

**Statement of  
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Bureau of Land Management  
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests  
S. 2898, H.R. 816, Orchard Detention Basin Flood Control Act  
July 9, 2008**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 2898, the Orchard Detention Basin Flood Control Act. S. 2898, which is substantively the same as the House-passed bill, 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. The BLM supports S. 2898, but would like to work with the Committee on an amendment 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 the ISA 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. It would also allow the BLM to address other vital management issues associated with the long-standing human uses affecting this area. Among these issues is the need for an additional storm water detention basin that is an essential component of a remediation project for the Sunrise Landfill, a hazardous waste site on the ISA's southeastern boundary. The proposed detention basin would encroach several acres into the ISA.

The BLM recommends that S. 2898 be amended to release the entire ISA (10,240 acres) 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 2898. We look forward to working with the sponsors and the Committee on this piece of legislation.