



STATE OF NEVADA  
**STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
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**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING**

USDA Service Center  
Video/Teleconference Meeting  
3275 Fountain Way, Winnemucca, Nevada 89445  
**January 31, 2023 at 11:00 AM**

- **List of Acronyms attached as last page.**

**Board Members Present:**

Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise-Sonoma Conservation District (CD);  
Vice Chairman Commissioner Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD;  
Commissioner Meghan Brown, Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA);  
Commissioner Mark Damron, CD of Southern Nevada;  
Commissioner Dr. Paul Meiman, University of Nevada, Reno College of Agriculture,  
Biotechnology & Natural Resources and Cooperative Extension (CABNR/UNCE), Elko;  
Commissioner Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD, member at large;  
Commissioner Doug Martin, Nevada Tahoe CD;  
Commissioner Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD;  
Commissioner Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD.

**Board Members Absent:**

None.

**Others Present:**

James A. Settelmeyer, Director Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR);  
Dominique Etchegoyhen, Deputy Director NDCNR;  
Melany Aten, Nevada Conservation Districts Program (NCDP) Manager;  
Jennifer Zampanti, State Conservation Commission Recorder, NDCNR;  
Boyd Hatch, District Ranger, United State Forest Service, USFS  
Robert Adams, Nye County CD;  
Amber Pike, district manager Lincoln County CD;  
Cheryl Mandich U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program;  
Marlies Wandler, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS);  
Lauren Williams, NCDP Ely Conservation Staff Specialist;  
Richard Wilkinson, NRCS;  
Rob Holley, Dayton Valley CD;  
Meshanna Merrow, Tonopah CD;  
John Pawlak, Southern Nye County CD  
Holly Gatzke, University of Nevada, Reno Extension  
Rick Orr  
Chuck Schembre, NDEP-Water Quality Planning  
Ryan Shane, Nevada Division of Forestry

**1. Call to order, Determination of Quorum (For Possible Action)**

- A. Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 11:09 AM.
- B. A quorum was confirmed. **NO ACTION TAKEN**

**2. Public Comments. There were no public comments.**

**3. Review and consideration of approval of minutes (For Possible Action)**

- A. Commissioner Meiman requested edits of minutes in sections 4B and 5D. He asked that 4B be clarified whether the applicants did not request enough funding to cover the work they proposed or that some were not funded or partially funded. 5D does not specify who was speaking. Melany will make the edits.
- B. Commissioner Meiman moved to accept May 4, 2022 minutes after edits. Commissioner Orr seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN**

Commissioner Martin asked to defer Agenda #4 and 5 until Commissioner Tibbitts can join the meeting. Chairman Sicking agreed and invited DCNR Director Settlemeyer to speak. The Director gave his history, including previously appointment on the SCC. He discussed funding through the Legislature for CD's.

Commissioner Martin discussed the NvACD hosting a legislative day on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, having a partnership with DCNR and sharing legislative information. Commissioner Martin intends to register as a volunteer lobbyist. He asked about a tracking system for legislation. Director Settlemeyer answered that Cathy Erskine with the Director's office tracks the legislative bills, including a few current water bills in session. Information on the bills is not released until drafting of the bills is complete. Commissioner Martin would like to continue access to bill tracking, notably the one on soil health advisory and the creation of a advisory demo. Director Settlemeyer commented that Ms. Erskine is reaching out to legislature about getting them the information they need for their goals and that legislative bill information can be shared with the SCC. The Director suggested that everyone get a free bill tracking software through the legislature to save time. Mr. Etchegoyhen commented that in the past, information was shared through Tim Rubald, but contact was lost with him. Chairman Sicking confirmed with Commissioner Martin that they can lobby as a conservation district, but not as commissioners. Chairman Sicking shared his opinion that the soil bill is redundant, due to the work within NRCS. Director Settlemeyer suggested reaching out to the Senator who has the bill to share information.

Commissioner Brown commented that she looks forward to working with DCNR and the districts on noxious weed programs. Director Settlemeyer looks forward to the shared stewardship program.

Chairman Sicking agreed to continue with Partner Updates (See #8).

**4. Review and Discussion of Conservation Districts Reports (For Discussion Only)  
Meeting materials provided.**

- A. Ms. Aten stated that she received the late submission from CD of Southern Nevada. It included their current bank account information and reviewed all their expenses and income. There was a full board, not full capacity, but all seats were at the meeting.
- B. Ms. Aten also stated that CD of Southern Nye submitted their information late, but their submission looked good.
- C. Ms. Aten continued that Duck Valley CD is still in touch with the Secretary of State's office and trying to open a Nevada bank account. They do not have financials to submit because

they have not been able to receive or spend money. Supervisors have been using out of pocket money to get CD work done. They will be reimbursed once they can cash checks, but it will be in a different fiscal year.

