

SUMMARY

LIST OF PUBLIC LANDS IDENTIFIED FOR ACQUISITION

(Assembled by the Division of State Lands March 1999)

BACKGROUND AND LISTS OF STATE/COUNTY PRIORITIES

SHORT TERM PROGRAM - The Nevada Legislature's Committee on Public Lands requested the Division of State Lands develop a list of high priority lands needed by local and state government for public use, community expansion and economic development. Members of the Committee believe there is a potential for acquiring some key federal lands and are willing to present the County and State proposals to appropriate officials in Washington.

State Lands sent a request to each county on December 17, 1998 asking for a list of federal lands to be identified by each County to meet local needs. Eleven counties responded and provided an updated list of high priority lands they would like to acquire. The updated list provided in 1999 is just the latest effort by the county's in identifying lands needed for community and economic needs. State Lands assisted the counties in developing previous lists between 1983-86 and these previous lists still provide the basis for a larger acquisition program.

Two counties did not respond for unique reasons. Clark County's current efforts are in implementing the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. Lincoln County is currently working with the BLM and Douglas County on the Rural Lands Initiative, which proposes to sell approximately 15,000 acres of public land in Lincoln County in the first phase. If Phase I is successful, the BLM and County plan additional sales. The receipts from the Lincoln County Sales are planned to be used to purchase conservation easements on prime agricultural lands in Douglas County.

Although Churchill County did respond, the County has a special situation in that most of the public lands within the Lahontan Valley have been withdrawn by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for the Newlands Project. BOR and the BLM completed a study of the withdrawn lands in the early 1990's. The study has been in Washington D. C. with no apparent action. A decision by the Secretary of Interior is needed before the BLM can respond to any significant land disposal proposals on these withdrawn lands. Existing actions are based on a case-by-case review involve multiple federal agencies from BOR, BLM and in some cases the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

This Summary Document provides a list of requests developed in 1999 by the county's for acquisition and address only the immediate needs. The ultimate solution would be to implement the decisions described in the County's Public Policy Plans and in the BLM Resource Management Plans as described below:

LONG TERM PROGRAM - As mentioned previously, an earlier list of state/county selected lands was developed during the preparation of the Policy Plans for Public Lands (SB 40 Plans) between 1983 and 1985. This work was further refined by State Lands in 1986 that brought together both county and state needs. These lists are still useful in that many of the lands identified in the 1980's for selection are still needed by the counties. Two copies of the complete lists have been provided the Chairman. This document includes the 1999 updated lists, the lists from the SB 40 Plans and current BLM lists.

There has been considerable coordination between the federal agencies and local governments to identify lands that should be moved from federal ownership to county/city ownership or the private sector. Finally, BLM

planning has identified approximately 1.0 million acres tentatively suitable for disposal across the state. The BLM has received many proposals to sell or exchange federal lands for private lands

Federal ownership averages 87 percent with more than 90% federal ownership in Nye, Lincoln, Esmeralda, Lander, and White Pine Counties. Most of Nevada's rural counties have identified a need for additional lands for economic development and to increase the local tax base. Most rural counties have adopted policies opposing any net increase in federal ownership.

Nevada's urban counties such as Washoe County, Clark County, Carson City, and parts of Douglas County view the federal lands as having the potential to provide open space for their communities. Carson City has requested the BLM retain most of their lands within and adjacent to the city as part of their open space program. Douglas County is interested in using revenues from BLM sales to purchase conservation easements on some historic ranches in the valley.

CURRENT SITUATION - Although the BLM and local governments have agreed to many land adjustments, there has been relatively little action taken on the smaller proposals primarily due to budget and staff constraints. Land adjustments (exchanges/sales/purchases) can take several years to complete even with adequate funding and staff. Without funding/staff, priorities are set by those exchanges that are large enough to attract attention from organizations such as the American Land Conservancy, the Trust for Public Lands, or from wealthy individuals or cooperations who can provide the resources. Small exchange or sale proposals are normally not efficient to process due to the cost of the process requirements. Often these small proposals are not initiated unless they can be packaged with a large exchange.

There are numerous small proposed land sales and exchanges that are "backlogged" because of the lack of funds. A systematic processing of small sales and exchanges have the greatest potential to resolve local issues.

BARRIERS - The following are barriers to an active small parcel exchange/sales program:

- C Land values for grazing lands are as low as \$50 to \$100 per acre while environmental studies and real estate transactions can range from a minimum of \$100 to \$500 per acre and higher.
- C Funds and staffing to complete the studies are generally not available. The agencies try to use their limited funds as efficiently as possible, which precludes many small isolated exchanges or sales.

NEVADA PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT ACT - The Nevada Public Land Management Act would provide an additional source of funding for the land's program. The proposed Act provides for a portion of the receipts to be used to finance the studies and other work necessary to complete the real estate action. Studies that could be funded include archaeology and historic studies, threatened and endangered plant and animal studies, mineral surveys, and a survey of potential hazardous materials as well as the realty actions.