

Trump Administration to Auction Off 900,000 Acres for Fracking in Nevada

Massive Lease Sale Includes Public Land Near National Park, Wildlife Refuge

By [Center For Biological Diversity](#)

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The Trump administration plans to auction more than 900,000 acres for oil and gas extraction on the doorstep of Nevada's only national park and other protected public lands. It would be the largest single lease sale of public lands in the lower 48 states in at least a decade.

"The Trump administration is doubling down on its reckless 'drill-anywhere' strategy," said Patrick Donnelly, Nevada state director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Nevadans cherish our national park and wildlife refuges. It's disgusting that Trump officials are willing to permanently defile these spectacular places to appease the oil industry."

The Bureau of Land Management lease sale, scheduled for March 12, 2019, will auction off public land next to Great Basin National Park and Ruby Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, an internationally known migratory waterfowl stopover cherished by birders and hunters.

One parcel comes within a half-mile of South Ruby Lake, where a spill of fracking fluids or a well failure could contaminate one of the Great Basin's most vibrant aquatic ecosystems.

Great Basin National Park has been designated an International Dark Sky Park in recognition of its remoteness. The area surrounding the park is undisturbed except for a few multigenerational ranches.

The plan threatens imperiled wildlife, including greater sage grouse, since the massive lease sale includes hundreds of thousands of acres of important grouse habitat. The sale also covers tens of thousands of acres of designated critical habitat for the federally protected desert tortoise and parcels adjacent to springs harboring rare native fish, including the threatened Railroad Valley springfish.

"Every time the BLM invites the oil and gas industry to drill and frack sage-grouse habitat, the grouse moves closer to extinction," said Kelly Fuller, energy and mining campaign director for Western Watersheds Project. "The BLM needs to stop leasing sage-grouse habitat, period."

The BLM deferred roughly 400,000 acres of sage-grouse habitat from an October auction to

the March sale in response to a federal court order, stemming from a [lawsuit](#) filed by the Center, Western Watersheds and Advocates for the West.

“The BLM is doing the absolute minimum to claim it’s complying with the court order,” Donnelly said. “Meanwhile the agency is rushing ahead with the illegal action that prompted the lawsuit in the first place, offering massive swaths of critical sage-grouse habitat in violation of its own plans to protect the bird.”

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