



STATE OF NEVADA
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING
PHONE CONFERENCE ONLY
Wednesday, May 20, 2015, 7:00 p.m.

The Nevada State Conservation Commission held a phone conference meeting on May 20, 2015.

Board Members Present: Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise/Sonoma CD, Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD, Leland Wallace, Esmeralda County CD, Dr. Sherm Swanson, CABNR-NAES, Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD, and Kathy Mort, Stillwater CD.

Board Members Absent: Vice Chairman Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD, Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD, and Tina Mudd, Nevada Department of Agriculture.

Others Present: Tim Rubald, Conservation Districts Program Manager, Sandy Quilici, DCNR Director's Office, Bill Elder, Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Resource Conservationist, Steve Weaver, Winnemucca Area Conservation Staff Specialist, Carl Clinger, Big Meadow CD, Kent McAdoo, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Specialist, Rangeland Resources, and Connie Lee, NV Department of Wildlife, Private Landowner Incentives Program Coordinator.

CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

- A. A quorum was established and Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
The participants introduced themselves.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

III. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DECISIONS ON APPLYING FOR A NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM GRANT (RCPP), WHAT THE PROJECT SHOULD BE, AND WHO SHOULD BE THE APPLICANT OF THE GRANT – * FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Chairman Sicking said a project that could be considered is work on the Humboldt River Watershed. Mr. Rubald said this is the 2nd year of the RCPP as part of the new Farm Bill. At the last Commission meeting, which Astor Boozer (Western Regional Conservationist) attended, there was discussion of taking on the issues of the Humboldt River. It was agreed to have a meeting in July, possibly in Winnemucca, to discuss the issues. It would be a workshop and include specifically inviting the CD's in the watershed.

Because of the timing of the RCPP grant, the timing must be moved up. Others will be submitting applications including NDOW for the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout and possibly others for sage grouse projects. Diamond Valley may submit and the Northeast Elko CD. Commissioner Smith said the Northeast Elko CD is looking at building capacity and trying to get progress work and NEPA done. They also hope to include funding for an executive director for the large project work that is in their plan.

Mr. Rubald said there a number of projects in Nevada that will be submitted for this round of the RCPP. Commissioner Swanson and Bill Elder attended a meeting with the Humboldt River Water Authority. A presentation was made about project possibilities. A Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment is needed.

Jason King, State Water Engineer, has talked about doing some modeling using DRI and the USGS on the Humboldt River Watershed.

Ben Bolton created a map showing the Humboldt River Watershed and the water basins that include the watershed area (*See Attachment I*). There are 16 CD's whose boundaries are physically involved.

Mr. Rubald asked if the Commission wants to pursue this application, who should the applicant be, what partners, and what projects? The tentative meeting in July would now need to be held in the first two weeks of June in order to involve the public, the districts, and any other partners.

Chairman Sicking asked Bill Elder for his thoughts. Mr. Elder said NRCS and CABNR are looking at an assessment model to prioritize riparian projects. We would like to work with CD's and other local groups.

Chairman Sicking said there should be multiple partners such as NDOW and sage grouse groups.

Commissioner Swanson said the focus should be on the meadows and repairing riparian areas. There is an Integrated Riparian Management tool that could be used. The Conservation Credit system could prove to be a benefit. There is an opportunity to work on private land with the private land owners. There needs to be improvements at South Fork. We need to focus on where there would be the most impact.

Commissioner Orr said we need to find out if the private land owners will participate. Mr. Rubald said the CD's would have to bring them to the table. Commissioner Mort said when the CD's have their meetings they could invite the landowners. Mr. Rubald said some of the CD's have had their final meeting for this spring and won't meet again until August. We need to meet on this before the deadline of the application on July 8th. Perhaps there could be a large meeting to explain to the landowners and others.

Mr. Rubald suggested scheduling a meeting in the first part of June to see what the response is and make a decision.

Commissioner Swanson said it is a two stage process with a pre-proposal and then the full proposal which will require significantly more detail.

Mr. Rubald asked Commissioner Tibbitts about what he thought the projects should be – all watershed areas or the areas that need it the most. We need to define the scope of work to determine those to invite to the meeting.

Commissioner Swanson said there is a capture study the State Engineer is doing involving DRI and USGS that will take four years. There is modeling to be done and there are concerns about groundwater pumping and there is a lowered water table in some of the basins along the river. There is work to be done on the tributaries also.

Chairman Sicking asked for a motion to pursue this grant. Commissioner Smith made a motion to pursue, Commissioner Orr seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

IV. COMMISSIONER ITEMS - * NOT FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Comments and Reports

Chairman Sicking asked Mr. Rubald to find a moderator for the June meeting. Mr. Rubald said he will invite all the CD's that are involved on the watershed map. Chairman Sicking said the CD's need to call in the cooperators and producers that are involved in the watershed.

Commissioner Orr asked if we need to decide on where we want to start the work. Chairman Sicking suggested we leave it open until the meeting and let the CDs and public provide input. Commissioner Orr agreed and said the more partners we have the better chance of being awarded the RCPP grant. Chairman Sicking suggested involving the SETT, NDOW, CD's, and private landowners. Commissioner Swanson said some others are the mines, NACO, and the Navy. Other suggestions were the Dept. of Agriculture, local working groups, Ducks Unlimited and other sportsman's groups, Sierra Club, Bureau of Reclamation, USFWS, NRCS, BLM, US Forest Service, Humboldt River Watershed Assoc., County Commissions, NV State Parks, NV Division of Forestry, NV Division of Environmental Protection, NV Natural Heritage Program, DRI, CABNR, NV Division of Water Resources, NV Conservation League, The Nature Conservancy, NV Association of Conservation Districts, NWRA, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Tribes.

Chairman Sicking said there will be a need to get permits etc. because the Humboldt River is considered a navigable body of water.

Chairman Sicking asked Bill Elder for his comments. Mr. Elder said there is a lot of opportunity; it is a huge project and a lot of work to be done. A question from a public education perspective is how do we recharge the aquifer, how do we hold water on the land, refill the wetlands, etc. There will need to be some public education.

Commissioner Swanson said we want to involve the landowners and educate them also.

Chairman Sicking said there is a lot of mining property along the river and the mining owners need to be involved.

Commissioner Smith said their CD has one landowner that is involved with the Humboldt Watershed and he will speak with them.

Commissioner Orr said the education component could be an important part of the project.

Commissioner Smith said there were some issues that happened on the Humboldt River in the Halleck area a couple of years ago. There was an effort to do something along the Humboldt and some of the landowners felt left out. It is important to include the landowners and avoid these kinds of problems. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

NEXT COMMISSION MEETING - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

B. Agenda items for future consideration. Mr. Rubald will develop an agenda the public meetings and also regarding the scope of work for a Commission meeting following the public workshops.

C. Date, time and location of next meeting. Mr. Rubald asked when the Commission wants to have a public forum meeting and where? Would you want one or two meetings? It needs to be soon.

Chairman Sicking said we need one in Winnemucca and one in Elko. After some discussion, consensus was reached that there will be evening meetings in Winnemucca on June 8th and in Elko on June 9th. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

VI. ADJOURNMENT *** FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*** The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m. **by acclamation.**