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# NYE COUNTY

## PURPOSE

The Division of State Lands was directed by the 1983 State Legislature (Senate Bill 40) to "prepare, in cooperation with appropriate state agencies and local governments throughout the state, plans or policy statements concerning the use of lands in Nevada which are under federal management." The purpose of the plans is to provide state and locally developed public land management policies to be used by the various federal agencies managing the public lands in Nevada. The plans are a comprehensive set of policies and measures which are designed to increase the role Nevadans have in determining the management of public lands. Within the plans are comprehensive descriptions of problems and opportunities relating to the public lands, as perceived by the state and local governments and the citizens of Nevada, which must be addressed by the federal public land managing agencies. With these plans the federal land management agencies will be better able to know, and to respond in a positive fashion to, the concerns and needs of Nevada.

## PROCESS

A series of meetings and workshops were the basis of this plan. The first meetings were with the County Commissioners, the Planning Commission, staff and major land managing agencies. A key feature of the process used is that the plan will address actual issues identified for Nye County by the residents of Nye County. The issues, objectives and recommendations and policies are adopted by the County Commission and the Gabbs City Council to act as a guide for dealing with the federal lands. Appendix I is a listing of meetings and workshops held that specifically relate to Nye County.

## SENATE BILL 40

Under existing law (Nevada Revised Statutes 321.640-770), the State Land Use Planning Agency, within the Division of State Lands, is required to help local governments in their land use planning efforts. Senate Bill 40 directs the State Land Use Planning Agency to work together with local planning entities to actually prepare local plans and policy statements regarding the use of federal land in Nevada. Following public review and comment, each plan must be reviewed and approved by the governor and the governing bodies of affected counties and cities. The bill thus provides for cooperative land use planning by state and local governments concerning federal lands in Nevada. Senate Bill 40 is designed, in part, to take advantage of the consistency language in Section 202(c)(9) of Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Section 202(c)(9) governs BLM planning and requires that BLM land use plans be consistent with federal law and the purposes of FLPMA. Senate Bill 40 is intended to give Nevada localities an opportunity to positively address federal land use management issues directly and thereby offer an alternative to relying solely on after-the-fact reactions.

## BACKGROUND

Named in honor of James W. Nye, Nevada's territorial governor and first U.S. Senator, Nye County was formed from portions of Lander and Esmeralda Counties in 1864, before Nevada became a state.

The reason for its inception was the development of the Union Mining District, on the western side of the Shoshone Mountains. Ione, a mining town in the district, was named the first county seat, but lost that position to Belmont in 1867. Additions and subtractions were made to Nye's territory several times, the largest change being the removal of the southeastern portion to establish Lincoln County in 1866.

Activity declined in Nye County during the latter part of the nineteenth century. However, the discovery and development of gold and silver ores at Tonopah and Bullfrog, after 1900, led to a new boom era. In 1905, the county seat was moved from Belmont to Tonopah, where it has remained.

In recent years, a large part of the county's activity has resulted from the operation of the United States Government's Nevada Test Site. Mining has continued on a boom-bust cycle; agriculture in the southern part of the county was very important and recreation and tourism are becoming important economic activities.

### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Located in the south central part of the State, Nye is Nevada's largest county, 18,064 square miles in area. Mountainous, the altitude of its terrain reaches 11,949 feet at Mt. Jefferson, the County's highest elevation.

Geographically colorful, prominent landforms include the Cactus Range, Cactus and Gold Flats, Paiute Mesa, and the Pancake, Kawich, Monitor, Toiyabe and Toquima Ranges, along with many playas, or dry lakes.

### CLIMATE

Nye's climate varies from north to south. The northern "cool desert" is semi-arid, while the southern "warm desert" is arid. The growing season, 144 days, averages a little longer than the State's. Annual average precipitation is 4.7 inches. July temperatures rise into the nineties, while January temperatures drop to the low twenties.

### LAND STATUS

Nye County is the largest county in the State. Within the ninety-three percent of the county managed by the federal government are large areas administered for specific purposes, including the Nellis Air Force Base Bombing and Gunnery Range, the Nevada Test Site, the U.S. Forest Service and Death Valley National Monument. Small areas are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and Ash Meadows Refuge.

