



STATE OF NEVADA
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES

STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Richard H. Bryan Building
Video/Teleconference Meeting
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701
March 12, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

Board Members Present: Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise-Sonoma CD; Leland Wallace, Esmeralda CD; Mark Damron, CD of Southern Nevada; Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD; Dr. Paul Meiman, UNCE/CABNR, Elko; Doug Martin, Nevada Tahoe CD; Meghan Brown, NV Dept. of Agriculture, and Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD.

Board Members Absent: Vice-Chairman Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD.

Others Present: Melany Aten, Acting Conservation Districts Program Manager; Sandy Quilici, NDCNR Director's Office; Lauren Williams, Ely Conservation Staff Specialist; Dominique Etchegoyhen, Deputy Director, NDCNR; Gerry Miller, Elko Conservation Staff Specialist; Naomi DeVore, Washoe Storey CD; Dan Moore, Quinn River CD, and Susan Abele, USFWS.

1. CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF QUORUM – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

- A. Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.
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 Smith made a motion to approve the November 17, 2020, meeting minutes, Commissioner Damron seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. Commission Tibbitts abstained from voting as he did not attend the meeting. ***ACTION TAKEN***

4. BRIEF UPDATES FROM AGENCIES AND PARTNERS: - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

- NRCS No report today.
- DCNR Dominique Etchegoyhen said we have been in the Legislative Session and we have provided a budget update and presentation to the Joint Committee. We have been able to maintain positions, but we have made some budget cuts. The competitive grant is reduced by \$50,000.

The Committee did express interest in the work that CDs do. The annual stipend has been reduced by \$1000. There is a delay of filling the CD Program Manager position for now. Melany is doing the work of two jobs and she is doing a phenomenal job. We introduced Senate Bill 23 which amended Mineral County to be moved from Area 3 to Area 2. The bill has been heard on the Senate side and is now in the Assembly.

Commissioner Tibbitts asked if the COVID Relief Package money may help with the budget shortfalls. Dominique said that is in talks above him, but NDCNR did prepare a budget which does have prioritizations to fill some gaps.

Commissioner Tibbitts said there is NRS 548 where the Legislature is directed to inform the Governor if we are on par with other western states on district funding. Currently, our CDs are at the bottom of funding by comparison. Could the Legislature look at the disparity? Dominique said it is an important point, we want to support the CDs. We try to impress the importance of investing in our CDs and realizing the significance of the work that they do.

- **NDOW** No report today.
- **NDA** Commissioner Brown said Agriculture has submitted their budget to the Legislature. We are making some changes to Pest Control Licensing; she can answer questions related to that. The Nevada Native Seed Forum will meet next week, March 16 and 17. It is a virtual meeting and Melany has the information. Agriculture now has the Rapid Response Plan and we hosted our first meeting with state and federal partners. We talked about the database for data requests. She would like a future agenda item to discuss data requests from our partners.

Commissioner Smith said he was asked to inquire about the vet inspections on horses. In the areas close to the border there was a pact between states on vet inspections and it seems Nevada has pulled out of that program. It is difficult get vet inspections more frequently now. Commissioner Brown said she would pass that along and ask about it. Commissioner Smith asked Commissioner Meiman if he could contact the man who had the question. Commissioner Meiman said at one time there was the GlobalVetLINK and you could get an extended vet inspection for one year. You could go in and generate a trip permit. He believes that now you need a vet inspection once a month. Commissioner Brown will ask NDA's Doug Farris to email Commissioner Meiman for the information.

- **UNR** Commissioner Meiman asked Dean Payne, Director Lyles, and Dr. Barry Perryman what they would like mentioned. They would like you to know about our new hires in the last couple of years. In the Vet Science Program is Coretta Patterson. Alejandro Andrade-Rodriguez is in water/irrigation management. Andrew and Melanie Hess will start in Animal Breeding and Genetics soon. In the Rangeland Science Program are Lesley Morris as an Associate Professor, Amanda Gearhart starts in July, and Yvette Gibson will be an instructor and she will work with BLM firefighters. Commissioner Meiman started about a year and a half ago and works as an Extension Specialist and with the Experiment Station. Dr. Tamzen Stringham stepped down as Department Chair of AVRS and Dr. Barry Perryman is the Chair. He went on to list new Extension Specialists. There are some positions that may be frozen. Some faculty may experience one FTE position to be cut.

The Great Basin Agriculture Research & Extension Center in Eureka County has been established. It will address the related issues of sustainable grazing management of dryland rangelands, livestock, crop production under water-limited environments, and alternative water and irrigation strategies for crop production. This involved a ~~44-acre~~ 644 acre¹ ranch in Diamond Valley and associated BLM permits in the Diamond and Fish Creek Mountains. UNR bought the

Rafter 7 Ranch merino sheep herd in July. Sales from some of the sheep will help fund the Center. Gary McCuin is the director of the Great Basin Agriculture Research & Extension Center. Melany asked if Commissioner Meiman would send her a list of the new positions and she will send it to the CDs for contact information. He will do that, and he will use the new Partner Updates template.

