



MINUTES STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION



Date: Thursday April 24th, 2025
Time: 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Location: Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Building, 901 South Stewart Street, 2nd Floor, Pyramid Room in Carson City, Nevada

Public Comment*

If you wish to make a public comment, you may do so verbally in person or virtually. Public comment may be submitted via email to maten@dcnr.nv.gov or by written mail to the CD Program 3275 Fountain Way, Winnemucca, NV 89445. Public comment is for all matters, both on or off the agenda as designated on the agenda and will be limited to three minutes per person. Public comments will also be heard during individual action items on the agenda prior to action taken. The Commissioners may prohibit or limit comment of the content if the comments are a topic not relevant to, or within the authority of the SCC, or if they are irrational or amounting to personal attacks or interfering with the rights of other speakers but will not restrict comments based on viewpoint only. The SCC reserves the right to reduce the time or limit in writing on the agenda items and/or attend and make comments on that item at the meeting.

- Items on the agenda may be taken out of order.
- The Commission may combine two or more agenda items for consideration.
- The Commission may remove an item from the agenda or delay discussion relating to an item at any time.

Agenda

1. Call to order & Determination of Quorum.

Chairman Tibbitts called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM.

A quorum was confirmed.

Commission Members Present:

Chair Commissioner Jake Tibbitts, Area 1

Vice Chairman Commissioner Eric Rieman, Area 2

Commissioner Doug Martin, Area 2

Commissioner Maggie Orr, Area 3

Commissioner Jerry Annis, Area 1

Commissioner Mark Damron, Area 3

Commissioner Agee Smith, member at large.

Commissioner Dr. Paul Meiman, University of Nevada, Reno College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources and Cooperative Extension (CABNR/UNCE), Elko.

Commission Members Absent:

Commissioner Meghan Brown, Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA).

Guests:

Casey Adkins, SETT Representative

Christian Fritsen, NDEP

Madi Ellingwood NDOW

Bob Adams, OHV Commission

Heidi Ramsey, NRCS

Chris Rose, NRCS

Dominique Etchegoyhen, DCNR
Chad Stephens, DCNR
Marlee Jenkins, DCNR
Skyler Monaghan, SETT
Greg Cloward, DAG
Laura McSwain CDSN
Susan Abele USFWS
Christopher Beveridge, BLM
Robert Burdick, BLM
Courtney Walker, Walker Basin
Rich Wilkinson, CVCD
Connie Lee, NVACD

2. Public Comment. *

None

3. Approve today's agenda, April 24th, 2025 with the inclusion of any emergency items and deletion of any items. (For Possible Action)

Commissioner Annis made a motion to accept the agenda as presented, Commissioner Orr second the motion. Motion passed unanimously. ACTION TAKEN

4. Approve the SCC January 21st, 2025 draft meeting minutes. (For Possible Action). Meeting Materials provided.

Commissioner Meiman noted a few corrections to spelling, no substantial changes to content.

Chairman Tibbitts notes a name misspelled in a few places.

Commissioner Reiman made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected, Commissioner Martin second the motion. Motion passed unanimously. ACTION TAKEN

5. Nomination of officer positions on the State Conservation Commission. (NRS 548.140) (For Possible Action).

a) Nomination and vote for Chairman position for the SCC

Chairman Tibbitts open nominations for Chair of the SCC.

Commissioner Orr nominated Jake Tibbitts for SCC Chair.

No other nominations were heard.

Commissioner Reiman second the nomination for Jake Tibbitts for Chair of the SCC.

No opposition to chair nominations. Jake Tibbitts will abstain from the vote.

Chairman Tibbitts approved as Chairman of the SCC. ACTION TAKEN

b) Nomination and vote for Vice chairman for the SCC.

Chairman Tibbitts open nominations for Vicechair of the SCC.

Commissioner Martin nominated Eric Reiman for SCC Vicechair.

No other nominations were heard.

