

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2016

COMMITTEES:

FINANCE

BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to strongly urge you to abandon any national monument designation under the Antiquities Act in the State of Nevada that you may be considering before you leave office. I recognize that often times at the end of a Presidential term, there are various outstanding issues that are addressed in an expedited manner. As someone who strongly believes in working in a collaborative nature with both my colleagues within the Nevada Congressional Delegation, as well as the local communities impacted by public land policies, I remain strongly concerned about any unilateral action that significantly changes how our lands are managed.

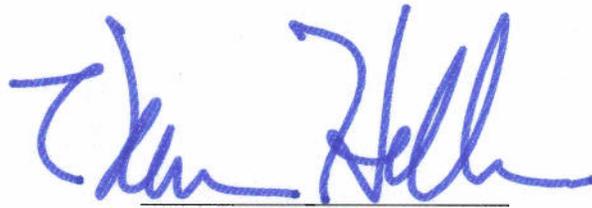
As you may know, the Nevada Delegation has a strong tradition of advancing public lands-related legislation in a bipartisan matter that protects ecologically sensitive areas while facilitating economic development in our communities. Just last Congress, three long-standing bills of this nature – *the Lyon County Economic Development and Conservation Act*, *the Las Vegas Valley Public Land and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Act*, and *the Pine Forest Range Recreation Enhancement Act* – were enacted into law as part of the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (P.L.113-291). The Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument was established as a result of that law in the manner monuments should come about: in an open, grassroots-driven, and transparent Congressionally-approved process. Accordingly, the Nevada Congressional Delegation unanimously supported each of those initiatives and worked together to enact them into law.

In recent weeks, some advocates have urged you to designate a new national monument south of the City of Mesquite in Clark County, NV, referred to as Gold Butte, before you leave office. I want to take this opportunity to underscore that while nearly everyone agrees Gold Butte is a natural treasure, there are strong differences of opinion among Nevadans on the conservation policies best suited to ensure future generations can camp, hike, hunt, and enjoy the cultural resources in that region. In fact, unlike the aforementioned conservation successes, our delegation is deeply divided on this issue. It is also important to note that there would be significant opposition to a Presidential proclamation establishing a national monument from many of the local governments, businesses, residents, and visitors of the region.

The establishment of any new national monument in the State of Nevada, regardless of location, ought to be considered in the public Congressional process. Only through this type of process, not unilateral action by the executive, can we ensure all parties, including those who support and oppose a given measure, have an equal opportunity to voice their opinions. That is the manner in which our delegation has traditionally pursued conservation initiatives and the manner in which I remain committed to advancing conservation priorities as one of Nevada's United States Senators.

Thank you for your attention on this important Nevada issue. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Heller", written over a horizontal line.

Dean Heller
United States Senator

cc:

Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell

Director of the Bureau of Land Management, Neil Kornze