



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

**Monday, November 4, 2013, 4:00 p.m.**  
**Red Lion Hotel, Main Ballroom**  
**2065 Idaho Street, Elko, Nevada 89801**

The Nevada State Conservation Commission held a public meeting on November 4, 2013, in the Main Ballroom of the Red Lion Hotel, 2065 Idaho Street, Elko, NV, 89801. The State Conservation Commission considered and acted on the following items on November 4, 2013.

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

**Others Present:** Joe Locurto, Conservation Districts Program Coordinator, Sandy Quilici, DCNR Director's Office, Tim Rubald, Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Manager, Doni Bruland, Conservation Staff Specialist Elko Area, Steve Weaver, Conservation Staff Specialist Winnemucca Area, Carl Clinger, Big Meadow CD, Bill Elder, NRCS, Rick Orr, NV Sustainable Grazing Coalition, Jake Tibbitts, Eureka Natural Resources Manager and NvACD President, Connie Lee, NDOW, Barbara Perlman-Whyman, NvACD, Jodi Vesco, Ted Ramsey, NACD, Southwest-Pacific Representative, Bruce Petersen, NV State Conservationist, and Marlene Wallace.

**I. CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. A quorum was established with members: Chairman Joe Sicking, Vice Chairman, Vance Vesco, Commissioner Eric Rieman, Commissioner Maggie Orr, Commissioner Dr. Sherm Swanson, Commissioner Ed Foster, and Commissioner Leland Wallace. There were introductions of the others present.

**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 June 27, 2013 meeting minutes. Commissioner Orr made a motion to approve the minutes, Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion. There was a vote and the minutes were approved unanimously. **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

B. Chairman Sicking asked for approval of the October 2, 2013 meeting minutes. Commissioner Orr made a motion to approve the minutes, Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion. There was a vote and the minutes were approved unanimously. **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

#### **IV. REPORTS TO THE COMMISSION - \*NOT FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. **Program Update and General Correspondence** – *Joe Locurto*. Mr. Locurto said he has been working on the CD reports which he provided to the Commission members in their binders. He provided handouts showing the activities of himself, Doni Bruland, and Steve Weaver since the last Commission meeting. Steve and Doni have been making connections with the CDs, private landowners, agencies and working with the SETT.

B. Mr. Locurto provided a handout of a draft of the application form for the CD Sage Grouse Habitat Competitive Grant Program. In the draft, he wants to notify the CDs in January 2014 that the funds will be available. The deadline to apply will be February 28, 2014. Then about another month to notify if approved and one year for project reports.

C. The application contains a project title, location, county, there may be more than one county involved, and a contact person. There are specific questions concerning the project description and the total application should not be more than 10 pages. Then more specific questions A through G – what are the sage grouse benefits, are there partnerships, is the project in a core sage grouse area and what other sensitive species could benefit. Is the project consistent with SETT projects? The questions include past grants management history and ask if there is the fiscal capability to handle the work and funding.

D. Appendix A tells how to submit the application. Included are project ideas from other states and Sage Grouse Initiative as examples.

E. Mr. Locurto asked for suggestions. Connie Lee asked if there is a copy to email and Mr. Locurto said there is in Word and he wants to make it available as a PDF and a Word version for the Districts.

F. Mr. Locurto has been at district meetings and some work group meetings along with Doni and Steve - He wants to know what the districts are doing and the current sage grouse projects.

G. Mr. Locurto has completed a revised and updated Supervisor's Handbook from the 2007 version. The books will be available at tomorrow's NvACD meeting. The handbook will be put on the website. When changes occur the pages can be replaced or forms added. Commissioner Swanson asked if there is local working group input included. Mr. Locurto said there are appendices for local working groups, NRCS functions, and local area work groups, Sagebrush Ecosystem functions.

There was discussion that NRCS needs better communication with the Districts and the working groups. Commissioner Swanson suggested showing NRCS the handbook and ask if it has included everything that NRCS would need regarding projects.

Commissioner Vesco asked Tim Rubald how the Sagebrush Ecosystem working groups are different and what entities are involved. Mr. Rubald said the field people are key and it is focused on sagebrush/sage grouse projects. The entities include BLM, Forest Service, NDOW, Agriculture, and state and county agencies.

