# Senator Dean Heller: Public Lands And Conservation

Outgoing Senator Dean Arthur Heller has been a member of the U.S. Senate since 2011. He was first appointed to the seat by Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval after former Senator John Ensign resigned. Heller was officially elected to the office in 2012, after defeating Democratic Representative Shelley Berkley with 45.87 percent of the vote. In the November 2018 election, Heller lost his re-election bid to Democratic Congresswoman Jacky Rosen. According to POLITICO, “Heller conceded with Rosen at 50.8 percent of the vote to his 45 percent.” Heller was also challenged to a primary by Danny Tarkanian, who later dropped his bid at Trump’s urging, to run for a U.S. House seat instead.

Key findings include:

**Heller: “If I Had It My Way, There Would Be No Federal Lands In The State Of Nevada.”** In January 2014, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported: “Public lands should be managed by the states, not the federal governments, U.S. Sen. Dean Heller stressed recently [in 2014]. Speaking recently to the Reno Gazette-Journal editorial board, he said, ‘If I had it my way there would be no federal lands in the state of Nevada. If you look at east of the Mississippi (River), there are states with very little federal lands.’ And even Nebraska, west of the Mississippi, has less than 10 percent public lands, while Nevada’s is upward of 80 percent.” Heller reportedly added: I will always believe that the states will take care of their lands better than the federal government.”

**Heller Co-Sponsored and Voted in Favor of Repealing a BLM Rule Meant To Conserve Public Lands.** In March 2017, Heller co-sponsored and voted in favor of H.J.Res.44, a bill backed by Donald Trump to repeal a Bureau of Land Management Rule meant to protect and manage public lands. According to the Las Vegas Review-Journal, “Conservationists and Democrats argued that the Obama administration regulation, known as the Planning 2.0 rule, protected Bureau of Land Management lands from commercial interests.” The Trump Administration argued that the regulation did not, “adequately serve the State and local communities’ interests and could potentially dilute their input in planning decisions.”

**Heller Supported Considering Bill To Repeal Rule Preventing Methane Pollution On Public Lands.** In May 2017, Heller voted in favor of H.J.Res.36, a joint resolution that would “nullify a Bureau of Land Management rule that requires oil and gas operators on public lands to take measures that decrease waste of natural gas. The rule requires these operators to reduce the practice of burning gas by adopting current technologies, to replace outdated equipment to minimize release of gas into the air and to periodically inspect their operations for leaks,” according to CQ.

**Heller Supported Using Public Lands For Mining, Energy Generation, And Renewable Energy Development.**  In 2014, Heller praised the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2015. Heller stated, “Through this legislation, we free up thousands of acres of land suitable for commercial development, mining, energy generation, ranching, and timber work, while conserving some of our state’s most beautiful areas so future generations can camp, hike, hunt, and fish.” In 2012, the Las Vegas Sun reported, “Heller and Heck released legislation to revamp the approval process for renewable energy projects sited on public lands[.]”

**Heller Praised Trump Executive Order Mandating Review of Monument Declarations; Opposed Designation of Gold Butte and the Basin and Range National Monument.** In 2017, Heller praised Donald Trump’s Executive Order mandating a review of presidential monument declarations over the past two decades. . In 2017, Heller recommended to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke that both Gold Butte, and Basin and Range national monuments, be reduced in boundary and size. In 2014, Heller opposed turning the Gold Butte into a national conservation area and in a letter to Obama, Heller pointed to the BLM’s standoff with Bundy on Gold Butte as a reason to oppose designating the area. In 2015, Heller called President Obama’s creation of the 704,000-acre Basin and Range national monument conservation area in Nevada a “disgrace” that was carried out without input from lawmakers or rural Nevada counties. Heller has voted to allow grazing on public lands considered sensitive, regardless of damage that could be caused and he voted against codifying 27 million acres of land considered historically, culturally, or ecologically significant into the National Landscape Conservation System.

**Heller Planned to Introduce Legislation in 2018 to Block Future Wilderness Designations in Nevada, Removing Congressional Protection for 2.5 Million Acres of Wilderness Study Areas in Nevada.** In June 2018, the Reno Gazette Journal reported that Heller planned to introduce a bill “that would strip protections from potentially dozens of designated wilderness study areas.” The newspaper further reported, “. Heller chose the partisan approach because he’s anticipating political blowback from conservationists and wants the legislation to move while Republicans have control of Congress and the White House, a Heller aide told the Lander County Commission during a Feb. 8 meeting. ‘When Dean drops this bill, all hell is going to break loose,’ Heller aide Andrew Williams said, according to a transcript of the meeting.” KNVC reported that Heller’s bill, expected to be proposed introduced in 2019, would “remove Congressional protection for up to 63 wilderness study areas (WSAs) totaling some 2.5 million acres in Nevada.”

**Heller Once Called Cliven Bundy Supporters “Patriots;” Denied Calling Bundy Himself a “Patriot” And Condemned Racist Comments Made by Bundy.** In 2014, Heller called Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy’s supporters “patriots” and wanted Congress to review the incident that caused Bundy to clash with the Bureau of Land Management. *(Video available)* Heller later clarified that he never called Cliven Bundy a patriot and Heller condemned Bundy’s racist comments “appalling.”

