

STATEMENT OF ARLAN MELENDEZ
CHAIRMAN, RENO SPARKS INDIAN COLONY, NEVADA
SUBMITTED BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES – SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND
ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS
REGARDING H. R. 2455, NEVADA NATIVE NATIONS LANDS ACT

Tuesday, July 23, 2013, 2:00 PM

1334 Longworth House Office Building

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Hanabusa and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs,

Thank you for accepting this testimony of the Reno Sparks Indian Colony (RSIC) for the hearing record on HR 2455 and for considering our views. In my oral testimony I will be speaking not just on behalf of the RSIC but on behalf of all the tribes in this important bill. I am honored to be speaking on behalf of the Nevada Native Nations Lands Act Tribal coalition, consisting of the following tribes:

- The Elko and South Fork Band Councils of Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians
- Reno-Sparks Indian Colony
- Shoshone Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley
- Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
- Summit Lake Paiute
- Ft. McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe

In this written statement for the record my remarks are mostly specific to the Reno Sparks Indian Colony's land expansion needs. The other tribes in this bill may be submitting their own written statements for the record, and their statements should be relied upon for specific claims pertinent to their land transfer requests. However, there is a common theme among all our tribes which I would like to share.

Common Themes Amongst Nevada Native Nations Lands Act (HR 2455) Tribes

Our tribes' membership numbers are growing and the carrying capacity of our current lands is very limited. It is only by being able to expand and consolidate our lands for housing, development, and preservation that our tribes and cultural practices can continue to thrive. Each tribe in HR 2455 has specific reasons for seeking to expand the lands of our reservations and we are united in our need for better management and more effective use of these lands. We are fully capable of assuming these responsibilities. With the exception of a small parcel owned by the Forest Service, the lands in question are presently owned by BLM so transferring title to a different Interior agency (BIA) is not going to, for instance, affect the tax base. In many instances Indian tribes have been able to undertake economic activities that have generated jobs and benefited both reservation and off-reservation economies and helped create jobs.

We would also ask that you examine almost any map of Indian reservations in this country and you will see that through historic quirks of fate, the majority of land bases of the tribes in Nevada, particularly when compared to the land bases of many other tribes, are so small as to border on being non-workable. There are numerous million plus acre reservations in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona and New Mexico and many more reservations that are hundreds of thousands of acres in size yet the majority of

Paiute and Shoshone tribes of the Great Basin ended up with almost nothing. In many instances our existing homelands are so small they don't even show up on many state maps. For instance the Reno Sparks Indian Colony in Reno is 27 acres (in addition to the 1900 acres we have in Hungry Valley) and the Elko Band Council has 193 acres. These are not viable land bases of Indian tribes. We cannot house our people, we cannot attract business or engage in economically viable agriculture. HR 2455 would put to effective use by tribes BLM lands that are underutilized and not being adequately managed.

Background on Reno Sparks Indian Colony

In the 1880's, an urban Indian settlement made up of landless Indians from the regional Washoe, Shoshone and Paiute tribes started along the Truckee River next to the City of Reno. A land base of 20 acres was purchased in 1917 by the Federal government to provide a permanent home for this urban settlement. The Colony population grew along with the City of Reno. In 1934, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony (the RSIC) was established as a federally recognized Tribal government under the Indian Reorganization Act. By the mid-1980's, the City of Reno had grown and eventually engulfed the undersized lands of the RSIC. The land base of the Reno Colony, near downtown Reno, is now just 27 acres of densely packed homes in the residential area as well as additional commercial property. Less than 3% of the land base is designated as park and open space. The residential area is totally built out and could not accommodate another home.

In 1986, pursuant to a bill introduced by former Nevada Representative Barbara Vucanovich, Congress transferred three sections of land north of Reno from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to the RSIC to address the need for additional community housing. Currently, this area, known as the Hungry Valley community, houses approximately half the

RSIC's population. The Hungry Valley community is seven miles west of the Spanish Springs community and 10 miles north of the City of Reno. The RSIC has spent millions of dollars in public improvements and community development, for example building homes; water and sewer system; community buildings and construction of Eagle Canyon Road from Pyramid Lake Highway to the Hungry Valley community. We also created a tribal utility district to supply water and sanitary sewer service to residents. The water system includes production wells, water tanks and a water treatment facility. The community sewer system provides for the treatment of all wastewater. The Hungry Valley Community Center we built is the primary public facility serving residents, with a volunteer fire department, offices for Housing Department, Utility District, Head Start Program, a gym, and meeting rooms. When Congresswoman Vucanovich got the bill passed establishing the Hungry Valley Reservation she told us that if at some point in the future we needed to supplement the Hungry Valley land, that we should make such a request of the Congress. We are now doing exactly that. Some have suggested that we wait until there is a Washoe County lands bills and that we should attach our request to it. We have delayed this request for years waiting on such a bill and in our recent meetings with Washoe County Commissioners we were told unequivocally that no such bill is forthcoming. To suggest that we wait any longer is unfair and is not viable.

