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\$47.2 million for natural resources sought on ballot

RENO (AP) — Voters will be asked Nov. 6 to approve \$47.2 million in general obligation bonds for state park improvements and wildlife preservation.

Funds raised from the bond sale, put on the ballot by the 1989 Legislature, would be used to buy land and water rights "to protect and preserve the natural resources of the state."

"I think the feeling is that Question 5 is a quality-of-life issue," said David Livermore, director of the Great Basin Field Office of the Nature Conservancy.

State Wildlife Director Willie Molini is optimistic Nevadans will favor the measure.

"We believe the public in general is supportive of a healthy environment and is willing to pay for a healthy environment," Molini said.

If a statewide property tax is used to repay the bonds, an owner of a \$100,000 home would see a tax bill increase of no more than \$7.70 a year, a figure that would drop as total state assessed values increase.

Of the total bond package, \$34.2 million would be allocated to the state Parks Division.

Of that, \$7 million would be earmarked for property acquisition, \$8.6 million for state park facilities and \$300,000 for feasibility studies.

The Parks Division money also includes \$13.3 million to develop a desert wetlands park at the Las Vegas Wash. That plan includes erosion control, improvements to existing wetlands and construction of recreational and parking facilities.

Wildlife officials say the wash, a natural drainage for the Las Vegas Valley, is home to 65 percent of the bird species found in Nevada as well as the endangered Golden Bear poppy.

Washoe County would get \$5 million of the Parks Division money for regional park development.

The balance of the bond revenues,

\$13 million, would go to the Department of Wildlife. The agency would use \$5 million of its share to buy or lease water rights and pump new life into Nevada's dwindling wetlands.

"Nevada has been ranked sixth in the nation in terms of the diversity of plant and animal life," Livermore said. "Much of the state's significance in terms of wildlife is connected to its wetlands."

The driest state in the nation, Nevada has lost more than 80 percent of its wetlands during this century, Livermore said.

The Lahontan Valley wetlands, including the Stillwater Wildlife Refuge, has been plagued by drought and a continuing struggle that pits man's water needs against nature's.

The wetlands have shrunk from 30,000 acres to less than 3,000 acres in recent years, Livermore said.

Biologists say protection of the northern Nevada wetlands, a life-sustaining oasis on the Pacific Flyway, is crucial to the existence of mi-

grating birds and waterfowl.

Question 5 also would boost the state's chances of getting additional federal funding for wetland preservation, Molini said.

A clause in the Department of Interior's budget would authorize the interior secretary to purchase water rights and make other expenditures necessary to maintain the wetlands at 25,000 acres.

Although the appropriation doesn't contain a specific monetary amount, Molini said future federal allocations are contingent upon the state putting up \$9 million.

The pending bond issue would help satisfy that requirement, he said.

A separate appropriation in the federal budget would set aside another \$2 million for Stillwater.

"Question 5 is key for a bigger federal authorization," Molini said. He added it will take in excess of \$30 million to maintain the wetlands at the targeted 25,000 acres.

Senate approves \$47.2 million program for parks, wildlife

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — More than \$47 million in park and wildlife projects will be funded statewide if voters approve the program in an historical bill that has received final legislative approval.

SB185, called the most comprehensive parks and wildlife protection bill proposed in decades in Nevada, was unanimously approved Thursday by the Senate and by the Assembly on the same day as the record-long session winds down.

The only negative comment about SB185 came from Assembly Natural Resources Committee Chairman Ernie Adler, D-Carson City, who said he didn't think it was fair that the lower house didn't get a chance to hold hearings on the issue.

But Assemblyman Bob Kerns, R-Reno, pushed for immediate passage, saying "Anything that's for ducks, I'm for it."

The measure was sent to Gov. Bob Miller for his signature into law. And, if approved, the parks and wildlife bond issue will go to the 1990 general election ballot for approval.

"We're very excited about this issue," Dave Livermore, Great Basin field office director for the Nature Conservancy, said. "We feel it's the

more comprehensive parks and wildlife preservation program introduced in Nevada in two decades or more."

Livermore said his group would run a strong publicity campaign to urge voters to approve the proposed \$47.2 million in bonds which would be paid off through a statewide property tax rate of about 2 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation.

"I think the people of Nevada really want this, according to the polls we've seen," Livermore said. "There's a real strong move in this state to protect the state's wildlife and build more parks."

A poll of 450 Nevadans by Pulse Unlimited this spring showed that eight out of 10 residents said the state needs more laws to protect the environment. And 72 percent said the Legislature should do more to improve the park system.

Sen. Virgil Getto, R-Fallon, sponsored the bill which was changed several times as many of the state's 63 lawmakers proposed special projects for their area of the state.

"I think it has something for everybody now," Getto said, adding that \$5 million in the bill to purchase water rights for the Stillwater Wildlife Refuge could help save the wildlife

habitat that has dried up to nearly nothing in the past couple of years.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Raggio, R-Reno, said SB185 contains money for regional parks in both the northern and southern parts of the state, and the measure will serve future Nevadans well.

"I think we're doing something here that will not only serve the moment, but will also serve our heritage," Raggio said.

Under SB185, \$15.6 million will be set aside for the development of parks statewide. Another \$300,000 will go towards planning state parks. And \$13 million will go to the Department of Wildlife for animal and plant protection programs, including the money for Stillwater.

Another \$13.3 million will go to Clark County for its Las Vegas Wash wetland project.

And Washoe County will get \$5 million to help develop two regional parks — one in the Bartley-Anderson area in south Reno and another in the north valley region.

US foreign debt burden tool big jump last year

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States, already the world's largest debtor nation, strengthened its hold on that dubious title in 1988 as its foreign debt surged 41 percent to \$532.5 billion, the government said Thursday.

The Commerce Department, releasing its annual balance sheet on America's global economic standing, said the U.S. debt burden had risen

cans own abroad. The report was certain to fuel the already heated debate over whether the United States is losing control of its economic destiny to foreigners.

Last year, the government said that foreign holdings in the United States increased 15.4 percent, to \$1.786 trillion. American investments abroad rose a smaller 7.2 percent, to \$1.253 trillion.

investment holdings, up 28 percent from 1987. Japan moved into second place with \$53.3 billion in direct holdings, up a sharp 52 percent from 1987.

Some economists predict that the debt total could surpass the \$1 trillion mark early in the next decade.

They warn that the burden of servicing that debt will put a severe strain on domestic resources, lower