

Protectors of Tule Springs

Contact: Jill DeStefano
(702) 807-9402

Lisa Mayo-DeRiso
(702) 292-9976

For Immediate Release

Momentum Grows for Protection of Las Vegas Fossil Beds

*Local Governments and Community Groups Unite Together to
Protect, Almost Forgotten, Paleontological Area.*

LAS VEGAS, NV., (November 16, 2009) --- In a show of solidarity, Clark County, City of Las Vegas, and City of North Las Vegas have come together to approve, adopt and authorize a resolution to urge the United States Congress, The U.S. Department of the Interior, and the National Park Service to protect the Upper Las Vegas Wash (also known as Tule Springs). This resolution will set the stage for Nevada's Congressional delegation to move forward with legislation to protect the area known as the upper Las Vegas Wash as a Fossil Bed National Monument within the National Park System.

"This area represents an opportunity for conservation in the Las Vegas Valley and would correct a grievous mistake made when it was designated for disposal under the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002 ("Clark County Lands Act")", said Rob Mrowka with the Center for Biological Diversity.

In 2007, the organization Scenic Nevada, selected 13 scenic treasures in Nevada that deserved special consideration for protection. The Upper Las Vegas Wash was one of those scenic treasures. The hope from the organization was that the *Last Chance Scenic Places* reference guide would be used to support legislation, policy or funding efforts in support of retaining the *Last Chance Scenic Places* for now and years to come. "As a board member of Scenic Nevada, I'm thrilled to see this incredible paleontological treasure be preserved and protected. This was the whole idea behind our organization's publishing of this reference guide, and it looks like it, plus the outpouring of support from the community, worked for the Upper Las Vegas Wash. I'm so pleased", said Lisa Mayo-DeRiso.

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Significance of the Upper Las Vegas Wash area has been re-confirmed in the past few years with the scientifically documented removal of thousands of fossils. The area is tremendously rich in paleontological resources, not only from the last ice age, but from a previous ice age over 170,000 years ago. As such it is tremendously important for advancing the understanding of how ecosystems responded to periods of global warming, and is very important for informing the science regarding the current warming. The San Bernadino County Museum currently holds thousands of fossils from the site in its repository facility. "When I first became aware of the BLM Environmental Impact Study and at the same time was informed of the enormous number of fossils found on the surface of the area, I knew I had to organize a group of citizen's to protect this historical and cultural treasure, so Protectors of Tule Springs (POTS) was created", said Jill DeStefano, founder. POTS, has organized neighborhood meetings, collected more than 10,000 signatures in support of saving the Upper Las Vegas Wash from development, and met with local and national political and environmental leaders.

Compatible conservation of the Upper Las Vegas Wash region presents a great opportunity to protect two different national treasures - the Wash and the Nellis Complex. In addition to the paleontological and habitat conservation, the area also provides critical airspace that supports military air and ground operations. As stated by Colonel Dave Belote, Commander of the 99th Air Base

Wing at Nellis Air Force Base, "we have crucial low/high-level flight arrival, departure, and training routes throughout the wash region, and the area serves as a gateway to our testing and training ranges. By federally protecting the region with an associated military aviation reservation, we can ensure the sustainment of both critical habitat and military airspace, creating a truly win-win compatible future for Nevada."

A Fossil Bed National Monument creates a new foundation for economic growth and diversity for the Southern Nevada economy by creating a larger and more diverse platform for tourism. If the Fossil Bed National Monument is adopted, Southern Nevada will be home to many protected and geographically diverse outdoor recreation landscape; Red Rock Conservation Area, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Desert Wildlife Refuge, and now a Fossil Bed National Monument, to name just a few. This offers outdoor sport tourists a wide variety of cultural and historic destinations to visit and broadens the appeal of Southern Nevada to both domestic and international travelers. JT Reynolds, a board member with The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees who lives in Henderson said, "I saw first hand the impact of visitors and tourism while at Death Valley Nation Park where I was the Superintendent. Death Valley has visitor volumes of over one million visitors each year, and it provides both environmental and economic impacts."

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The Fossil Bed Monument is also a new and exciting educational resource for all ages; from elementary school to college. "The university has long-term plans to create a North Las Vegas Campus, east of the Fossil Bed National Monument. With the addition of the monument, we have the possibility of creating unparalleled science education and research in the areas of paleontology, conservation biology, vegetation and wildlife ecology, health, outdoor education and recreation management." UNLV President, Neal J. Smatresk said. The resolutions set forth by the three municipalities; Clark County, City of Las Vegas, and City of North Las Vegas is the result of rigorous criteria and adheres to eight significant findings that support a Fossil Beds National Monument:

Eight Criteria Components

1. **Fossil Significance;**
2. **Confirmation of the Areas Significance;**
3. **Imperiled Plants and Wildlife;**
4. **Wildlife Corridors and Open Space;**
5. **Active Watershed;**
6. **State of Nevada NRS Protects Pale ontological and Historic Resources;**
7. **Model of Cooperation between municipalities and community groups;**
8. **National Park Service is the Appropriate Agency to Manage the Proposed National Monument.**

The proposed area is also home to the Threatened desert tortoise, a species whose recovery, while mandated by the Endangered Species Act ("ESA") is in serious jeopardy. Prior to the Clark County Lands Act, this area was designated as an area to be "intensely managed" for conservation under the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Incidental Take Permit. The Wash is also home to rare plant species such as the Las Vegas bearpoppy, Merriam's bearpoppy, and the Las Vegas buckwheat, a species the Center has petitioned for listing under the ESA and which was found to be warranted for listing but currently precluded due to other priority species' needs.

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And finally, the upper Las Vegas Wash serves as a vital segment for the Las Vegas Valley trail system, largely funded through Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act monies, connecting the Las Vegas Wetlands Park to BLM and National Forest lands to the north.

"We stand together with these three municipalities in recognizing the international scientific significance of this site, and look forward to sharing archeological history and new found knowledge with our nation and the world. What

happened in Vegas during the Ice Age, stayed in Vegas and now we want to preserve it for future generations.” said Jill DeStefano, Founder Protectors of Tule Springs.

Community Support Organization

Group	Contact Name	Contact Number
Protectors of Tule Springs	Jill DeStefano	702-807-9402
Scenic Nevada	Lisa Mayo-DeRiso	702-292-9976
Center for Biological Diversity	Rob Mrowka	702-249-5821
Nellis Air Force Base	Public Affairs	702-652-2753
UNLV Public Lands Institute	Dr. Peg Rees	702 895-5486
Archeo-Nevada Society	Dr. Kevin Rafferty	702-651-5715
National Park Conservation Association	Lynn Davis	702-281-7380
Sierra Club	Yuki Takagi	702-263-7327

Resolution Hearing Dates

The Clark County Commission

Date: Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Time: 10:00 AM

The Las Vegas City Council

Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Time: 9:00 AM

The North Las Vegas City Council

Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Time: 6:00 PM