The Need to Supplement the Land Base of the Hungry Valley Residential Community

The Hungry Valley community is surrounded by BLM public lands to the west, north, and east. Directly to the south and southeast is an active open aggregate mining pit which conducts blasting on a regular basis. Many adverse activities are routinely occurring (in some cases permitted by the BLM, in other cases in violation of BLM regulations) on the lands adjacent to our residents' homes in Hungry Valley including:

- o Unlimited off highway vehicle (OHV) recreation area.
- o Loud and disruptive motorcycle events.
- o Gun Shooting events & recreational shooting – with assault weapons – near residential areas.
- o Illegal dumping.
- o Unauthorized creation of motorcycle race tracks.
- o Military practice operation with simulated explosive devices. (Hopefully an activity that won't be repeated.)

Initial target shooting involved rifles. More recently it has escalated to assault weapons including apparent efforts at cutting trees down by shooting streams of bullets via such high powered guns. These are not activities anyone would want to see in proximity to a residential area.

Proposed Land Transfer from BLM to BIA

As shown on the attached maps, the RSIC is proposing to acquire through a Congressional transfer approximately 11,180 acres from the BLM to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in trust for the RSIC in order to expand and consolidate our land base at the Hungry Valley residential community. Both BLM and BIA are agencies of the Department of the Interior. These 11,180 acres represent a minute fraction of the 43 million acres of BLM lands in Nevada, lands that were once the exclusive domain of Paiute, Washoe and Shoshone tribes of Nevada.

The local BLM staff are overwhelmed and readily admit they cannot enforce their own regulations and ordinances in Hungry Valley. We believe that transferring this land to the BIA's jurisdiction to be held in trust for the RSIC is important for the citizens of our Tribe and for the

surrounding communities. The current situation is untenable. Our residents should not have to live in fear from stray gunshots from automatic weapons used recreationally, nor should they have to deal with unregulated off-road race tracks carved out near their homes. We have met with a majority of the Washoe County Commissioners, including all those who represent the immediately surrounding communities and they are either supportive of, or at the least not opposed to, our efforts at consolidating a land base in the Hungry Valley for our people.

In addition to public safety concerns, there are important cultural reasons why Hungry Valley is of great significance to us. We seek to manage this land so as to ensure for future generations that the open natural landscape that provides essential spiritual and traditional cultural support for our people will continue to be accessible and be properly managed. It is the intention of the Tribe to preserve and manage these scenic, cultural and natural resources. In the past, the Hungry Valley region was a traditional link between Pyramid Lake and the Truckee Meadows. Many camps and cultural resources have been identified by past archaeological studies. Many elders and residents continue to use Hungry Valley for spiritual and traditional ways. Several prominent landscape features in the Hungry Valley area are used for traditional religious practices and are a source of medicinal plants.

