
City could get thousands of acres for parks and open space

BY BY [DAVE FRANK](#)

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Carson City would take over thousands of acres in federal land, including the Silver Saddle Ranch, to maintain as parks and open space if a U.S. Senate bill is approved.

More than 5,000 acres from the Bureau of Land Management on the east side of the city and about 1,000 acres from the U.S. Forest Service on the west side of the city would go to the local government under the bill introduced this week by U.S. senators Harry Reid and John Ensign.

This would more than triple the land the city has for parks and open space now.

Federal budgets are shrinking and Carson City was interested in the land the agencies were managing anyway, said Duane Petite of The Nature Conservancy, which helped work on the bill.

“It didn’t make sense” for the federal government to manager the land, he said.

Taking over 3,500 acres of the Silver Saddle Ranch and areas around the Carson River in the southeast part of the city on a condition that it cannot be developed is one of the most important things about the bill, Petite said.

The area needs to be preserved for both wildlife and city residents, he said.

The city would give up about 2,200 acres of high mountains in the Humbolt-Toiyabe National Forest under the bill, but that is land easier for the forest service to maintain.

About 150 acres of the land the city will get under the bill, mostly along Highway 50 East, will be available for economic development.

Other provisions in the bill include close to 300 acres from the federal government to the Washoe Tribe, land next to the Carson and Stewart Indian Colonies.

Federal officials, city workers and Carson City residents have been working on the bill for about four years.

Carson City Planning Director Lee Plemel said the bill is in line with the city’s master plan because it preserves forests, mountains and open spaces and tries to restrict housing and business in already developed areas.

“I think it’s a great thing for the city that these surrounding public lands are being permanently protected by this legislation, permanently protected from development,” he said.

Less than a tenth of Carson City is now used for housing or business. Over three-fourths of city land is owned by federal, state or city governments.

Though the city is gaining thousands of acres, the weed, fire and erosion control maintenance won’t be expensive or take a lot of time, City Manager Larry Werner said.

Private land will be sold through a bidding process, he said, and most of the profits will go to a fund for city open space.

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