Commissioner Smith asked if Commissioner Meiman had any comments on the virtual fencing process. Commissioner Meiman said he went to Cottonwood Ranch and met with Commissioner Smith who had interest in virtual fencing. They created a project using some UNR Agriculture Experiment funds and support from the USFWS and BLM. We set up the virtual fence system at Cottonwood Ranch and Maggie Creek Ranch at their Lamoille Unit. Last summer we went out with collars on 135-140 animals at each of the two ranches to get an idea of what the system can do. We just collared about 180 at Cottonwood Ranch earlier this week and in May we will collar another group at Lamoille. We are encouraged in using this tool to help manage livestock.

Gerry Miller said there have been some CDs asking about the in-person education seminars to ranchers and farmers. It has been some time since we have had these. How would we write a letter to request this? Commissioner Meiman said a letter to Dean Payne and Dr. Lyles would be great. Gerry will draft a letter from the CDs and ask their chairmen to sign.

- **NvACD** Commissioner Martin said we are working on a Strategic Plan. The Annual Meeting will focus on water and he calls it “make every drop count”. He is developing a Steering Committee to help make it what we want it to be. He is also creating an Advisory Committee. He asked Commissioner Brown if she would join the Advisory Committee and she will. The Annual Meeting is in person in Fallon this year in November.
- **All Others** Commissioner Tibbitts said there is a STAC (State Technical Advisory Committee) Meeting March 22nd, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. There are sign-ups now for producers for the Sage-Grouse Initiative until April 16, 2021.

Susan Abele, with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Reno, introduced herself to the Commission. She works with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. They have staff in Winnemucca, Elko, and Las Vegas. We have joined some CDs with on the ground projects. She administers the private lands habitat restoration program. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

5. REVIEW JOINT PROGRAM “SUPERVISOR WELCOME” LETTER DEVELOPED BY NvACD WHICH INCLUDES SCC INFORMATION: - * FOR POSSIBLE ACTION *

- A. Melany said in the minutes from the last meeting the Commission said they would like an explanation of the SCC in the letter. Chairman Sicking said he would like a brief summary of what we do. Chairman Sicking said the letter should be signed by the Association President and perhaps the Commission. Melany said we could also write our own Welcome Letter. Gerry Miller has a template. Commissioner Tibbitts said two letters may be confusing. He supports one letter. Commissioner Martin made a motion to make it a joint letter. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion; after a vote the motion passed unanimously.

ACTION TAKEN

Commissioner Tibbitts said the handbook needs to be updated. In our Strategic Plan it says we will update it. Melany said one of our goals is to get the handbook updated. Tim Rubald is volunteering to work on the template update. Most of the forms are updated and the information can be entered online and printable. We are creating one central email address. We are also working on the website.

Melany said she will work with Connie Lee on a draft of the Welcome Letter and the Commission can review the letter at the next meeting.

6. REVIEW LETTER OF REQUEST FROM QRCD TO GET OPPORTUNITY FOR SAGE GROUSE FUNDING BACK: - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

- A. Chairman Sicking said Quinn River CD has reorganized and they have the funding back. Dan Moore from Quinn River said thank you. Commissioner Tibbitts said to clarify: the letter stated that Quinn River was not permitted to request or apply for projects. That was not correct. We want to clarify that did not come from the Commission. Melany said the previous Program Managers said that it was an SCC action and it was discussed. Quinn River was told not to apply. Commissioner Tibbitts said we did not have item about this, and we want this clarified. Chairman Sicking said please enter into the record that this did not come before the Commission. Commissioner Tibbitts said the confusion may have come from being found “not in good standing”. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

7. UPDATE ON S.B. 23, PROPOSED LANGUAGE CHANGES TO NRS 548.125 CONCERNING MINERAL COUNTY MOVED TO AREA 2: - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

- A. Chairman Sicking this passed the Senate and has not come before the Assembly yet. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

8. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION AND CONSIDER RESPONSE ON ANY OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES, CONSERVATION, AND AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION BILLS BEING PROPOSED OR DISCUSSED. - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

- A. Commissioner Damron said the Legislative Update emails from Melany are helpful. Thank you.

Commissioner Tibbitts said he had a question for Commissioner Brown. A.B.34 in Section 6 defines “a natural person who is employed by a city, county, state or other governmental agency as an applicator”. Now move to Section 15, Sub-Section 2. and it says, “a natural person or business entity shall not operate, for hire or for profit, as a pest control business with this State at any time without a business license”. Some CDs are doing work under grants and being reimbursed. There needs to be a clarification that no business license is required if you are a government entity. Commissioner Brown will talk with Bret Allen about the terminology definitions of a government applicator and get back to the Commission.

