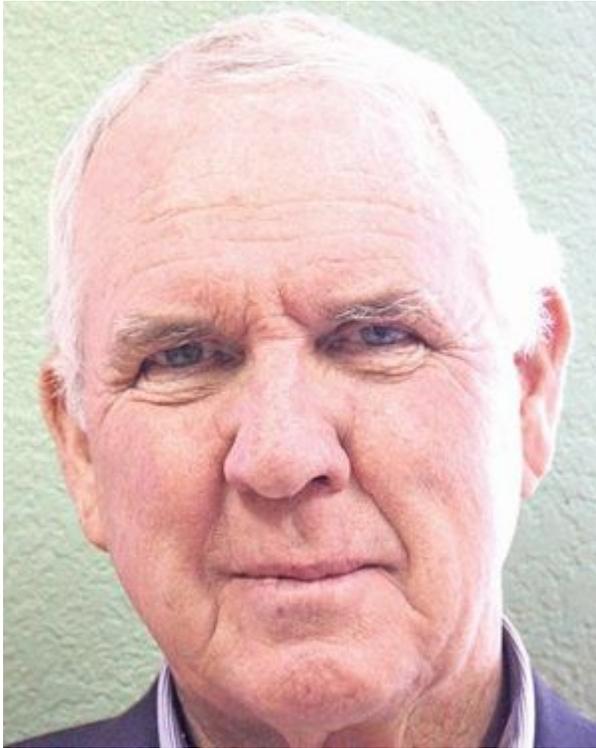




## County wants Sandoval to do more on sage grouse



4 HOURS AGO

ELKO – The County sent a letter to Gov. Brian Sandoval thanking him for his negotiations with Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, but also said he wasn't doing enough.

Commissioner Demar Dahl wrote in the letter that Sandoval's negotiations did not "solve critical harms that the (sage-grouse Land Use Plan Amendment) has created in Elko County and in other rural counties."

Dahl said the county is "Ground Zero for the harms associated with the LUPA in Nevada."

His main complaint was that the maps will be landscape scale and won't show "critically important on-the-ground information about actual habitat conditions."

The County stated Sagebrush Focal Areas threaten the future to two "promising" mineral projects – Western Exploration's Gravel Creek Project and Quantum Mineral's Jarbidge Project. Both projects are possible gold deposits.

"Your letter to Secretary Jewell does not appear to make any effort to save these important projects by eliminating active mining claims or to reduce the size of the SFA," Dahl stated.

The County stated the Secretary's commitment that existing projects with approved plans of operation will be unaffected is "a hollow gesture that ignores the root of the problem, which is the proposed withdrawal of the SFA from mineral entry."

The U.S. Forest Service – not the Bureau of Land Management – has jurisdiction over the management of the surface of these lands, according to the County.

"A promise from the Secretary of the Interior may not be binding upon the Secretary of Agriculture who does have jurisdiction over these lands," Dahl wrote. "Secondly, both the Gravel Creek and Quantum projects are exploration projects that need to continue to expand their exploration activities, which they will not be able to do under the segregation when the time comes to modify their plans of operation."

The County stated it wished the governor had focused on solving “the most serious threat” to sage grouse habitat: wildfire.

The County stated the agencies ignored “credible scientific data that managed grazing is the most cost effective way to reduce wildfire risks.”

At the Nov. 17 federal court hearing, Forest Supervisor Bill Dunkleberger said the LUPA will reduce grazing, while the County said experts testified that grazing can reduce fuels and the threat of wildfire.

The County will continue to pursue fighting the LUPA in court.

“Elko County believes that negotiations you are pursuing with Secretary Jewell will not provide any meaningful relief to Elko County or the rest of Nevada from the onerous LUPA land use restrictions and prohibition and will do nothing to reduce the wildfire risks throughout northern Nevada,” Dahl wrote.