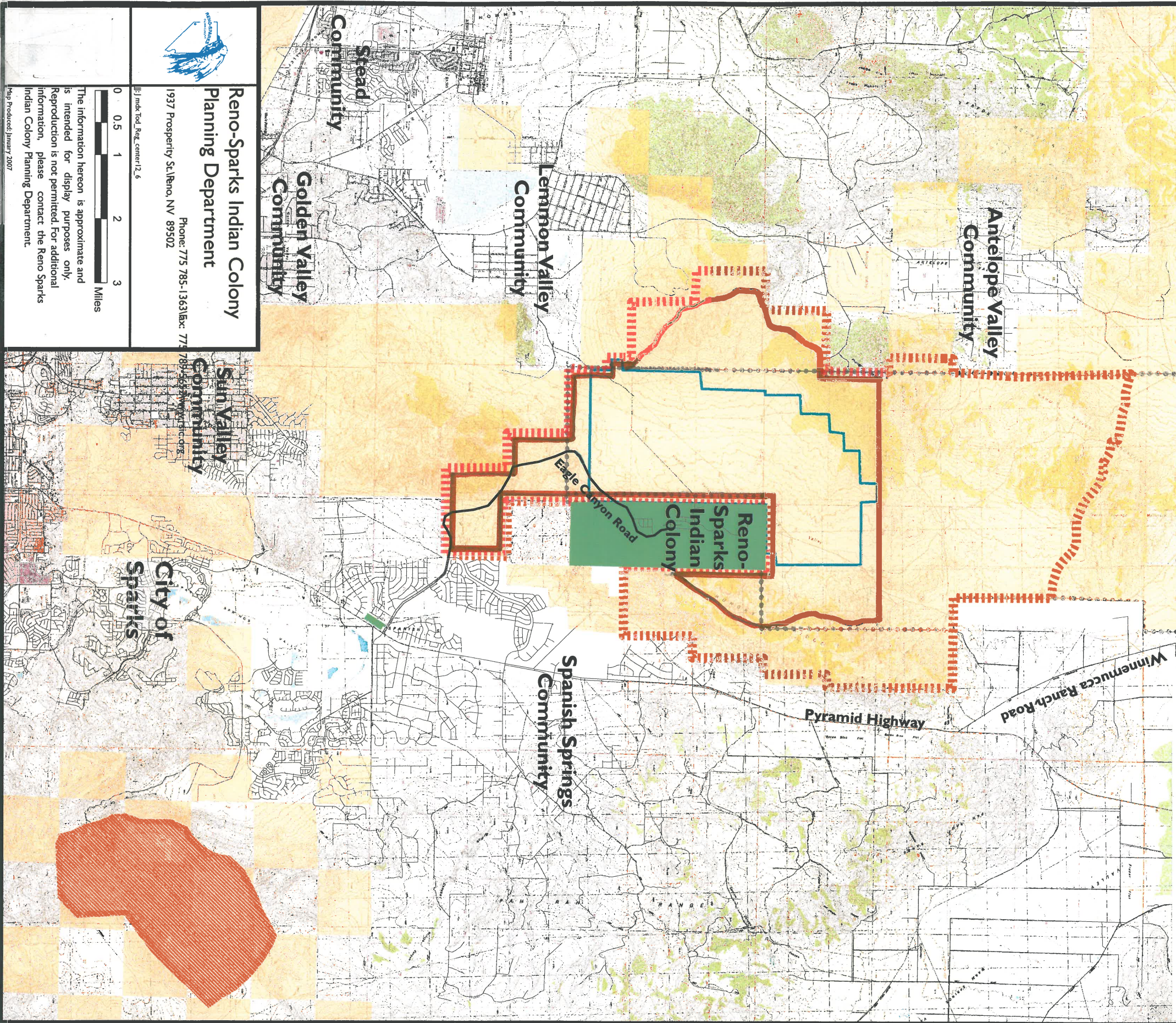
We are very proud of the many cooperative efforts we have entered into with the State of Nevada and with the governments that surround our downtown reservation as well our existing Hungry Valley lands. We assure the Congress that this spirit of good will and cooperation will continue and that all parties in the surrounding areas will benefit by this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. I am pleased to answer any questions you might have.

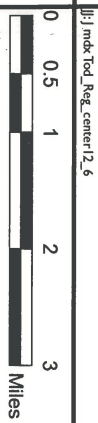
Hungry Valley Cultural And Natural Resource Management Area

- Original Request (approx. 23,320 Acres)
- RSIC Mineral Rights (6,000 Acres)
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (Designated by BLM)
- Federal Lands (BLM 2005 Surface Management Status Map)
- Existing Reno-Sparks Indian Colony (1950 Acres)
- Designated OHV Use (Urban Interface Plan - January 2001)

Amodei Public Lands Legislative Request (approx. 11,180 acres)



