



STATE OF NEVADA
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Nevada State Conservation Commission
Richard H. Bryan Building Tahoe Hearing Room 2nd Floor
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701
Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.

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

Board Members Present: Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise-Sonoma CD; Vice Chairman Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD; Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD (via telephone); Leland Wallace, Esmeralda County CD; Kevin Roukey, Washoe-Storey CD; Dr. Sherm Swanson, UNCE/CABNR; Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD, and Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD.

Board Members Absent: Meghan Brown, NV Dept. of Agriculture.

Others Present: Tim Rubald, Conservation Districts Program Manager; Sandy Quilici, DCNR Director's Office; Lori Story, Senior Deputy Attorney General; Ray Dotson, State Conservationist; Marlene Wallace, Esmeralda County CD; Nancy Sicking; Kelly McGowan, Sagebrush Ecosystem Team Program Manager; Jon Paul Kiel, NV Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Water Quality Planning, and Dominique Etchegoyhen, NV Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Deputy Director.

I. CALL TO ORDER, DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

- A. Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.
A quorum was confirmed and introductions were made.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dominique Etchegoyhen introduced himself as the new Deputy Director of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Mr. Etchegoyhen said he comes from a ranching family established in 1857 in Douglas County and he enjoys working with landowners and CD's. He looks forward to working with the Conservation Commission.

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

- A. Commissioner Orr made a motion to approve the November 14, 2016, meeting minutes. Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

IV. BRIEF UPDATE ON CONSERVATION DISTRICTS PROGRAM - *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

A. Tim Rubald, program manager, said the November 2016 meeting agenda was incorrectly posted on the program website for this meeting. The mistake was corrected quickly and the Commission's DAG, Lori Story, said it should not be a problem.

Mr. Rubald said the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources new Director is Brad Crowell and the new Deputy Director is Dominique Etchegoyhen who introduced himself earlier.

Mr. Rubald thanked Commissioner Maggie Orr for her work in organizing Conservation Districts Day at the Legislature. He said it was well received. He reminded the Commissioners that if they testify at the Legislature, unless it is something officially previously approved by the Commission, they are testifying as an individual.

He said the Strategic Plan needs to be reviewed and approved and he will recommend it as an item on the next meeting agenda.

V. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DIRECTION TO STAFF FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEVADA CONSERVATION RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE (NCRMI), ORIGINALLY STARTED AS THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE'S (NRCS) RESOURCE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) APPLICATION SUBMISSION - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Commissioner Orr said she sees this blending with the Nevada Collaboration Conservation Network (NCCN). She asked John Ruhs, the Nevada BLM Director, if he would continue forward with funds and he would, but it depends on his budget. Commissioner Roukey said we would want that commitment from other agencies as we did for the RCPP. Commissioner Swanson said he spoke with Mark Walker, the Director of Nevada Cooperative Extension, and their commitment would be in personnel time. This means the CD's would need to be involved in the planning and collaboration to make this real.

Commissioner Smith provided information about NCCN. Last December, with funding from BLM and USFS, there was a collaborative facilitator training in Reno with 80 attendees. The leadership from the federal and state agencies was there. It was a two and a half day workshop. At the end there was an agreement that this is a new way to do business. Last week there was a two and a half day NCCN meeting in Reno which has been needed. There were about twenty attendees. Sheila Anderson with the Governor's Office has helped develop the NCCN. It was said if we could create a collaborative network to help make decisions it would be a better way to do business. An example of how not to do something is the sage-grouse plan. The state plan was about to come out, then USFWS wanted to add to it, and then Wildlife wanted changes etc. If everyone had sat down together at the beginning this could have been avoided.

Commissioner Orr noted some of those who attended the NCCN meeting: from CD's there was Commissioner Orr, Tim Rubald, Commissioner Smith, Gary McCuin, and Commissioner Tibbitts. From the USFS were Cheva Gabor and Boyd Hatch. Also Commissioners Swanson, Smith, and herself, Sheila Anderson with the Governor's Office, Matt Magaletti with BLM, Connie Lee with NDOW, and Bettina Scherer and Lauren Williams with the Conservation Districts Program attended. She commented that this was a good cross section.