## Criticisms of Federal Public Lands

**Heller: “If I Had It My Way, There Would Be No Federal Lands In The State Of Nevada.”** According to Reno Gazette-Journal, “Public lands should be managed by the states, not the federal governments, U.S. Sen. Dean Heller stressed recently. Speaking recently to the Reno Gazette-Journal editorial board, he said, ‘If I had it my way there would be no federal lands in the state of Nevada. If you look at east of the Mississippi (River), there are states with very little federal lands.’ And even Nebraska, west of the Mississippi, has less than 10 percent public lands, while Nevada’s is upward of 80 percent.” [Reno Gazette-Journal, 1/29/14]

* **Heller: “I Will Always Believe That The States Will Take Care Of Their Lands Better Than The Federal Government.”** [Reno Gazette-Journal, 1/29/14]

**2014: Heller: “I Believe It’s In The Best Interest Of The State Of Nevada For Nevadans To Control Their Own Lands.”** According to Pahrump Valley Times, “‘I believe it’s in the best interest of the State of Nevada for Nevadans to control their own lands. Back in 1864, when we became a state, Nebraska became a state at the same time. The difference is 87 percent of the State of Nevada is federal land, only 3 percent of Nebraska is federal land. Why did that happen?’ Heller asked. ‘It’s going to take someone back here in the Senate to point that out and try to move this and come to some grips on this.’” [Pahrump Valley Times, 4/11/14]

**Heller Argued That Nevada Could Not Expand Its Tax Base Due To The Prevalence Of Federal Lands.** According to Reno Gazette-Journal, “Of his opinion there is too much federally-managed lands in Nevada, Heller said, ‘These small towns in rural Nevada are land-locked. They can’t expand their tax base, and they’re not able to do what they would normally be doing in another state. ‘You can’t have a growth economy if the federal government locks you in. ... Construction has always been a growth engine in this state,’ he said. He said he feels the states would deal with the conservation steps to improve the sage grouse population more effectively.” [Reno Gazette-Journal, 1/29/14]

**Heller: “Often, Companies Looking To Create Jobs [And Use Public Lands] In Tell Me The Length, Difficulty, And Uncertainty Of The Permitting Process Is Depressing Development And Discouraging Investors From Committing To U.S. Projects.”** According to Dean Heller’s opinion piece placed in the Elko Daily Free Press, “Often, companies looking to create jobs [and use public lands] in tell me the length, difficulty, and uncertainty of the permitting process is depressing development and discouraging investors from committing to U.S. projects. One company told me, ‘It is becoming bad business to even try to get a project off the ground when federal lands are involved.’” [Dean Heller Op-ed, Elko Daily Free Press, 7/29/14]

* **Heller: “We Have To Get The Federal Government Out Of The Way Of Our Job Producers So Our Western States Can Capitalize On Their Energy Potential And Can Drive The Nation's 21st Century Energy Strategy.”** According to Dean Heller’s opinion piece placed in the Elko Daily Free Press, “It is no coincidence that our public lands counties are suffering from unemployment rates well above the national average. We have to get the federal government out of the way of our job producers so our western states can capitalize on their energy potential and can drive the nation’s 21st century energy strategy.” [Dean Heller Op-ed, Elko Daily Free Press, 7/29/14]

## Conservation and Land Management

**Heller Co-Sponsored And Voted For Repeal Of Bureau Of Land Management Planning Rule Meant To Manage And Conserve Public Lands.** “Joint Resolution, H.J. Res 44, which disapproves and nullifies the BLM Planning 2.0 Rule, was signed by President Trump on Monday. On December 12, 2016, the Obama Administration published the BLM’s new Resource Management Rule, also known as BLM’s Planning 2.0, that meant ‘to manage and conserve public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.’ The Obama Administration’s decision was an effort to address issues like proliferating wildfire, renewable energy, and conserving wildlife habitat. Further, according to BLM, the changes were meant to create opportunities for science-based, landscape-scale approaches to resource management, as well as open up opportunities for early engagement to state and local government, Tribes, partner agencies, stakeholders and the public. But some argue the new rule would have reduced the efficiency of resource planning and cause few opportunities for state and local government input. With BLM’s Planning 2.0 rule, other states and special-interest groups would have the same influence as county or local officials in the planning process. [H.J.Res.44, Vote #82, [3/07/17](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-joint-resolution/44/actions); Fox News 13, [3/27/17](http://fox13now.com/2017/03/27/trump-signs-bill-to-rollback-regulations-on-blms-planning-2-0/)]

* **Trump Administration Supported Repealing The BLM Rule.** According to the White House, “Given its regional approach to planning, the Administration believes the rule does not adequately serve the State and local communities’ interests and could potentially dilute their input in planning decisions.” [White House, [2/07/17](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/07/hjr-44-disapproving-rule-submitted-department-interior-relating-bureau)]
* **Heller Co-Sponsored The Resolution.** According to Las Vegas Review-Journal, “President Donald Trump signed a bill Monday that kills a federal rule dictating planning on public lands in Western states -- including 47.5 million acres in Nevada. […] All GOP senators from Western states, including Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., were co-sponsors of a resolution calling for the repeal of the regulation. It was sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, the chairwoman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 3/28/17]
* **Conservationists And Democrats Argued That The Rule Was Meant To Protect BLM Lands From Commercial Interests.** “Conservationists and Democrats argued that the Obama administration regulation, known as the Planning 2.0 rule, protected Bureau of Land Management lands from commercial interests.” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 3/28/17]
* **LCV President Gene Karpinski Sent Letters To Senators Urging Them To Vote Against The “Radical” Legislation.** “Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters, sent a letter to senators Friday urging them to vote against H.J. Res. 44, calling it ‘radical’ legislation that ‘would prohibit the BLM from developing any similar measure in the future.’” [E&E News, [3/07/17](https://www.eenews.net/eedaily/stories/1060051032)]