**Reno-Sparks Indian Colony
Planning Department**
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 Phone: 775 785-1363 fax: 775 789-5623
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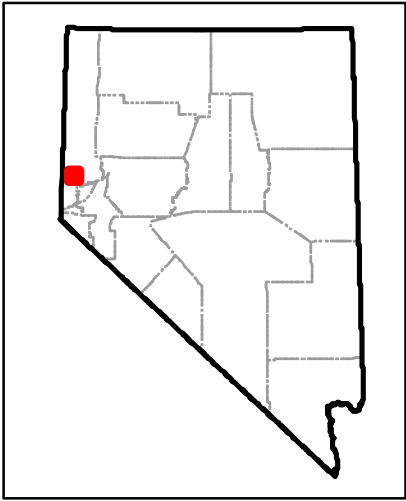
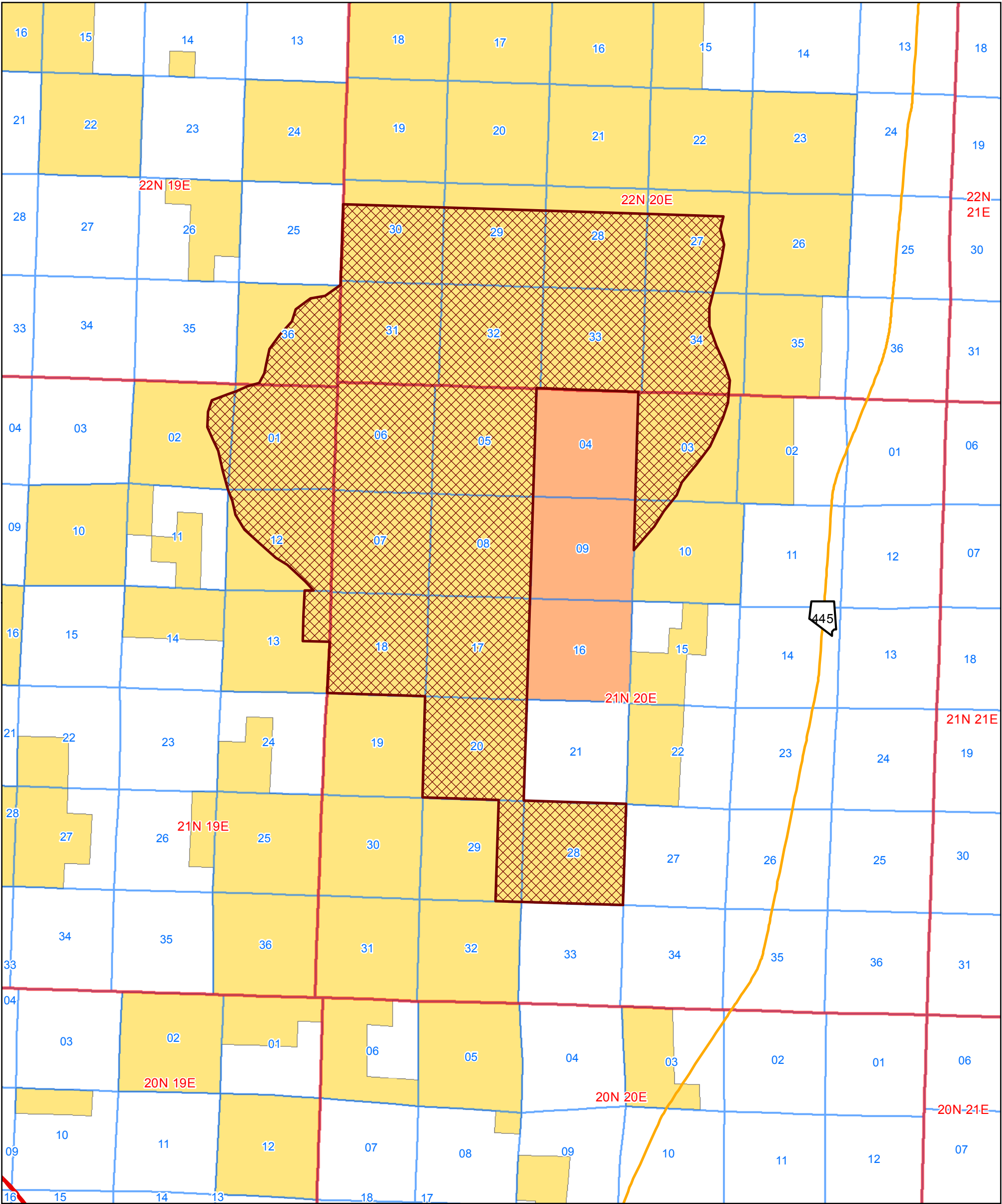
The information hereon is approximate and is intended for display purposes only. Reproduction is not permitted. For additional information, please contact the Reno Sparks Indian Colony Planning Department.

Map Produced January 2007

Updated 4-05-2013

Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Expansion

This map prepared at the request of Representative Mark Amodei
May 28, 2013



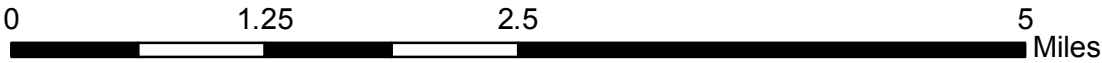
- Colony Expansion Lands (Approx 11,180 Acres)
- Township
- Section

Major Highways

- US Highway
- State Route

Land Status

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Private



1:60,000



N



No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.