

Posted May 2, 2013 - 9:40am

# Rural officials in Nevada would rather kill coyotes than study them

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ELKO — County commissioners in rural northeast Nevada say they'd rather kill coyotes than study them.

Predator-control advocate Mike Laughlin, of Elko, is among those upset about a state Department of Wildlife proposal to use a \$3 fee on hunting tags to help fund a \$100,000 study on coyotes as part of efforts to try to keep the sage grouse off the federal list of endangered species in Nevada, Utah and much of the West.

"We got way off from where this money was originally intended for," Laughlin told the Elko County Commission on Wednesday.

"We are doing administrative payment out of it, we're doing coyote studies, we're doing habitat (rehabilitation). We're doing everything in the world but what the money was designed for. That was killing something to protect, primarily, mule deer," he said, the Elko Daily Free Press reported.

Commissioner Charlie Myers said the county is doing its share by agreeing to spend \$25,000 on predator control for local ranchers.

"I think we've studied the coyote to death," Myers said. "I, as a hunter, think that my \$3 is going toward predation. That's where I'm told it's going to go. And I don't personally want to see Southern Nevada make a change for all the hunters to take that money and use it for however they want to use it."

The commission voted to send a letter to the Department of Wildlife and state lawmakers expressing their opposition to spending hunting tag money on non-traditional purposes.

Last month, the panel approved a pilot project aimed at protecting sage grouse, primarily by killing ravens with poisoned eggs and by reducing wildfire threats through livestock grazing.

Commissioners said the 15,000-acre program at Devils Gate Ranch about 80 miles east of the Utah line is the first private-local government agreement to try to stave off a listing they fear will result in federal restrictions on grazing, mining and other activities on public land.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced in 2010 that sage grouse across the West deserved protection under the Endangered Species Act. The agency pledged to make a final listing decision by late 2015.