Commissioner Damron thanked Ms. Aten for her help.

Commissioner Tibbitts questioned the financial abilities of Duck Valley. Ms. Aten clarified that they have no fiscal report for 2022, they did not receive or spending money. Commissioner Tibbitts asked if there is another Elko district that could take on Duck Valley's financials for the time being, as allowed by NRS 548.400. Ms. Aten will work with Gerry Miller to discuss this option.

D. Commissioner Tibbitts noted that a few districts are asking for stuff from us, as noted on the Ms. Aten's form on the reports for districts. One item referenced getting a conference line. Commissioner Tibbitts brought up the availability of NvACD's Zoom line, with Connie Lee as a contact for that.

E. Commissioner Tibbitts also mentioned that Elko districts don't list a County Supervisor. Ms. Aten confirmed that there is no county engagement. Commissioner Tibbitts stated that the Commission should formally notify the county that they are required to appoint someone as Supervisor, for voting. Commissioner Martin mentioned knowing a statute allowing the Commission to appoint a representative as supervisor. Commissioner Tibbitts confirms that a statute states that governing bodies of cities or counties shall appoint a representative to represent as a supervisor on the governing board of the district. If one can't be agreed upon, the Commission shall appoint one, along with a designated alternative. This issue is not on the agenda. Commissioner Smith reminded the Commission that there are 8 CDs in Elko County. He questioned whether one supervisor would suffice for all of the districts. Commissioner Tibbitts stated that every district shall have an appointed supervisor. He questioned Duck Valley having a full board. Ms. Aten answered that they now have a full board, Lamoille also. Commissioner Tibbitts questioned whether or not districts that lack financial management experience would be able to report revenue and expenditures correctly. Ms. Aten responded that they have talked about grants and how to report them. There was discussion on how to correctly report grants and financials. Commissioner Tibbitts stated that the districts should be preparing their own reports. It's not the Conservation Staff Specialist's job to prepare the reports for them. Ms. Aten stated that "our" job is to assist the CD's in any capacity, even when it's basic business. Commissioner Tibbitts stated that Legislative funding for the staff was granted for doing projects, not basic business. Chairman Sicking asked for a motion to send Elko a letter regarding the statues. Ms. Aten stated that she can put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

**5. Determination of Districts "In Good Standing" for FY23, and List of Districts to receive FY23 Funding (For Possible Action) Meeting materials provided.**

A. List of those Districts that meet the criteria of "Good Standing" based on submissions. NAC 548.110. Commissioner Martin asked Ms. Aten to review which districts did not meet the deadline for submitting their reports, specifically Southern Nye, Clark County, and Duck Valley. Commissioner Tibbitts requested to see more information on the CD tracking sheet, instead of just the fiscal information. He stated this meeting is for finding CD's in good standing or not. The CD's can file for appeal and attend a future meeting for the Commission to decide their standing. Commissioner Martin asked Chairman Sicking whether the Commission can hear the appeals now. Commissioner Tibbitts stated the NAC says the Commission can request revised statements of accounts within 60 days. Ms. Aten explained that a certified letter must be sent to the CD's. After that notification, they can submit an appeal and the Commission must meet again for discussion. Chairman Sicking asked for a motion to find all CD's in good standing, with the exception of CD of Southern Nevada,

Southern Nye and Duck Valley. Commissioner Orr made the motion and asked that the Commission send the three CD's not in good standing the information to appeal and resubmit. Commissioner Tibbitts seconded the motion.

Commissioner Brown asked for a discussion on having a phone call to help get CD's in good standing. Commissioner Tibbitts confirmed that upon receiving notice of not being in good standing, the district may respond in writing within 60 days or attend the determination meeting. Ms. Aten stated that the Commission would still need to have the determination on their agenda. Southern Nye and Southern Nevada have their submittals in, but Duck Valley has a 30 day waiting period for their bank account to be established. Commissioner Tibbitts stated that the funds needed to be spent by June 30. Ms. Aten stated that Duck Valley has receipts showing they paid for projects and will be paid back in 2023. She does not want to divide the money amongst other districts until this is settled. Amount of funds can't be determined until they're split.

