

BLM foolish to auction off Nevada land to oil-gas industry: Sophia Kirschenman

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(Photo: RGJ file)

Nevada's public lands often take a backseat to the glamour of Vegas and the state's allure of legalized sin. It's a shame because whether you're a hunter, hiker or simply a lover of the American West, Nevada's public lands are truly the hottest game in town.

Sadly, the state's jackpot of public lands is increasingly under siege. The latest: a scheme by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to auction off nearly 200,000 acres to the oil and gas industry this June (https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV_OG_20170614_BMDO_Sale_Notice_0.pdf).



Sophia Kirschenman (Photo: Provided)

The proposal would effectively cede control of public lands near Nevada's Ruby Mountains and Monitor Range to oil and gas companies.

The end results for Nevada: The American public loses access, the oil and gas industry gains the right to contaminate our air and water, and industry executives are enriched at our expense.

• **News on Nevada public lands: [Amodei won't revive bill to unload federal land \(/story/life/outdoors/2017/05/16/congressman-wont-revive-bill-unload-federal-land/324081001/\)](#)**

Just look at the situation on the ground. At present, of the 1.1 million acres of public lands in Nevada under lease to the oil and gas

industry, only 27,000 are producing.

Put another way, only 2% of all leased public lands in Nevada are actually producing oil and gas. Given this, why would the Bureau of Land Management consider selling 200,000 more acres to industry?

The answer is simple: to pad the industry's assets by putting our lands in their hands.

Just consider that companies are able to acquire public lands oil and gas leases for as low as \$1.50 per acre, less than the cost of a pack of gum.

Nationwide, industry has more than 26 million acres of publicly owned oil and gas leases, mostly in the American West. Yet according to the Bureau of Land Management, only 46% of these acres are actually producing oil and gas. The other 54% are just padding industry's balance sheets and failing to produce any energy.

Our public lands are not for the oil and gas industry, especially in Nevada. Here, our lands have higher and better uses, including enormous outdoor recreational opportunities and chances to develop clean energy.

In fact, Nevada has the nation's largest amount of unused geothermal energy and the highest solar energy potential. If energy independence is the goal, it doesn't lie with the oil and gas industry.

By catering to industry demands, the Bureau of Land Management is failing Nevada. They're sacrificing our irreplaceable public lands at the expense of true energy independence and the prospect of a healthy environment.

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Now is the time for anyone who values public lands, including Nevada's U.S. senators and representatives, to speak up and speak out against this dangerous scheme. It's critical that our members of Congress defend this state.

Instead of dooming Nevada to an obsolete and polluted future, the Bureau of Land Management should be protecting our heritage, so that Nevadans — and all Americans for that matter — can enjoy our public lands for generations to come.

Sophia Kirschenman grew up in Reno and is a volunteer for WildEarth Guardians, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the wildlife of the American West.

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