



STATE OF NEVADA
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES

STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Richard H. Bryan Building
Video/Teleconference Meeting
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701
May 4, 2022 at 1:00 PM

- **List of Acronyms attached as last page.**

Board Members Present:

Chairman Joe Sicking, Paradise-Sonoma Conservation District (CD);
Commissioner Meghan Brown, Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA);
Commissioner Mark Damron, CD of Southern Nevada;
Commissioner Dr. Paul Meiman, University of Nevada, Reno College of Agriculture,
Biotechnology & Natural Resources and Cooperative Extension (CABNR/UNCE), Elko;
Commissioner Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD, member at large;
Commissioner Doug Martin, Nevada Tahoe CD;
Commissioner Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD;
Commissioner Leland Wallace, Esmeralda CD.

Board Members Absent:

Vice Chairman Commissioner Eric Rieman, Carson Valley CD.

Others Present:

Melany Aten, Nevada Conservation Districts Program (NCDP) Manager;
Jennifer Zampanti, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR),
Director's office;
Dominique Etchegoyhen, NDCNR Deputy Director;
Gerry Miller, NCDP Elko Conservation Staff Specialist;
Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General (DAG);
Lorinda Wichman, Nye County Natural Resources Director;
Lauren Williams, NCDP Ely Conservation Staff Specialist;
Carl Clinger; Big Meadow CD;
Ray Dotson, State Conservationist USDA and NRCS.

1. Call to order, Determination of Quorum (For Possible Action)

- A. Chairman Sicking called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.
- B. A quorum was confirmed. **NO ACTION TAKEN**

2. Public Comments There were no public comments.

3. Review and consideration of approval of minutes (For Possible Action)

A. Commissioner Smith moved to pass February 24, 2022 minutes. Commissioner Damron seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN**

4. Review, ranking and determination of funding for applicants of the Sage Grouse Competitive Grant (For Possible Action) Meeting materials provided

A. Chairman Sicking opened discussion. Ms. Aten explained the review process for awarding the grant money. Six applications were received and were on time and complete. They were sent to a review panel of four that filled out review sheets for each CD. All applications ranked high, compared to prior years, and presented some good projects. The merit of all of the projects could indicate to the Legislature that there is a need to increase funding for Sage Grouse conservation efforts. Reviews showed important highlights and information. Ms. Aten was asked to show spreadsheet of scoring for the grant.

B. The scores and reviews were presented and discussed. Commissioner Martin commented on the deviation of scores and why there was such a difference. He made suggestions of what could have been different on the applications to present a more clear project proposal. Amount of grant will not cover all of the requested amounts.

C. Commissioner Tibbitts talked about the Administrative Code that states the SCC to rank the projects and the results will be given to SET for review for Sage Grouse habitat benefit. Outside rankings are helpful, but not required. SCC has ultimate decision in the ranking. He stated that three of the six applicants should get funding. