

Clark County Public Lands

Conservation Proposal

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Introduction

In 2002, the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act added acres available for development while protecting valuable habitat and recreation in places such as the Muddy Mountains, Arrow Canyon and Ireteba Peaks.

In the latest lands bill effort, elected leaders and residents continue to work towards a balance between growth and development of one of the fastest growing Counties in the country, and conservation.

In August 2017, Clark County shared a first draft resolution with the coalition presenting this proposal. These groups include Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Nevada Conservation League, and Conservation Lands Foundation. The resolution has since been updated and includes additions to existing wilderness such as in the Muddy Mountains, Ireteba Peaks and Eldorado areas, a new wilderness addition in Mt. Stirling, and legislative designations to Areas of Critical Environmental Concern for the Mojave desert tortoise as attempts to balance the expansion of the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA) boundary to the south of the Las Vegas Valley. The proposal would also add needed economic development land for the Moapa Band of Paiutes. It also permanently transfers land currently leased by the County for flood control, fire stations, recreation and schools into the County's hands.

Below, we offer a vision for wilderness designation that addresses past precedent, external realities such as the Clark County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan and maintains the balance between economic development needs and conservation. We believe such a vision is in the best interests of Clark County and its residents, and reflects the national importance of these lands that are owned by all Americans.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with the County, Nevada's Members of Congress and other stakeholders to create balanced public lands legislation. We urge the County to consider the tremendous conservation and recreation opportunities as laid out in this proposal as they formulate their recommendations to our federal delegation, and be mindful of the potential issues within the County's draft resolution we've identified as we move forward in this process.

Conservation Recommendations and Concerns With Clark County Resolution

Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

Clark County has a legal obligation under the 1998 Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) to ensure the natural resources of the county are managed to protect conservation values. Under the MSHCP, the county's future growth was chartered to allow for reasonable development while avoiding what the plan calls "no unmitigated net loss" of habitat for hundreds of critical species.

It is important that the County maintain the protections of the MSHCP, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is our intent in supporting this process moving forward through the Congressional channels that the integrity and purpose of the MSHCP, ESA and NEPA are not negatively impacted, circumvented, or compromised.

Proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Clark County has proposed several areas to be legislatively designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Until now, ACECs have been administratively designated by the Department of Interior through a resource management planning process, and have rarely had implementation plans of their own.

If passed, these legislated ACEC designations will be a first of their kind, and need to have strong language that describes in detail how they should be managed to protect the objects (ie. the mojave desert tortoise).

Gale Hills ACEC, Bitter Springs ACEC, and Muddy Mountains ACEC

Although we have no issues with the boundaries of the proposed Gale Hills and Bitter Springs ACECs, we do want to highlight that they overlap with proposed wilderness areas. Our preference would be that these areas be designated as wilderness.

Moapa Band of Paiutes Tribal Land Expansion

We support the Moapa Band of Paiutes' request to convey federal land to the Tribal Nation (as outlined in the map below) with reserved access for U.S. and State of Nevada wildlife officials to manage habitat. After conversations with the Tribal Chairman Greg Anderson and Commissioner Marilyn Kirkpatrick, we believe this expansion of the Moapa River Reservation will provide opportunities for needed economic development and return historic Southern Paiute lands to their original stewards.

Wilderness Proposals

The latest draft (June 2018) of the Clark County resolution calls for the designation of one new wilderness area and gives examples of other additions to existing wilderness boundaries that should be considered by the delegation. We believe these five areas called out in the current County's resolution are deserving of wilderness designations for various reasons, and have listed several others we believe are also worth of protection for the Nevada delegation to consider in this process moving forward.

Below, we have outlined why the five areas named by the County and our additional suggestions are worthy of designation, and have included preliminary maps of all the proposed areas courtesy of Friends of Nevada

Wilderness (FNW) who over the years with the help of partners have put tens of thousands of hours of volunteer and paid staff work in the monitoring, inventory and stewardship of these places. The preliminary maps need to be further ground truthed for accuracy of roads and boundary lines. Most recently, FNW inventoried appropriate lands with wilderness characteristics, and our recommendations are based on that extensive, recent effort.

In this “Wilderness Proposals” section, we have also included an extensive inventory of wilderness quality lands throughout the County, including those that are undergoing separate legislative efforts, but which are within the County’s boundaries.