TABLE I  
LAND OWNERSHIP IN NYE COUNTY  
(Nevada Division of State Lands)

Land Area	Acres	% of County
Federal	10,712,207	92.7
BLM	6,703,643	58.0
USFS	1,750,119	15.1
NPS	106,971	0.9
DOD, DOE	2,151,474	18.6

**TABLE I (continued)**

<u>Land Area</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>% of County</u>
Tribal	9,273	0.1
State	10,496	0.1
County	295	-
<b>TOTAL TAX EXEMPT</b>	<b>10,738,249</b>	<b>92.9</b>
Railroad	-	-
Commercial, Residential		
Agricultural	822,711	7.1
<b>TOTAL ON TAX ROLL</b>	<b>822,711</b>	<b>7.1</b>
<b>COUNTY TOTAL</b>	<b>11,560,960</b>	<b>(1st ranked, 16.3% of County)</b>

**POPULATION**

Growing at rapid rates, Nye's population is expected to increase over 400 percent between 1980 and 2000.

**TABLE II  
CENSUS POPULATION OF NYE COUNTY**

	<u>1920</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>
County	6,504	3,606	4,374	5,599	9,048
Gabbs	-	-	770	874	811
Tonopah	-	-	1,679	1,716	1,952
State	77,407	110,247	285,278	488,758	800,495
% of State	8.4	3.3	1.5	1.2	1.1
Persons per square mile	.4	.2	.2	.3	.5

**TABLE III  
POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR NYE COUNTY  
(Nevada Office of Community Services, 1984)**

	<u>1985</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>
County	20,190	34,790	42,408
State	980,597	1,164,480	1,498,224
% of State	2.1	3.0	

**EMPLOYMENT**

The leading employment sectors within Nye County are services, mining, construction and retail sales. Table IV indicates that in Nye County in 1980 there were 171 people whose major occupation was in agriculture, that this was 4.2 percent of Nye County's workforce, and that about three percent of all the agriculture employment in the State was in Nye County. The principal economic base sectors are mining and agriculture. Over thirteen percent of the mining employment in Nevada was in Nye County in 1980, compared to one percent of the total workforce.

**TABLE IV**  
**INDUSTRY OF EMPLOYED PERSONS FOR NYE COUNTY: 1980**  
**(US Census PC 80-1-C30)**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Employed Persons</b>	<b>% of County Total</b>	<b>% of State Industry Total</b>
Agriculture	171	4.2	2.9
Forestry	24	0.6	
Mining	717	17.4	13.3
Construction	556	13.5	1.8
Manufacturing	120	2.9	0.5
Transportation, Communications, Utilities	265	6.4	.09
Wholesale Trade	92	2.2	
Retail Trade	522	12.7	0.8
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	174	4.2	0.7
Services	1,128	27.3	0.6
Public Administration	356	8.6	1.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,125</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>

**RECREATION**

Recreational activities play an important part in the lifestyles and economy of Nye County. In a 1981 study of dispersed recreation, Nye County was grouped together with Esmeralda and Mineral Counties. These three counties together had 2.7 percent of the state's population, yet they hosted a relatively higher percentage of the dispersed recreational activities. These percentages are reflected in the first column of figures in Table V and indicate the importance of recreation to the local community economy and lifestyles. The participation rate in Table V indicates average frequency of participation per capita in an outdoor recreational activity during the season of highest use. For example, the statewide participation rate for horseback riding is slightly over one day per person in the season of highest use, compared to almost seven days per person in the season of highest use in the Nye-Mineral-Esmeralda region. This information came from the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

**TABLE V**  
**DISPERSED RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES OCCURRING IN THE NYE, MINERAL AND**  
**ESMERALDA COUNTY REGION**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>% Occurring in Region</b>	<b>Statewide Participation Rate</b>	<b>Regional Participation Rate</b>
Rockhounding	22.6	-	-
Horseback Riding	18.4	1.06	6.81
Off-Highway Vehicle Use	12.0	0.14	0.57
Photography	10.6	-	-
Hunting	10.4	1.06	1.96
Primitive Camping	9.7	0.83	1.13
Sightseeing	9.2	-	-
Exploring	8.4	-	-
Fishing	5.7	2.99	4.42
Shooting (non-hunting)	4.8	-	-
Hiking, Backpacking	3.4	4.41	2.17
Motor Boating	3.3	1.44	0.35

## POLICIES

This policy plan for the federal lands in Nye County is a guide developed by the citizens and local government entities regarding the use of federal lands in Nye County. The plan addresses public land use management issues directly and is intended to be used as a positive guide for federal land management agencies in their development and implementation of federal land plans and management actions. The county and citizens support the continued multiple use of the federal lands in Nye County. The policies are intended to further agriculture, mining and recreation as principal economic bases of the county. The county commission should be consulted on any interpretation of these policies.

Policies followed by (Gabbs) or (Nye) are policies adopted by that governing body only and the wording differs from that adopted by the other. All other policies are uniformly adopted by both governing bodies in Nye County.

