovernmental mandates or mandates on private business and will impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments, or on any private business. The state of Nevada's educational program will benefit through receipt of about \$17 million over the first five years according to CBO estimates. Counties where land is purchased by the federal government may lose part of their tax base through loss of property tax revenues, but the extent of this impact is unknown.

Impact on the Federal Government

The CBO estimates that this Act will generate receipts to the federal government from land sales of about \$70 million in fiscal year 1998, and a total of about \$350 million in the first five years. In addition, CBO estimates that the Act will increase direct spending by \$20 million in fiscal year 1998, and by \$287 million over first five years. This results in a net gain for the federal government of about \$63 million over five years. These estimates assume about half of the designated 27,000

acres would be sold within five years.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, the BLM has privatized approximately 24,000 acres of land in Clark County. The privatization of these federal lands through land exchanges has had a significant impact on Clark County which has been forced to shoulder the burden of providing necessary infrastructure, including roads, water delivery and electricity. A process will be established, according to the Act itself, "to provide for the orderly disposal of certain federal lands in Clark County, Nevada, and to provide for the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands in the State of Nevada", by allowing local authority, joint with the federal government, over these land sales.

Clark County will have increased control over its own development and realize an increase in recreational expenditures, both at the county level and the federal level. The State of Nevada will receive five percent of the gross sales receipts for its educational program and realize an increase in protection of environmentally sensitive lands within the state. Counties where this land is purchased by the federal government will realize a decrease in property tax revenues that may or may not be compensated for by an increase in federal payments in lieu of taxes.

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