Proposed Wilderness in Clark County Resolution

Mount Stirling

The Mount Stirling Wilderness Study Area is a land of canyons and ridges with heavy forest cover. This rugged landscape provides challenging routes for hikers, and its peaks offer scenic vistas of the surrounding valleys. Located 45 minutes west of Las Vegas, it is part of the Spring Mountains complex, which also includes the La Madre Mountain Wilderness in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area and Mount Charleston Wilderness.

Paleozoic marine fossiliferous formations, two large petroglyph sites and remnants of a pine nut milling site can be seen in Mt. Stirling. In addition to three charcoal kilns, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Places like the Mount Stirling WSA are under siege from burgeoning population pressures from Pahrump and southern Nye County. New housing developments have reduced open space, forcing wildlife to retreat, and more residents are venturing into the hills to explore their backyard wild country.

Wilderness Proposal for Mount Stirling

Area Name	Acres
Mount Stirling WSA (in Clark County)	39,268
Mount Stirling East Addition LWC	29,862
Total	69,130

Muddy Mountains Addition

Located about 16 miles northeast of Las Vegas, the proposed Muddy Mountains addition is contiguous with the Muddy Mountains Wilderness, which is managed in part by the Bureau of Land Management’s Las Vegas Field Office and National Park Service’s Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

This entire area is located in what was formerly the Muddy Mountains Wilderness Study Area, which was identified as having outstanding opportunities for solitude as well as primitive and unconfined recreation. It also contains a portion of the Rainbow Gardens ACEC, which is identified for geologic, scenic, scientific, cultural, and sensitive plants, and Hidden Valley ACEC, identified for its prehistoric cultural value.

The proposed wilderness addition contains habitat for rare and sensitive plants such as Las Vegas buckwheat, and Las Vegas bearpoppy.

Recreational opportunities include nature study, bird watching, horseback riding, hunting, and hiking.

Wilderness Proposal for Muddy Mountains Addition

Area Name	Acres
Muddy Mountains Addition	45,812*

[*Reflects acreage based on recent FNW fieldwork]

South McCullough Additions

Located 15 miles east of Primm, the South McCullough proposed additional wilderness includes the lower slopes of eastern portions of the McCullough Mountains contiguous with the South McCullough Wilderness (BLM). The addition includes a formally private parcel recently purchased by the Nevada Land Trust and contains McCullough Spring. Flowing water and lush riparian area makes this an important addition to the existing Wilderness. The surrounding area consists of volcanic rock outcrops in the Joshua Tree/Creosote Community. The area has been identified as having outstanding opportunities for solitude. Wildlife that can be seen in the area include desert bighorn sheep, antelope ground squirrels, desert woodrats, jackrabbits, desert tortoise, a variety of lizards and snakes, Gambel's Quail, Chukar, Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Flickers, and a variety of sparrows. Recreational opportunities include nature study, horseback riding, hunting, and hiking.

Wilderness Proposal for South McCullough

Area Name	Acres
South McCullough Addition	6,671

Eldorado Addition

Low desert shrubs, several varieties of cacti, and yucca comprise the primary flora of this addition. Some of the washes include plants such as mesquite, acacia, and some willow. The main wash, emanating from Bridge Spring, contains a dense riparian community of plants including scrub oaks. Bridge Spring arise from beneath a heavy, low-arching stone bridge, creates an attractive natural feature well worth the walk to visit. The topography throughout the northern and central portion of the unit consists of rolling hills culminating in a wide variety of rocky formation that invite scrambling and exploration. The entirety of this unit is located in what was the Eldorado Wilderness Study Area.

Outstanding opportunities for hiking, hunting, sightseeing, rock-hounding, nature studies, geological sightseeing, orienteering, archaeological sightseeing, outstanding landscape and nature photography, rock scrambling, peak bagging, night sky viewing, burro packing, horseback riding, archaeological study, backpacking, journaling, sketching, and painting recreational opportunities of this area are available year around. The degree of challenge and risk of these recreational activities vary with the season of use.