Commissioner Orr second the nomination for Eric Reiman for Vicechair of the SCC.

No oppositions to Vicechair nominations. Eric Reiman will abstain from the vote.

*Commissioner Reiman approved as Vice chairman of the SCC. **ACTION TAKEN***

**6. Update on travel policies for Commissioners by DCNR staff. (For Discussion Only).
Meeting Materials provided.**

Ms. Aten said the staff person in DCNR who was going to provide the training was unavailable and unable to do the training for today's meeting. Ms. Aten gave an overview of the meeting materials and went through the required forms for requesting travel and submitting travel claims for Commissioners. The Commissioners will need to fill out their travel claims in the future and submit them to the DCNR accounting email for approval and payment.

Ms. Aten will send out a draft example of common travel for Commissioners on the form for their guidance.

The new SAM federal travel rules are already incorporated into the spreadsheet for claims and the gsa.com website lists all current per diem and lodging rates.

Travel pre-authorization will mostly be required for long-distance travel or flights and will likely only impact Commissioner Damron currently. Travel authorization forms will need to be submitted in advance of any airline tickets purchased. Most airline purchases will be made by the state, not as a reimbursement.

Commissioner Martin asked about mileage radius for travel and if that was one way or round trip.

Ms. Aten will follow up with DCNR fiscal staff to help answer more of the specific questions relating to Commissioner travel.

Commissioner Reiman asked why the DCNR staff can not just fill them out for Commissioner as they use to.

Ms. Aten clarified that to create a transparent process employees need to submit their own claims for DCNR staff review and approval. There needed to be a separation in fiscal reporting and management and employee claims.

Commissioner Damron asked if the forms can be electronically signed?

Ms. Aten replied Yes at this time they can be electronically signed for submission.

No Action Taken

7. Discuss options for providing Open Meeting Law training and Ethics training for Conservation Districts. (For Possible Action).

- a) Consideration of reporting to the Program and SCC open meeting law and ethics

training by CDs every 2 or 4 years.

b) Consideration of training options, video, in person, pool/pact, or other options.

Ms. Aten explained the need for CD training in open meeting law and ethics. There have been more issues over the last few years with a lack of understanding and a lack of follow-up on following the rules and an increase in potential accidental violations. New Supervisors often lack the training, and Ms. Aten is asking for ideas and proposals on how we can provide CDs the training needed. She has reached out to the County DA offices in various places to acquire training, but they have either said no, or they don't have time. She also gave examples of how other states are providing training to their supervisors this can be done through online portals, watching videos and answering questions, or checking a box at the end of the year saying they have completed training. Ms. Aten would like to have some process for providing the training or ideas for how the training might be acquired for the boards.

Commissioner Orr asked for material that is about or under an hour and said she might be able to get the CD to participate in that way. She also mentioned the DA has participated in meetings in the past and might be open to providing something, although they understand they often cannot make time. Pool pact attends Lincoln county meetings and may be able provide the training in the future if the board can find out how to participate.

Commissioner Martin said Carson city provides a free 3-4hour training each year for new members across all boards.

Chairman Tibbitts said the County has provided training in their region for multiple boards. He said NACO has also provided training. Nevada Leadership Program through UNR provides training throughout the state. They may be able to provide the training.

Ms. Aten said we have been trying to connect with Pool pact to find out who is providing the OML training and how to get on their notification list or coordinate so that supervisors can participate. We have been unable to connect with anyone at pool pact to get an answer back.

Ms. Aten also has the new DAG OLM presentation PowerPoint, but if sent out she is worried there would not be the opportunity for questions and follow up. There is also a youtube video of Lyon County's DA giving a OML and ethics training, it is one hour long but very well done.

Chairman Tibbitts said there is training on NACO's website and a recording of the OML and good governance training available, it's a training from 2023.

Ms. Aten has been updating the handbook but it also lacks the OML and ethics information needed by boards. She wants to be consistent in the information and spend time working on the best possible delivery of the information.

