

July 16, 2015

Leo Drozdoff, Chairman
John J Entsminger, Vice Chairman
Care of: Pam Robinson and Andrea Sanchez-Turner

Via Email to: sprobinson@att.net
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RE: Invitation to Nevada Drought Forum Meeting, July 17, 2015

Chairman Drozdoff and Vice Chairman Entsminger,

I apologize for not being able to attend the Forum Meeting on July 17 as a result of a regional wildlife management conference. Due to busy summer schedules, I was not able to identify an alternate representative. However, I do recognize the importance of the Forum and offer my written inputs. Please feel free to include this document as part of the exhibit file for the meeting, and share or read the pertinent portions of this correspondence into the record as appropriate.

Before addressing the three questions requested in your letter of invitation, I should make one clarification. While I serve as the Chairman of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners (Commission), these comments are my own and should not be viewed as representing the Commission as a body. Per NRS 501.181, the Commission's duties include establishment of broad policies for the protection, propagation, restoration, transplanting, introduction and management of wildlife in this State; the promotion of the safety of persons using or property used in the operation of vessels on the waters of this State and, the promotion of uniformity of laws relating to policy matters. The Commission also establishes regulations for hunting, trapping, fishing and boating. The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) implements the Commission's policies and regulations and provides technical inputs to the Commission.

Given the above, I offer the following inputs given my experience as a member of the Commission over the past four years. These are not necessarily traditional "industry" based comments; however, impacts of drought to wildlife, fish and state waterways do have a direct impact on the various industries and businesses that support wildlife and boating activities as well as NDOW. More importantly, as a Native Nevadan, I recognize that water is and will continue to be our most precious and limiting resource!

How has drought in Nevada affected your industry?

I will address this question in three part, including: terrestrial wildlife, fish, and boating.

Terrestrial Wildlife: There are a suite of industries that are supported by terrestrial wildlife-based recreation. This includes everything from gas stations, convenience and grocery stores, auto and ATV

dealers, hotels / motels, etc. that support supplies, materials and services to non-consumptive users, such as bird watchers, and consumptive users such as sportsmen.

The drought has generally been characterized by mild, open winters, so over-winter survival by many species of terrestrial wildlife has actually remained quite high. However, water and summer habitat have been quite limiting. Every species has a unique set of population dynamics, so it is hard to make broad characterizations, but generally terrestrial wildlife species have maintained stable population trends in spite of the drought. For hunted species such as deer, elk, upland game, etc. NDOW has carefully monitored population trends and adjusted quotas accordingly. The key is to balance populations with available resources. In areas where we have urban or even agricultural interface with wildlife species we have seen increased conflict situations. Issues with bears or deer in urban settings along the Carson Front, coyotes in the urban areas of the Las Vegas Valley, and various big game, particularly elk in agricultural areas have all been amplified as a result of the drought as animals seek more consistent supplies of food and water. One particular area of concern is waterfowl and shorebirds. Due to the drought, many of Nevada's wetlands, marshes and ponds have dried up. Some of the areas that have traditionally accommodated many use days are simply dry and offer no opportunities for recreation. This has manifested itself somewhat in the dramatic decrease in the sales of state duck stamps.

Fish: There is no doubt that fish and fishing have been impacted by the drought. Subsequently, those industries and businesses that support recreational fishing have seen an impact. The Reno Gazette Journal has recently documented the issues associated with the fish in the Truckee River. NDOW and the Commission have closely monitored popular fishing destinations throughout the State. In some areas, such as Wildhorse Reservoir in Elko County, the Commission has actually passed emergency regulations to lift limits in an effort to utilize the existing resource before an anticipated fish die-off due to low water levels and high temperatures. There have been calls to suspend fishing in some waters, but that can be problematic by trying to maintain fixed population of fish in a shrinking amount of habitat. Potential fish salvage operations have been suggested, but these efforts are often hampered or made infeasible by the concern of spreading aquatic invasive species. The bottom line is that all the regulation in the world can't replace the need for more water. It is a very real possibility that some fisheries could be lost, or depleted, until more water is available. For instance, there is not currently a viable fishery at Walker Lake as a result of low water and increased salinity.

Boating: As with fish and fishing, less water equates to less boating opportunity and a similar impact to the industries that support boating and associated water sports. Some popular boating destinations have seen dramatic declines while others may experience increased traffic as a result of fewer boating options. As an example, Lahontan Reservoir and Topaz Lake have generally experienced much less use due to low water levels and limited access (i.e. viable boat ramps). Traditional users of these waters may instead travel to other local waters such as Lake Tahoe or areas in California, or elect not to boat at all. Of course the same issue has been occurring in Southern Nevada over a longer time period for popular use areas along the Colorado River System.

What has your industry done to respond to drought?

Terrestrial Wildlife: The wildlife management framework in the State does a good job of monitoring populations and taking appropriate management actions as herds and populations respond to drought conditions. The drought has resulted in the need to spend more time and attention in the arena of

conflict wildlife, and programs have been adjusted to address such changes. NGOs have played a significant role in providing supplemental water for wildlife where it is needed and logistically feasible. For instance, wildlife guzzlers have been helpful at providing additional habitat that was previously water limited. Management on private and state-owned marshes and wetlands has been adjusted to maximize limited water resources. For instance, efforts have been made to improve delivery infrastructure, laser leveling of ponds and management units and moist-soils marsh management in the summer months with flooding in the fall to limit evaporation and provide habitat during key migration and breeding seasons.

Fish: In some cases regulations have been adjusted to address potential fish die offs. Stocking programs have been altered in an effort to avoid making matter worse, while still providing opportunities to fish in bodies of water with more consistent supplies. In some cases, minimum pool agreements have been made for popular fishing reservoirs in cooperation with water right holders and other users. Voluntary programs and increased public outreach and education programs have also been implemented.

Boating: Safety remains the top priority for boating, so enforcement resources have been prioritized to those bodies of water with the highest amount of use. Public outreach and education remains a priority. Little can be done in most instances in terms of access until water levels are replenished.

What major obstacles exist to overcoming additional levels of water efficiency in your industry?

In terms of everything wildlife and boating related, the key obstacle has been and will continue to be working across various stakeholder groups and political subdivisions to strike a proper balance between competing and sometimes conflicting interests. It should be noted that wildlife-based recreation, as well as boating, contributes significantly to this state's economy. But more importantly, wildlife and open water remain a priority for Nevadans and their active outdoor lifestyles. As the forum moves forward with its analysis, it is important to recognize that a balance must be reached for a diminishing resource. In addition, a protocol or framework needs to be established to determine how collaborative discussions can occur moving forward.

I appreciate the invitation to participate and encourage the inclusion of wildlife and outdoor recreation interests in future discussions. I look forward to participating in person at future events.

Thank you!

Jeremy Drew