Wilderness Proposal for Eldorado Addition

Area Name	Acres
Eldorado Addition	6,796*

[*Reflects acreage based on recent FNW fieldwork]

Ireteba Peaks Addition

Located 8 miles northeast of Searchlight, the 21,000 acres are contiguous with the Ireteba Peaks Wilderness to the east. This addition includes the area that was part of the Ireteba Peaks Wilderness Study Area and contiguous identified Lands with Wilderness Characteristics as well as recent field work. This area includes the rugged and challenging multiple summits of the Ireteba Peaks that rise to over 5,000 feet. Here explorers can find barrel cactus, yucca, fishhook cactus, and the occasional juniper or pinyon pine tree. Astute observers may even catch a glimpse of the elusive bighorn sheep that frequent the rugged recesses of these additions. West of the peaks a dense creosote plant communities sprawl across the western alluvial fan supporting ideal habitat for jackrabbits, side-blotched lizards, rattle snakes, and desert tortoises. The western part of this addition hosts spectacular wildflower blooms when the rains are cooperative. Hiking, nature studies, horseback riding, camping, and hunting can be enjoyed in the area.

Wilderness Proposal for Ireteba Peaks

Area Name	Acres
Ireteba Peaks Addition	20,844*

[*Reflects acreage based on recent FNW field checking of most recent BLM LWC boundaries]

Additional Wilderness That Should Be Considered

Arrow Canyon Additions

In 2002, Congress designated 27,530 acres of Arrow Canyon as wilderness. The more than 46,000 contiguous acres remaining were categorized as Lands with Wilderness characteristics.

Just 35 miles north of Las Vegas the Arrow Canyon Wilderness addition contains critical habitat for the federally endangered desert tortoise as well as geological, biological, archeological, and scenic values. There are three areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC) overlapping: the Mormon Mesa/Arrow Canyon ACEC; Arrow Canyon ACEC; and Mormon Mesa ACEC.

There are several known prehistoric cultural sites including petroglyphs, pictographs, agave roasting pits, shelter caves, lithic and ceramic scatters, and rock alignments. The addition also contains a unique geologic formation of scientific interest in addition to vertebrate and invertebrate fossils.

Opportunities for recreation include hiking, rock climbing, nature study, and photography. Bird and small game hunting are possible.

Wilderness Proposal for Arrow Canyon

Area Name	Acres
Arrow Canyon Additions	28,934*

[*Reflects acreage based on recent FNW fieldwork- NOTE: portions of the additions were not included in the addition recommendation as they overlap with the lands requested by the Moapa River Tribe]

Buffington Pockets

[This unit includes the main Buffington Pockets unit and a small unit just south identified as Buffington Pockets South]

The Muddy Mountains section on the west and north sides of this unit towers to an extremely rugged, knife-edge ridge climbing to more than 1,000 feet over the surrounding steep canyons and washes. The Longwell Ridge Complex, on the east side of the unit, soars to prominences more than 2,000 feet above the surrounding alluvial plains. The majority of the unit is characterized by rugged and convoluted landscape offering multiple outstanding opportunities for wilderness users to lose themselves in solitude. The expansive alluvial outwash plain of the south-central part of the unit offers thousands of acres of natural landscape where visitors can find outstanding opportunities for solitude in this immense space combined with unlimited, 360 degree vistas. Hiking, hunting, sightseeing, rock-hounding, nature studies, geological sightseeing, orienteering, archaeological sightseeing, outstanding landscape and nature photography, rock scrambling, peak bagging, night sky viewing, burro packing, horseback riding, archaeological study, backpacking, journaling, sketching, and painting opportunities of this area are all truly outstanding and all these opportunities are available year around. The degree of challenge and risk of these recreational activities vary with the season of use.

The fact that all of these primitive and unconfined recreational activities are available within a nearly 35,000 acre roadless area where visitors will not be disturbed by motorized vehicles, truly makes these opportunities outstanding. The landscape here displays a thriving Mojave Desert habitat of creosote bush, black brush, yucca, Joshua trees and desert willow. About 300 million years ago, the towering mountains of this area lay as flat depositional layers at the bottom the bottom of the sea. Today, this sea floor comprises the limestone peaks that create the rugged and convolute skyline of the area, while scattered fossilized sand dunes add surprising canyons and domes, intricately carved and painted in shades of red, orange, and yellow.

Wilderness Proposal for Buffington Pockets

Area Name	Acres
Buffington Pockets	41,900*
Buffington Pockets South	6,836*

[*Reflects acreage based on recent FNW fieldwork]

Highland Range

The Highland Range, located 30 miles south of Las Vegas, is comprised of very rugged peaks towering more than 1,500 feet above the surrounding canyons and foothills, and dense Joshua tree forests.