Commissioner Annis said he thinks the Pool pact training would likely be good training to show at CD meetings, and we can encourage CDs to watch the video at a meeting.

Chairman Tibbitts mentioned that DAs are required by law to assist the CDs, and likely most

DAs are not aware of that requirement. It would be a good time to remind them and start conversations to be included in future opportunities.

Chairman Tibbitts noted that under the commissioner in the NAC it does require that commission to find the CDs in good standing based on several items. It might be worth considering this training is added to the NAC language to be found in good standing. The CDs are already required to submit the agendas and minutes which should be complying with OML, and if those are found not to be meeting the requirements they could be found to be not in good standing.

Commissioner Martin said the Pool pact website has a menu of items for training. There are numerous e-trainings available on the website and that provide a training certificate upon completion.

No Action Taken

8. Discuss a request for receipts for State awarded funds starting next fiscal year, and receipts for spending and match on Sage grouse grants. (For Possible Action).

- a) Consider adding a requirement for receipts to show State award of money is spent and spent in the categories outlined under NRS 548.150 “reasonable and necessary expenses” starting in FY26.
- b) Consider adding a requirement for receipts for spending and match on Sage grouse grants starting in FY26.

Ms. Aten said this would be a good thing to consider for financial reporting. It would move the CDs towards being more fiscally responsible in their spending and ensure they are spending state awards under the NRA and NAC requirements. Currently the only report of spending is in an the annual report which often lacks clarity and proof of expenditures in the allowed categories. She also noted every other grant program in DCNR and other State departments require receipts as proof of purchase under the grant, the difference being those grant are all reimbursement grants versus up front awards of money. The suggestion is not to ask for large budget books, but to show the money being spent is being conducted under the grants guidelines and purpose.

Chairman Tibbitts is concerned the state award money would be difficult to track, if for instance its to pay dues. They would only have a check of that payment.

Ms. Aten replied that it would be suffice or a receipt showing payment for something like herbicide for a spray project. By sending in the receipt, she can also show how much the board is matching the award of money from the state because right now there is no way to show that matching unless we are able to encourage them to share that in the reporting somewhere.

Chairman Tibbitts says under 548.520, the supervisors shall keep an accurate record of all spending. This statue requires them to keep accounts and have an audit. The SCC review is a

audit, but when the reports are not accurately reporting it also puts the SCC commissioners on the line for responsibility.

Commissioner Martin said his concern is with receipts, and how a CD would report staff time when it's part of a salary which includes other avenues of payment. There wouldn't be a receipt for that time.

Chairman Tibbitts replied that although there may not be a traditional receipt there would be a proof of payment to the staff.

Commissioner Martin also noted that audits are cheap for the CD.

Ms. Aten acknowledged that once you are in a different tax or income bracket those audits are advisable and understand they are not cheap. But that 90% of the CDs have only around \$60,000 in their bank account in a good year. Many are not even above \$20,000.

Ms. Aten again clarified that it's not meant to be an increased burden on the CDs, just an additional form of reporting on what they are already claiming. It might end up being a bigger burden on CD staff as we sort through receipts, but it would help with tracking and proof of appropriate spending.

Chairman Tibbitts said under the NRS CDs are asked to submit a statement of receipts and disbursements. This statement should be backed by the receipts upon request, but he's not sure it needs to be turned into the program.

Ms. Aten to add clarity, this request is just for the state awarded funding. The template that is currently provided to show the spending of the state funds is often not filled out or lacks any narrative to know what and where the spending was used by the CDs. Adding a reporting requirement would provide more transparency in the spending of legislatively awarded dollars versus other match funding.

b) Consider adding a requirement for receipts for spending and match on Sage grouse grants starting in FY26.

Ms. Aten said under the current sage grouse grant reporting there is only a request for a report upon completion and a report on the spending. There is no proof of that spending by the CDs. The request to create more consistency with other grant programs, but also to create more clarity in how the money awarded is being spent.