## FEDERAL LANDS

Manage and utilize public lands on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield concepts, and in a manner that will conserve natural resources; protect and preserve the quality of the environment, and ecological, scenic, historical and archeological values; protect and preserve wildlife habitat, and certain lands in their natural condition; and provide for long term benefits, including economic benefits, for the people of Nye County and future generations.

## POLICIES

1. Increase opportunities for local economic development by selectively increasing the amount of privately owned and locally managed land within the county.
  - a. Lands with high recreational, wildlife, mineral, and other public values should continue to remain as public lands. (Nye)  
  
Lands with high recreational, wildlife and other public values should continue to remain public lands. (Gabbs)
  - b. Public lands within the municipal service area of existing communities should continue to be made available to the private sector for housing and economic activity. These lands should be transferred only when local governments agree that the transfer is opportune and would not be a burden to local governments. Growth should be directed to these areas to the extent that it can be accommodated in a manner compatible with each area's character and without overburdening public facilities and services. (Nye)  
  
Public lands within the municipal service area of existing communities should continue to be made available for housing and industrial sites. These lands should be transferred only when local governments agree that the transfer is opportune and would not be a burden to local governments. Growth should be directed to these areas to the extent that it can be accommodated in a manner compatible with each area's character and without overburdening public facilities and services. (Gabbs)
  - c. Public lands should continue to be made available for state and local government purposes. Land identified for public purposes should receive preference over disposal for private purposes.

- d. Public land disposals should be in conformance with local land use plans. The general public and state and local governments should be involved in public land disposals.
  - e. Public lands should be made available to local governments at a discounted price and then those local governments should be allowed to develop and dispose of the lands to private interests.
2. Public land should be disposed of for private agricultural needs.
    - a. Those lands disposed of for farm land would have to have adequate water, for irrigation and appropriate soil, as determined by a soil study.
    - b. Before public lands are disposed of, adverse impacts on existing and future uses should be considered. Adverse impacts could include important wildlife habitat, key seasonal grazing rights, municipal watershed, flood prone areas, access, mining (including potential), and recreational use of the lands. (Nye)  
  
Before public lands are disposed of, adverse impacts on existing uses should be considered. Adverse impacts could include important wildlife habitat, key seasonal grazing rights, municipal watershed, flood prone areas, access, mining, and recreational use of the lands. (Gabbs)
  3. Whenever the public lands are disposed of, existing access to adjoining and nearby public lands should be retained for recreational and other multiple use needs or alternative routes of access should be made available.
    - a. When access to public lands with high recreational or other public values is blocked by private lands, public access should be developed.
  4. Promote the increased use of, and adherence to, comprehensive planning among all government entities in Nevada.
    - a. The state and local governments should continue to develop land use plans to identify lands that should remain in public ownership.
    - b. Local involvement and the use of Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP) techniques should be encouraged in the federal planning process.
    - c. Adequate means should be developed to implement the policies in this plan.
  5. Corridors for communications and transportation need to be planned for in harmony with other multiple uses on public lands.
  6. To provide maximum management flexibility, disposals should be by the most appropriate authority available.
    - a. Land exchanges that block up high value public purpose lands and make private lands more manageable should be given a high priority in federal real estate actions.
  7. Federal land management agencies should expand efforts to clarify the legal status and title to historically disposed lands. This action should receive priority over other land action issues.

## NUCLEAR AND HAZARDOUS WASTE STORAGE (N)

The storage of nuclear and hazardous waste in Nevada should not occur unless it can be proven that said storage will not adversely impact the health, safety and well-being of Nevadans (current and future residents) and Nevada's unique and valued environment. It is incumbent on the entity (public or private) desiring to store nuclear and/or hazardous waste in Nevada to utilize the best and most relevant scientific methods and information in ascertaining the impact of said storage on man and his environment. All activity associated with said storage (including but not limited to analyses, planning, construction, operation and closure activities) must involve the state and its affected local governments as full partners or participants.

### POLICIES

1. The entity desiring to store the waste must bear the total financial responsibility for the mitigation of all adverse impacts associated with said storage. Assistance should be provided in the following areas, but not necessarily limited to these areas:
  - a. Education, including facilities and personnel for the elementary and secondary levels, for community colleges and for vocational and technical education;
  - b. Public health, including facilities and personnel for programs of water treatment and distribution, sewerage and sewage treatment, pest control, sanitary land fill and sanitation;
  - c. Law enforcement and criminal justice, including facilities and personnel for the functions of prosecution and defense, for the courts, for corrections and for training of administrative personnel;
  - d. Fire protection, including early location and construction of stations, acquisition of firefighting equipment and communications equipment, personnel and the training of personnel;
  - e. Emergency medical services, including equipment, facilities and personnel;
  - f. Medical care, including hospitals, equipment and personnel;
  - g. Cultural needs, including facilities and personnel for libraries, management of cultural resources, museums, recreational facilities and acquisition and expansion of parks;
  - h. Disposal of public lands in a timely fashion to allow the expansion of existing communities, the possible creation of new ones and the construction of needed residential and commercial facilities;
  - i. Utilization of labor, including facilities and personnel for employment services and for vocational training;
  - j. Social services, including facilities and personnel for welfare programs, services to the aging, services to youth; rehabilitation programs, programs relating to health and mental hygiene and programs relating to the abuse of alcohol and controlled substances;

