



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

Thursday March 7, 2013, 2:00 p.m.  
NDEP Conference Center, Richard H. Bryan Building  
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701

The Nevada State Conservation Commission held a public meeting on March 7, 2013, at the NDEP Conference Center in the Richard H. Bryan Building, 901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV, 89701. The State Conservation Commission considered and acted on the following items on March 7, 2013.

**Board Members Present:** Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise/Sonoma CD, Leland Wallace, Esmeralda CD, Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD, Vance Vesco, Big Meadow CD, Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD, Kathy Mort, Stillwater CD, Ed Foster, NV Dept. of Agriculture, and Dr. Sherm Swanson, CABNR-NAES.

**Others Present:** Tim Rubald, Conservation Districts Program Manager, Sandy Quilici, DCNR Director's Office, William Elder, USDA-NRCS, Jake Tibbitts, NvACD, Jean Stone, NDEP, Bureau of Water Quality Planning, William Campbell, NDEP Tribal Liaison, Kathy Tilton, Washoe-Storey Conservation District, Bret Tyler, Washoe-Storey Conservation District, Kevin Benson, Deputy Attorney General, Rick Orr, Nancy Sicking, and Marlene Wallace. Attending by teleconference: Brian Gale, Ruby Valley Conservation District, Richard Wilkinson, Dayton Valley Conservation District, Nicole Bitsilly, Duck Valley Conservation District, and Connie Lee, NV Dept. of Wildlife.

**I. CALL TO ORDER-**

A. Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Meeting attendees introduced themselves. Chairman Sicking welcomed Dr. Sherm Swanson (representing CABNR) to the Commission and commented he will be a positive addition.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT** – There was no public comment.

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

A. Chairman Sicking asked for approval of the minutes from the October 22<sup>nd</sup> and October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 meetings. Commissioner Orr said at the October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting under Agenda Item VI, Public Comment “*Commissioner Wallace asked if the Commission can accept grants. Tim Rubald said there is a process required to set up an account and perhaps an act of the Legislature and he would ask DAG Kevin Benson for help with this.*” She asked if this was answered yet. Tim Rubald and Kevin Benson said no, but they will. Commissioner Orr made a motion to accept the October 22<sup>nd</sup> minutes, Commissioner Vesco seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Wallace made a motion to accept the October 24<sup>th</sup> minutes, Commissioner Orr seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

**IV. DETERMINATION OF STANDING OF WASHOE/STOREY CONSERVATION DISTRICT - \* FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

- A. Tim Rubald told the Commissioners that in their packets there is the Washoe-Storey Work Plan. Bret Tyler, the Washoe-Storey CD Board Chairman spoke to the Commission. Mr. Tyler said they have lost staff and funding. We lost Sandi Gotta who supplied us information and our board chairman (Mr. Tyler is the new chairman). We are rebuilding; our board is five elected members now. Commissioner Vesco asked if they are active – Mr. Tyler said we are involved with the Steamboat Wetlands Project and there is a bridge project to connect the Legends Mall with Moana and Glendale which would involve wetlands. Commissioner Vesco asked if they have staff; Mr. Tyler said they have Kathy Tilton who is volunteering.
- B. Chairman Sicking asked if \$853.26 is all they are eligible to receive. Tim Rubald said that is what was spent in FY2012 and that is all that can be issued in FY2013. DAG Kevin Benson said that is correct. Mr. Tyler said they were being frugal because they were not informed. Commissioner Vesco asked if they had any other funding revenue. Mr. Tyler said they can use 10% of a mitigation fund from the Reno Airport. Mr. Rubald pointed out that they have \$30,363.65 in funds.
- C. Chairman Sicking asked about their compliance to have meetings. Mr. Rubald said there was a meeting on 2/4/13 (Tim needs the minutes) and he received minutes from an 11/7/12 meeting. There is still time to get three meetings completed by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Tim has their election information.
- D. Commissioner Rieman made a motion to find Washoe-Storey CD in good standing. Commissioner Swanson seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed.  
**\*ACTION TAKEN\***

**V. DETERMINATION OF STANDING OF RUBY VALLEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT - \* FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

