



STATE OF NEVADA
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES

STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Nevada State Conservation Commission
Richard H. Bryan Building, Tahoe Hearing Room 2nd Floor
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV
Friday, March 9, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise-Sonoma CD; Leland Wallace, Esmeralda County CD (by teleconference); Kevin Roukey, Washoe-Storey CD; Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD; Vice Chairman Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD; Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD and Meghan Brown, NV Dept. of Agriculture.

Board Members Absent: Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD and Dr. Sherm Swanson, UNCE/CABNR.

Others Present: Bettina Scherer, Conservation Districts Program Manager; Sandy Quilici, DCNR Director's Office; Nancy Sicking; Tim Rubald, past Conservation Districts Program Manager; Connie Lee, NV Department of Wildlife (by teleconference); Kelly McGowan, Sagebrush Ecosystem Team, Program Manager; Samantha Thompson, DCNR Public Information Officer; Lori Story, Deputy Attorney General; Bobby Jones, NDOW/NRCS Shared Habitat Biologist (by teleconference); Connie Lee, NDOW (by teleconference) and Gary Roeder, NRCS, Acting State Conservationist (by teleconference).

I. CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

- A. Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.
A quorum was confirmed and there were introductions.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

III. REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF MINUTES - * FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

- A. Commissioner Tibbitts had sent comments to amend the minutes. Commissioner Rieman made a motion to approve the November 6, 2017, meeting minutes with the amendments, Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

IV. BRIEF UPDATE ON CONSERVATION DISTRICTS PROGRAM - *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

- A. Bettina Scherer said we have an additional Public Information Officer who is attending today, her name is Samantha Thompson. Samantha wants to know about the Conservation Districts Program and she is here to learn. She would be interested in photos of projects, videos, and news of what the Districts are doing.

There was a NCCN (Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network) Workshop on March 6th and March 7th. The meeting was facilitated by Laura Van Riper and Mike Lunn. Further clarity and NCCN vision, scope, and purpose were key points. The objective of this meeting was to achieve a clear purpose and focus for 2018 and beyond.

There will be a two day NCCN Workshop on May 8th and 9th in Elko at the Elko Convention Center. This will include local working groups and focus on the benefits of collaboration and community based conservation. I have provided a "Save the Date" flyer. This will be limited to a count of 40 so please be sure to RSVP by April 6th.

Commissioner Orr welcomed Samantha Thompson and said that she (Commissioner Orr) is also the president of the State Conservation Districts Association. Commissioner Orr would be interested in any photos also, and she would share hers with Samantha.

V. REVIEW, RANKING AND DETERMINATION OF FUNDING OF APPLICATIONS FROM CONSERVATION DISTRICTS FOR THE SAGE-GROUSE COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM - * FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Chairman Sicking said we have more funds available than applications this year. He thanked SET Program Manager Kelly McGowan for his comments. We could resubmit and ask for more applications or we could divide the funds among the four applications.

Kelly McGowan said there are four projects; one is the medusahead project in Smith Valley. This would be a multi-year effort and would need to include reseeding.

The Cave Valley Ranch project has also applied for RCCP funding from NRCS. We would want to make sure this is not a conflict.

The Cottonwood Ranch project is for meadow habitat to help with sage-grouse brood stock. The edges of the meadows are critical to baby brooders for cover and forbs. The sagebrush habitat near the edges is important as well. He would encourage the focus on these projects as they arise. We want to maximize our limited funds on these ecological projects. Commissioner Orr said that in our drier area (Lincoln CD) we need extra guidance and consideration.

The Pasco Canyon project would be a long term project. We would advise caution on rabbitbrush removal and not advise extensive removal at one time. The birds need the cover near the meadow habitat where the sagebrush ends and the rabbitbrush begins. We would advise not to mow it down, but to remove it in phases. We recommend all PJ (Pinyon/Juniper) be removed within 440 meters of the site.

Commissioner Brown said she would want to make sure there is a revegetation component in all the projects.

Chairman Sicking asked for a motion to accept the applications as is; Commissioner Roukey made a motion to accept, Commissioner Orr seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

ACTION TAKEN

Commissioner Brown asked should they have a match. Ms. Scherer said a match was not required for this. Bobby Jones with NDOW said they could ask for a match from NDOW.

Chairman Sicking said we need to rescind the first motion and revote because two of the Commissioners are on CDs that have an application. Commissioner Roukey made a motion to rescind the first motion, Commissioner Brown seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

Chairman Sicking said we will vote on each individually. The Lincoln and White Pine application – Commissioner Rieman made a motion to approve the application, Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed with one abstention (Commissioner Orr). ***ACTION TAKEN***

Commissioner Roukey made a motion to approve the Northeast Elko application, Commissioner Orr seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed with one abstention (Commissioner Smith).

