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**Heller Applauds Interior Department’s Decision to Reopen Nevada’s Public Lands**

**Washington, D.C.** - U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today applauded the U.S. Department of the Interior for its decision to reopen 10 million acres of federal lands in six Western states, including Nevada, for mineral development after finding that these activities have no effect on sage-grouse populations. This includes many acres of private land in Nevada already sited for mineral development.

The decision by the Interior Department comes after [Heller urged Secretary Ryan Zinke in a letter sent in May](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/b650119c-493b-417e-913b-6985daff3eb6/05192017%20Heller%20SFA%20Letter.pdf) to conduct a review on the Obama Administration’s proposed plans to protect the sage-grouse, a flightless, chicken-like bird that roams areas in the West. The 10 million acres of public lands were previously off-limits for over a year and a half under this proposal.

The Bureau of Land Management recently said that the past Administration’s proposal was “unreasonable” in light of the data that showed that mining affected less than 0.1 percent of sage-grouse-occupied range.

“The Department of the Interior’s decision is a win for Nevada, as it returns power back to the states and local governments and removes unnecessary restrictions that stand to benefit no one. By lifting restrictions on these federal lands, our state has the potential to create many more jobs for Nevadans through mining opportunities,” **said Heller.** “I applaud Secretary Zinke for recognizing the government overreach of the past Administration when it first proposed this plan.”

Heller has a history of pushing for states to handle sage-grouse conservation efforts. This summer Heller [expressed his support](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=BBFFA8EB-0447-4113-997C-F60DB84487B4) for the U.S. Department of the Interior’s review of the previous Administration’s sage-grouse land use plans. Additionally, earlier this year he introduced the [Greater Sage-Grouse Protection and Recovery Act of 2017,](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/2/western-senators-introduce-greater-sage-grouse-protection-and-recovery-act) legislation that allows for states to implement their own specific conservation and management plans to protect greater sage-grouse populations and their habitats.

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