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Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Chairman Assemblyman Tom Collins, and Vice-Chairman Jerry Claborn, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of AB287. A packet of my testimony and additional information relating to the testimony has been provided for all committee members.

My name is Terri Robertson. I am a fourth generation Nevadan, long active in the preservation and protection of historical, cultural, and natural sites in our state. I am here today representing the Tule Springs Preservation Committee as its President. This committee is an advisory group to Floyd R. Lamb State Park and the Tule Springs Dig Site. The first two information pieces (items 1 and 2) in your packet from the committee are flyers on the committee.

I will be speaking directly concerning two areas of land now owned by the State of Nevada. In the northwest area of the Las Vegas Valley sits approximately 981 acres that are registered on the National Register of Historical Places. This site is known as an "Early Man" site (items 3 & 4) and documents early human occupation of the Las Vegas Valley to about 13,000 years ago. The December 2000 issue of the National Geographic Extensive included a map showing all of the important routes and sites of the "Peopling of the Americas". Tule Springs appears on this map as one of the important "Early Man" sites in the world.

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ASSEMBLY NATURAL RES., AGRICULTURE & MINING
DATE: 3/26/03 ROOM: 3161 EXHIBIT H1-4
SUBMITTED BY: Terri Robertson

A copy of this map has been provided for Chairman Collins. Extensive late Pleistocene deposits at the site also revealed the bones of extinct

mammoth, camel, and horse. Of the 981 acres (item 5-map) the State of Nevada owns approximately 314 acres at the southwest corner of the site as it is registered.

Due to the tremendous urban growth of the Las Vegas Valley this site is being greatly impacted by development. The map provided also denotes the location of Shadow Ridge High School that will open in August of 2003. This school sits just across Decatur from the site.

As our committee developed recommendations for protecting and preserving this area we worked hard to educate our community to the importance of this site. In November of 2002 we put together a reunion (item-6) of the science team involved in the 1962 dig at the site. Twelve members of the original science team attended. These team members presented public workshops and lead a field trip to the site. Through the efforts of the Nevada State Museum a "Big Dig Exhibit" is now on display at the Nevada State Museum in Lorenzi Park.

While the site location being far removed from the city had long been a line of defense in its protection, it is now faced with fast paced urban development. As we would visit the site and see all the construction at the new high school we realized what a wonderful opportunity it would be to use the site as an educational tool.

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We have been able to bring together community partnerships (item-7 Grant National Science Foundation) that are well on the way to providing programs that will enrich the educational experience in our community and direct attention to the significance of the site. If all goes well this new high school will open with the Clark County School District's first earth science honors class utilizing the Tule Springs Dig Site as a curriculum base and authentic research laboratory. The University of Nevada Las Vegas has in their third round of long-range planning a satellite building at the site.

So, why are we talking about this particular piece of land? Several years ago an entity approached the State of Nevada to purchase the land to enable a golf course to be built. Entities and developers look at this undeveloped desert wash land as an opportunity to adjust development boundary lines. We need to ensure that this valuable and important site is protected, preserved, and utilized for the educational research opportunities existing there.

The second area that we are concerned with is Floyd R. Lamb State Park. This area also sits in the northwest area of the Las Vegas Valley. The park (item 8) is approximately 320 acres of which 60 acres are what could be called rural green space on which there are three ponds, rolling grass areas shaded by large trees, and historical buildings. Along with the state owned park land there is a BLM lease for park purposes of approximately 1200 acres.

Again, due to the tremendous urban growth this park already has housing development at its boundary lines. Entities and developers again see the undeveloped desert wash land here as an opportunity to adjust development boundary lines.

As our committee has dealt with issues regarding these two areas we were informed that there was a movement to have the state divest itself of them. We became concerned that if the state chose to divest itself of these sites and others statewide, some conditions on the transfers needed to be in place. These conditions need to guarantee the historical, and recreational value of the property to the people of the State of Nevada is not compromised. These conditions need to guarantee that the new owner could not sell or transfer the land to private ownership. These conditions need to guarantee public access and that park land, including leases must be maintained and operated in such a manner that the use and enjoyment of the park by the residents of this state is not diminished.

It is with that in mind that we support AB287 and hope that the legislature will find it appropriate to add this bill to the laws of the State of Nevada.

Sincerely,

Terri Robertson, President

Tule Springs Preservation Committee

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