Commissioner Brown made a motion to approve the Smith Valley application, Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

Commissioner Roukey made a motion to approve the Tonopah application, Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

B. Commissioner Roukey made a motion to increase the grant funding by \$4525.45 to each of the four recipients and encourage they coordinate for a match in funds and added Commissioner Brown's comment to encourage them to reseed which NDOW could help with. Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

C. Commissioner Brown made a motion to say the Commission authorizes Bettina Scherer, serving as their Secretary, to negotiate with each funded Conservation District any funding issues, project monitoring or other reporting, and any changes the Commission may stipulate in a specific Funding Agreement, and to sign the agreement with successful Districts on the Commission's behalf. Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

VI. DISCUSSION OF THE HUMBOLDT RIVER BASIN NETWORK'S ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 11-06-2017 MEETING - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Chairman Sicking, Bettina Scherer, and Tim Rubald attended the Humboldt River Basin Water Authority's (HRBWA) Meeting on February 9th, 2018, and answered some of their concerns. It was explained this is a bottom up project. Bettina said you have a copy of the HRBN Situation Assessment Status Report which talks about future steps.

Mr. Rubald said if the Commission wants to continue this effort, we need to go slowly. We need to continue to attend the HRBWA's meetings and keep them apprised of any plans. They meet quarterly and their new director is Jeff Fontaine who is very approachable. Chairman Sicking said we want to continue and to build trust and confidence. Commissioner Brown said the situation assessment is good. We can talk about the less controversial projects. Commissioner Smith agreed we should continue.

Commissioner Roukey made a motion for the SCC to continue to support the HRBN, Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

Commissioner Smith said his Northeast Elko CD is looking at helping with the weed problem on the Mary's River a tributary of the Humboldt River.

BREAK – Chairman Sicking stopped the meeting for a break at 2:07 p.m.

RECONVENE – Chairman Sicking called the meeting back to order at 2:15 p.m.

VII. PERIODIC REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACTION PLAN - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Commissioner Orr would like to add to the Strategic Plan to Goal IV. **Increasing Districts; Capacity and Capabilities** a Number 7. She made a motion that Number 7 states 'the State Conservation Commission supports the Nevada Association of Conservation Districts Resource Needs Assessments process and believes that it will bring increased capacity and capabilities to the CDs'. Also to add to the Action Plan to Goal Number Four, Objective Number Three a Step # 7 that says the SCC will provide ongoing support to the NvACD Resource Needs Assessments as the needs are determined. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion; there was a vote and the motion pass unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

B. Commissioner Roukey said in the Action Plan under Goal: **Vibrancy of Renewable Natural Resources**, Goal Number Two, Objective Number Five, under Step # 2 regarding training for the Rangeland Monitoring Application (RMA) we wanted to tie this to the Soil Health Program. Commissioner Brown said we are in the final stages of testing the RMA and we will make sure to include and encourage the CDs to do cooperative monitoring.

Commissioner Roukey said under Goal: **Vibrancy of Renewable Natural Resources**, Goal Number Two, Objective Number Four, we talked about NRCS developing a Soil Health and Assistance Program, but we have not seen anything so far.

Bettina asked Bobbie Jones if NDOW had any soil trainings. Mr. Jones said they will be doing outreach. Commissioner Smith said this spring the Stewardship Alliance of Northeast Elko (SANE) will have a presentation on State-and-Transition Model Development for Nevada Upland and Riparian Ecological Sites in Major Land Resources. As an FYI Commissioner Orr said the Lincoln County CD had NRCS come to a workshop with a Soil Scientist and it is important to let NRCS know exactly what the CD wants to discuss. It did not go well.

Commissioner Smith said the class we did last year with Nicole Masters of Integrity Soils, New Zealand, is returning this year on June 27, 28, and 29. It is sponsored by SANE and the Northeast Elko CD as an effort to promote soil education.

VIII. AGENCY UPDATES - *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

C. Natural Resources Conservation Service – *Gary Roeder, Acting State Conservationist* Mr. Roeder said there have been significant applications for EQIP funds. We will be short on applications for specific fund use as for sage-grouse. We made need to turn those funds back. There may be RCPP fund opportunities, please check our website. There are Petroleum Claims Funds through the NV Division of Environmental Protection. We are going to ask that the program funds be exempt from federal taxes in Nevada.