**2009: Heller Voted For Amendment Giving State Foresters Authority To Carry Out “Potentially Harmful Projects.”** According to LCV, “The amendment offered by Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) would have given state foresters expanded authority to carry out potentially harmful projects on national forests. The language contained two significant National Forest Management Act waivers, which would not require state foresters to advertise timber sales and eliminate federal oversight of marking, designating, and implementing logging projects on national forest lands. On March 26, the amendment was rejected 148-272 (House roll call vote 161). NO IS THE PRO-ENVIRONMENT VOTE. The FLAME Act was included in the Interior-Environment appropriations bill, which the President signed into law March 30.” Heller voted in favor of the amendment. [LCV Score Card, [2009](http://scorecard.lcv.org/roll-call-vote/2009-161-undermining-forest-management); House Roll Call 161, [3/26/09](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2009/roll161.xml)]

**2012: Heller Voted Against Motion To Waive Budget Laws For Amendment To Provide Additional Recreational Access To Certain Public Lands For Hunters**. According to CQ, “Tester, D-Mont., motion to waive all applicable budget laws with respect to the Sessions, R-Ala., point of order against the Tester substitute amendment no. 2875 that would provide additional recreational access to certain public lands for hunters. It would exclude ammunition and fish tackle from EPA regulations, ease a ban on importing polar bear remains, reauthorize several conservation measures and allow the Interior Department to increase fees for duck stamps, a federal migratory-bird hunting license that also helps fund conservation efforts. The substitute would strike provisions in the bill to prohibit the sale of billfish and require a report on artificial reefs in the Gulf of Mexico. Motion rejected by a vote of 50-44.” Heller voted against the motion. [CQ Floor Vote, Senate Roll Call 204, [11/26/12](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=112&session=2&vote=00204)]

**2013: Heller Sided With The Hage Family Who Sued The Federal Government Over A Dispute That Allegedly Deprived The Family Of Water Needed For Cattle Grazing.** “U.S. Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), top Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee, and Sen. Dean Heller (R.-Nev.) issued the following statements in response to a federal court’s determination that government officials conspired to deprive E. Wayne Hage and his family of essential water rights needed to conduct cattle grazing … ‘Property rights are sacred. In a state like Nevada where the federal government controls 87% of the land, water rights and grazing rights are the lifeblood of our rural communities. It is unacceptable that any federal agency would act above the law and infringe on the rights of American citizens. I am eager for the Supreme Court to hear the Hages’ plea that they are entitled just compensation for the loss of their rights,’ said Heller.” [Congressional Documents And Publications, 6/12/13]

**2009: Heller Voted Against Public Lands Management Act That Would Authorize Numerous Land Exchanges And Conveyances To Help Western Communities.** According to LCV, “The Omnibus Public Land Management Act also authorized numerous land exchanges and conveyances to help Western communities, addressed water resource and supply issues, and launched programs to study the effects of climate change on natural resources. A provision not supported by the conservation community was a measure that may permit a road within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. On March 25, the House passed the bill 285-140 (House roll call vote 153). YES IS THE PRO-ENVIRONMENT VOTE. This followed Senate passage of H.R. 146 on March 19, and the President signed the bill into law on March 30.” Heller voted against the amendments. [LCV Score Card, [2009](http://scorecard.lcv.org/roll-call-vote/2009-153-public-lands-protection); House Roll Call 153, [3/25/09](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2009/roll153.xml)]

## Public Land Use For Energy Development

**2017: Heller Voter in Favor of Considering Bill That Would Nullify the BLM’s Rule Requiring Oil and Gas Operators** **On Public Land to Take Measures to Decrease Waste and Leaks of Natural Gas.** In May 2017, Heller voted in favor of H.J. Res 36, a joint resolution on to repeal a methane waste rule. According to CQ, the “motion to proceed to the joint resolution that would nullify a Bureau of Land Management rule that requires oil and gas operators on public lands to take measures that decrease waste of natural gas. The rule requires these operators to reduce the practice of burning gas by adopting current technologies, to replace outdated equipment to minimize release of gas into the air and to periodically inspect their operations for leaks.” The motion was rejected by a vote of 49–51. [H J Res 36, Senate Vote [#125](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=115&session=1&vote=00125), 5/10/17; CQ Floor Votes, [5/10/17](https://plus.cq.com/vote/2017/S/125?12)]

**Heller Praised Defense Bill That Freed “Up Thousands Of Acres Of [Public] Land Suitable For Commercial Development, Mining, Energy Generation, Ranching, And Timber Work.”**, “United States Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) issued the following statement after the United States Senate passed important Nevada public lands priorities as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) earlier today: ‘The Passage of FY 2015 NDAA legislation is yet another milestone towards positive change for both the country and the state of Nevada. It will not only spur economic growth across the United States but will also greatly impact the state. Through this legislation, we free up thousands of acres of land suitable for commercial development, mining, energy generation, ranching, and timber work, while conserving some of our state’s most beautiful areas so future generations can camp, hike, hunt, and fish. This legislation will benefit Nevada. I look forward to it reaching the President’s desk and being signed into law.’” [Press release, Senator Heller’s office, 12/12/14]

**2012: Heller And Rep. Joe Heck Introduced Bill That Would Streamline Approval Process Of Renewable Energy Projects On Public Lands.** According to Las Vegas Sun, “This summer, Heller and Heck released legislation to revamp the approval process for renewable energy projects sited on public lands so the country can meet that goal and improve its pace of clearing new projects “By streamlining the development of renewable energy on these lands, Nevada will have the chance to lead the nation in the development of viable renewable energy sources,” Heck said at the time. […] ‘Nevada has vast potential for renewable energy development,’ Heller said this year, when he joined a bipartisan group to push for a renewal of the renewable energy production tax credit. ‘Renewable energy development as a part of a broader energy strategy will ensure our nation has a diverse and secure energy future.’” [Las Vegas Sun, [8/12/12](https://lasvegassun.com/news/2012/aug/12/nevada-lawmakers-battle-position-renewable-energy/)]

