

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

I write to express my strong opposition to the proposed rescissions of \$230 million from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act special account at the Department of the Interior, established under Public Law 105-263, laid out in a document provided to Congressional Appropriators by the Administration in preparation for the Fiscal Year 2017 budget negotiations. These resources are obligated for important wildlife restoration, conservation, outdoor recreation, and infrastructure development projects in the State of Nevada, and are an important component of carefully negotiated public land legislation enacted by the Nevada Congressional Delegation over the past two decades. I respectfully request you eliminate these proposed rescissions from budget request or negotiation.

The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) became law in October 1998, and allows the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to sell public land within a specific boundary around Las Vegas, Nevada. The revenue derived from those sales is split between the State of Nevada General Education Fund (5%), the Southern Nevada Water Authority (10%), a government agency tasked with the regional water management, and a special account available to the Secretary of the Interior for public works projects, ecological restoration, and conservation efforts. It is one of the Department's most successful programs, authorizing land sales that played an integral role in the Las Vegas region's growth into one of the largest metropolitan areas in the west, while investing over \$3.4 billion in over 1200 conservation projects that would otherwise require significant Congressional appropriations or would not occur at all.

Not only would a rescission usurp important economic growth and conservation initiatives, it would undermine important agreements that local communities, tribal governments, and the federal government formed in good faith. Rather than improve trust with local governments, facilitate additional outdoor recreation, and empower grassroots driven conservation, goals you've told me personally are among your top priorities as Secretary, this action would hamper any efforts to achieve a working, trustful relationship between your department and Nevada's local government officials.

Keeping the SMPLMA program intact will help spur economic development in the private sector and provide the necessary resources for conservation and habitat restoration and to

reduce the risk of wildfires. I respectfully request that you reconsider the proposal to gut the program. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Heller", with a stylized flourish at the end.

DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator

cc: Michael Nedd, Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management