- A. Mr. Rubald said there are documents from the Ruby Valley C.D. in the Commissioner's packets. Brian Gale, Chairman of the Ruby Valley C.D., said we have been slow getting the minutes in and we did not get the final financial report in last year. We had problems with our administrative assistant and will be addressing that issue in our April meeting. We will discuss using the assistant from the Elko County Association of Conservation Districts. Tim said it costs the districts \$1000 annually to participate in the sharing of an assistant. The assistant's name is Cheryl Gonzales and she is located the NRCS office in Elko.
- B. Commissioner Orr encouraged Mr. Gale to please stay involved because of the sage grouse issues coming up. Mr. Rubald said the Ruby Valley C.D. understands they may not receive funding for this fiscal year, but they want to move forward for the next fiscal year. Tim asked Mr. Gale if there was an election this year; there was not. Mr. Gale did provide a work plan. Chairman Sicking asked if the final report and minutes met the minimum. Mr. Gale said there was one meeting with the minutes turned in which was May 3, 2012. Mr. Rubald said there were three meetings in the last fiscal year and Mr. Gale said two of the meetings did not get the minutes in on time. Chairman Sicking said there is too much missing to find Ruby Valley in good standing this year. Tim said if they get their meetings and minutes in by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 they could qualify for grants in the fall of 2013 which is fiscal year 2014. Mr. Rubald told Mr. Gale they can not be issued any money this fiscal year. Chairman Sicking mentioned that the new NvACD President Jake Tibbitts could help Mr. Gale with any questions. Commissioner Orr made a motion to find Ruby Valley C.D. not in good standing. Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion; there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Foster asked Mr. Gale if he was clear on what was needed and Mr. Gale said yes. **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

**VI. CONSIDERATION AND DETERMINATION OF FUNDING TO BE PROVIDED TO CONSERVATION DISTRICTS TO CLOSE OUT FY2013 COMMISSION**

## **GRANTS. - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. The Commission will consider the distribution of the remaining \$5,000 among the districts to close out grants for FY2013. Tim Rubald said by finding Washoe/Storey C.D. in good standing they can be offered \$853.26 and the remainder will be equally divided among the other twenty-six C.D.'s in good standing. Commissioner Swanson made a motion to distribute the monies equally and Commissioner Vesco seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

## **VII. AGENCY UPDATES - \*NOT FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Nevada Dept. of Agriculture – Ed Foster, Regional Manager/Plant Industry Div. Commissioner Foster said their director (Jim Barbee) has been at the legislature frequently and has been informing the committees of Agriculture's master plan. Agriculture will be merging Food Safety and Nutrition into their department.

There will be an agricultural marketing person to promote Nevada products.

There have been no wild horse captures lately. Agriculture has a cooperative agreement with the Wild Horse Preservation Association and the ASPCA. Commissioner Rieman said he saw a horse with numbers tattooed on its neck; Commissioner Foster said that is a BLM marking and Chairman Sicking said it could have been an adopted horse turned out.

Commissioner Foster said Agriculture has the authority to fine the public for feeding wild horses. They are trying to educate people not to feed the animals; there have been no fines issued yet.

B. UNR-College of Agriculture Biotechnology and Natural Resources – Dr. Sherm Swanson, Range and Riparian Extension State Specialist for the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and Scientist for the Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station. Commissioner Swanson spoke of the Strategic Planning Process at the college and he provided a slideshow for the Commission.

Chairman Sicking said he would like to see a rangeland presentation with a plan.

Commissioner Vesco asked about a recent land sale. Commissioner Swanson said the land on the left side of McCarran was the first parcel sold. The only other transfer up to now is to the RTC (Regional Transportation Commission) for a southeast connector.

Commissioner Swanson said the Dairy Hill Facility on Valley Road will become a research commercial winery with a ten acre vineyard.

Commissioner Rieman asked about the University Slaughterhouse. Commissioner Swanson said it is unclear whether it will stay and he will get back with the answer.

Commissioner Orr asked if UNCE and the College of Agriculture join - will that affect the land grant. Commissioner Swanson said the proposal is not to combine the two entities but to share the same leader. This should not change the land grant.

C. Natural Resources Conservation Service – William Elder, Assistant State Conservationist, Operations. Mr. Elder passed out a 2012 summary of activities. There was 22 million dollars provided to Nevada land owners for conservation projects with about 13 million dollars in financial assistance and 8 million dollars in easements.

After March 27<sup>th</sup> there will be budget cuts and impacts are not known yet.

There is a preliminary budget for FY13 – for our farm bill programs/financial assistance programs there is about 9.3 million dollars. There has been an increase in requests.

The easement program has lost authorization – since that time there has been a one year extension through the end of FY13 ending September 30, 2013. There was an obligation signed for a 2.4 million dollars GRP easement.

One upcoming project is in the Nevada/Oregon burned area west of McDermitt with an application for revegetation/rehabilitation and improving grazing management in the areas that were not burned to help the producers in the area. The Sagebrush Team will help as well.

Nevada is a USDA Strikeforce State which is an outreach effort of USDA to help under served producers. Last year we were building our efforts with Native American communities and land owners. This year's efforts will reach out to small farmers. The hoop house program has helped to provide stable food supplies.

There were four sub-watersheds selected for the Water Quality Initiative in the upper Humboldt River Basin. These were impaired areas that have been improved. A current project is in the lower Carson River Basin regarding grazing and the high water table which is creating water quality concerns. There is an application to obligate \$500,000. There will be a state technical committee meeting for input on how to distribute the funds.