Commissioner Meiman asked if the other commissions collect receipts and who reviews those?

Ms. Aten yes, those programs are collecting that information under their awarded grants.

Deputy Director Etchegoyhen noted that the other grants are all reimbursement grants, so the information must be submitted for reimbursement of funds.

Ms. Aten can develop some reporting template updates for future review, her intention today was to have a conversation and ask if this is something the commission is interested in

pursuing for reporting.

No Action Necessary.

9. Update on Conservation District requirement for staff enrollment in Public Employee Retirement (PERS). (For Possible Action). Meeting Materials provided.

- a) Requirement and outline of guidance created for CD PERS enrollment process and options.

Ms. Aten said the program was made aware that CD employees would need to be enrolled in PERS. After working with PERS and the DAG we were able to create some clarity about PERS enrollment. She created a guidance sheet for CDs and outlined what defines an employee and under which circumstances the CD employees might need to enroll.

CD employees who work 20 hours or more are considered employees and must enroll in PERS. Employees who work seasonally 1,039 hours or more in one fiscal year must be enrolled in PERS. Employees who work under 20 hours a week are not required to enroll in PERS.

Ms. Aten worked with PERS to get a point of contact, and they will assist the CDs in the process of getting set up with PERS.

Mr. Rose (NRCS) asked if this is applicable with the new NVACD NRCS agreement? Would the CD employees hired under this agreement be considered an employee and require PERS? Chairman Tibbitts replied that they could be considered an employee depending on how the CD hires them. But likely many of those situations will fit under the contract employee category and could be excluded due to that.

Mr. Rose noted it would be good to ensure NVACD, Mr. Piper knows about this policy and understand when it might be applicable under the agreement.

Commissioner Damron asked about staff who work erratic schedules, where they might work 20 hours one week and only 4 the next.

Ms. Aten replied they would likely fall under the "seasonal or temporary" employee category and should not exceed the 1,039 hours in one fiscal year.

Commissioner Reiman asked how would they keep paying seasonal or field employees if funding isn't consistent. How would they keep them enrolled in PERS if they are not working.

Ms. Aten said not knowing all the specifics of that specific situation the Cd would need to define if the employee is a contract or CD employee first.

Commissioner Reiman said they are CD employees who work under multiple grants on various projects.

Ms. Aten said they could be defined as either one. Contracted to work on specific projects and recontract them when the work changes, in this case the CD would not enroll in PERS but provide fringe benefits. Or if they are a CD employee they would keep them enrolled in PERS even if they are not working 40hours and they would fall under the 1,039hour rule.

Commissioner Martin offered they could be a hybrid employee who is contracted for certain projects, but otherwise says under 1,039hours doing other work.

Commission Reiman said the difficulty is that they already pay around 28% in fringe benefits and if enrolled in PERS it would increase the amount set aside by 40%.

Deputy Director Etchegoyhen asked what the Social Security withdrawal would be versus the Nevada 17%

Ms. Aten said the rate that she was able to find was 28%, which shouldn't make a huge difference in what the CD is currently setting aside.

Commissioner Reiman asked about past state employees.

Ms. Aten said there are different situations depending on when they left employment and how they retired their account. The PERS point of contact will help them enroll and answer all those questions specific to their situation.

Deputy Director Etchegoyhen noted there are different enrolment options, employee/ employer and employer paid. That difference can also change how they pay into PERS and their withdrawal from PERS. Would that factor in to the burden on CDs if their employer would need to pay more?

Commissioner Orr said yes, this was a discussion point when they enrolled in PERS and could end up being a burden.

Ms. Aten said the PEBS Public employee benefits program was the next area being investigated. Currently they have different definitions of a public employee. This means right now they are not required to be enrolled in PEBS. She is still in discussion with the DAG and PERS to ensure this interpretation is correct and that there is not a legal requirement for enrollment.

By consensus of the Commission the guidance reviewed and discussed will be provided to all districts by Ms. Aten.