Mr. Pawlak questioned Nye County meeting it's requirements. Ms. Aten said they did meet, but their submission to the program was late. She advised she would assist with the determination meeting and that everything is in order to be found in good standing at that time. She explained the procedure of notification, appeal, and presentation of their report.

Only CD Southern Nevada did not hold the required three meetings and didn't spend their allocations. The Commission can make the distribution of funding contingent of Duck Valley and Southern nye being found in good standing, CDSN's allocation will need to be discussed since they did not spend the \$2,850.90 from last year, which was already a deduction in allocations from their previous year.

Commissioner Damron asked how CDSN could have enough meetings with not enough members for a quorum. Ms. Aten answered that the CD was told a couple of times that the CD can move forward with business and to conduct meetings without a quorum. Vacancies on the board don't count against the CD in the quorum. Commissioner Damron stated that it was misunderstood about the meetings and that they did have one or two informational meetings and will look for documentation for that to submit. Ms. Aten answered that the information was researched at the meeting the other day and not found. If those could be found, they can be submitted at the determination meeting.

Motion passed.

B. List of Districts the Commission authorizes the release of funding from the State based on "good standing" requirements and eligibility in NAC 548.115. Commissioner Martin asked whether to move forward with releasing the funding. Chairman Sicking responded that the Commission should release the funding to the districts, with the exceptions. Ms. Aten stated that they will not be writing the checks yet. Dollar amounts were discussed between Commissioner Tibbitts, Commissioner Martin, and Ms. Aten. Commissioner Martin moved to release the funds to districts in good standing. Commissioner Meiman seconded. Motion passed.

Ms. Aten will send the letters to the districts not in good standing.

There was discussion of the new format for the forms and reporting amounts of the districts.

Mr. Etchegoyhen stated that there have been questions from Legislature when considering requests for more funding. The Legislature needs better information about the impacts of funding that is allocated to the districts before they approve more funding. **ACTION TAKEN**

Commented [PM1]: Trying to clarify; Hope I didn't change the intent/message.

## **6. Discussion and Approval to Release the 2023 SCC Sage Grouse Request for Proposal forms. (For Possible Action) Meeting materials provided.**

A. Review of updated SCC Sage Grouse RFP document. Ms. Aten spoke about making edits to the Request for Proposal (RFP) from last year. Dates of submission and review were

changed. Commissioner Meiman previously provided edits to Ms. Aten, to correct typos and points adjustments.

B. Select release and submission dates. As shown on materials provided.

Ms. Aten stated that the time period and any other edits are the only items to be agreed on before a motion.

Commissioner Tibbitts had a question on the volunteer rate. He looked it up and it's \$26.18, and requested that correction. Commissioner Meiman asked about "significant equipment" under "Budget Detail-Supplies". Clarification of the NAC was requested as an addition.

Commissioner Tibbitts asked that questions in the "Decision Points" section be separated for readability. He also asked that #3 on the application be highlighted, since it was missed by some applicants last year.

Commissioner Martin moves to approve the RFP. Commissioner Orr seconded the motion. Motion passed to accept changes. **ACTION TAKEN** On to #7.

**7. Discussion and Approval of the 2023 SCC Sage Grouse Grant Grading Form, and Selection of Grading Committee. (For Possible Action) Meeting materials provided.**

A. Review and approve grading form. Ms. Aten explained her role with her CD team to write grants for the program. Her position has always been in charge of grading the applications for the grants and presenting them to the Commission. Ms. Aten proposed a committee be developed to review and grade the applications and present them to the Commission, so that she is not grading them and writing the grants as well.

B. Nominate partner names for grading committee. We attempt to get partners in all areas of conservation to review the SCC applications in place of a CD Program manager review. All CD Program staff have been involved in assisting CDs in writing submissions and therefore request a grading committee outside of our CD program staff be selected for the grading and review process prior to SCC review. A proposed list of positions for the nominees was given, with suggestions from the Commission of specific names requested. Nominations for the committee can be emailed at a later time. Commissioner Orr moved for the list to be approved and completed at Ms. Aten's discretion. Commissioner Meiman seconded the motion. Motion passed. **ACTION TAKEN** On to #4.

