

## DISCLAIMER

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March 12, 2003

Dear Assemblyman Mortensen:

On behalf of the Outside Las Vegas Foundation, it is my pleasure to speak in strong support for Assembly Bill 131 to further protect our State's cultural heritage and establish a site stewardship program. This is an outstanding piece of legislation and a wonderful complement to what our foundation is trying to accomplish in southern Nevada.

The Outside Las Vegas Foundation is a private non-profit organization made up of prominent community and business leaders and private citizens that work hand-in-hand with the four federal land managing agencies to improve the long-term stewardship of the seven million acres of federal land surrounding Las Vegas and to enrich the experiences for those who visit. The Outside Las Vegas Foundation serves as the principal point of contact and coordination for the four federal land managing agencies in working with the citizens, the business community and local governments in developing partnership initiatives that enhance both the short-term and long-term values of the adjacent federal public lands. Our mission is to enhance the connection between people and their public lands.

The area encompassed within the Outside Las Vegas Partnership initiative include three million acres of federal public land plus eight Congressionally designated areas: Lake Mead National Recreation Area; Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, Spring Mountains National Recreation Area; Desert National Wildlife Refuge; Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge; Moapa Valley National Wildlife Refuge; and Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge. These seven million acres of natural and cultural landscape – ranging from the lush forested alpine environment to dry desert landscape – form the most unique setting of any large urban area in North America. These lands and waters contain some of the most diverse flora and fauna found anywhere in the world. Some 1,000 species of plants, 400 species of birds, 54 species of reptiles, 142 species of mammals; and 41 species of fish are found within the seven million acres. Also present are thousands of cultural sites, many listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The cultural sites include historic, prehistoric and paleontological resources. For example, there are 302 recorded rock art sites in Clark County alone. These include petroglyphs, pictographs or geoglyphs that represent a long cultural continuum and provide an extensive documentation of various cultural groups for whom no written record exists. Cultural sites are valued for an assortment of reasons by different groups or individuals and, in some cases, are increasingly sought out as points of destination. These irreplaceable sites are the cultural heritage of our state and nation, deserving of protection through proactive management.

2252 MORNING MESA AVENUE  
HENDERSON, NV 89052

ASSEMBLY NATURAL RES., AGRICULTURE & MINING  
DATE: 3/12/03 ROOM: 3161 EXHIBIT F1-3  
SUBMITTED BY: Alan O'Neill

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F1-3

As you are aware, the Las Vegas metropolitan area has been the fastest growing urban area in the country over the past decade, with a resident population now exceeding 1.5 million people. In addition, some 37 million people visit Las Vegas each year. The seven million acres of adjacent public land receive over 18 million visitors each year. The pressures of population explosion, increasing visitor volume and urban encroachment are creating tremendous problems for the public land managing agencies. The fragile rock art sites are being indirectly and directly impacted by the increasing demands placed on public lands for recreation and non-recreation uses. Once isolated and little known, the cultural resource properties are now easily accessed and widely recognized. The escalating visitation and inappropriate use of such cultural resource sites have, all too often, resulted in adverse impacts either by accident or intentional, destructive actions. Cultural resource sites situated near urban areas or adjacent to travel corridors have suffered from different forms of vandalism such as target shooting, graffiti, damage by off-road vehicles, trash dumping and artifact collecting.


There are around 350 federal employees to manage the seven million acres of public land in southern Nevada. This is equivalent to the size of the culinary staff at a medium size Las Vegas hotel. The most extreme case is at the Desert National Wildlife Refuge where there are only four employees to manage 1.6 million acres. Likewise, there are similar staff shortfalls in the state and local public land managing agencies. The public land managing agencies do not have adequate staff to be in the field on a regular basis to discover the negative impacts of man on cultural resources.

It is unlikely that the number of employees will increase for the federal, state, and local land managing agencies in the years ahead due to budget constraints and the public's concern over the size of government. Yet there is a need for more people to help in the stewardship of these areas. Therefore, it's critical to find avenues where the citizenry can take a greater sense of ownership and engagement in the process. These are our community's heritage and we all share an intergenerational responsibility to pass on to those generations to follow a full complement of our cultural and natural heritage. This is why we are so excited about Assembly Bill 131 for it sets up a productive framework and partnership between the federal, state, and local governmental agencies, tribes, and private citizens to assist in monitoring sensitive cultural sites and in educating the public about the value of our cultural heritage. The level of understanding, appreciation, advocacy and involvement on the part of the southern Nevada community needed to assist government has been lacking to date. Programs like the Site Stewardship Program can raise the level of consciousness in the community and help build the community's capacity to help.

The Outside Las Vegas partners have requested funding through Round 4 of the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act Program to implement a site stewardship program for Clark County and adjacent areas. The funding would hire a site stewardship coordinator for the local program and cover the costs of training, consultation, and coordination. The program would focus on monitoring of key sites. This local model would fit perfectly under the framework of the statewide program as proposed under Assembly Bill 131.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and are hopeful that the legislation will be enacted. We stand ready to assist wherever needed in its implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan O'Neill".

Alan O'Neill  
Executive Director  
Outside Las Vegas Foundation