The northern portion of the area has been designated as the Highland Range Crucial Bighorn Habitat in order to protect the desert bighorn sheep. Big game hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities are outstanding due to the year-round habitat for desert bighorn sheep and mule deer the area provides. Highland Range also provides crucial habitat for quail. Three natural springs and several guzzler water developments provide precious water for the wildlife. Crucial habitat for the desert tortoise is found in this area as well. The jagged multi-colored volcanic rock formations, arches, and plant life make the region an excellent habitat for the animals and plants that reside there.

The majority of the unit is characterized by rugged and convoluted landscape offering multiple outstanding opportunities for wilderness users to lose themselves in solitude. Hiking, hunting, rockhounding, outstanding

landscape and nature photography, rock scrambling, rock climbing, peak bagging, night sky viewing, burro packing, horseback riding, archaeological study, backpacking, and painting opportunities abound in this area.

Wilderness Proposal for Highland Range

Area Name	Acres
Highland Range	34,607

National Park Service Proposed Wilderness

These spectacular areas, managed by the National Park Service are Nevada’s portion of the Grand Canyon. Unlike the vast majority of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, Nevada’s Grand Canyon Wilderness is accessible by boat from Lake Mead, or as the grand finale of adventurous 4-wheel explorations via the designated route system of Gold Butte National Monument. Wilderness protection for these areas will ensure that Nevada’s Grand Canyon will retain the character that greeted John Wesley Powell after his challenging traverse of the Colorado River in 1869. Wilderness for Nevada’s Grand Canyon will continue to provide primitive boat accessible camping and picnicking opportunities along over 90 miles of Lake Mead and the Colorado River shoreline. Wilderness designation for these areas will protect desert bighorn sheep and desert tortoise habitat and the migration and transit corridors to keep these populations healthy.

The areas listed in the table below have also been recommended by the National Park Service as worthy of wilderness designation and were part of the proposal in 2002. Others such as Jimbilnan Wilderness, Pinto Valley Wilderness, Spirit Mountain Wilderness and other NPS proposed wilderness areas were designated in the 2002 Clark County lands bill.

Wilderness Proposal for National Park Service Lands

Area Name	Acres
Overton	23,227
Twin Springs	9,684
Scanlon Wash	22,826
Hiller Mountains	14,832
Hell’s Kitchen	12,439
Indian Hills	8,955
Total	91,963

Nellis Wash Addition (also known as Summit Springs)

Nellis Wash Addition includes the highest summits of the Newberry Mountains, which feed sediment into Nellis Wash. These colorful peaks rise to 3,300 feet and feature basalt-andesite volcanic cones, flows, ash-flow tuffs, and ancient, metamorphosed granite dating to more than ½ billion years old. The broad creosote-scrub community alluvial plain on the western portion of this addition provides important habitat and a migration corridor for the endangered desert tortoise.

Western chuckwalla, fence lizard, Great Basin gopher snake, leopard lizard, Southwestern speckled rattlesnake, large spotted leopard lizard, Great Basin whiptail, desert iguana, zebra-tailed lizard, yellow-backed spiny lizard, Great Basin collared lizard, Mojave patch-nosed snake, Mojave rattlesnake, desert banded gecko, Western long-nosed snake, Mojave shovel-nosed snake, red coachwhip, and the banded Gila monster are all critters which inhabit this addition.

Wilderness Proposal for Nellis Wash Addition [AKA Summit Springs LWC]

Area Name	Acres
Nellis Wash Addition	30,843

Spirit Mountain

Lying directly north of Spirit Mountain, this small addition protects the lower side of the sacred Avikwame down to the floor of Roman Wash. This area were not included in the current Wilderness designation because of the random termination of the the Wilderness boundary at the National Park Service boundary. This area includes wild area of rolling alluvial fan deeply incised with a network of drainage systems and is characterized by Mojave Desert vegetation.