No Action Necessary.

10. Legislative Updates related to or impacting Conservation District of natural renewable resources. (For Discussion Only).

a) Updates and discussion on AB 80, and other proposed or pending legislative impacts.

Commissioner Reiman asked about SB108.

Chairman Tibbitts said SB 108 it was declared exempt, and it will need to win its way through the Ways committee. It has not had a hearing yet.

AB80 was amended to exclude a fiscal note and was changed to say the formation would be upon the availability of funding. There was also a sunset clause added. In Utah they were able to stand up this initial without funding, and getting something in law. This was successful in other state so we are hoping NV will also take on this process.

Commissioner Orr asked who would carry it forward and how would it be formed in NV?

Chairman Tibbitts noted it could be CDs or the SCC and others with partners, but can not increase the burden on CD program staff as is since there is not funding.

Commissioner Meiman asked about the struck out \$250,000 in the original bill, would that be the cost of standing this up?

Chairman Tibbitts said in the original bill that was set up for CD Program staff and hiring to carry out the incitive.

Commissioner Meiman would the estimate of \$250,000 be the cost for the program to be set up and be an ask of partners to help stand up this with staff?

Chairman Tibbitts said that could be the initial starting point.

Commissioner Martin said it would be good if once this is passed the SCC bring it back to a meeting to help organize the partners.

Chairman Tibbitts noted that it can come back to the SCC, but can not increase the current workload on CD Program staff since it's unfunded. So, it can be part of board business and discussed on an agenda.

Commissioner Martin said he looked up the Governor budget and there is an increase for the cost of living increases and the CD Program does not have that increase added. He asked Deputy Director Etchegoyhen if that is where the cost of living can be added?

Deputy Director Etchegoyhen noted that not all programs and divisions add that every year, but it is added in some places. If for instance the cost of fuel increases that can be very impactful on certain divisions.

Commissioner Martin said the CDs are also impacted by that inflation and said it would be beneficial to see that cost of living increase be added to the CD budget.

Commissioner Annis said he was disappointed to see that AB 109 did not pass out, and it should be considered in the future. It monitors geothermal and dissolved mineral water

consummation and impacts on water. These industries move into basins which are over allocated and there is currently no monitoring of geothermal impacts on those closed basins. Chairman Tibbitts noted that this bill was to clean up the discrepancy which occurs with geothermal facilities that does not require them to get a water right. He said the counter argument is that it's not the consumptive water use, but the impact on the water basins overall including the surface water impacts when there is pumpage in the closed system. Commissioner Annis said there are new technologies which will allow them to use a directional drilling systems which will still require water.

Commissioner Martin asked about the water retirement programs.

Chairman Tibbitts said there are currently a few bills being reviewed all had funding removed. They will prop up a program to support the water rights retirement, but no funding in the first few years. The idea would be to get the program set up and ask for funding later. **For Discussion Only**

11. Updates from Agencies and Partners. (For Discussion Only).

- a) Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA)

None

- b) University of Nevada Reno/ University Cooperative Extension (UNCE)

Commissioner Meiman provided a written update for UNCE attached to these minutes.

- c) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Mrs. Heidi Ramsey State Conservationist NRCS: provided an update for the State. There have been numerous programs for federal staff to leave and retire. After the second early retirement offer they lost a lot of staff. There are 36 staff of the 85 positions with only 12 people in the 9 field office locations. They hope they will not be asked to reduce staff further, but will know after the reorganization plan review.

The Nevada NRCS submitted their reorganization plan and have not heard back yet, but should hear back soon if it was accepted. She anticipates it will be accepted. Among the leadership team they are looking at how to cover the field office locations to provide good customer service and doing what they can to help customers.

The state did do better with contract obligations, they are over allocated in programs. The sage grouse spending was better, this year it was \$675,000 in applications.

There were two new programs, the tractor program which did great for the first year, allocating around one million in funds, and she anticipates an increase in that fund pool next year.