The Great Basin Plant Materials Center has a number of projects with BLM, NDOW, and ARS. There is a Plant Materials Advisory Committee meeting planned for May and the Commission will be invited.

Chairman Sicking asked who is partnering with easements. Mr. Elder said five million dollars for a FRPP easement was partnered with the Nature Conservancy in the bi-state sage grouse area near Carson City.

Chairman Sicking pointed out that there is not a service in Nevada that evaluates irrigation pumping at this time.

Commissioner Vesco asked if NRCS was using Technical Service Providers anymore. Mr. Elder said yes, but it didn't help in the Chairman's case.

Commissioner Orr said she had looked at what the jobs of the State Conservation Commission are and said we are here to secure cooperation and assistance from the federal government to work with the districts; serve as the official state agency for cooperating with the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service and enlist the cooperation and collaboration with state, federal, interstate, local, public and private agencies and organizations of programs dealing with renewable natural conservation.

Commissioner Orr said she has felt disrespected by the NRCS for over a year. The problem is not at the local offices and she hears this from others also. This is a personnel management problem which has led to a lack of communication and roadblocks. I believe this Commission needs to say we want better communication and please pass this on to your (NRCS) staff.

Commissioner Orr said when we met last year at the Dept. of Agriculture you said Dave White wanted to realign NRCS with its core values. What happened? Mr. Elder said Mr. White retired. Something I have done is to look at our recruitment and retention of staff. Commissioner Orr said we need to make this work better and Mr. Elder said he would appreciate the input.

#### **Break 3:30 p.m. and Reconvene at 3:50 p.m.**

- D. **Farm Services Administration** – Clint Koble, State Executive Director. Mr. Koble was unable to attend this meeting.
- E. **NV Dept. of Wildlife** – Connie Lee, Farm Bill Coordinator. Ms. Lee said NDOW has an interim director, George Tsukamoto. March 15<sup>th</sup> through the 1<sup>st</sup> week of May are Sage Grouse Lek Surveys. Fisheries are conducting surveys. There is work on federal aid reports. There is work on mining exploration responses, energy responses, fire rehab and work in the bi-state area. The diversity division is working on updating the Wildlife Action Plan. Some new information in the plan is a chapter in climate change. In northeastern Nevada a group of landowners formed a group to address sagebrush habitat conditions. It is comprised of about seven ranches covering about three million public acres and about 300,000 private acres. Mike Lund has been hired as a facilitator. The name is the Stewardship Alliance of Northeast Elko County (SANE). Their statement of purpose is: SANE is a solution-based multidisciplinary conservation team working together to provide a rich heritage using the tools of education, balancing science with local knowledge, and collaboration. Our alliance/team is grounded in accountability and common values while recognizing the interrelationship between good habitat and economic viability. We work to create a sustainable community rich in traditional resources uses. Their goal is to get restoration projects on the ground. On March 19<sup>th</sup> there will be a NRCS local work group subcommittee meeting at the NRCS Reno office. This group was newly formed in Winnemucca after the state meeting to address some issues with C.D.'s and local work groups and the interrelationship with the state office.

Commissioner Orr asked if the Wildlife Action Plan is on the NDOW website. Ms. Lee said the new revised one should be soon.

Commissioner Swanson asked is there any more than a partial geographic difference between SANE and the Northeast Elko Conservation District. Ms. Lee said SANE will keep their interest within the Northeast Elko C.D. boundaries.

F. **NV Association of Conservation Districts** – Jake Tibbitts, President. Mr. Tibbitts said there was a meeting in Elko in January attended by about 30. This meeting was to see what the people want from the Association and how to move forward. The Association is going to have formal development of policies and position statements. This will go to a vote of the members at the annual meeting. We are amending the by-laws to be more consistent.

Mr. Tibbitts attended the national Association meeting in San Antonio and said it was worthwhile to see what other states are doing and gain information.

Regarding the two resolutions that the SCC approved at the October, 24, 2012 meeting from the NvACD meeting – The first resolution was support for the next farm bill to continue the opportunity for EQiP funds to be utilized on public lands. With Nevada bringing forth this resolution it was accepted and is now a formal policy of the National Association. The second resolution concerned stewardship contracts and pinyon/juniper treatments and did not pass. It was not submitted in time. Commissioner Swanson asked if the resolution can be heard again and the answer was yes.

Mr. Tibbitts said there have not been notices for dues sent; he would like to organize the current funds before asking for more.

The annual NvACD meeting will be in Elko on November 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Please let him know of topics for the agenda.

Mr. Tibbitts is looking for means to fund a fulltime position staff position.