**2011: Heller Planned To Propose A ‘Shot Clock’ Measure To Require The Interior Department To Act Within 45 Days On Proposed Mining And Energy Projects To Boost Job Creation.”** According to Elko Daily Free Press, “Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., said Wednesday he is proposing a ‘shot clock’ measure that would require the U.S. Department of Interior to act within 45 days on proposed mining and energy projects to boost job creation. The Public Lands Job Creation Act will be offered in two places: as an amendment to the Republican jobs bill and as a separate bill, he said. ‘I plan to introduce this as part of the plan and as a stand-alone bill this week,’ the senator said during a teleconference. ‘In the past it could take up to a year,’ Heller said. ‘If they don’t complete the work in 45 days, it automatically is sent and published in the Federal Register. We don’t need delays.’ Mining companies for some time have been calling for quicker action in Washington because project proposals for Nevada are bogged down after the U.S. Bureau of Land Management district offices forward them to Interior. Heller said the proposed act ‘obviously is for the whole West, not just Nevada.’ It would cover renewable energy projects and oil and gas projects, as well as mining.” [Elko Daily Free Press, 10/20/11]

**2007: Heller Voted Against Delaying Implementation Of Commercial Leasing Program For Oil Shale On Public Lands.** According to LCV, “Under a 2005 law, the Bureau of Land Management was forced to expedite a full-scale commercial leasing program for oil shale on Western public lands. Conservationists argued that the law doesn't allow the agency to thoroughly consider the program's impacts on natural resources or to find suitable alternatives. During consideration of H.R. 2643, the Interior-Environment appropriations bill, Representative Mark Udall (D-CO) introduced an amendment to delay the program's implementation by a year to better assess its environmental and economic impacts. The amendment was adopted by a 216-210 vote (House roll call vote 577) on June 27, 2007. YES is the pro-environment vote.” Heller voted against the amendment. [LCV Score Card, [2007](http://scorecard.lcv.org/roll-call-vote/2007-577-oil-shale); House Roll Call 577, [6/27/07](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll577.xml)]

## Monuments

**Heller Planned to Introduce Legislation To Block Future Wilderness Designations in Nevada; Heller Aide Andrew Williams: “When Dean Drops This Bill, All Hell Is Going To Break Loose.”** “Republican Sen. Dean Heller is seeking to leverage one-party control of Congress and the White House with an idea for a bill that would block future wilderness designations in Nevada. Heller, who is running for re-election and considered the most vulnerable Republican in the Senate, says he plans to introduce legislation ‘within weeks’ that would strip protections from potentially dozens of designated wilderness study areas. A wilderness advocate who has worked with Nevada’s federal delegation on conservation legislation called Heller’s idea a ‘radical departure’ from prior, bipartisan public lands bills. Heller chose the partisan approach because he’s anticipating political blowback from conservationists and wants the legislation to move while Republicans have control of Congress and the White House, a Heller aide told the Lander County Commission during a Feb. 8 meeting. ‘When Dean drops this bill, all hell is going to break loose,’ Heller aide Andrew Williams said, according to a transcript of the meeting. Williams told the commission that Nye, Eureka and Elko counties were already on board and that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke pledged support and Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, promised Heller a hearing.” [Reno Gazette Journal, [6/04/18](https://www.rgj.com/story/life/outdoors/2018/06/04/all-hell-going-break-loose-under-heller-wilderness-bill-aide-says/653238002/)]

* **Heller’s Proposed Legislation Would Remove Congressional Protections for Up to 63 Wilderness Study Areas, Totaling Approximately 2.5 Million Acres in Nevada.** “On Thursday August 9 about a dozen people showed up in front of the State Capitol in Carson City on a warm and smokey day for a news conference to protest Senator Dean Heller’s proposed legislation that would remove Congressional protection for up to 63 wilderness study areas (WSAs) totaling some 2.5 million acres in Nevada. The Trump Administration and Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke have environmental and conservation watchdog groups on edge for several reasons, and though Senator Heller’s bill has yet to be introduced, many expect the measure will be a Republican legislative priority before a new congress is seated in 2019 and Republicans could potentially lose majority control of the House of Representatives or the Senate or both.” [KNVC, [8/11/18](https://knvc.org/news/nevada-conservation-groups-protest-in-anticipation-of-heller-bill-to-force-decision-on-wilderness-study-areas/)]

**Heller Praised Donald Trump’s Executive Order Mandating A Review Of Presidential Monument Declarations Over The Past Two Decades.** “Backers of Nevada’s newest national monuments are bracing for a push by President Donald Trump to roll back those designations. Trump signed an executive order Wednesday directing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review presidential monument declarations over the past two decades and recommend possible changes to their boundaries and scope. […] Trump’s order drew a mix of anger and alarm from conservation and outdoor recreation groups, while organizations favoring limited government regulation and reduced federal land ownership heralded the move. The response from Nevada’s congressional delegation was split along party lines, with Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto blasting the order and Republican Sen. Dean Heller praising the decision to review what he called the Obama administration’s “failed Washington-knows-best approach” to land management.” [Las Vegas Review, [4/26/17](https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-nevada/2-nevada-monuments-face-scrutiny-as-trump-orders-review/)]

**2010: Heller Voted Against Motion To Pass Bill To Expand Casa Grande Ruins National Monument In Arizona**. According to CQ, “Christensen, D-V.I., motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill that would authorize the Interior Department to expand the boundary of the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument in Arizona by approximately 415 acres. Motion rejected by a vote of 244-174.” Heller voted against the motion. [CQ Floor Vote, House Roll Call 537, [9/23/10](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll537.xml)]