Commissioner Smith said the vision is to start on the ground and move up. An example from Northeast Elko is the Shoesole group and out of that came SANE (Stewardship Alliance of Northeast Elko). The next levels to involve are the district rangers and area managers. Then involve the state level which would include the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council and this Commission.

Commissioner Orr said before the meeting last week we looked at what other states are doing - Oregon, Wyoming, and Utah. This could provide a model for us. They are working across jurisdictional boundaries. They have monies from multiple sources in one pot. The local districts decide how the money should be spent and then decide the best agency to do the project. This is what we want here.

Commissioner Orr spoke with Joe Freeland the State Forester about work to be done in Lincoln County. Mr. Freeland is supportive. She said she would like the Commission to send a message to DCNR that we have a broad appetite to work with these projects, to work across jurisdictional boundaries, and that we are supportive.

Commissioner Swanson said we can invite CD's to bring ideas to us for help with collaboration and development. This year looks to be a high fire danger year from grasses and we need fine fuels management. There needs to be a conversation between the federal agencies, the industry, and the stakeholders on how to address the problem. This may mean changing grazing times.

Commissioner Orr said she would like to direct staff to make those questions to all the agencies and entities involved with the NCRMI and see if they are interested and tell them there will be a structure coming from the Governor's Office. And she would like the Commission to talk up the implementation as it evolves.

Commissioner Swanson made a motion to include the two steps that Commissioner Orr mentioned and a third to ask them where there is particular readiness for collaboration to address what they feel is important.

Commissioner Orr stated that it would be nice to know what these agencies have financially to add to the pot. She asked Mr. McGowan if that was something he could ask for or should the Commission? Mr. McGowan said initially it would be good to get the agencies together and find out what funding sources they have and start the initial discussion. Commissioner Orr said we want the structure to be flexible and show that we support the NCRMI and we want to fold our previous work into it.

Chairman Sicking said some of the agencies may not offer financial help but could offer cooperation.

Commissioner Swanson said when we go to the agencies and ask if they are willing to engage in the NCRMI we ask them if they are ready to collaborate and Commissioner Orr asked if staff could also ask the same of the Conservation Districts. Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Swanson asked to invite the NCCN to the next Commission meeting and Mr. Rubald said he would. ***ACTION TAKEN***

Chairman Sicking moved to **Agenda Item VIII. F.** – the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team report.

VIII. AGENCY UPDATES - *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

F. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team – Kelly McGowan, Program Manager Mr. McGowan said the SETT has been working on a list of improvement recommendations to the Conservation Credit System. These are improvements to the habitat quantification tool. They have recommended 14 improvements to the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council and 13 were approved. The one remaining will be heard at the April 5th meeting. It concerns power lines and tower heights and distances and how that impacts habitat.

The SETT put out a call for proposals, letters of interest, from people that may be interested in generating credits within the credit system. They had 11 responses and we have narrowed that down to 6. They got approval from the Council at the last meeting to proceed with those 6 projects and get full proposals. They now have the full proposals and cost estimates and will make the final recommendation to the Council. The number of credits that will be generated from these projects is impressive.

In coordination with the Colorado Habitat Exchange Program and the Colorado Cattleman's Association, the SETT applied for an RCPP grant fund through NRCS. We were awarded the funding and we will partner the state funding with this federal funding on these projects.

Tibbitts has joined the meeting by telephone.

Commissioner Orr asked how this works with Colorado? Mr. McGowan said both states applied on behalf of the Habitat Exchanges. We call ours the Conservation Credit System and Colorado calls theirs the Habitat Exchange Program. This is to get credits in the bank and to get good sage-grouse conservation on the ground.

Commissioner Smith asked if the recommendation for the power lines is likely to be approved by the Council. Mr. McGowan said the team used science and research and he is hopeful for approval. He hopes that what comes from these power line discussions is that in the future when transmission lines are being developed that we consider design features, minimization in the design, and when feasible burying the lines. The issue is not necessarily power lines, but the ravens that are attracted to the lines.

Chairman Sicking thanked Mr. McGowan for helping to secure the grants.

C. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Ray Dotson, State Conservationist Mr. Dotson said there has been a 21% cut to USDA and we don't know what our agency's reduction will be. In the last year and a half we have lost 10 full time employees and we have only brought back 3. We are trying to maintain our service to you at the local level. We have one agreement that was fulfilled at the national level. The Eastern Sierra Land Trust received 8 million dollars for the bi-state (California and Nevada) to do easement work to try to keep lands from being fragmented which is a threat to the sage-grouse.

There is pressure from the national headquarters to ensure that we get quality projects for the state RCPP

funding of which we have not received one application. We have been working with multiple partners to give us a quality proposal that will get work done on the ground.

We need help in finding assistance with getting more conservation easements on the ground. We need matching funds for the federal dollars.

Commissioner Smith asked if Conservation Credit System funds can be used for a match. Mr. Dotson said he would like to have that conservation.

We are currently in the process of processing applications for our Environmental Incentive Program. The Conservation Stewardship Program has enough interest this year to pick up all the resources that have been given to us.

We're looking for opportunities through the Sage-Grouse Initiative from national headquarters. We have some funds set aside that we can do some agreements. We want to utilize these funds to do some workshops. An example would be "How to graze cheatgrass at the right point". We want to help with management concepts.

Chairman Sicking asked Mr. Etchegoyhen if QI funds could be used for conservation easements. Mr. Etchegoyhen said at this time there will not be additional funding available through the QI Program.

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 we have bills at the Legislature that would be detrimental to UNR. This would be about having the southern Nevada cooperative extension offices serviced out of UNLV instead of UNR. We are continuing to hire faculty for the college.

E. Nevada Association of Conservation Districts – Maggie Orr, President Commissioner Orr said Conservation Districts Day at the Legislature went well. We visited each Assembly and Senate office and either interviewed with them or left information.

Amber Boskett with the Southern Nevada CD has two Assembly members that will be at the grand opening of the Zion Garden Park on Saturday in Las Vegas.

At the Government Affairs Committee we spoke against AB379 which is a general improvement district bill and because section 2 of that essentially repeated our authority in 548. We are not against the intent of the bill; it's just the way that it is worded. We met with Assemblywoman Joiner and we came to reconciliation.

NvACD has participated with a new group that wants to work on the Humboldt River - the Humboldt River Basin Network.

We are coordinating with the Humboldt River Authority and the Farm Bureau.

We are active participants in the Nevada Conservation Collaborative Network. There is a need for a coordinator position to help move forward.

We will be moving the dates of the Annual NvACD Meeting in Virginia City. It was November 6-8, but November 1st is the beginning of the off season in Virginia City. We are now planning on October 23-25.

Barbara Perlman-Whyman with NvACD and Ray Dotson went to Washington D.C. for the National Association of Conservation Districts Fly-In. Barbara said it went very well.

Gary McCuin, NvACD's 2nd Vice President, wrote an article (one of two) for the Progressive Rancher.

There is an opportunity through the National Association of Conservation Districts – they are having a National Leadership Training funded by NRCS on June 22, 2017, in Lincoln, Nebraska. NRCS will pay for two to three sessions for each state. Please let her know if you have someone that would be interested in this worthwhile opportunity.

Commissioner Orr said she submitted a Soil Health Champion and that is Spencer Scott from Washoe-Storey CD.

We have put out the NvACD Scholarship Applications.

We are working on a video with Golden Productions and we would like to have any historical CD pictures for the film.

Commissioner Orr's email address with NvACD is president@nvacd.org

We have sent support letters; one to the NV Department of Agriculture regarding their weeds bill and one to BLM regarding the Planning 2.0. Gary McCuin is working a Facebook page for us.

Commissioner Orr has submitted nominations to the Governor for the State Conservation Commission. For Area 1 - Jake Tibbitts, Agee Smith, Shannon Berumen, Area 2 – Randy Emm, Bill Washburn, Eric Rieman, and Area 3 – Randall Williams, Brad Hunt, and Leland Wallace.

- A. Nevada Department of Agriculture – Meghan Brown, Plant Industry Division There was no report today.
- D. Nevada Department of Wildlife – Connie Lee, Landowner Incentive Programs There was no report today.
- G. Others – There were no other reports.

Chairman Sicking adjourned for a break at 12:27 p.m.