Commissioner Vesco said thank you for stepping up to the position.

Commission Orr showed the members a brochure for Conservation Districts.

Mr. Rubald said NvACD has to submit nine names by the end of April for a pool from which to appoint new members. Mr. Tibbitts said he is getting recommendations. This needs to be in sixty days prior to the member's term expiration. These are for Commissioners Vesco, Wallace, and Fortier.

G. **NV Sagebrush Ecosystem Program** – Tim Rubald, Program Manager. Mr. Rubald said the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council has been appointed. The list is in your binders. J.J. Goicoechea is the Chairman and Kent McAdoo is the Vice-Chairman. The technical team is hired (names in your binders). The office is in Carson City at 201 S. Roop Street, Suite 101. The Council held its first meeting in February. We are in the process of listing the numerous entities and gathering data. There is the State of Nevada's Alternative to BLM's Regional Sage Grouse EIS which has six alternatives:

1. No action.
2. The National Technical Team Report which we operate under now.
3. The Nevada alternative.
4. Western Watersheds alternative.
5. The Earth Guardian's citizens group alternative.
6. A BLM alternative

This was a group effort with USFS, BLM, NDOW and Dept. of Agriculture. The draft EIS will be out at the end of April.

The money that will come from the mitigation bank will help C.D.'s get projects going. There will be three Conservation Staff Specialists hired. The Sagebrush Ecosystem Council will meet again in March (TBD).

Commissioner Vesco asked if 2014 is the timeline for the potential listing. Mr. Rubald said the Bi-State Grouse will have a ruling by September 30, 2013. The Greater Sage Grouse data call is September 30, 2014 and the decision by USFW by September 30, 2015. The Sagebrush Ecosystem Team will continue as there will be other listings in the future.

Commissioner Wallace said we are trying to keep BLM from taking grazing land, but there has been some range closed on the eastern part of the state. Mr. Rubald said that is part of the issue. Chairman Sicking said there are eleven western states that are impacted by sage grouse. He would like to see a plan in place that works for Nevada, not a plan dictated by another state or Washington, D.C.

H. **Others** – Participating agencies and partners may report items of importance or urgency they see necessary at this time. There were none.

**VIII. DISCUSSION OF BUDGET STATUS UNDER LEGISLATIVE CONSIDERATION - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Mr. Rubald said in DCNR's budget there is an additional \$28,000 that can be divided among the districts in good standing – instead of \$2500 a year it will be \$3500. This would be in the next fiscal year. In addition there is a \$40,000 request for a pool that would be administered on a competitive basis for the districts by this commission. If approved there would need to be regulations written. These requests are in the Governor's Recommended Budget to the Legislature for approval. Chairman Sicking asked who will maintain the mitigation bank. Mr. Rubald said that will be the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council. **\*NO ACTION TAKEN\***

**IX. DISCUSSION OF THE PROCESS OF FILLING NEW POSITIONS IN ELKO AND WINNEMUCCA TO ASSIST DISTRICTS IN THOSE AREAS. - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Mr. Rubald said there is current recruitment for two of the three Conservation Staff Specialist positions. These positions are to help C.D.'s with projects. The first two positions are for Elko and Winnemucca and the third for Ely. Our federal partners will help with office space, computers, etc. NRCS will provide office space in Elko and the FSA will help with the Winnemucca space. The recruitment is for both Specialist I and II – this broadens the pool. Mr. Rubald asked how the Commission would want the C.D.'s divided (three areas). After discussion it was decided to go with Chairman Sicking's recommendation. The Winnemucca area will come down between Paradise/Sonoma and Owyhee, all of Lander and to the top of Nye County. Elko will take in all of Elko county and the top of Eureka County. The remaining is the Ely area. Commissioner Vesco mentioned that housing in Winnemucca and Elko is nearly impossible and is a concern for the Conservation Specialist position. Commissioner Swanson said they may have to live in Fallon or Lovelock. Chairman Sicking said there should be a local C.D. person on the interview panel. . There was a motion to accept the Chairman's plan for district lines from Commissioner Swanson which was seconded by Commissioner Vesco. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. Please see the attached map of the districts plan (rough draft). **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

**X. UPDATE ON THE RECRUITMENT OF THE POSITION OF PROGRAM MANAGER FOR THE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS PROGRAM. - \*NOT FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Mr. Rubald said the recruitment will close this week for the C.D.'s program manager position. Right now there are 14 applicants. Chairman Sicking will be on the interview panel. The position will be in the Sagebrush Ecosystem Team office.

**XI. COMMISSIONER ITEMS - \*NOT FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\* There were none.**

**XII. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING - \*NOT FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\* To be determined.**

**XIII. PUBLIC COMMENT There was none.**

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT** Chairman Sicking made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Swanson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