**2008: Heller Voted Against Bill To Codify 27 Million Acres In The National Landscape Conservation System**. According to CQ, “Passage of the bill that would codify the National Landscape Conservation System, comprising approximately 27 million acres of areas considered to have significant historical, cultural, ecological, scientific or scenic value. The bill also includes within the system any area that Congress has already designated for preservation.” The bill passed, 278-140. Heller voted against the bill. [HR 2016, Roll Call 174, [4/09/08](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2008/roll174.xml)]

### Gold Butte

**Las Vegas Review-Journal: Heller Sought “A Reduction In The Size Of Gold Butte And Basin And Range National Monuments, And Urged The Trump Administration To Reduce The Boundaries.”** “Heller also sought a reduction in the size of Gold Butte and Basin and Range national monuments, and urged the Trump administration to reduce the boundaries. Zinke recommended a small reduction for Gold Butte, but Trump has not acted on that recommendation.” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, [12/16/18](https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/politics-and-government/interior-secretary-stepping-down-heller-seen-as-possible-replacement-1553001/)]

**Heller Touted That Interior Secretary Zinke Took His Recommendation to The President That Gold Butte’s Boundaries Be Modified to Allow the Virgin Valley Water District to Access Water Rights.** “Zinke’s recommendation, made public in September, prompted an outcry from environmental groups who promised to take the Trump administration to court to block any attempts to rescind or reduce the monument designations. There was no indication Friday that the White House had made a decision regarding Zinke’s recommendation for Gold Butte. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., said in September that Zinke had taken his recommendation to the president to modify Gold Butte’s boundaries to allow the Virgin Valley Water District to access its water rights.” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, [10/27/17]](https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/politics-and-government/utah-senator-says-trump-shrinking-2-national-monuments-in-utah/)

**2014: Heller Opposed A Measure To Turn Gold Butte Into A National Conservation Area.** According to Las Vegas Review-Journal, “Nevada’s congressional delegation has been unable to reach an agreement on Gold Butte’s future. U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., introduced legislation in May 2013 to turn the 35,000 acres into a national conservation area. That bill, which would keep all open roads available for vehicle access, hasn’t had a hearing yet. However, U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., hasn’t supported the bill. ‘Gold Butte is a natural treasure and a draw for tourism in Southern Nevada,’ Heller spokesman Chandler Smith said in a statement. ‘While nearly everyone agrees that the area should be preserved so future generations can camp, hike, hunt, and enjoy the cultural resources there, there are strong differences of opinion on how that can be accomplished. ‘When it comes to public lands legislation, Senator Heller strongly relies on local opinion and believes that buy-in within the community is extremely important. There is significant opposition to the current proposal at this point that needs to be resolved before he would support moving legislation through Congress.’” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 6/2/14]

**2014: Heller Press Release: “U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) Sent A Letter To President Barack Obama Urging Him To Disregard Any Request To Use His Antiquities Act Authority To Designate Gold Butte As A National Monument.”** According to Congressional Documents And Publications, “Yesterday, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) sent a letter to President Barack Obama urging him to disregard any request to use his Antiquities Act authority to designate Gold Butte as a national monument … ‘New land designations ought to be considered in the open and public Congressional process so all parties, including those who support and oppose the measure, have an equal opportunity to voice their concerns. I strongly believe that if any action is taken on this matter, it should be by Congress reflecting the will of the affected local community,’ Heller writes in the letter.” [Congressional Documents And Publications, 6/6/14]

**2014: Las Vegas Review-Journal: “Heller Told Obama He Should Think Twice If He Was Thinking Of Taking Action On Gold Butte, Where The Bureau Of Land Management Engaged In A Testy Standoff In April With Cliven Bundy And The Controversial Rancher's Armed Supporters Over Cattle Rights.”** According to Las Vegas Review-Journal, “Debate over Nevada public land flared anew on Friday when Sen. Dean Heller warned President Barack Obama against designating a national monument in the Gold Butte region of Clark County. Heller told Obama he should think twice if he was thinking of taking action on Gold Butte, where the Bureau of Land Management engaged in a testy standoff in April with Cliven Bundy and the controversial rancher’s armed supporters over cattle rights. Heller did not mention Bundy by name, but he told the president any move to assert more federal authority ‘would not serve the area well.’ He said it would escalate anger and frustration ‘in a region of our state where tensions are already presently high.’ There already is ‘significant opposition’ to bills before Congress that seek to upgrade conservation in the area, Heller added.” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 6/7/14]

### Basin And Range National Monument

**Heller Called Obama’s Creation Of A 704,000-Acre National Monument Conservation Area A “Disgrace,” That Was Done Without Input From Lawmakers Or The Rural Counties It Affected.** According to Las Vegas Review-Journal, “Sen. Dean Heller on Tuesday called President Barack Obama’s creation of a 704,000-acre national monument conservation area in Nevada a ‘disgrace,’ saying it was done without input from lawmakers or the rural counties it affects the most. When Obama on July 10 signed the proclamation designating the Basin and Range National Monument, Heller, R-Nev., issued a statement critical of the move. On Tuesday he ramped up his remarks, and in the process drew a retort from Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., who had championed the president’s move to set aside 1,100 square miles of Lincoln and Nye counties through executive order. ‘What happened in Nevada, I feel was a disgrace, and it’s a shame we are standing here today with a monument in the state of Nevada the size of Rhode Island, with no input from Nevada’s delegation nor counties,’ Heller said on the Senate floor. ‘Just a single action made by one person.’” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 8/4/15]

