

THE OPINION OF THE RGJ EDITORIAL BOARD

Nevada land bill deserves to be approved by Senate

It went according to plan on Monday — no sure thing when dealing with Congress, even for a bill with the kind of widespread support that the Nevada lands bill has — and the long-awaited bill needed to help Yerington economic development efforts is on its way to the U.S. Senate today.

That's good news for Yerington, and the rest of the state that will be affected by the package of bills that was approved on Monday.

Time is running out on the current Congress, however, with the members ready to pack up and head home soon for the November election. If it's not approved by Congress before the end, the sponsors, including Reps. Mark Amodei and Steven Horsford of Nevada, will have to start over.

Approval of the bill already is long overdue, so going back to square one would be a significant setback for everyone who has worked so hard on the package of bills and created a bipartisan compromise that Nevadans of all stripes can live with for many years to come.

Amodei and Horsford deserve praise for moving the bill this far. Now it's up to Sen. Harry Reid, the Nevada Democrat and Senate majority leader, and Sen. Dean Heller, the state's Republican junior senator, to ensure that the bills are approved by the Senate before time runs out on the 2013-14 session.



Such is life when some 85 percent of the land in the state is under the control of Congress, as it is in Nevada.

The odds are against that statistic changing any time in the foreseeable future, so Nevada needs to seek out small victories whenever it can.

The Northern Nevada Land Conservation and Economic Development Act is one of those opportunities.

H.R. 52051 actually consists of six land-related bills, five



PROVIDED BY NEVADA COPPER

This view from Dead Ox Canyon looking south to Bald Mountain shows a portion of the land to be included in the Wovoka Wilderness Area.

SNAPSHOT

ISSUE: Nevada Lands Bill

OUR VIEW: Reps. Amodei and Horsford deserve praise for moving the bill this far. Now it's up to Sens. Reid and Heller to ensure final approval in the U.S. Senate.

sponsored by Amodei, a Republican representing Nevada's 2nd Congressional District, and one sponsored by Horsford, a Democrat representing the 4th Congressional District.

For Yerington, the most important is H.R. 696, the Lyon County Economic Development and Conservation Act, which would allow the city and Nevada Copper to purchase about 10,000 acres of BLM land surrounding the Pumpkin Hollow mine site (at fair-market value) for industrial, recreational and infrastructure projects. That project is a key to Lyon County's economy, which was hit particularly hard by the recession.

H.R. 696 also would designate 48,000 acres in Lyon Coun-

ty as the Wovoka Wilderness Area, a provision sought by Reid.

If approved, the omnibus bill also would designated 26,000 acres in the Blue Lakes and Alder Creek Wilderness Study areas as the Pine Forest Range Wilderness Area. It would allow Fernley, Carlin and Elko and Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians to buy parcels of federal land for various parcels. And it would transfer 400 acres from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to the Navy for the construction of military housing. (Even government has to beg government for land.)

The bill is the result of a lot of disagreements, negotiations and compromises. They make sense for Nevada, but they also make sense for the federal government. Before time runs out, it should be approved by the Senate and sent to the president for his signature.

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