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Contact: Taylor McKinnon, Center for Biological Diversity, (801) 300-2414, [tmckinnon@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:tmckinnon@biologicaldiversity.org)  
Bob Fulkerson, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN), (775) 348-7557, [bfulkerson@planevada.org](mailto:bfulkerson@planevada.org)  
Kelly Fuller, Western Watersheds Project, (928) 322-8449, [kfuller@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:kfuller@westernwatersheds.org)  
John Hadder, Great Basin Resource Watch, (775) 348-1986, [john@gbrw.org](mailto:john@gbrw.org)  
David von Seggern, Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter, (775) 303-8461

## **Trump Administration Offers 195,000 Nevada Acres for Fracking**

### ***Water, Wildlife, Public Lands, Climate in Crosshairs***

LAS VEGAS— Despite legal [protests](#) from conservation groups, the Bureau of Land Management is auctioning off 195,732 acres (304 square miles) of public lands in Nevada today for fossil fuel development. The BLM dismissed the protests on Tuesday, ignoring or downplaying legal and environmental concerns about fracking impacts to public lands, surface and groundwater, wildlife and the climate.

“We won’t let Nevada’s water and wildlife be sacrificed for oil industry profits — if the BLM wants a fight, it’s found one,” said Taylor McKinnon with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Trump administration oil industry cronyism has no place on America’s public lands.”

The fracking auction covers public lands in northern Nevada, including the Big Smoky, Diamond and Railroad valleys and the Diamond, Fish Creek and Sulphur Creek mountain ranges. Wildlife at risk include mule deer, greater sage grouse, the threatened Railroad Valley springfish and other species that live in springs fed by aquifers threatened by fracking.

Under the Obama administration, the BLM’s original preferred alternative would have deferred more than 104,000 acres from leasing because of environmental concerns. Now, under Trump, the BLM has put that land back on the table.

“It is outrageous that profits for oil and gas corporations trump protecting our precious desert groundwater,” said Bob Fulkerson, state director of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada. “The BLM must cease cosigning on their plunder of Nevada.”

Conservation groups’ protest challenged the BLM’s failure to analyze the environmental impacts of high-volume hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, especially relating to depletion and pollution of aquifers and the springs they feed. The groups argued that the Battle Mountain District resource management plan, which was written long before the widespread use of fracking on public land, must be updated prior to new leasing.

“The government’s environmental analysis failed to truly address obvious dangers of leasing these public lands to oil companies,” said John Hadder, director of Great Basin Resource Watch. “Oil and gas extraction is a dirty business that will release toxic chemicals into the air and water upon which communities depend. We urge federal officials to end this irresponsible leasing practice.”

In its environmental analysis for the lease sale, the BLM failed to consider the impact of fracking on wildlife and habitat. In addition, its requirements for fossil fuel companies and other developers are weak, vague and unenforceable, opening the door to the destruction of riparian areas, wetlands, priority sage grouse habitat and big-game ranges.

“Fracking these valleys will drive greater sage-grouse closer to the brink of extinction. This iconic western bird is part of the heritage of every American, and future generations will not look kindly on us if we lose it before they can see it,” said Kelly Fuller, energy campaign coordinator at Western Watersheds Project.

The BLM also failed to adequately consider the greenhouse gas pollution that would result from fracking, and failed to consider an alternative that would prohibit leasing to protect the climate. [Studies](#) have shown that the carbon pollution from new federal fossil fuel leasing is incompatible with U.S. commitments under the Paris climate agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius.

Said David von Seggern, chair of the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club: “Oil and gas leasing in Nevada is nearly a futile exercise. With miniscule production in the past and even today, Nevada has no sizable oil and gas industry. What Nevada has is huge solar and geothermal energy resources — we should continue to grow those industries.”

The BLM’s denial of the groups’ protest begins a 30-day period for appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

*The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.3 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.*