**Heller: With The Stroke Of A Pen, President Obama Has Bypassed Congress And Unilaterally Restricted The Use Of Over 700,000 Acres Of Nevada's Public Land.”** According to Associated Press State & Local, “The sudden designation of a state-sized area of desert, valleys and mountains in Nevada as a new national monument was derided Friday by local congressmen as an act of political cronyism involving outgoing U.S. Sen. Harry Reid and President Barack Obama. Reid shrugged off the criticism and hailed the president’s use of executive power to protect about 1,100 square miles of Silver State rangeland. Presidents of both parties have invoked the Antiquities Act of 1906, he said. ‘This is so important for Nevada,’ Reid said by telephone minutes after Obama signed an act creating the Basin and Range National Monument … U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, and Gov. Brian Sandoval, both Republicans, also complained about lack of local involvement. ‘With the stroke of a pen, President Obama has bypassed Congress and unilaterally restricted the use of over 700,000 acres of Nevada’s public land,’ Heller said.” [Associated Press State & Local, 7/10/15]

### Local And Congressional Input

**Las Vegas Review-Journal: Heller Sponsored Bill That Would Limit Future Presidents From Making Designations Without More Input From Local Leaders And Stakeholders.”** “Zinke, during his hearing, promised to visit both Nevada and Utah in his review of former President Barack Obama’s designation of the Gold Butte and Bear’s Ears regions of those two states as national monuments. Obama used the Antiquities Act of 1906 to make the national monument designations. The action was hailed by Democrats and environmentalists, but drew opposition from Republicans and conservatives. U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., and U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., sponsored legislation in the Senate and House that would limit future presidents from making designations without more input from local leaders and stakeholders.” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 1/31/17]

**2016: Heller Voted For Amendment To Specify That A President's Proclamation Or Reservation Of A National Monument Would Expire 3 Years After Proclaimed.** According to CQ, “Lee, R-Utah, amendment no. 3023 to the Murkowski, R-Alaska, substitute amendment no. 2953, that would modify Title 54, U.S. Code, to specify that a president's proclamation or reservation of a national monument would expire 3 years after proclaimed or reserved unless approved by federal and state law. The substitute would, among other provisions, repeal a number of additional studies and programs.” The amendment was rejected 47-48. Heller voted for the amendment. [CQ Floor Vote, Senate Roll Call 10, [2/2/16](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=114&session=2&vote=00010)]

**2015: Heller Introduced Bill That “Prevents The Threat Of Executive Action Designating Or Expanding National Monuments Without Congressional Approval Or Local Support.”** “Congressman Joe Heck (NV-03) today joined with United States Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) and Congressmen Mark Amodei (NV-02) and Cresent Hardy (NV-04) to introduce the Nevada Land Sovereignty Act of 2015. The legislation prevents the threat of executive action designating or expanding national monuments without Congressional approval or local support … ‘Currently, with a quick stroke of the pen, the executive branch can lock up millions of acres of public land without consulting the public or their representation in Congress. With more than 85 percent of Nevada’s land already managed by the federal government, public input and local support are critical to the decision-making process when changing federal land designations. This legislation ensures Congress and local officials are not bypassed by the executive branch when it comes to proposed national monuments in Nevada,’ stated Senator Heller.” [Press release, Senator Heller, 1/22/15]

**2011: Heller And Rep. Jason Chaffetz Urged Secretary Ken Salazar To Allow Local Communities To Have A Say In Decisions To Give Protective Designations To Public Lands In The West.”** According to Congressional Documents And Publications, “(Washington DC) - U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) and U.S. Representative Jason Chaffetz (UT-3) together sent a letter to Department of Interior Secretary Salazar urging him to allow local communities to have a say in any new decisions to give protective designations to public lands in the West. The two lawmakers reiterated that any conservation designations should not be handled through a ‘top-down’ approach but instead ‘should originate in local communities...and be presented to Congress by the impacted members of the House and Senate.’ Both Senator Heller and Representative Chaffetz are advocating that decisions be made through a transparent process that balances the needs of both the land and their state’s constituents. The letter is the latest in a series sent to Secretary Salazar after the Secretary asked members of Congress for their wish lists of public lands that should be set aside as wilderness.” [Congressional Documents And Publications, 10/17/11]

## Cliven Bundy

**New York Times: Heller Called Cliven Bundy’s Supporters “Patriots.”** “Senator Dean Heller, a Nevada Republican, referred to Mr. Bundy’s supporters as ‘patriots.’ Senator Harry Reid, the Nevada Democrat who is the Senate majority leader and has a long history of pushing for protection of public lands, denounced the rancher’s supporters as ‘domestic terrorists.’” [New York Times, [4/23/14](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/24/us/politics/rancher-proudly-breaks-the-law-becoming-a-hero-in-the-west.html)]

**Heller: “What Sen. Reid May Call Domestic Terrorists, I Call Patriots.”** “But earlier this month in a joint Las Vegas TV interview with Reid and Heller, the Republican senator defended Bundy’s supporters against Reid’s charges that they were acting like terrorists. ‘What Sen. Reid may call domestic terrorists, I call patriots,’ he said during the April 18 televised interview. ‘We have a very different view on this.’” [Politico, [4/29/14](http://www.politico.com/story/2014/04/dean-heller-cliven-bundy-patriot-106167)]; VIDEO, [4/17/14](http://www.rollcall.com/news/home/heller-calls-bundy-ranch-supporters-patriots-reid-sticks-with-domestic-terrorists); ~02:30 mark]

