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## Cortez Masto's federal lands bill contains 'blueprint' for Clark County growth

**LAS VEGAS (KLAS)** — A sweeping federal lands bill introduced on Wednesday proposes protections for more than 2 million acres of sensitive lands.

The Southern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act (SNEDCA) was introduced in the Senate by U.S. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev. U.S. Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., introduced the bill in the House. It has the support of Nevada's entire congressional delegation, as well as many state and local leaders.

The bill also calls for the expansion of tribal trust lands, land set aside for more affordable housing and provides opportunities for economic growth in Clark County. It has been described as "a blueprint" for balanced growth.

A news release from Cortez Masto's office indicated that the legislation was built in consultation with local, regional, and national stakeholders. But not everyone agrees with the legislation's approach.

Patrick Donnelly, Nevada director of the Center for Biological Diversity, said the legislation sets up "wall to wall development from the California border all the way to Apex."

He said it expands the urban growth boundary by about 65 square miles to the south of the Las Vegas valley.

"We are opposed to sprawl development and selling off public lands, and this bill does both of those things," Donnelly said.

Clark County's population is expected to grow to nearly 3 million people by 2035, and county officials wanted a plan to manage growth while also

protecting public lands, including places for recreation like Red Rock National Conservation Area.

SNEDCA seeks to provide permanent protection for regional wildlife habitats and endangered species.

“We are at a crossroads in Southern Nevada where we must make smart decisions about the kind of community we want to live in and the values we stand for,” said Commissioner Justin Jones.

“I believe this legislation gives us the tools to act responsibly, taking into consideration the effects of climate change, the charge we have to protect our public lands, as well as the duty we have to ensure all of our citizens have access to economic opportunities by way of job growth and affordable housing,” Jones said.