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

A. **Nevada Department of Agriculture** – *Ed Foster, Regional Manager Plant Industry Division*.

Commissioner Foster said there are two new noxious weed personnel-Robert Little and Jamie Greer. The Noxious Weed Program awards projects on a competitive basis for weed control and restoration for the CDs. There is free GPS training and GPS rentals for noxious weed mapping, a bio control program for weed management, and educational supplies. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) will open a competitive solicitation to award funds to projects that seek to improve the specialty crops industry. The legislature passed a law that there is a \$2500 fine to feed wild horses. There is an RFP to wild horse groups to take captured horses. There is a process of finding a new holding place for the horses. John Carpenter retired and a new agriculture inspector is Brett Allen. Lee Lawrence, Pest Control Program Coordinator, retired and we have hired Robert Leavitt. We are hiring an Agriculturist II who will be organically certified. There are 31 new positions since we now have the Dairy Commission and Food Nutrition and Commodities Program. Commissioner Orr asked if the agency would sell horses. Mr. Foster said yes they have.

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.* Commissioner Swanson said there are new positions-Ian Wallace a plant geneticist, a bio fuels position, Paul Verberg a soil scientist, another soil scientist and a soil physicist. Antonio Faciola is a large animal nutritionist, Deborah Bujnowski is a human nutritional epidemiologist, Veronica Zapota is a bio chemistry instructor, Ralph Phillips is a development officer for CABNR. There is a national recruitment for a new dean, also an agronomist, and an eco-hydrologist.

C. **Natural Resources Conservation Service** - *Bruce Petersen, State Conservationist.* The Farm Bill should be approved soon, the conservation provisions look good. Last year there was almost \$15 million spent on WRP wetland and grassland reserve program easements. In the Bi-State sage grouse area we gained some properties (easements) to help with the habitat. NRCS launched the national Soil Health Initiative and there has been training for Nevada soil health. We can meet with producers with examples and suggestions of how to improve soils. Liz Warner was our public affairs specialist and has retired, but is now volunteering. Her replacement is Heather Emmons. NRCS has funded some agreements. Chairman Sicking thanked Mr. Petersen for his willingness to help CDs and try to improve communication. Mr. Petersen said they have video conferencing available for all their NRCS field offices. They need some T1 lines and soon they can attend the local board meetings by video.

D. **Farm Services Administration** - *Clint Koble, State Executive Director.* Mr. Koble was unable to attend the meeting.

E. **Nevada Department of Wildlife** - *Connie Lee, Farm Bill Coordinator* Report will be after Tim Rubald.

F. **Nevada Association of Conservation Districts** - *Jake Tibbitts, President* Mr. Tibbitts said the State Association meeting is tomorrow and Wednesday and there is still time to register. The Association is making progress and at the meeting we will strategize how to move forward. Chairman Sicking recognized Mr. Tibbitts for the work he has done.

G. **Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Program** - *Tim Rubald, Program Manager* Mr. Rubald said the Bi-State decision is out; one item to note is the difference between threatened and endangered. The USFW has the ability to put special rules out when a species is threatened and the special rule here allows normal agriculture production activities (grazing) to continue. The EIS for the greater sage grouse is out and the team is working to review what parts of the BLM alternative are different from the state alternative and create a preferred alternative. The Conservation Credit System is in the EIS. There is some money and the RFP response from contractors is due November 6<sup>th</sup>. Then the contract goes to the Board of Examiners for approval. The Conservation Commission may want to provide a set of comments on the EIS to the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council. There are comments needed regarding grazing. Your comments as a board would have an impact. There is a science work group (UNR, DRI, private contractors, biologists from federal and state agencies) that has been created and has helped the technical team with difficult scientific issues. We have been working with the NCAT-Nevada Cheatgrass Action Team. The USFWS has said that cheatgrass in Nevada is a problem for sage grouse. We are working with Lee Turner at NDOW. There are three private ranches that have volunteered for work projects. Mr. Rubald thanked Bruce Petersen for help in funding the Ely staff position. There are at least three people to be interviewed and some Commission members will be part of the interview panel. The Sagebrush Ecosystem Team is working on outreach – Mr. Rubald will talk at the Cattleman’s meeting with updates. He will be having monthly two hour meetings with county commissioners through NACO with updates.

