

**Statement of  
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before the  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands  
H.R. 816, Orchard Detention Basin Flood Control Act  
October 23, 2007**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 816, the Orchard Detention Basin Flood Control Act. H.R. 816 would release approximately 65 acres of public land within the Sunrise Mountain Instant Study Area (ISA) [now referred to as a wilderness study area under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)]. The Sunrise Mountain ISA is located on the east side of the Las Vegas Valley and within proximity to Las Vegas. H.R. 816 would also legislate a right-of-way on the lands that are to be released for the construction of the Orchard Detention Basin Project. The BLM supports H.R. 816, but would like to work with the Committee on certain amendments to the bill.

The Orchard Basin Detention Project would provide much-needed flood control for the eastern portion of the Las Vegas Valley. The project is intended to protect the fast-growing Las Vegas area from flooding due in part to stormwater drainage. The BLM understands the needs of this growing area and supports efforts to protect both the expansion of the city and the natural surroundings of the Las Vegas area.

The Sunrise Mountain ISA includes 10,240 acres of BLM-managed land. The ISA lacks wilderness characteristics; it is in a clearly unnatural condition and does not offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. Sections of the ISA are affected by numerous off-highway-vehicle routes and illegal trash dumping, and there are remnants of a copper mining operation from the early 1900s. Furthermore, a portion of the ISA's western section is adjacent to expanding land development that increases the likelihood of further disturbances and unauthorized uses of the lands. Releasing this area from wilderness study status would provide the BLM with additional management tools for managing human activities, such as mechanically removing litter and fencing off areas to protect sensitive resource values.

The BLM recommends that H.R. 816 be amended to release the entire ISA from interim management of its wilderness values so that the lands can be managed for other multiple uses and under existing conservation agreements for the area. The BLM also recommends the deletion of section 2(d), which provides for a right-of-way within the area proposed for release. A right-of-way for the Orchard Detention Basin project can be administratively processed under the procedures set forth under FLPMA. This would allow for full public participation in the process. The BLM would be happy to work with Clark County in this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 816. We look forward to working with the sponsors and the Committee on this piece of legislation.