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LAND USE IN NEVADA: COUNTIES AND THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)

Environment Fact Sheet No. 3 | September 2020

Prepared by: Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio, Kelliann Beavers, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

This Fact Sheet compares land ownership in the State of Nevada, and its 17 counties. Drawn from an original report by Headwaters Economics¹, the figures and tables that follow provide each jurisdiction's total land acreage, 2019 population estimates, and a breakdown of land ownership categories, including: private lands, federal lands, state lands, tribal lands, and land owned by cities, counties, or other jurisdictions.²

ABOUT THE DATA:

Headwaters Economics maintains the Economic Profile System (EPS), a report builder tool that provides economic profiles by topic and jurisdictions (states and counties). Within the category of "Federal Lands," this fact sheet looks at the subcategory of federally owned lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Nevada contains more than 70.6 million acres, but the vast majority of Nevada land is owned by the federal government (59.6 million acres). The Silver State ranks first nationally, with the largest share of federally owned land: 84.4%. Utah has the second highest share in the country with 61.4%.³
2. In terms of land area, Nevada is the 7th largest state in the nation (70,664,589 acres); if you remove federal land (59,661,755 acres) from Nevada's land area, it would rank as the 41st largest state, larger than Maryland and smaller than West Virginia.⁴
3. Clark County is the most populous jurisdiction in Nevada, yet it is the sixth largest in terms of total acres. Most land in Clark County is federally owned (4.45 million acres out of 5.15 million acres), with the remaining property a mixture of land categorized as private, tribal, state, and other ownership.
4. The largest Nevada county in terms of spatial size is Nye County, at over 11.6 million acres, followed by Elko (11 million), Lincoln (6.8 million), Humboldt (6.18 million), and White Pine (5.69 million) counties, respectively.
5. Storey County has the smallest share of federally owned land (9%), compared to Lincoln County, which has the largest share (97.8%).
6. Nearly half (49.8%) of the state share of Nevada BLM land is in 4 counties: Elko County (14.6%), followed by Nye County (13.9%), Lincoln County (11.8%), and White Pine (9.54%)

¹ Headwater Economics is an "independent, nonprofit research group that works to improve community development and land management decisions" (2020)

² See Headwaters Economics, "Economic Profile System, Land Use," June 18, 2020 (<https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/economic-profile-system/#landuse-report-section>)

³ Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, Land Use, 2020.

⁴ Census Bureau, State Land Area Measurements 2010, <https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-files/2010/geo/state-area.html>, retrieved August 2020.

KEY TERMS:

Term	Definition
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	The BLM is a national agency within the U.S. Department of Interior tasked with “managing public lands for a variety of uses such as energy development, livestock grazing, recreation, and timber harvesting while ensuring natural, cultural, and historic resources are maintained for present and future use” (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management).
Federal Lands	Federally owned public lands are administered by a range of agencies including BLM, National Park Service (NPS), Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS) and others.
Jurisdiction	The limits or territory within which authority may be exercised ⁵ including (for this study): a state, county, or city.
Public Land	The portion of land held by central or local governments, including federal, state, county or city held land.
State Lands	State Trust Lands are often held in trust for designated beneficiaries, principally public schools and other state held land. ⁶

Table 1 offers a summary of land ownership within each county, ranked by population size and compared to the State of Nevada as a whole. It also provides data for the state capital, Carson City. The five categories of land ownership include: private, federal, state, tribal and city/county/other. The county with the highest acreage in each category is highlighted in blue. In addition, this table provides the total acres and 2019 population for each jurisdiction.

Table 1: Land Ownership in Nevada, by 2019 County Population

		2019 Population	Total Acres	Private Lands	Federal Lands	State Lands	Tribal Lands	City, County, Other
-	Nevada	3,080,156	70,664,589	9,576,613	59,661,755	166,321	1,243,958	15,909
1	Clark	2,266,715	5,158,982	582,648	4,445,770	48,269	79,143	3,126
2	Washoe	471,519	4,187,015	683,420	3,006,844	20,586	463,891	12,274
3	Lyon	57,510	1,295,518	376,696	839,067	28,846	50,911	0
4	Carson City*	55,916	100,635	38,310	51,246	4,062	3,918	3,101
5	Elko	52,778	11,009,486	2,844,111	7,982,731	22,413	160,231	0
6	Douglas	48,905	472,092	142,009	244,960	1,496	83,627	0
7	Nye	46,523	11,647,102	305,785	11,322,575	10,263	8,479	0
8	Churchill	24,909	3,215,467	791,160	2,364,081	7,823	52,401	0
9	Humboldt	16,831	6,181,029	1,096,813	5,054,762	0	29,453	0
10	White Pine	9,580	5,693,255	245,145	5,369,792	7,831	70,488	0
11	Pershing	6,725	3,883,169	946,467	2,923,252	7,431	6,018	0
12	Lander	5,532	3,532,482	537,034	2,991,340	3,476	630	0
13	Lincoln	5,183	6,807,789	142,447	6,658,164	6,669	0	509
14	Mineral	4,505	2,440,305	99,825	2,101,815	298	238,366	0
15	Storey	4,123	168,732	153,180	15,146	85	320	0
16	Eureka	2,029	2,675,173	565,004	2,110,168	0	0	0
17	Esmeralda	873	2,296,993	64,869	2,231,288	835	0	0

Source: Adapted using data provided by Headwaters Economics’ Economic Profile Systems (EPS), 2020

⁵ Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Jurisdiction. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved August 8, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jurisdiction>

⁶ Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, Land Use. 2020.