* **Heller Wanted Congress To Review The Bundy Incident.** According to Las Vegas Review-Journal, “U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., has said he would like Congress to review the incident. Bundy and the BLM clashed earlier this month when the federal agency attempted to round up cattle on public lands that Bundy uses. The agency said Bundy owes more than $1 million in grazing fees and fines and hasn’t paid the BLM for more than 20 years. The effort was halted on April 12 to avoid violence after armed militias from across the country traveled to his ranch to confront the BLM.” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 4/26/14]
* **Heller Later Clarified, “I Never Called Bundy A Patriot. And I Believe Bundy Should Have Been Paying Those Fees.”** “Nevada Sen. Dean Heller wants to be clear: Cliven Bundy is no patriot. As criticism has mounted over the controversial Nevada rancher’s comments and tactics, the GOP senator is distancing himself from Bundy and his supporters after referring to them as ‘patriots’ earlier this month. ‘I am very quick in calling American citizens ‘patriots,’’ Heller said in an interview. ‘Maybe in this case, too quick.’ Heller added: ‘I want to make it very clear that I never called Bundy a patriot. And I believe Bundy should have been paying those fees.’ […] While Heller said about ‘80 percent’ of the protesters were ‘people I called patriots,’ he added that there were ‘some bad apples in there, bad actors, no doubt.’” [Politico, [4/29/14](http://www.politico.com/story/2014/04/dean-heller-cliven-bundy-patriot-106167)]
* **Heller Called Bundy’s Racial Comments “Appalling” And Said He Condemned The Rhetoric “In The Most Strenuous Way.”** “Today, the office of U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) has provided this statement regarding comments made by Cliven Bundy, as reported by the New York Times. ‘Senator Heller completely disagrees with Mr. Bundy’s appalling and racist statements, and condemns them in the most strenuous way,’ said Heller spokesperson Chandler Smith.” [Press release, office of Senator Dean Heller, [4/24/14](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=fee5bc54-3a63-4d92-a1d5-49d78804ae12)]

## Land And Water Conservation Fund

**Heller Voted to Consider Bill That Would Have Slashed Clean Energy and Conservation Funding and Cut $16 Million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.** In June 2018, Heller voted in favor of considering bill that would have slashed clean energy and conservation funding and cut $16 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. According to the League of Conservation Voters, “Representative Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) sponsored H.R. 3, the Spending Cuts to Expired and Unnecessary Programs Act, also known as the rescission package, which would cut funding for several programs that protect our environment and public health. H.R. 3 would slash programs that promote needed investments in clean energy and conservation, as well as $16 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Additionally, this package proposed by the Trump administration irresponsibly rescinds funding levels agreed upon through Congress, and much of the funding that H.R. 3 would cut have been identified for future use and could continue to support projects and communities across the country.” The motion was rejected by a vote of 48-50. [HR 3, Senate vote [#134,](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=115&session=2&vote=00134) 6/20/18;League of Conservation Voter, 2018 Recent Vote, accessed [12/17/18](http://scorecard.lcv.org/roll-call-vote/2017-323-anti-environmental-tax-bill-opens-drilling-arctic-refuge)]

**2016: Heller Voted In Favor Of Amendment That Would Require Congress To Approve Any Purchases Of Land Through The Land And Water Conservation Fund.** According to CQ, “Lankford, R-Okla., amendment no. 3210 to the Murkowski, R-Alaska, substitute amendment no. 2953 that would require Congress to approve any purchases of land through the Land and Water Conservation Fund that costs more than $50,000 per acre through enactment of legislation. Additionally, acquisitions of land could not exceed the level of deferred maintenance backlog funding if the non-road deferred maintenance backlog on federal land is greater than $1 billion. The substitute amendment would create a grant program to carry out projects designed to improve the performance and efficiency of a modernized electric grid, contain provisions related to applications to export liquefied natural gas and would permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund.” The amendment was rejected 34-63. Heller voted for the amendment. [CQ Floor Vote, Senate Roll Call 50, [4/19/16](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=114&session=2&vote=00050)]

## Wildfires

**2018: Urged FEMA to Review Nevada’s Request for Fire Management Resources and Asked FEMA to Reconsider the Criteria Used to Determine Nevada’s Eligibility for Fire Management Funding.** “After the State of Nevada re-applied for assistance using new criteria under the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program for the damages caused by the South Sugarloaf Fire, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today urged the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to immediately review the State’s request for resources and again pressed the agency to reconsider the criteria used to determine the state’s eligibility for funding through the FMAG program. When FEMA initially denied the State’s previous application because it didn’t meet the eligibility requirements under current FMAG criteria, Heller immediately pushed for a long-term solution for the State when he urged FEMA to level the playing field for states like Nevada that have high percentages of federal land by re-evaluating the criteria used to determine Nevada’s ability to qualify for wildfire assistance grants. In an August letter to FEMA, Heller stated that 85 percent of Nevada’s lands are managed by the federal government, and he argued that must be reflected in the criteria used to determine wildfire assistance grants.” [Office of Senator Dean Heller, [9/20/18](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=927AC0D9-4699-4057-9D0A-32354CADFBA5)]

**Heller Announced $684,689 National Science Foundation Award for Wildfire Smoke & Air Quality Research.** “U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today announced that the National Science Foundation (NSF) will award the University of Nevada, Reno $684,689 to research air quality forecasting for wildfire smoke so that communities can provide well-timed health alerts. ‘At a time when Nevadans continue to face devastating wildfires across the state, I welcome the National Science Foundation’s support for research that will help mitigate future health hazards caused by wildfire smoke,’ said Heller. ‘As a strong advocate for Nevada’s ability to detect, protect against, and recover from wildfires, I will continue to promote policies that protect the health, wellness, and safety of Nevadans facing threats from wildfires throughout the state.’ In August, after the state was denied a request for resources to help fight the South Sugarloaf Fire, Heller urged the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to reconsider the criteria required to qualify for wildfire assistance grants through the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program.” [Office of Senator Dean Heller, [9/11/18](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=74A1B2C8-E9D4-4E50-85F8-410C461A4568)]