The other new practice was virtual fencing which they do not have figure on for this year, but there is a lot of new interest.

The IJA and IRA funding was unfrozen yesterday so they anticipate being able to pay those obligated contracts. No new contracts will be allowed under those funds pools.

There is a new chief, Aubrey Betencout and she is trying to free up more IRA funding or other funding to help get the program moving again.

The NVACD and NRCS contract was able to obligate the funding for the NTCD engineers and Mr. Rose has been working on moving those agreements forward.

Phesants forever was able to pay staff to keep the partner biologists employed and with IRA unfrozen they hope to be able to keep them employed.

The next STAC meeting is set for May 19th

The first tribal TAC took place April 17th and went well with around 7 tribes providing input.

**Additional notes are attached to the minutes - as provided by NRCS.*

d) Nevada Farm Service Agency (FSA)

None

e) Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Deputy Director Etchegoyhen DCNR Deputy Director: gave an update for DCNR Programs.

NDF was able to work with NDOW to do some projects including NDF helped filled guzzlers with their new helicopter. NDF and DOC continue to discuss about the camps and continue to have difficulties in paying and keeping the program intact.

Had partnership with USFS last year where combined crews were used to work at Arcdome and other places to fulfill a full crew. Firefighters are being hired currently.

Shared stewardship funds are available in priority areas for projects, and there has been success in the Western region on fine fuels management and restoration projects. Received 24million dollars from USFS to keep working on projects.

NDEP and DCNR are working on comments on the waters of the US to work towards a better definition.

State Parks is still working on acquisition of the Kinsey House for historical preservation and are working on adding it to the existing State park. Another location being acquired called Montaneva near Eureka, being pursued for protection of a conservation site and also adding a recreational area nearby.

Location near Dayton, called Chavez along the river for conservation and preservation. And continued work at other parks.

The State has been working with the BLM on the ARMPA and discussing alternatives in the proposal. Looking to find alignment with the Nevada plan developed with the SEC and SETT. There are still some issues with disturbance caps and a few other definitions that do not align.

State land use planner position still vacant and has been difficult to fill. Current vacancy rate for the department is around 13%.

Commissioner Martin: Is NDF working on the restoration of the Davis fire?

Deputy Director Etchegoyhen: Yes, they have been working there, and additionally shared stewardship has funding for the region. Reseeding did occur across multiple fires.

f) Nevada Conservation District Program (NCDP)

Ms. Aten said the Program is still working to fly the Southern Nevada CD Program staff position. The anticipated dates for staffing are to have someone in Southern Nevada by June and in Elko by July.

She also noted that there will be a few CDs who likely will not be found in good standing this year due to the staff vacancies and reliance on the Program and staff for the CDs to hold meetings and help them spend their awarded funds.

Completed CD staff training for new admin and CD staff online going over general admin work, NRS laws, the handbook etc. This has continued to be successful for new employees and admin.

g) Sagebrush Ecosystem Program & Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SEP/ SETT)

Skyler Monaghan with the SETT gave an update: The SEC and SETT are working through consistency in language in the BLM ARMPA. BLM communicated that Alternative #5 was the final chosen alternative, but the State specific circumstances will require more review to create consistency.

The SETT putting on debit and credit workshop for all interested parties in Elko May 20th 1-7 at the Elko convention center. There will be information for many different interested parties about both the debit and credit side of the program. Also, a workshop project at the 3-bars ranch in Eureka doing willow staking and riparian restoration, all are invited to attend. There will also be an end-of-the-summer Proper functioning condition (PFC) workshop in Eureka with Creeks and Communities and Dr. Sherm Swanson.

h) All other DCNR Programs and Divisions

None

i) Nevada Association of Conservation Districts (NvACD)

Commissioner Damron: Nevada Tahoe engineers have been working with the NRCS funding for contracting opportunities.