**8. Updates from Agencies and Partners (For Discussion Only)**

A. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program: Ms. Mandich, updated SCC about BIL funding, focusing on protecting sagebrush habitat against the spread of invasive grasses and wildfire, and combating the effects of drought. Ms. Aten commented that Vya CD was one of the successful applicants for the last round of partners funding and they have been working with Ms. Mandich, to do projects in their CD's area. Ms. Mandich, stated that the Joint Chief's funding is coming from America the Beautiful grant. Ms. Aten stated that the Joint Chief's project in Paradise Region working with Forest Service is executing weed management, green strips, and proper functioning condition on streamways. The NCDP, partnered with the partners program, Forest Service, two local conservation districts, National Riparian Service Team of BLM, and local BLM to execute that agreement. Commissioner Meiman commented the Partners Program has been a great partner in our virtual fence project. Commissioner Martin asked about the virtual fence project that Commissioner Meiman is working on. Commissioner Meiman commented that there have been mixed results including collars staying on with the system they've been using. Large range scale work was done at the Cottonwood Ranch and a more controlled study in Lamoille. Mr. Etchegoyhen asked what the investment cost is for the software needed. Commissioner Meiman answered that the bulk of the cost is in the towers that allow communication between the collars and the tower or other equipment and those are \$13,000 each. The number of towers needed depends on the size and topography of the place where it's being used. The collars are \$40 per head per year as a service fee. Mr. Hatch

commented that there are good programs within NRCS with innovation grants to help offset costs. Commissioner Brown stated BLM and Kathryn Dyer with her Washington office through their target and prescribed grazing also has funding potential. Mr. Hatch was interested in that. Commissioner Meiman stated BLM contributed to the project and has for the last three years. Commissioner Smith stated that the tech part of the project is really effective, but it's discouraging that the collars won't stay on.

B. Nevada Department of Agriculture: Commissioner Brown spoke of the annual native seed forum on April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in Elko. There will be a hybrid meeting and a fire restoration tour. In the next week or so, Agriculture will have the second round of foundation seed program applications available. Through federal funding, the department received some money to create a foundation seed program as part of the Nevada Native Seed Partnership. The applications are for growers that are interested in that sort of commercial production. The seed is given to producers for free and a portion of the seed will go back into the foundation seed program. The first round was last Fall, this round is for Spring, with another round of funding for Fall planting. Stephen came to the association meeting last Fall and is coming to a couple of growers meetings. He's willing to come to any conservation meetings to give presentations. Jake Dick with the noxious weed program is hosting the annual regional meeting for Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) program and participating in standing CWMA. Agriculture is also continuing work to find opportunities for infrastructure and bill funding for noxious weed treatment. Commissioner Brown continued, talking about SB13 in relation to section 555 of the NRS regarding environmental pest control. Chairman Sicking asked about the new Agriculture Director. Commissioner Brown confirmed that Director Goicoechea has started his position and will fill vacant positions in his office. Commissioner Meiman asked whether Agriculture has considered new listings in each region. Commissioner Brown answered that there is a list of EDR species and they are all class B plus Medusa head. The state plan has a list that has been broken down into three sections of individual areas. Individual areas can prioritize species and add to the list.

Mr. Hatch of USFS stated that he reached out to Elko and they're interested in working with CD's and the project areas. Chairman Sicking introduced Mr. Hatch as the new ranger in Winnemucca. Commissioner Orr asked Mr. Hatch if funding is only going to areas that have Forest service. Mr. Hatch answered that Commissioner Orr may be referring to Joint Chiefs funding and that if Commissioner Orr's CD is in that county, they can apply for funding. The County must agree to want the funding. Funding that isn't used is divided between other counties. Commissioner Orr clarified that the Forestry funding needs to benefit the forest. Mr. Hatch advised that Lincoln County write a proposal and apply for funding. Ms. Aten stated that the other funding is Joint Chiefs that Lincoln County would be eligible for that. There can be more than one CD working on an area with Joint Chiefs funding.

C. Nevada Association of Conservation Districts (NvACD): Commissioner Martin commented on coordinating Legislative Day and using posters to represent everyone's successes. DCNR and Agriculture are invited to participate. Coming in August is the pacific southwest region meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts at Lake Tahoe. Talks will be about the impacts of fires and megafires and how they impact all our communities. Another focus will be the El Dorado County Resource CD. Also focus on the new sawmill in the region and the new biomass facility being built in Northstar, which is using a sustainable fuels reduction program. Participating in the meeting will be CD's from the southwest and the pacific, NRCS, and the Forest Service, and hopefully Department of Interior and BLM with the local CD's and the State. The meeting will be August 22-24 at the Lake Tahoe Resort.