## DOI Leadership

**Heller Voted For Zinke To Be Confirmed As Interior Secretary.** According to Las Vegas Review-Journal, “Montana U.S. Rep. Ryan Zinke was confirmed overwhelmingly Wednesday by the Senate to head the Department of Interior where he has pledged to review recent presidential designations of national monuments, including Gold Butte in Nevada. Zinke was confirmed on a 68-31 vote that included support from Nevada U.S. Sens. Dean Heller, a Republican, and Catherine Cortez Masto, a Democrat. President Donald Trump nominated Zinke, 55, a former U.S. Navy SEAL, to head the department citing his knowledge of public lands in Western states and his desire to protect those lands from transfer to private owners. Cortez Masto said she supported Zinke because ‘his stance against wholesale land transfers assures me that he has an understanding of just how essential it is to preserve and protect our public lands.’” [Las Vegas Review-Journal, 3/2/17; Senate Vote [#75](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=115&session=1&vote=00075), 3/01/17]

**2017: Heller Voted to Confirm David Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary of Interior.** On July 24, 2017, Heller voted in favor of confirming David Bernhardt of Virginia to be deputy secretary of the Interior. Bernhardt was confirmed by a vote of 53 – 43. [PN365, Senate Vote [#166](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=115&session=1&vote=00166), 7/24/17; CQ Floor Votes, 7/24/17]

**2014: Heller Voted To Confirm Neil Kornze As U.S. Bureau Of Land Management Director.** According to Reno Gazette-Journal, “Elko native Neil Kornze was confirmed by the Senate last week as the new director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which oversees nearly 70 percent of the land in Nevada. ‘Neil is just perfect for this position,’ said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev. […] Some Republicans had said that Kornze, 35, was too young for the job as head of an agency that oversees 245 million acres of land, most of it in the West. More than 48 million of those acres are in Nevada. But, in the end, the Senate voted 71-28 to approve Kornze. Reid and Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., voted for the Nevadan. Kornze joined the BLM in January 2011 as Abbey’s senior adviser. He worked on the development of renewable and conventional energy, the siting of power transmission lines and conservation policy.” [Reno Gazette-Journal, 4/13/14]

## Positives on Public Lands

**2010: Heller Voted For Expansion Of NOAA Public Land Conservation Program**. According to CQ, “Passage of the bill that would expand a public land conservation volunteer program for youth to all Interior Department agencies and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. As amended, it would authorize $12 million per year through fiscal 2015 for the program and require 75 percent of funding be used for forest restoration projects. Passed by a vote of 288-116.” Heller voted in favor of the bill. [CQ Floor Vote, House Roll Call 151, [3/20/10](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll151.xml)]

**2008: Heller Voted In Favor Of Omnibus Bill That Reauthorized Public Lands Programs**. According to CQ, “Rahall, D-W.Va., motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill that would designate new park, wilderness and scenic areas and would authorize programs and activities in the Forest Service, the departments of Interior and Energy, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Land Management. It would add 106,000 acres in Washington state to the National Wilderness Preservation System, which would be known as the "Wild Sky Wilderness." It also would apply federal immigration laws to the Northern Mariana Islands and give the commonwealth a non-voting House delegate.” The bill passed, 291-117. Heller voted in favor of the bill. [S 2739, Roll Call 226, [4/29/08](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2008/roll226.xml)]

**2012: Heller And Reid Coauthored A Bill That Would “Designate 26,000 Acres Of Wilderness In Northwest Nevada's Pine Forest Range.”** According to Environment And Energy Daily, “A Senate Energy and Natural Resources panel Thursday will take up more than a dozen bills to restore a polluted mine site, streamline grazing access on public lands and designate nearly 200,000 acres of new wilderness, among other proposals. S. 1788, by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.), would designate 26,000 acres of wilderness in northwest Nevada’s Pine Forest Range, which is home to mule deer, sage grouse and mountain lions and is a popular hunting ground.” [Environment And Energy Daily, 3/19/12]

**Heller And Congressman Joe Heck Introduced Good Samaritan Search And Recovery Act To Speed Up Access To Public Lands So Search Groups Could Look For Missing Persons.** “Congressman Joe Heck (NV-03) and Senator Dean Heller (NV) today introduced the Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act of 2015, legislation that speeds access to public lands so that accredited volunteer search groups can conduct searches for missing persons. Rep. Heck and Sen. Heller introduced identical legislation in 2013. The House version passed 394-0 but was not advanced in the Senate before the 113th Congress adjourned. […] ‘No family should have to wait on the federal government when it comes to searching for a missing loved one on public lands. Congressman Heck and I have worked diligently in order to ensure Good Samaritan search and rescue groups have the tools necessary to bypass the bureaucratic red tape often hindering their efforts. I look forward to working with my Senate colleagues in order to have the Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act signed into law,’ said Senator Dean Heller.” [Press release, Rep. Joe Heck’s office, [1/14/15](https://votesmart.org/public-statement/952573/rep-heck-sen-heller-introduce-good-samaritan-search-and-recovery-act#.WP-N5YjythE)]

* **2015: Heller Praised The Senate Passage Of The Good Samaritan Search And Recovery Act Of 2015.** “Today, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) and Congressman Joe Heck (NV-03) applauded Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources passage of the Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act of 2015 (H.R. 373). This legislation, which is the House companion to Senator Heller’s bill (S.160), expedites access to public lands so accredited volunteer search groups can conduct searches for missing persons.” [Press release, Senator Heller’s office, [11/19/15](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/espanol/pressreleases?ID=41caa33b-9a89-43e5-a5f2-431ad3a5ec6a)]

**2010: Heller Voted For Rob Bishop Public Land Amendment**. According to CQ, “Bishop, R-Utah, amendment that would retain the existing authorization level of $12 million per fiscal year for a federal land conservation program. It also would authorize the program for five years. Adopted by a vote of 227-180.” Heller voted in favor of the amendment. [CQ Floor Vote, House Roll Call 148, [3/20/10](http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll148.xml)]