Mrs. Connie Lee NVACD staff: Reminder that names are still needed for the Governors

nomination recommendation letter. There are names needed in Area 1 and Area 3, Area 1 will need to be someone from Humboldt or Pershing. Areas 3 must be from Esmeralda or Nye. Reminder about the sportsman's raffle this year, contact any board member for tickets. NVACD will be attempting to host area meetings this year to have dialogue directly with the CDs in rural areas. This will help meet the NvACD requirements for areas meetings, as well as get more direct feedback from the CDs and help put names down for the Commissioner seats on the SCC. NVACD is also working on by-law revision, and those by-law revisions are open to comment by Supervisors.

j) All Other Partners and participating agencies

Mrs. Susan Able with USFWS – there have been resignations from the department but no final numbers to report at this time. There are still some projects being developed and worked on including a virtual fence project in Elko. There are around 20 projects in northern Nevada right now, they did get some funding back and will be resuming work on those projects soon. They are in the process of reviewing the ESA updates and changes, and there will be more news soon regarding the proposed species.

Mr. Robert Burdick with BLM – the weeds program lead has left so for now none of the new pesticide use proposals -PUPS will not move forward until that position has coverage or may move slower.

Meeting with an IPM crew near Lake mead to do treatments.

They are working on getting funding options in place for Nevada and they are still attending meetings with Stakeholders throughout the state.

For Discussion Only

12. Commissioner Items. (For Discussion Only)

Commissioner Ore said the NACD grant was awarded and signed for Lincoln County.

Commissioner Annis asked about the requirements for the names on the SCC list that NvACD mentioned their update. There was some discussion about the requirements in place for the areas to nominate individuals for the vacant or upcoming expired seats.

13. Public Comments: *None*

14. Next Commission Meeting. (For Discussion Only)

a) Possible future Agenda items for consideration.

i. Legislative review

b) Date, time and location of next meeting.

Thursday July 24th at 1pm

15. Adjournment. 3:40pm

Meiman's Update from UNR College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources – primarily Extension and the Department of Agriculture Veterinary and Rangeland Sciences, this time around:

Tracy Shane is working feverishly to finish her PhD Dissertation as she starts up her new position as our statewide Extension Livestock Specialist. Tracy is going gangbusters.... she was recently awarded a large grant from USDA APHIS National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program for Improving Nevada's Preparedness for Foot-and-Mouth Disease and other Foreign Animal Disease Outbreaks. Gary McCuin, Amilton DeMello, Hannah Rodriguez and I are collaborating with Tracy on this grant, and we are working closely with NDA.

Shane and Meiman just recently kicked off another Virtual Fence project with our neighbors to the West (CA).

Meiman is still hoping to get a new VF project off of the ground north of Elko with BLM a permittee using the eShepherd VF system from Gallagher. Skyler Monaghan with NDA Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team and Meiman have been working with another rancher in NW NV who is interested in getting a VF project up and running.

The Department of Agriculture, Veterinary and Rangeland Sciences is working to fill multiple positions:

- Asst Prof. Rangeland Ecology and Mgt – closes 5/2
- Asst Prof. Animal Nutrition – Interviews complete – probably making offers/negotiating
- Veterinary Science Instructor
- Animal and Range Instructor

Baker Perry has been hired as our State Climatologist and has been making rounds introducing himself (ROGER and other recent meetings/I've been on). Holly Gatzke, our N. Area Director describes Baker as "enthusiastic and very experienced in measuring applied implications from climate, especially in mountainous areas."

Holly asked me to provide an update on a cooperative project between Extension and UNLV (Dale Devitt) – In 2024, a network of weather stations were installed following a plan implemented by University of California known as CIMIIS (California Irrigation Management Information System). Extension is providing funding for a similar system to be developed in the Las Vegas valley. The long-term goal is to establish an interactive website that makes available real-time estimates of environmental demand generated at weather stations throughout southern Nevada. The environmental demand estimates will be used by irrigators to more accurately schedule irrigation events and irrigation amounts.

