

Romney doesn't get the point about public lands

Written by Wild Nevada
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Mitt Romney spent a little bit of time in Nevada this week drumming up support for his presidential bid. He didn't sing an off-key version of "America The Beautiful" but he did prove himself to be tone deaf on the matter of public lands.



When asked during [an interview](#) with some editors at the Reno Gazette-Journal whether he would sell or otherwise give federal land in Nevada back to the state, Romney admitted he hadn't really studied the matter.

"I don't know the reason that the federal government owns such a large share (80 percent) of Nevada," he said.

"And when I was in Utah at the Olympics there I heard a similar refrain there. What they were concerned about was that the government would step in and say, 'We're taking this' — which by the way has extraordinary coal reserves — 'and we're not going to let you develop these coal reserves.' I mean, it drove the people nuts. Unless there's a valid, and legitimate, and compelling governmental purpose, I don't know why the government owns so much of this land.

"So I haven't studied it, what the purpose is of the land, so I don't want to say, 'Oh, I'm about to hand it over.' But where government ownership of land is designed to satisfy, let's say, the most extreme environmentalists, from keeping a population from developing their coal, their gold, their other resources for the benefit of the state, I would find that to be unacceptable."

We're hoping Mr. Romney *does* study the issue, because if he does, he'll learn that federally managed [public lands in Nevada provided over \\$1 billion in economic impacts](#) and supported 13,311 jobs in 2010. And that doesn't even include the economic impacts of Forest Service lands which in the Sierra are often leased out to ski resorts for even more jobs and revenue to local and state economies.

Luckily, Mitt has a tendency to [change his mind](#) on important issues, so we're hoping he's not locking himself into a position here.

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If he decides to study the issue, he'll learn that protecting special landscapes and having tracts of land in the hands of federal land managers is not just for "extreme environmentalists."

He'll find out mining companies in Nevada are getting access to plenty of gold, and that some are actually working with sportsmen on setting aside special landscapes like [Pine Forest](#) .

He'll find out that federal land in Nevada is becoming home to renewable energy projects and that federal land managers are working with those developers to save money and find the best locations that don't compromise wilderness lands or wildlife.

He'll find out that the threatened sage-grouse populations in Nevada and elsewhere are being taken seriously by federal land managers, who are working with groups like the Nevada Wilderness Project to preclude the bird from being put on the Endangered Species List, which shut down all that gold mining and coal mining he is so fond of. We guess he'll find out that the best way to help the economy is to have all that public land managed by people who know what they are doing.