

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 35—Senator Titus

FILE NUMBER.....

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION—Directing the Legislative Commission to conduct an interim study of measures needed to protect and maintain the natural treasures of Nevada.

WHEREAS, Nevada exists in a high desert region of the western United States displaying rugged snow-capped mountains, towering alpine forests, deep azure lakes, rocky cliffs, dramatic canyons, unexpected sand dunes and whitewater rivers and is one of the most biologically diverse states of our Nation; and

WHEREAS, In 1992, the Nevada Natural Heritage Program recognized over 100 locations in Nevada as areas with a multitude of rare species, known as biodiversity hot spots, with many of these species being endemic to a particular Nevada habitat; and

WHEREAS, The diverse landscape of northwest Nevada includes the expansive volcanic plateaus of Sheldon, the glaciated peaks and basins of Blue Lakes, the baked dry lake bed of the Black Rock Desert and the starkly beautiful and mysterious Pyramid Lake; and

WHEREAS, The northeast corner of Nevada is defined by its waters which carve canyons and create, in contrast to the arid deserts that cover a large portion of the State, a spectacularly lush oasis teeming with wildlife; and

WHEREAS, The mountainous terrain of eastern Nevada exhibits such wonders as Wheeler Peak, the second highest mountain in Nevada, which holds the only active glacier in the Great Basin, the Lehman Caves, a major cave system with a fascinating wonderland of limestone formations, Lexington Arch, a natural limestone arch more than six stories high, stands of bristlecone pines, which are among the world's oldest living organisms and can live for more than 4,000 years, Cathedral Gorge with its unique formations of circular shafts and steep spires carved by the erosion of soft bentonite clay, and the Ruby Mountains, sometimes referred to as the Nevada Alps, home to lush valleys, wildflower meadows, alpine lakes, waterfalls, glacially formed canyons, including the dramatic Lamoille Canyon and Chimney Rock; and

WHEREAS, With sections stretching from Lake Tahoe and Reno south to the Las Vegas area, the Toiyabe National Forest is the largest national forest outside Alaska and, with its wide range of elevations combined with variable climates and soils, holds a wide diversity of plant life, ranging from Joshua trees and creosote bushes to bristlecone pines, and animal life, including mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, wild burros and horses, and innumerable small mammals, reptiles and birds; and

WHEREAS, The area know as Mount Charleston is made up of the 316,000-acre Spring Mountains National Recreation Area and boasts the highest point in southern Nevada, Charleston Peak, which looms over the desert floor of the Las Vegas Valley at an elevation of 11,918 feet; and

WHEREAS, In the shadow of the Spring Mountain Range lie multicolored sandstone formations, known as Red Rock Canyon, replete with unique flora and a large number of animals including the desert bighorn sheep, the official state animal of Nevada; and

WHEREAS, One of the Silver State's most startlingly beautiful desert environments is the wind-sculpted sandstone of the Valley of Fire State Park which sports colors from a deep red to a golden orange that contrast with the sparkling white of the regal Silica Dome also contained in the park; and

WHEREAS, Walker Lake, part of the remains of a prehistoric lake which covered much of the western United States, contains various native fish species that are vital to thousands of birds that rely on the lake as a fueling and rest stop on their migratory routes, including spring and fall visits from 1,400 common loons, the largest known inland congregation west of the Mississippi, and is rumored to be the home of Cecil the sea serpent; and

WHEREAS, Other amazing treasures of Nevada include the fossilized remains of the prehistoric ichthyosaurs who ruled the warm, shallow seas that covered Nevada during the late Triassic Period, "singing" Sand Mountain which was created when sand from surrounding flats, once part of the bottom of ancient Lake Lahontan, was blown against nearby mountain walls to form a dune rising 600 feet high and stretching for 2 miles, and the abundance of geothermal resources that can be found throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, Nevada's vast and diverse landscape has always been part of the State's history, people and wealth, and has provided assets such as minerals, forage and fertile soil, as well as the invaluable resources of clean water and air, abundant wildlife and open space; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of different kinds of life call Nevada home and hundreds of these live nowhere else, and the health and economic well-being of our State depend directly upon wise stewardship of its land and all the life it supports; and

WHEREAS, The challenge to make decisions in the best interest of future generations of Nevadans increases as population and land-use pressures grow, but with early planning and responsible development, economic growth and our biological resources can successfully exist side by side; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE ASSEMBLY CONCURRING, That the Legislative Commission is hereby directed to conduct an interim study of any measures

necessary for the protection and maintenance of Mount Charleston and Walker Lake and any other area of the State the committee appointed to conduct the study deems appropriate; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Legislative Commission shall submit a report of the results of the study and any recommendations for legislation to the 74th Session of the Nevada Legislature.