Chairman Sicking reconvened the meeting at 12:50 p.m.

VI. REVIEW, RANKING AND DETERMINATION OF FUNDING OF APPLICATIONS FROM CONSERVATION DISTRICTS FOR THE SAGE-GROUSE COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM - * FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Mr. Rubald said he had some updates. Commissioner Tibbitts sent an email that said, “I support your rankings and would like to do what we did last time which is simply go down the list and fund the top ranked proposals in order until the funding runs out and the remaining projects getting whatever funds are left over. If the short funded projects are not moved forward without full funding then go down to the next ranked that would take any funds available.”

Mr. Rubald said Lander County CD held a questionable emergency meeting that he believes was not legal. It did not meet the qualifications for an emergency meeting as described in the statute.

Mr. Rubald said this is not confirmed yet - he spoke with Ray Dotson with NRCS on the break and Mr. Dotson said NRCS will most likely add \$25,000 to the \$75,000 general fund money.

Chairman Sicking agreed with Commissioner Tibbitts to fund by ranking.

Commissioner Orr said Vya CD was late in submitting and should not be considered.

B. Commissioner Roukey made a motion to distribute the money between Lincoln and White Pine (the original \$75,000) with the remainder trickling down to Smith Valley. If the additional \$25,000 becomes available, Smith Valley would be fully funded and then Tonopah and whatever after that goes to Vya. After discussion, Commissioner Roukey rescinded his motion.

Commissioner Swanson moved to fully fund Smith Valley and to cut back Lincoln and White Pine proportionately to the \$75,000. And then we invite NRCS to add funding to the pool for the projects that they believe are their highest priorities.

Commissioner Swanson restated his motion to say to fully fund Smith Valley, and we would proportionately cut back Lincoln and White Pine of the \$75,000. If there is extra money in the pot from NRCS we would fully fund Lincoln and White Pine and any remaining would fund Tonopah and Lander. Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

C. Commissioner Orr made a motion to authorize Tim Rubald to negotiate with each funded Conservation District any funding issues, project monitor reporting, and any changes the Commission stipulates in a specific funding agreement, and to sign the agreement with successful Districts on the Commission’s behalf. Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

Mr. Rubald asked for a motion to authorize the release of the \$75,000. Commissioner Swanson made a motion to authorize Mr. Rubald to release the \$75,000. Commissioner Rieman seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

VII. REVIEW, DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF THE HUMBOLDT RIVER BASIN NETWORK’S REQUEST FOR THE COMMISSION TO BECOME THE LEAD ENTITY FOR

**FUTURE WORK AS YET TO BE DETERMINED, IN THE HUMBOLDT RIVER BASIN - *
FOR POSSIBLE ACTION***

Commissioner Orr said the request is that the SCC becomes the sponsoring entity that will essentially provide a home for the group. Commissioner Swanson moved that the Commission become the lead entity. Commissioner Roukey seconded the motion, there was a vote and the motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION TAKEN***

IX. COMMISSIONER ITEMS - *FOR DISCUSSION ONLY*

Commissioner Swanson commented that there is a group in the state involved with results oriented grazing for ecosystem restoration. It is a number of managers meeting with high level people in federal agencies about the idea of grazing management that works. Commissioner Swanson's proposal is to take the idea of a grazing response index to various ranches that will be called stewardship ranches. We would bring those ranches together with extension and agency people to talk about what was learned and use that to inform the next round of the Nevada Range Management School. He believes that would lead to talk of how to use supplementation in order to concentrate animals and provide opportunities for recovery, how to develop water, and using stockmanship as a tool for concentrating animals for planned use and for planned recovery. This would include changing the grazing locations which helps to regrow the leaf area.

X. NEXT COMMISSION MEETING - * FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

A. Mr. Rubald said the Strategic Plan needs to be reviewed and it will be on the next agenda.

Mr. Rubald said we would want to invite the principals of the NCCN, the Governor's Office representative, and the USFS representative to the next meeting.

B. It was agreed to meet in mid to late May. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS There were no public comments.

XII. ADJOURNMENT - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Chairman Sicking adjourned the meeting at 1:32 p.m. ***NO ACTION TAKEN***