Zaijing Sun (UNLV) – Studying changes in heavy metals in Lake Mead water and Las Vegas Valley ground sources with drought conditions. Started collecting samples in 2024 and have secured other grants with the Extension seed funding.

The multi-state invasive annual grass tech transfer partnership that Meiman works with put on an invasive annual grass introductory webinar in early April that was well-attended (~300 folks), and we are holding 2-day field workshops in Idaho Falls (June 3-4) and Elko (June 10-11).

The Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group has been leaning on Meiman for years to put on a Rangeland Monitoring Workshop focusing on the recently revised "Ranchers Monitoring Guide". We finally did it in March. NNSG took care of the logistics and Meiman planned and led the delivery of the content. Other presenters included

Brad Schultz (UNCE), Bill Wells, who was with USFS at the time, Jeff Moore from BLM-Elko, Gerry Miller retired from everything (including, but not limited to DCNR), and Dave Voth (formerly NDA; now consulting). The workshop included lots of hand-on practice and was very well-attended (38 folks; 2/3 of whom were ranchers of all ages), and we received some very positive feedback.

Staci Emm with UNCE has received some grant funding for Regenerative Ag education/outreach in NV. She has hired Adrienne Snow (based in Fallon) to coordinate some educational events. A Regenerative Ag workshop was held in Elko last fall, I believe there is one coming up at Cottonwood (those interested should check with Agee Smith or Gary McCuin to confirm and for details). Given the large role of soil health in the regenerative ag space, it might be good to coordinate with Staci if we want to move forward in the direction of looking for outside funding for Soil Health efforts in NV.

SCC Meeting Update

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Contact: Chris Rose, Partnership Coordinator, 775-834-0890, Christopher.rose@usda.gov

4/17/25

Staffing

- DRP 2.0 ended 4/15. Contracts are due to be signed NLT 4/23. Participants will be placed on admin leave 4/30.
- After DRP 2.0 takes effect on 4/30
 - We are expecting to have 36 of 85 positions filled in the state.
 - There will only be 12 people staffing 9 field offices in the state.
- Agency Reduction-in-Force (RIF) and Reorganization Plan (ARRP) plans were due 4/14. No information has been provided on how that might impact staffing at the state or local levels. Media reports indicate plans may be completed in May.
- We are having discussions about how to cover offices and ensure good customer service but until the ARRP is released, we are unable to make any firm decisions.

Obligations

- We are over obligated for FY25 in all or almost all our programs and funding categories. Due to current staffing levels, we are not planning on requesting any additional funds for the FY.
- The good news is that last year we left about \$600k on the table for sage grouse related projects, this year we have about \$675k- \$700k in applications for sage grouse related projects.
- We launched the Combustion System Improvement program that can replace tractors and other types of equipment and applications have exceeded the \$1.5 million that had been allotted for the year.
- Virtual fence was also introduced as a practice this year. Do not have any figures regarding contracts utilizing it for this update.

Funding

- We are currently able to obligate funds related to our regular farm bill programs.

- Obligated contracts through FY24 that we funded by IRA money are going to be paid with IRA dollars.
- IRA and IJA funding was unfrozen 4/23. Working on determining how that impacts our agreements and obligations.
- 4/23 guidance: No new direct payment contracts with farmers using IRA monies (EQIP, CSP, ACEP) should be awarded yet.
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Agreements

- We were able to utilize the non-IRA funded agreement with the NV Association of Conservation Districts to continue funding the Nevada-Tahoe Conservation District to provide engineering assistance to our field offices.
- With the IRA funding being unfrozen, we are reaching out to partners to determine how to move forward under agreements.
- Thank you to NDOW for providing funding to keep our Pheasants Forever positions on board when the IRA funds were frozen.

Other

- The next State Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, 5/19. We are finalizing the time and requests for agenda items will be sent this week.
- Held our first Tribal Advisory Council meeting 4/17. The TAC is designed to provide an opportunity for tribes to provide input on NRCS programs in a similar way to the STAC.