Wilderness Proposal for Spirit Mountain Addition

Area Name	Acres
Spirit Mountain Addition	753

Bridge Canyon Addition

The Bridge Canyon Addition includes the beautiful upper drainage system of Bridge Canyon. This area the sculpted-granite headwaters of Bridge Canyon and towering peaks rising to 4,900 feet. In this intersection of the Mojave and Great Basin plant communities, one can find Woodlands of verdant yuccas growing alongside pinion and juniper. This area is home to desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, cactus mouse, canyon mouse, desert wood rat, Long-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Cactus Wren, Costa's Hummingbird, Crissal Thrasher and Bell's Vireo.

Reptiles include western chuckwalla, fence lizard, Great Basin gopher snake, leopard lizard, southwestern speckled rattlesnake, large spotted leopard lizard, Great Basin whiptail, desert iguana, zebra-tailed lizard, yellow-backed spiny lizard, Great Basin collared lizard, Mojave patch-nosed snake, Mojave rattlesnake, desert banded gecko, Western long-nosed snake, Mojave shovel-nosed snake and red coachwhip. The western portion of this addition includes critical desert tortoise habitat.

Lying south of Avikwame, or Spirit Mountain, significant in the spiritual birth of Fort Mojave and other native tribes of the region, this area contains resources of high cultural significance. This addition is sacred to Native American peoples.

Wilderness Proposal for Bridge Canyon Addition

Area Name	Acres
Bridge Canyon Addition	10,094

Other Wilderness Potential Within Clark County

In this section, we have included wilderness proposals for areas in Clark County that are undergoing legislative initiatives separate from the Clark County lands bill process. These include the current Legislative Environment Impact Statement process underway for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and S. 2354, the ANTIQUITIES Act of 2018, co-sponsored by Senator Cortez Masto. Our intent is to include these areas currently being considered for wilderness designations or that have been recommended for wilderness by members of this group within those processes in an effort to be transparent about all proposals being discussed with our Nevada Members of Congress.

Desert National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Air Force is seeking to extend and expand its withdrawal of public land, currently managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that overlap into the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. The U.S. Air Force and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service share use and management of 846,000 acres where the Nevada Test & Training Range overlap the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. On these lands U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have primary jurisdiction of land use, the U.S. Air Force has secondary jurisdiction. Due in part to the proposed wilderness, the U.S. Air Force cannot disturb land about the 4,000-ft. elevation contour in the overlap.

The U.S. Air Force is providing to Congress a Legislative Environment Impact Statement to renew their withdrawal that expires in 2021, their preferred alternative would close public access to the Historic Alamo Road, one of the longest backcountry roads in southern Nevada. It was a wagon trail in the 1800s and makes for a great backcountry drive today.

At risk is one of the most pristine, roadless areas in southern Nevada. The USAF preferred alternative would result in nearly 1.2 million acres, of the original 1.6 million acre Refuge, being permanently transferred to the Department of Defense, indefinitely and would go from being managed for wildlife habitat to that of military training ground. It would close public access to an additional 680,000 acres of the of the Refuge at a time when public lands are strained by the American people who go out to enjoy them. This proposal seeks to save what fraction of the Refuge remains available to the public.

Rock shelter, hunting blinds, and over 200 agave roasting pits dot the landscape of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, telling the story of those who lived there for over 12,000 years. Transferring primary jurisdiction to the Department of Defense of 3/4 (850,000 acres) of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge for military exercises, would permanently damage Wilderness character, cultural sites and bighorn sheep habitat.

The Wilderness proposals were part of the official agency Wilderness recommendations from the 1970's.

Wilderness Proposal for DNWR

Area Name	Acres
Sheep Range	420,752
East Desert Range	41,621
Las Vegas Range	175,247
Gass Peak	41,611
Total	679,231

Gold Butte National Monument - Wilderness

In January 30th 2018, Senator Tom Udall introduced S. 2354, the America's Natural Treasures of Immeasurable Quality Unite, Inspire, and Together Improve the Economies of States Act of 2018 (ANTIQUITIES Act of 2018). The bill was co-sponsored by Nevada Senator Catherine Cortez Masto and includes proposed wilderness within the Gold Butte National Monument. The proposed wilderness areas include Virgin Peak, Black Ridge, Bitter Ridge North, Bitter Ridge South, Billy Goat Peak, Million Hills and Lime Canyon. Descriptions for these areas accompanied by a map are included below.

