



STATE OF NEVADA
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES

STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Richard H. Bryan Building
Tahoe Hearing Room Video/Teleconference Meeting
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701
April 30, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

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

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

Others Present: Zachary Ormsby, Conservation Districts Program Manager; Sandy Quilici, NDCNR Director's Office; Lauren Williams, Ely Conservation Staff Specialist; Melany Aten, Winnemucca Conservation Staff Specialist; Connie Lee, Executive Director, NV Association of Conservation Districts; Ray Dotson, State Conservationist, NRCS; Dominique Etchegoyhen, Deputy Director, NDCNR, and Kelly McGowan, Program Manager, Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team.

I. CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

- A. Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.
A quorum was confirmed, and introductions were made.
- B. Chairman Sicking opened the nominations for Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Smith nominated Joe Sicking for Chairman and Jake Tibbitts for Vice-Chairman. The nominations were closed. Commissioner Smith made a motion to elect Joe Sicking as Chairman and Jake Tibbitts as Vice-Chairman, Commissioner Wallace seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously.
ACTION TAKEN

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

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

- A. Commissioner Tibbitts made a motion to approve the October 15, 2019, and October 24, 2019 meeting minutes, Commissioner Damron 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. Zachary Ormsby said there are a few CDs that will not meet the three meeting minimum requirement and there is the potential not to make the June 30th deadline for the annual reports. At our next meeting we should talk about waiving the three meeting requirement and extending the deadline because of the meeting restrictions due to Covid-19.

The CD Program is going to meet with the SET to better integrate CDs and the local area working groups on triggers and trigger responses. The Sagebrush Ecosystem Council wants the CDs to be more involved in drafting the triggers and addressing the trigger responses.

Zachary gave a report on some of the CDs projects:

- The Nevada Tahoe CD has procured over ½ million dollars in private and federal funding for riparian and watershed restoration in Douglas County. They have implemented over a quarter million dollars for stormwater improvements on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe.
- The Dayton Valley CD has secured funding of a quarter million dollars for a variety of watershed improvement projects along the Carson River.
- The Lincoln County CD has secured about \$200,000 in funding from the Nevada Division of Forestry, State Parks, NDOW, the Fish and Wildlife Foundation and others to install beaver dams in Wilson Creek and restore riparian wildlife habitat on private lands.
- The Conservation District of Southern Nevada partnered with NRCS, NACD, UNCE, State Renewable Energy and Zion Methodist Church to create an edible community garden in North Las Vegas.
- The Tonopah CD has worked on fire restoration and fuel breaks, sagebrush habitat and education outreach. They have worked with the USFS, NRCS, FFA, and the BLM and brought in about \$300,000 in funding.
- The Vya CD in northern Washoe County partnered with NRCS for a wetland restoration. The Wetland Reserve Project was initiated in 2015 and completed in late 2019 with costs of nearly ¾ of a million dollars.
- The Mason Valley CD is working on watershed rehabilitation and treating invasive weeds. They have acquired about \$170,000 in funding from partnering with the Bureau of Reclamation, the Division of Water Resources, and the Resource Advisory Committee.
- The Smith Valley CD has nearly \$150,000 in funding for wildlife habitat and weed treatment. The funds are from the State Conservation Commission, NDOW, the Walker River Irrigation District, and the Department of Agriculture.

The CDs receive \$5000 annually from the State of Nevada. These eight selected projects are 2.5 million dollars with partnering. The other 20 CDs have notable accomplishments as well. He wanted to highlight these facts.

Chairman Sicking asked about the coming year budget. Zachary said there will be some cuts this year and next year. There will likely be reduced travel for the program and more digital meetings. We will want to maximize our funds and continue to encourage partnering.

V. DISCUSSION OF AREA REPRESENTATIVES ON THE STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AND ADDED APPOINTMENT TO NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) STATE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC) - * FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Chairman Sicking said we need to replace the Area 3 representative on the STAC to serve each year. Commissioner Tibbitts said it is a good idea to have a representative from Las Vegas – he suggested Mark Damron. Commissioner Damron said he would accept the position. Commissioner Tibbitts made a motion to appoint Commissioner Damron as the Area 3 representative on the STAC, Commissioner Wallace seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

VI. REVIEW OF STATE-LEVEL NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENT (MOA) FOR SHARING RESOURCES WITH CONSERVATION DISTRICTS - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Zachary said the updated final draft has the SCC added as a signatory. The four groups represented are NRCS, NvACD, the Conservation Districts Program, and the SCC. Chairman Sicking asked if Ray Dotson with NRCS approved and Ray said yes. Commissioner Smith made a motion to accept the new draft, Commissioner Damron seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. *** ACTION TAKEN***

VII. SELECTION OF PROJECTS TO RECEIVE SAGE-GROUSE COMPETITIVE GRANT FUNDING - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Chairman Sicking said there are five proposals. Commissioner Tibbitts said he will recuse his vote on the Eureka application. Commissioner Tibbitts said there are three that scored at the top. It seems there are inconsistencies in what is priority habitat or connecting habitat and how it is scored. We should discuss this wording in the future.

It would be good to ask the CDs to advocate for their project and make any clarifications.

Chairman Sicking asked if Smith Valley CD was on the phone and they were not.

Lauren Williams spoke for the White Pine CD.

The project has an area where there would be tree removal, but not every tree. The area is a steep slope that needs some trees for soil stabilization. Kelly McGowan said there is a concern when not all p/j is removed for a sage-grouse project. When it is a fuels reduction project it is different. Commissioner Martin asked why the contract work price was so high? Lauren said the cost is high because it is a smaller contractor with a small crew. It is not easy to get a contractor to go to Ely for a small project.

Chairman Sicking asked if Lincoln County CD was on the phone and they were not.

Commissioner Tibbitts said one of the questions on the rankings is about our permissions. One is “are there necessary clearances” and the other is “do they have all needed written permissions?”. It should be added to the application to include all written permissions.

Chairman Sicking recommended funding for the Eureka CD, Lincoln CD, and Smith Valley CD. Commissioner Martin made a motion to accept the recommendation of funding for Eureka, Lincoln and Smith Valley CDs. Commissioner Tibbitts seconded the motion with recusing his approval of Eureka.

Commissioner Tibbitts said in the future we should ask the districts if their projects are scalable. This means do they need the total amount of funding or can they do with less. He noted that both Eureka and Smith Valley specifically said their projects are scalable. He said the Eureka CD would take less to fully fund the Smith Valley CD. Chairman Sicking said the motion has been amended to say we recommend funding Eureka, Lincoln and Smith Valley CDs with the Eureka CD giving the Smith Valley CD \$594 of their funding. Commissioner Tibbitts did not vote on the Eureka CD funding. There was a vote and the motion passed.

ACTION TAKEN

VIII. COMMISSIONER ITEMS - *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

A. There were no items today.

IX. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Zachary noted it may be best to see what the budget reductions will be and wait until the annual reports are in. This would be after the June 30th deadline. Chairman Sicking said we will try for July with the date to be determined. This will be a video/teleconference meeting again.

Commissioner Wallace said he would like to thank Connie Lee for her help in getting the Esmeralda CD meetings in.

Zachary said there were items that Commissioner Tibbitts mentioned in regard to the grading system in the grants round. The grading scale and the criteria for the grant need some polishing and upgrading. He would like that as an agenda item. *** NO ACTION TAKEN***

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

XI. ADJOURNMENT - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Chairman Sicking asked for a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Martin made the motion, Commissioner Meiman seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned. *** ACTION TAKEN***

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