

July 17, 2024

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning  
Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street, NW, Room 5643  
Washington DC, 20240

Dear Director Stone-Manning:

I am glad the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has utilized the recently-updated “Nevada Guidance” to facilitate the proposed Cactus Trails Affordable Housing Project in Southern Nevada. I urge BLM to expeditiously approve this needed project following the completion of the public comment period on August 30.

I am also writing to request an update on BLM’s implementation of the “Nevada Guidance” (Guidance), as issued on August, 3, 2023. Under this new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the BLM and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agreed to facilitate the review and approval of federal land sales for affordable housing projects stemming from authorities provided by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) (P.L. 105-263). Accordingly, I kindly request further information pertaining to the following:

- How is this new Guidance is being implemented?
- What are the obstacles in implementing the Guidance?
- What are the number and status of pending affordable housing applications being reviewed under the Guidance? Please provide details of what land parcels are being requested and over what time frame.
- Who has submitted applications? Is it clear how an entity can submit applications?
- Which staff have been charged with implementing the Guidance?
- What other efforts are BLM undertaking to address ongoing affordable housing needs in Nevada?

As you know, SNPLMA directs BLM and Clark County, Nevada to jointly select certain federal lands for disposal in the Las Vegas Valley. SNPLMA’s Section 7(b) is specifically designed to address state-wide affordable housing needs allowing the sale of federally-owned land to local government and public housing authorities across the state for below market value. Between 2003 and 2006, BLM worked with state and local governments, as well as the HUD, to create guidance that would help in the implementation of this affordable housing provision. However, just five projects amounting to 847 units have been constructed thus far. Unfortunately, the number of units created under SNPLMA’s Section 7(b) affordable housing guidance are completely inadequate and have not moved the needle on our need for more affordable homes.

Despite the availability of the affordable housing authority provided under SNPLMA, the Las Vegas Valley, in particular, continues to face a shortfall of affordable housing units. According to a report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there are a total of only 14 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 extremely low-income renters in Nevada.<sup>1</sup> The Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority estimates that more than 90,000 affordable housing units need to be built in Southern Nevada in order to meet the needs of the growing population.<sup>2</sup> Land availability is a critical factor in helping to build these much-needed homes

In order to make sure SNPLMA's affordable housing authority can be more optimally utilized, I previously urged BLM and HUD to revise the existing Guidance. While I am pleased that BLM and HUD affirmatively responded to my request and is processing the aforementioned Cactus Trails project, I remain concerned about the speed and efficiency in how the new Guidance can be deployed as Nevada's affordable housing crisis continues to grow.

I reintroduced the Southern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act on July 12, 2024 in part to further address our affordable housing needs, and to also address other land management needs in Southern Nevada. Notably, this bill further amends SNPLMA's Section 7(b) to prioritize affordable housing applications over other pending land disposal applications and requiring reviews for such applications be completed within six months.

I appreciate that you joined me for an April 2023 event at a senior-living affordable housing project made possible through SNPLMA where we discussed the urgent need for more affordable housing units with HUD and Clark County. I further understand and appreciate your dedication to this pressing issue. As such, I urge BLM to prioritize all tools available to help meet our affordable housing needs.

Thank you for your attention on this effort. I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine Cortez Masto". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

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<sup>1</sup> "Nevada." National Low Income Housing Coalition. <https://nlihc.org/gap/state/nv>.

<sup>2</sup> Mills, Heather. "We need more housing": Southern Nevada residents continue to struggle amid affordable housing shortage." KLAS. Last modified May 15, 2024. <https://www.8newsnow.com/news/local-news/we-need-more-housing-southern-nevada-residents-continue-to-struggle-amid-affordable-housing-shortage/>.