Virgin Peak

The Virgin Mountain Instant Study Area is now part of the Gold Butte National Monument designed December 28, 2016. While it is protected as part of the national monument, it is still officially a BLM Instant Study Area (ISA) requiring Congressional action in order to designate it Wilderness or release it from its WSA status. Virgin Mountain is located between Cabin Canyon, the Arizona State Line, the Whitney Pass Road and the Gold Butte Backcountry Byway. The Instant Study Area was set aside as a natural in 1976 because of ecological significance. The larger area of wilderness characteristics, at 26,576 acres, includes the ISA and additional rugged topography, dramatic cliffs, diverse vegetation, and springs characterize the higher elevations culminating steep limestone cliffs dotted with white fir and Douglas fir. In the lower elevations are found red and buff sandstone outcrops dominated by Joshua trees and creosote. From the tops of ridges are breathtaking views down into surrounding deserts including the Gold Butte area around Lake Mead and the Grand Canyon - Parashant of Arizona.

The Virgin Mountain area is especially diverse in its vegetation. It was recognized by the BLM as an Outstanding Natural Area because of the diversity. The lower elevations are dominated by creosote, black brush, Joshua tree and other yucca species. Climbing higher, the vegetation transitions to Gamble's oak, manzanita, pinyon pine, Utah and Rocky Mountain juniper, and in some locations, Arizona cypress. In several of the north-facing drainages are found aspen stands and Rocky Mountain maple. In the highest elevations are found remnant stands of white fir and Douglas fir.

There are fine opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, camping and hunting. Hikers typically climb Virgin Peak from the south. There are several old cattle trails that were cut through the dense vegetation on the northeast side that can be hiked; these are not open to motor vehicles. There are many nice locales for dry camping. Camping near water is limited to a number of springs and intermittent streams on the northeast side, but camp at least 300 feet away to allow wildlife access to this precious resource.

Signs of early man exist here, in the form of shelter caves, petroglyphs, campsites and lithic scatters. The BLM is protecting the wilderness character of the adjacent lands across the Arizona state line through the Resource Management Plan for the Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument.

Black Ridge

Black Ridge, Little Virgin Peak, and the short canyons intersecting the main ridge, provide outstanding opportunities for rock scrambling and adventuring in steep and rugged terrain. There are many places on within the low hills and bajada of the remaining unit where outstanding opportunities for solitude can be found. This area of rugged ridges and desert pavement mosaics are all within critical desert tortoise habitat and important bighorn Sheep winter range. The area supports a variety of cacti, Mojave desert shrubs, and several species of native grasses. A population of sticky buckwheat (*Eriogonum Viscidulum*) is identified on the northwestern side of Black Ridge. The area protects cultural significant resources such as pit houses above the Virgin River and petroglyphs and pictographs throughout the unit.

Bitter Ridge North

This 15,307 acre-unit includes a broad alluvial plain of prime desert tortoise habitat. Stretching from nearly the edge of Lake Mead to the foothills of Virgin Peak, this vast area features creosote desert scrub and rises to the

east to include yuccas and Joshua trees in the shadow of Virgin Peak. This area provides outstanding opportunities to find solitude in a wide-open space. Broad washes and gullies create hidden alcoves for visitors to explore. The large tracks of undisturbed Mojave scrub within this area are important to the Clark County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan's sensitive species recovery. Bitter Ridge North offers spectacular views of the Virgin Mountains and Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Bitter Ridge South

This wilderness would protect over 12,000 acres of pristine desert tortoise habitat, world-class cultural resources, some of the most outstanding scenery in Nevada. The large tracks of undisturbed Mojave scrub within this area are important to the Clark County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan's sensitive species recovery. Rugged limestone ridges, colorful sandstone formations, and drifting sand provide a multitude of landscapes for visitors to lose themselves in. Challenging desert hiking and route finding, rock scrambling, and incredible possibilities for photography provide truly outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation in this beautiful area. Bitter Ridge South is the beating-heart of the Gold Butte region and is a destination for visitors from around the world. Bitter Ridge South offers spectacular views of the Virgin Mountains and Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Billy Goat Peak

Contiguous with the AZ Pakoon basin desert tortoise critical habitat, the proposed Billy Goat Peak wilderness is an important corridor for genetic diversity for the tortoise. Billy Goat Peak, at 5,735 feet, is critical desert bighorn sheep habitat and Whitney Ridge is important winter range. Both of these areas offer outstanding opportunities for route-finding and rock-scrambling for the adventurous hiker. Lower elevations are home to the sensitive three corner milkvetch (*Astragalus geyeri* var. *triquetrus*). This ecologically diverse area is a desert hiker's paradise. Opportunities abound to wander through a Joshua tree and yucca forest, following the animal tracks in the sand, bird watching in the Mesquite woodlands, rock hounding in the Wechech Basin or Mud Hills and then rising to the higher elevations of Whitney Ridge to the rocky peaks of pinion and juniper, all in one day.