Table 2 lists the five categories of land ownership as percentages of land area for the state of Nevada, for the state capital, Carson City, and for each county in Nevada. In each land ownership category, the county with the largest share is highlighted in blue.

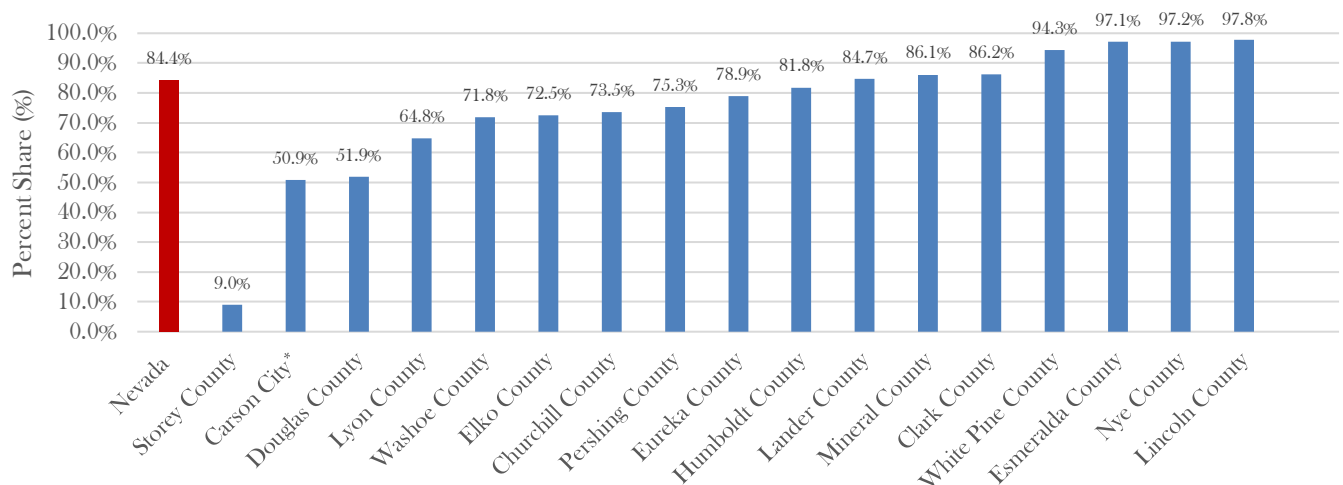
Table 2: Land Ownership, Percent of Land Area, by 2019 County Population

		2019 Population	Private Lands	Federal Lands	State Lands	Tribal Lands	City, County, Other
-	Nevada County	3,080,156	13.6%	84.4%	0.2%	1.8%	0.0%
1	Clark	2,266,715	11.3%	86.2%	0.9%	1.5%	0.1%
2	Washoe	471,519	16.3%	71.8%	0.5%	11.1%	0.3%
3	Lyon	57,510	29.1%	64.8%	2.2%	3.9%	0.0%
4	Carson City*	55,916	38.1%	50.9%	4.0%	3.9%	3.1%
5	Elko	52,778	25.8%	72.5%	0.2%	1.5%	0.0%
6	Douglas	48,905	30.1%	51.9%	0.3%	17.7%	0.0%
7	Nye	46,523	2.6%	97.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
8	Churchill	24,909	24.6%	73.5%	0.2%	1.6%	0.0%
9	Humboldt	16,831	17.9%	81.8%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%
10	White Pine	9,580	4.3%	94.3%	0.1%	1.2%	0.0%
11	Pershing	6,725	24.4%	75.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
12	Lander	5,532	15.2%	84.7%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
13	Lincoln	5,183	2.1%	97.8%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
14	Mineral	4,505	4.1%	86.1%	0.0%	9.8%	0.0%
15	Storey	4,123	90.8%	9.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%
16	Eureka	2,029	21.1%	78.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
17	Esmeralda	873	2.8%	97.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Adapted using data provided by Headwaters Economics’ Economic Profile Systems (EPS), 2020

Figure 1 indicates how much of each jurisdiction’s total area is occupied by Federal Lands. This figure includes the State of Nevada as well as each county and the state capital, Carson City. In Lincoln County, the federal government owns 97.8% of the land, while only 9% of the land in Storey County is government-owned.