H. **Nevada Department of Wildlife** - *Connie Lee, Farm Bill Coordinator* Ms. Lee said she did not have a report for this meeting. She suggested that the Commission send a letter to NDOW requesting reports for their Commission meetings.

I. **Others** – Participating agencies and partners may report items of importance or urgency they see necessary at this time. There were no other reports.

**VI. REVIEW OF CONSERVATION DISTRICT REPORTS – \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Review and consideration of all Conservation Districts' Proposed Budgets and Annual Work Plans pursuant to NAC 548.110.

1. Comments on District Reports - Mr. Locurto said the binders contain spreadsheets of the annual reports, budgets, work plans, and elections. Ruby Valley did not send any reports last fiscal year. There are some CDs that have had problems with limited staff, or staff has left, or there were oversights. Mr. Rubald said they have worked with the eight Elko CDs. The staff person they hired did not work out well; please consider these problems with their standing.

Mr. Locurto said the CDs do need to get their reports in and understand the reports are needed for the grant funding. With the additional Sage Grouse Grant monies coming, it is important. He added that he, Steve and Doni will help them with implementing and understanding this.

B. Review and consideration of tracking logs for all Conservation Districts' Submissions of Minutes and Agendas pursuant to NRS 548.330 and NAC 548.110.

1. Comments on tracking logs for District Minutes and Agendas – It was noted that Ruby Valley, Vya, and Quinn River did not complete the requirements as shown in their tracking logs.

**VII. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DETERMINATION OF DISTRICTS' 'IN GOOD STANDING' STATUS FOR 2012-2013 FUNDING PURPOSES - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Discussion and possible determination of those Districts that meet the criteria to be eligible for funding from the Commission for FY 2013-14. NOTE: Some districts may still qualify subsequent to this determination. Chairman Sicking asked for a motion to find all the CDs in good standing except Quinn River, Ruby Valley, and Vya. Commissioner Rieman made the motion; Commissioner Swanson seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. \*ACTION TAKEN\*

Commissioner Orr made a motion that in the letter Mr. Locurto sends to the three not "In Good Standing" that he outlines what they need to do to comply. Commissioner Swanson seconded the motion; there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. \*ACTION TAKEN\*

Commissioner Vesco made a motion to find Quinn River, Ruby Valley, and Vya not "In Good Standing". Commissioner Wallace seconded the motion; there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. \*ACTION TAKEN\*

**BREAK 5:45 p.m. – 5:55 p.m.**

Chairman Sicking called the meeting back to order. He said we are returning to **Agenda Item VI. A.** Review and consideration of all Conservation Districts' Proposed Budgets and Annual Work Plans pursuant to NAC 548.110.

Commissioner Swanson asked if the CDs had the information needed to respond. Mr. Locurto said he supplied the information. The final financial form was on the website as a PDF and some districts requested a Word version which he sent. The financial reports that he did receive reflected an overall view and good use of finances. Washoe-Storey said their reports are late due to the federal government shutdown and will be coming. He said Ruby Valley did not submit their budget or plan.

Chairman Sicking made a motion not to find Washoe-Storey "In Good Standing" because their reports are not in. Commissioner Vesco seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. \*ACTION TAKEN\*

Commissioner Vesco made a motion to approve all but Ruby Valley and Washoe-Storey. Commissioner Swanson seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. It was made clear that Washoe-Storey and designated CDs can appeal the decision **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

Chairman Sicking said a motion was needed to pay the districts found "In Good Standing". Commissioner Wallace made a motion to pay all the districts "In Good Standing". Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion. There was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. **\*ACTION TAKEN\***

The Chairman clarified that the monies will be available to the districts that may appeal and then found "In Good Standing".

**VIII. COMMISSIONER ITEMS - \*NOT FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Comments and Reports There were no items.

**IX. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

The next Commission meeting is Wednesday, November 6, 2013 at 2:30 p.m. at the Red Lion Hotel, Main Ballroom in Elko, Nevada. **\*ACTION TAKEN\*** (Meeting Scheduled)

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There was no public comment.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Sicking made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

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