



STATE OF NEVADA
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
901 South Stewart Street, Suite 1003
Carson City, Nevada 89701
Phone (775) 684-2717 Fax (775) 684-2715

MINUTES
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

University Cooperative Extension Office
1085 Fairgrounds Road
Winnemucca, Nevada
Monday, June 8, 2015 6:00 p.m.

The Nevada State Conservation Commission considered and acted on the following items.

Board Members Present: Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise/Sonoma CD; Dr. Sherm Swanson, CABNR-NAES; and Tina Mudd, Nevada Department of Agriculture.

Board Members Absent: Vice Chairman Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD; Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD; Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD; Leland Wallace, Esmeralda County CD; Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD; and Kathy Mort, Stillwater CD.

Others Present: Bill Elder, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Kevin Benson, Deputy Attorney General; Sandy Quilici, DCNR Director's Office; Carl Clinger, Big Meadow CD; Andrew Laca, Natural Resources Conservation Service, District Conservationist; Daryl Riersgard; Rod Davis, Lander County CD; Brad Schultz, UNCE Winnemucca; Joe Garrotto, USFS; Birgit Widegren, NV Division of Environmental Protection; Liz Munn, Natural Resource Management Specialist at The Great Basin Institute/Bureau of Land Management; Ron Cerri, Humboldt County Commissioner; Rick Graham, Paradise-Sonoma CD; Nancy Sicking; Ken Tipton, Paradise-Sonoma CD and Humboldt River Water Basin Authority; Bob Schweigert, IRC; Boyd Hatch, USFS; and Steve Lewis, UNCE Douglas County.

CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

A. The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m.

There was not a quorum at this meeting and there were no action items on the agenda.

The participants introduced themselves.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

III. A FACILITATED DISCUSSION FOR THE COMMISSION TO RECEIVE AND DISCUSS PUBLIC INPUT ON POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION WORK THROUGHOUT THE HUMBOLDT RIVER WATERSHED.

A. Chairman Sicking said we want to apply for a grant through NRCS. The number of projects will determine the amount of the grant and the area it will encompass. The Commission will apply for the grant and provide the monies to the CD's with projects. The Commission is considering applying for an NRCS grant known as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This item is to discuss with stakeholders and others the possible scope of conservation work that might best assist or improve the health of the watershed. Development of partnerships for this application is also an important discussion point, among others that may come up concerning conservation issues as

they apply to the health of the watershed. Chairman Sicking introduced Steve Lewis as the facilitator of the discussion.

Mr. Lewis said we want to come up with ideas for the Humboldt River Watershed. This watershed is extensive as shown on the map (*See Attachment I*). We want conservation ideas that you would be engaged in and invest time in.

Mr. Lewis said Carl Clinger has a presentation that he will share. Mr. Clinger said he is a rancher from Lovelock at the end of the Humboldt River. This is a compilation of presentations. Mine dewatering is an issue. Pit lakes do not have permits. Overpumping of the basins and too many wells has added to reduced flows in the Humboldt River. In the Humboldt River Basin the junior surface rights owners are getting more water allocation than the senior owners. The percentage flow from Palisades is greatly reduced. There is a need for a coalition to determine the current health of the Humboldt River.

Mr. Lewis asked the group to write down the greatest conservation need for the Humboldt Watershed. Some responses were:

- Increase the total 'in stream' flow
- Bring the basins back into balance, put the use back into the original adjudication
- Improve channel stability – reduce sediment transport
- Put the pit lake (mine) water back into the stream
- Stop head cutting
- Restore the meadows back to proper function
- Determine the amount of water being pumped

What do we need to know about the watershed to become better stewards?

- Need to know what the allocations are and how much is being pumped
- What is the groundwater hydrology
- What the climate was then and now - the results of climate change
- The evaporation rate of mine pit lakes and reservoirs
- The evaporation rate of irrigation systems
- Determine the long term goal
- Concerns of the private landowners and changes they are willing to accept and not accept
- Understand the watershed as a whole
- The locations of the risks
- The Division of Water Resources is going to do a 4-5 year capture study which could serve as a model
- Develop a Humboldt River conservancy

Commissioner Swanson asked Mr. Lewis to give a brief overview of the Carson River Coalition. Mr. Lewis said it was started to bring groups together and share ideas and information. The purpose is to develop goals, strategies, a stewardship plan, and a flood plain management plan. We needed a lead and the Carson Water Subconservancy District was decided to be the most logical. It is agencies and some private landowners.

What do we need to do to improve the watershed's health?

- Improve irrigation efficiency
- More users would conserve water if not in fear of losing their water rights
- To understand the constraints the mines have in releasing water back in the river
- Work with NDEP and DWR on a policy to release water back into the river
- Educate policymakers
- Sage grouse representative on the Humboldt
- Bring more people to the table

- Treat headcuts
- Assess and restore basic watershed functions
- Improve channel stability
- Need representation at the Drought Forum

Mr. Lewis asked the group to put the suggestions into categories which were later named:

- Policy/Legislative Initiatives
- Capture Study
- CCC – Collaboration, Communication, Cooperation
- Integrated Watershed Management
- Assessment and Planning

Mr. Lewis asked if there is one particular area that we need to focus.

Is there an individual or an organization willing to take the lead on one or more of the points?

Who are potential partners? There are the Conservation Districts – 16 in the watershed. Others:

- County Commissions
- CWMA's
- Public
- NGO's – i.e. Trout Unlimited, NV Bighorns
- Federal agencies
- Mining
- NDOW
- Tribes

There is a need to leverage resources and build consensus.

Who would take the lead? The Humboldt River Water Authority could, but it struggles with funding from the counties. Grant funds would help. Chairman Sicking said the Commission could apply for the grants and then release monies for specific projects to the Districts.

What are the true resource issues?

- Drought
- Wildfire
- Invasive species – cheatgrass, pepperweed
- Need grazing for fuel management
- Find a way to clean mine pit water enough to return to the river

Start with CCC and Assessment and Planning.

Bill Elder with NRCS said to use grant money it is needed to have a broad partnership base, a match, a plan showing how the funds will be expended (projects), and stakeholder support through education.

Chairman Sicking asked what projects each CD would want under the grant.

- Big Meadow CD – a health assessment of the river from Palisade to Imlay
- Lander CD – remove weeds

- Paradise-Sonoma CD – irrigation issues and a weed program

Mr. Lewis said to look at where the need is greatest and identify projects in each CD's.

Chairman Sicking said the Commission will try; there is a deadline.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

V. ADJOURNMENT Chairman Sicking adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

DRAFT