A. Nevada Department of Agriculture – *Meghan Brown, Plant Industry Division* Commissioner Brown said in early May there will be a Seed Forum. One part will be a presentation by a UNR professor on the economics of buying

the seed and another part of where to buy, whether from NDA, USFS, or NDOW. We have been working on finishing our app and on sage-grouse projects. She would like the NDA Rangeland Health Coordinator, Dave Voth, to attend an SCC meeting. He is in Elko. We have other staff that could attend and provide information also.

B. UNR-College of Agriculture Biotechnology and Natural Resources – *Dr. Sherm Swanson, Range and Riparian Extension State Specialist for University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and Scientist for Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station* There was no report today.

D. Nevada Department of Wildlife – *Bobby Jones, NDOW/NRCS shared Habitat Biologist* Mr. Jones said the hunting and fishing licenses and the website will look different; we have a new vendor for these. This fall and winter NDOW has spent funds on wildfire rehabilitation projects; several in eastern Nevada. It is about 2 million dollars. We look to leverage funds on private lands and pair with NDA. Connie Lee said it would be helpful to have the Conservation Specialists contact NDOW, Habitat Division, for funding opportunities. Caleb MacAdoo is the Elko contact.

E. Nevada Association of Conservation Districts – *Maggie Orr, President* Commissioner Orr said our major efforts have been for the Resource Needs Assessments process. We have five CDs committed – Lincoln, White Pine, Northeast Elko, Mason Valley, and Eureka. There are five more that will decide shortly for a total of ten. The CDs are seeing how this can be useful to them. It's possible that NRCS could work out a funding agreement with an individual CD for an additional \$4000. After this ten there will be no more presented.

NvACD has a contract out to a lawyer for hiring retired NRCS people to help with the checklist and compiling information and developing Action Plans. NvACD did receive the National Association of Conservation Districts funding for those positions. NDOW gave \$10,000 towards the project. Gary McCuin is working on a guide to train the CDs how to do this.

NvACD sent a support letter to Caliente Complex for their wild horse gathers over the next ten years. An email was sent to Alan Shepherd with BLM regarding herd areas and we have not heard back.

NvACD has sent out the scholarship information and it is on the website.

The response from the CDs for the Pool Pact was good; 14 of the 28 responded. In April there will be more information out.

NvACD was a sponsor for the International Meeting of Society for Range Management.

USFS invited NvACD to participate in the planning process in their review at the regional level. Cheva Gabor submitted our name and Commissioner Smith will participate.

Dennis Golden's Range Camp video is on the Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission website. It is fabulous; he also presented wild horse and pinyon/juniper encroachment in non-threatening manner.

F. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team – *Kelly McGowan, Program Manager* Bettina Scherer spoke for Kelly McGowan and said the Conservation Credit System will be hosting annual verifier training on March 21 and 22. Every year any verifier needs to go a refresher and it requires attendance at both days. It is a limited training; please contact the SET for your best local option.

The SET was awarded an RCPP grant for Nevada and Colorado. The due date for applications to NRCS was February 16th. The SET and CDs will help with field work.

Melany Aten, the Winnemucca Conservation Staff Specialist, and Dan Harmon are looking at updating the Nevada section of the SRM (Society for Range Management) webpage. They are interested in adding a tab with CD specific stories. Please contact Melany if you have a special story; this is a good opportunity for CD positive exposure.

G. Others – There were no other reports.

IX. COMMISSIONER ITEMS - *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

A. Commissioner Roukey said the EPA rule regarding control over all water, some projects will require permitting. Connie Lee said the applicants can work with the Army Corps of Engineers and other partners for help with project permitting. Mr. Roukey said regarding the Corps, if you are not getting a response in a timely manner, move on to a supervisor; keep moving up the chain.

Commissioner Smith he needed help to write a grazing plan. He has worked with Duane Coombs, BLM, Cheva Gabor with USFS, and USFWS to put together a workshop on the nuts and bolts of writing a grazing plan. In the meantime, we are putting in our proposals and gathering information to have at the workshop. We are

going to work on this grazing plan in the workshop and we have a graduate student who will be writing the plan. We want to create a template for others to use. BLM, USFS and UNCE will help the participants in the workshop.

X. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Commissioner Smith said the Shoesole Tour will be June 12 and 13. It was agreed to meet at the Dept. of Agriculture Office on June 14th. Commissioner Brown said the people from Carson/Reno can meet at the Sparks Agriculture Office and teleconference to the Elko meeting. The time will be set later.

Bettina said if you as a CD are offering a scholarship for Range Camp; please send the payment to Erica Freese with the Nevada SRM. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

XII. ADJOURNMENT - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Chairman Sicking adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.