

Reno Gazette Journal

Your Views: We can keep multiple-use public lands open, but only if we get involved in the electoral process

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Editor,

Lyon County voters need to take a long, hard look at candidates running for Nevada's Second Congressional District seat (Derby and Heller), the state assembly seat (Grady and Dalton), and especially the county commission vacancies. The winners of these races are crucial to either preserving open access to public lands, or seeing access curtailed by wilderness groups.

The battle isn't over just because we and the present commissioners, and incumbent assemblymen like Tom Grady, James Settelmeyer, Senator Mark McGinness, and Congressman Dean Heller all stood together. That was only Round One.

If you attended the public meetings in March and April you know that the other side isn't going away. That's why we need elected officials who will stand up for their constituents and not try to cut back room deals. There are already early indications that some candidates are meeting with wilderness supporters, which they have a perfect right to do, but we have a perfect right to ensure that they don't get elected.

The people of Inyo and Mono counties in California are now discovering what happens when you sit down at the table with those who are determined to restrict public access to public lands. The Boxer-McKeon Bill has turned into an utter fiasco. Open access advocates were told that if they sat down with the wilderness groups and Congressional staffers that the whole thing could be negotiated to everyone's satisfaction. SOUNDS FAMILIAR? Well, guess what? The good folks of these two counties thought they had a deal. And maybe they did...until the "deal" got to Washington, where wilderness lobbyists and Senator Boxer's people are now ripping it to pieces. What ultimately comes out will hardly be a work of the people.

No one should wonder why we refused to negotiate in Lyon, Mineral, and Esmeralda counties. You cannot negotiate with groups who would restrict access because you lose control of both the process and the product long before it is finished. But the other side does not lose control because their pockets are deep and they keep a tight leash on the Congressmen they own.

The Coalition for Public Access (CPA) will not endorse any candidates for elected office; however, we have sent out questionnaires to political candidates about their positions on open access to public lands and the implications of restricted access that occurs with wilderness designations. Their responses will be posed on the CPA web site ([www.cfpa-](http://www.cfpa-)

nv.org), in our newsletter, and we intend to make them available to newspapers in all of the northwestern Nevada counties. Also, we strongly encourage everyone to attend public meetings with candidates. Get them to commit to keeping our public lands open. Let them know how you feel about back room deals with wilderness groups and Congressional staffers.

We can control our own future and keep our multiple-use public lands open, but only if all of us get involved in the electoral process. Know where each candidate stands on the issues, and challenge them when it's appropriate.

Phil Tucker

Member, CPA Board of Directors

For the CPA Board of Directors: Larry Simmons, Don Smith, Mike Rosachi, Wade Harlan, Sue Silver, Lu Weaver, Phil Tucker, and Emery Thran.