D. DCNR: Commissioner Brown asked about the mapping project. Mr. Etchegoyhen spoke about the mapping project, creating maps to be shared with the local communities, which

should be matched with what land owners and CD's are seeing on the ground. Commissioner Brown explained the Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program hosted some meetings that prioritize conservation efforts within the sagebrush habitats of Nevada. NDOW should have had an executive order that directed them to do some habitat conservation. The Sagebrush Ecosystem Program has an adaptive management policy and plan that they're working on updating. Mark from NDOW and Kelly from Sagebrush are contacts for these joint talks. Info on this was from "Save the Date" from Kelly McGowan. It will be added into the minutes, per Ms. Aten. Ms. Aten mentioned there was limited notice of the NDOW/Sagebrush meetings. Mr. Etchegoyhen offered to ask for a presentation at a future Commission meeting if there is interest. Commissioner Brown thought it would be beneficial.

Chairman Sicking asked to move on to Discussion Approval (#6)

#### **9. Commissioner Items: (For Discussion Only)**

A. Commissioner Orr commented on a conversation between NDF and State Parks about a prescribed burn that didn't happen at Spring Valley State Park. Materials provided. She also stated that a project happened in Lincoln County where a private landowner hired Nevada Division of Forestry crews to implement an NRSC planned burn. She clarified for Commissioner Martin how NDF wrote the burn plan conducted on private property. The landowner paid the conservation camp crews and NRCS paid part that. Mr. Etchegoyhen offered to ask NDF to make a presentation to the Commission about the services they have available for hire. Commissioner Orr suggested that the Commission help NDF with their employment challenges and also support seeking ways to overcome challenges with smaller projects like one acre burns with BLM and partners. Commissioner Martin stated that all partners should be talking together to get things done. Mr. Etchegoyhen commented on using the Shared Stewardship program for large landscape scale opportunities. Bringing together Federal entities and State agencies prompts discussions. The Good Neighbor Authority Agreement is another resource. Commissioner Orr suggested using joint NDF and BLM burns as necessary training. Commissioner Brown commented on Shared Stewardship, and suggested that NRCS sign the agreement also to break down some of the barriers that make them so hard to work with. Mr. Etchegoyhen commented that NRCS was brought into the Shared Stewardship Agreement after the fact, not as a signatory, but to show that interest under the new Governor. There will be a re-signing, including NRCS.

#### **10. Next Commission Meeting: (For Possible Action)**

A. Future Agenda items for consideration:

- Review and Award SCC SG grants.
- Review new format for CD Annual Work Plans.
- NDF prescribed burn discussion.

Ms. Aten stated the only other item to add will be the determination for the CD's found to be not in good standing.

Commissioner Tibbitts asked that the Legislative session be added to the agenda, including pertinent bills like the Soil Health bill.

B. Date, time, and location of next meeting.

- Suggestion for early March for Sage Grouse grant submission review.

Week of March 20<sup>th</sup> was suggested, to give time for reviewing Sage Grouse submissions. The 23<sup>rd</sup> was decided upon.

Ms. Aten will also add discussion of an executive order requiring all Boards and Commissions to provide public meeting hearings for input on suggested changes to regulations. There is an April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline to hold the meeting. Mr. Etchegoyhen stated that the Commission needs a report that DCNR will provide to the Governor of changes to

regulations. He suggested examples of possible changes that will simplify and streamline the regulations. Ms. Aten suggested a template for submissions. Commissioner Tibbitts stated that the entities under Commission regulations are the CD's, not the private sector. The districts should know about this opportunity for them to bring forward their ideas to streamline the process. Ms. Aten offered to give notification through Listserv and/or on the next agenda. **ACTION TAKEN**

**11. Public comments-None**

Public comment may be made on any issue, provided such comment is limited to areas relevant to and within the authority of the State Conservation Commission. Public comment is limited to 3 minutes per person. No action will be taken on any item raised during public comment that is not already on the agenda. At the discretion of the Chair, public comment may be received prior to action on individual agenda items.

Commissioner Tibbitts commented that the soil health bill BDR 49-0571 was pre-filed and is available for viewing. A six-member advisory board will be appointed by the Commission and the SCC is named in the bill to manage the competitive funding.

Mr. Adams commented on the funding restoration projects of the Off Highway Vehicles (OHV).

**12. Adjournment (For Possible Action)**

A. **Motion to adjourn:** Meeting adjourned 1:20 PM. **ACTION TAKEN**