- k. Transportation, including full responsibility for any roads or rail built for the Repository project and assistance for the repair and maintenance of any local or state roads used and damaged by vehicles and equipment associated with the construction or operation of the Repository project; and the rail line built to the Repository to be utilized by the private sector for commercial activity in Nevada, and the rail line to be located to maximize said utilization;
- l. Training and equipment for local and state public safety, emergency medical and firefighting personnel for the handling of radioactive or hazardous waste accidents;
- m. Establishment of appropriate methods and equipment, including data processing, to observe and assess long-term effects of the Repository project over the entire life of the project from construction, closure and to the point the waste is no longer radioactive;
- n. Energy needs, including requisite facilities, created by all activity induced by the Repository project, recognizing that the cost of such needs should not be subsidized by current residents of the area proposed for deployment of the system; and
- o. Such other facilities and personnel of state or local governments as may be required to meet needs that would not have occurred except for the construction, operation, and closure of the Repository project.

#### NUCLEAR AND HAZARDOUS WASTE AND STORAGE (Gabbs)

The storage of nuclear or hazardous waste in Nevada should only be provided when proven to be safe for the community and local environment, and when facilities are planned in cooperation and coordinated with state and local governments.

#### POLICIES

- Criteria for the evaluation of nuclear or hazardous waste storage facilities should explicitly weigh the trade offs between demand, environmental cost and the creation of jobs.
  - a. All adverse impacts should be mitigated.
  - b. The general public and state and local governments should be involved in the designation decision and planning for nuclear or hazardous waste storage facilities.
- 2. The transportation of nuclear or hazardous waste should be by the safest means available and carefully controlled.
  - a. Local fire and safety officials along all transportation routes should be trained to deal with accidents and notified of all transports through their jurisdiction.
- 3. Records should be kept in a publically accessible site of all nuclear or hazardous waste storage to enable research into accidents, and safety planning.

**APPENDIX I: RECORD OF MEETINGS - NYE COUNTY**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
November 1, 1983	U.S. Forest Service, Toiyabe National Forest, Central Nevada Ranger District, Reno
January 17, 1984	Central Nevada Administrators Meeting, Austin
January 31, 1984	Nye County Planner, in Carson City
March 6, 1984	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Las Vegas
March 6, 1984	BLM District Manager, Las Vegas District
March 6, 1984	State Parks District Ranger, Las Vegas
March 7, 1984	Nye County Commissioners, Tonopah
March 8, 1984	Boy Scouts of America, Las Vegas
March 27, 1984	Amargosa Valley Planning Advisory Board, Amargosa
March 28, 1984	Pahrump Town Planning Advisory Board, Pahrump
April 11, 1984	Department of Wildlife, Las Vegas
April 11, 1984	BLM - Las Vegas District
May 1, 1984	Director, Death Valley National Monument
May 1, 1984	Senate Bill 40 Workshop - Amargosa
May 2, 1984	Senate Bill 40 Workshop - Pahrump
May 29, 1984	BLM District Manager, Carson City District
June 13, 1984	Gabbs City Council, Gabbs
June 18, 1984	Senate Bill 40 Workshop - Tonopah
August 3, 1984	Nye County Planner, Carson City
August 8, 1984	Humboldt National Forest, Elko
September 10, 1984	Senate Bill 40 Workshop - Tonopah
September 17, 1984	Senate Bill 40 Workshop - Amargosa Valley
November 7, 1984	Bureau of Land Management, Las Vegas District, Las Vegas
November 8, 1984	Nye County Commissioners, Tonopah
November 14, 1984	Gabbs City Council, Gabbs
November 20, 1984	Tonopah Town Planning Advisory Board, Tonopah
November 27, 1984	Pahrump Town Planning Advisory Board, Pahrump
November 28, 1984	Amargosa Valley Planning Advisory Board, Amargosa
December 12, 1984	Gabbs City Council, Gabbs
December 18, 1984	Nye County Commission, Tonopah
January 28, 1985	Bureau of Land Management, Battle Mountain District
April 3, 1985	Nye County Commission, Tonopah
April 5, 1985	Nye County Planner, in Carson City