Commissioner Tibbitts said at the National Association Meeting there was a presentation by a Soil Health Initiative Group. They are working across the nation to get Soil Health Programs brought before Legislatures. Something would need to be put before our Legislature as a conservation statute where they could declare Soil Health is important. As a member of NvACD, Commissioner Tibbitts reached out to Assemblyman Howard Watts, Chair of the Assembly Natural Resource Committee, if he would help. All bills need to be submitted by Monday, so chances are slim for this year. The language needs to be formed. An alternative is the SCC could develop a program. A future agenda item to consider is an action item to establish a voluntary soil health program and defining what it would be.

Commissioner Martin said NDOW has a legislative tracking system that is helpful. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

9. DISCUSSION AND PREPARATION OF COMMENTS FOR SUBMISSION TO DWR FOR HEARING ON PROPOSED INTERIM ORDER WITHIN THE HUMBOLDT RIVER REGION. DWR HEARING TO BE HELD ON APRIL 2, 2021. - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Commissioner Tibbitts said Eureka County is attending. The hearing is on April 2nd, but comments will be accepted until April 9th. Commissioner Tibbitts said DWR is broadcasting that from here forward if you want to put in a point of diversion close to a river or tributary you may be denied. This is putting it on paper.

Commissioner Meiman said there is reference to completing the groundwater model study in 2021. Commissioner Tibbitts said there was another workshop where DWR gave the results of the modeling. It is substantial. It should be finalized before the order is signed.

Commissioner Tibbitts said the CDs in this region should provide their individual comments. For the record the Commission cannot adequately represent the interests of all the CDs in the Humboldt Basin. Chairman Sicking agreed. Melany said she provided this for discussion to encourage comments from the CDs on these water issues. Commissioner Tibbitts asked Melany to distribute the hearing notice to the CDs and encourage their attendance at the hearing. *** NO ACTION TAKEN***

10. DISCUSSION ON FUTURE REPORTS TO SCC FROM OTHER PROGRAMS, DIVISIONS, COMMISSIONS AND DEPARTMENTS. *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Melany said she has provided a Partner Updates to SCC template. This creates the opportunity for partners to report to the Commission without having to be at the meetings. We can also invite some CDs and agencies to speak about their projects. This is a way to receive more information.

Commissioner Tibbitts said the Division of Outdoor Recreation has released their Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and it is open to public comment now. Since there is land use and conservation mentioned, it would be helpful to have Colin Robertson give the Commission a presentation. Commissioner Brown said the template is helpful to send to other agencies because the questions give an idea of what the Commission does.

Commissioner Tibbitts said perhaps each meeting have an outside partner come and talk about what they do. Commissioner Brown said the departments, programs or divisions could give a more comprehensive talk about what they do instead of the highlights. Commissioner Smith said NDOW is interested in soils in regard to habitat, they have hired a soils biologist. We could help each other in that area by joining for a discussion at one of our meetings.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to support Melany in her efforts to bring partners in and increase our knowledge and engagement. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

11. REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN TEMPLATE - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Melany is working on a draft with Gerry and Lauren. We are focused on the Action Plan. We went through and selected the things we feel we could divide amongst the three groups: the DCNR Program, NvACD, and the Commission. There are updates to the Action Plan - there will be a more streamlined approach on how to monitor items and it will be more measurable. It should be finished this week and we can have a follow up talk at the next meeting.

Melany has been working with Connie Lee with NvACD who is redoing their Strategic Plan. She will be coordinating with her so that nothing is removed or overlooked. Commissioner Smith said thank you, this is a huge job. Commissioner Tibbitts said this is a good approach. *** NO ACTION TAKEN***

12. COMMISSIONER ITEMS: *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

There were no items today.

13. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING: *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Commissioner Tibbitts asked for an action item on the next agenda concerning the SCC moving forward with a potential State Voluntary Soil Health Program. Melany said she would like to review the language that other states have submitted and have a discussion. Commissioner Tibbitts said he has been provided some information and he will forward it.

Chairman Sicking said we will have the nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair at the next meeting.

Melany said she will be working on the template and getting a presentation from a partner for the next meeting. Melany is working on updating the Listserv.

Chairman Sicking said the next meeting should have an update on the Supervisor's Handbook.

Commissioner Smith said we also need an update on the Steering Committee for the State Annual Meeting.

Commissioner Martin said we need to choose a date for the SCC Meeting to coincide with the NvACD Meeting in November. Commissioner Brown said we should plan a virtual meeting in case we cannot meet in person also.

B. It was agreed to meet in May with the date to be determined because of the Legislative Session.

14. PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no public comments.

15. ADJOURNMENT: *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Chairman Sicking adjourned the meeting at 11:56 a.m.