This areas offers opportunities for spectacular vistas into Nevada's precious part of the Grand Canyon. Billy Goat Peak wilderness is the star of the splendid natural, cultural and scenic resources of Gold Butte.

St. Thomas Gap

The St. Thomas Gap is a broad rolling plateau north of and contiguous with the Million Hills WSA. This area features scattered stands of Joshua trees, colorful canyons and ridges, and spectacular views of the surrounding wild lands of Gold Butte and the magnificent western wall of the Grand Canyon across the Colorado River. This area presents a "top of the world" experience as the eastern margins of this plateau roll-over into the deep inner canyon of the Colorado River. Whereas the Million Hills WSA protects the mountain uplands of this region, St. Thomas Gap represents the contiguous rolling alluvial system neglected in the WSA designation.

Million Hills Wilderness Study Area and Additions

The Million Hills Wilderness Study Area is part of the spectacular Gold Butte Region. Gold Butte was declared a National Monument on December 28, 2016 and the Million Hills WSA is within the monument. It is still a Wilderness Study Area and Congressional action is required to either designate it as Wilderness or release it from the WSA status. There are two small additions that include wilderness lands to the south of the WSA and a small section within the core of the unit

Wide sand washes cut through the hills and alluvial slopes. The southern part is a tilted ridge made up of colorful folds. The ridge gives way to steep, rugged drainages and canyons with abundant rock outcrops along Azure Ridge and Million Hills. This area offers fantastic scenic vistas and secluded getaways. Wild burros can be found wandering here and much of the area has been identified as desert tortoise habitat.

Fantastic scenic vistas, secluded spots and geologic features entice hikers and photographers. Rock outcrops along Azure Ridge and Million Hills provide solitude.

Lime Canyon Addition

This area includes lands that are contiguous with and support the fullness of the wilderness character of Lime Canyon Wilderness. Rugged, rocky limestone canyons, colorful cliffs and drifting sands complement the highland core of the Wilderness. Sparse Mojave Desert scrub characterizes this addition with creosote bush, white bursage, Joshua trees, catclaw acacia, Mojave yucca, Nevada jointfir, and barrel cactus scattered across the landscape. Arrowweed, paperbag bush, indigo bush, and buckhorn cholla can also be seen. With a watchful eye you may be able to spot black-tailed jackrabbits, desert cottontail, desert woodrats, white-tailed antelope squirrels, side-blotched lizards, and slow moving desert tortoises.

Temple Mesa (North and South Units)

With the creation of Gold Butte National Monument, the former Bureau of Reclamation lands with the boundary of the monument were transferred to the BLM. This transfer of lands simplified the complex pattern of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics inventoried by the BLM by consolidating several of the units and making other units now contiguous with wilderness proposed lands in Lake Mead National Recreation Area and with the Jumbo Springs Wilderness. The Temple Mesa North and South Units feature the rugged mountains and convoluted upland canyons. Jumbo Peak in the North Unit includes Jumbo Peak, which at 5,761 is the highest peak in the southern part of the monument. The northeast slopes of Junbo Peak supports stand of pinion and juniper trees. Rattlesnake Peak also continues the pinyon-juniper habitat to the west of the North Unit. Bonelli Peak in the South Unit is equally rugged and nearly as high as the North Unit peaks, but this area is drier and characterized by mojave scrub habitat and colorful, deeply inscribed mountains towering nearly 4,000 feet above the blue waters of Lake Mead.

Wilderness Proposal for Gold Butte

Area Name	Acres
Virgin Peak	26,576
Black Ridge	17,425
Bitter Ridge North	15,307
Bitter Ridge South	12,693
Billy Goat Peak	30,872
Million Hills WSA + Additions	24,818
Lime Canyon Addition	10,069
St.Thomas Gap	6,600
Temple Mesa North	11,464
Temple Mesa South	10,520