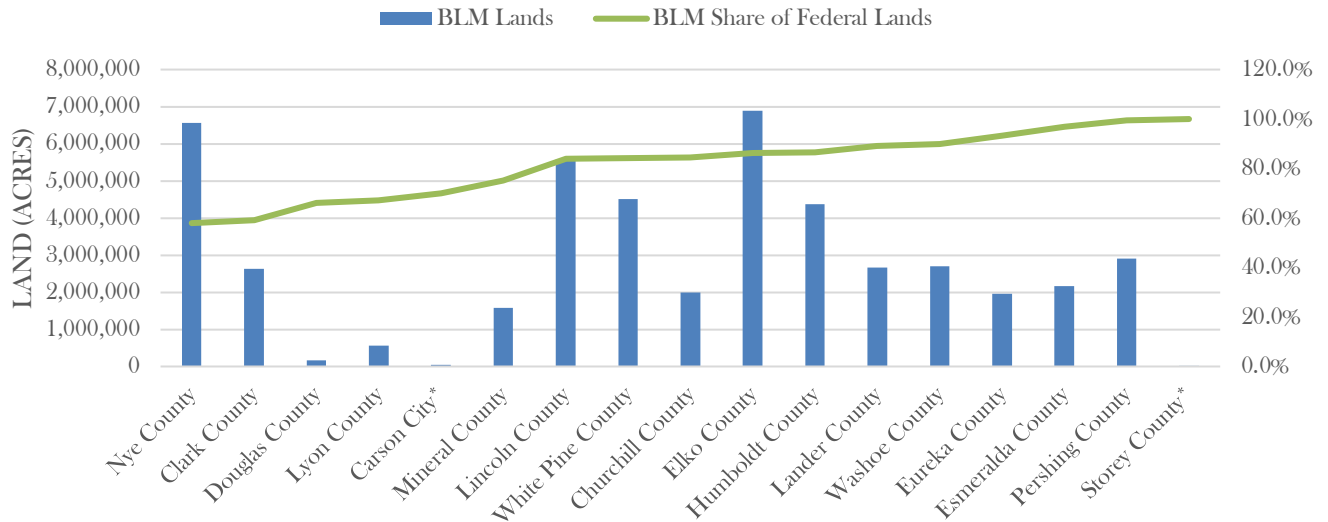
Figure 1: Share of Land – Federal Jurisdiction, by County



Source: Authors’ analysis of data provided by Headwaters Economics’ Economic Profile Systems (EPS), 2020

Figure 2 shows the total acreage of land in each jurisdiction that is federally owned and managed by the BLM, as well as the proportion of federal land that is BLM land within each jurisdiction (shown in green).

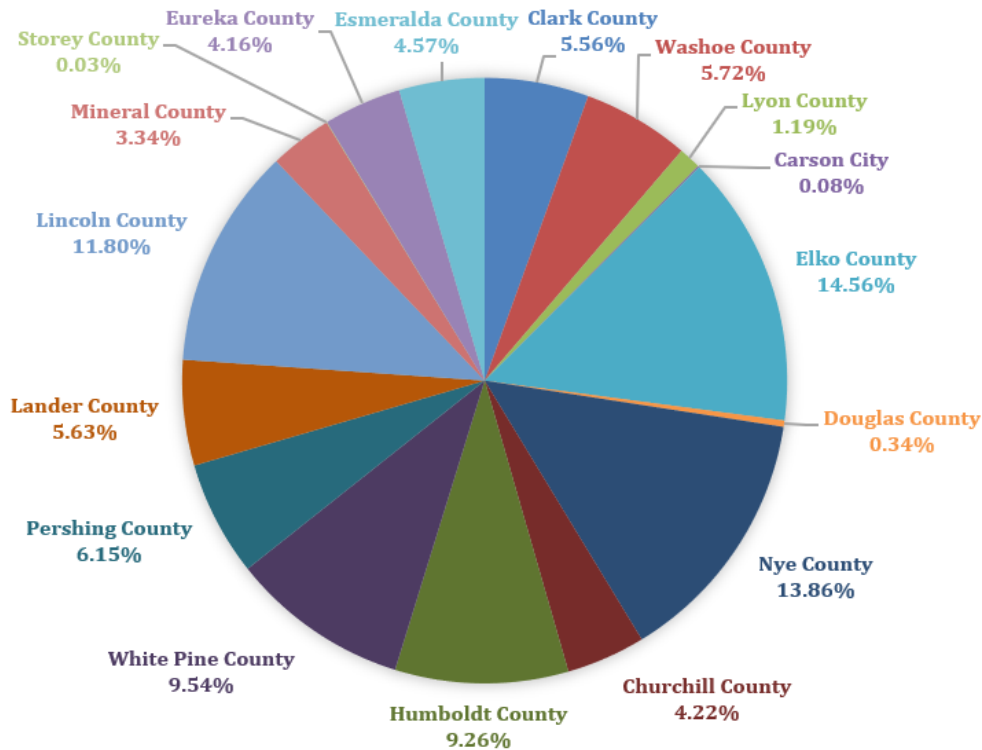
Figure 2: Share of Land, for the Bureau of Land Management, by County (2020)



Source: Adapted using data provided by Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile Systems (EPS), 2020
 *Carson City and Storey County had a negligible number of federally owned land acres

Figure 3 shows the state share of Nevada's total BLM land, by county. Elko County contains 14.56% of all the BLM land in Nevada, which is the largest share, followed by Nye County, Lincoln County, and White Pine County.

Figure 3: Bureau of Land Management Land in Nevada, by State Share (2020)



Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile Systems (EPS), 2020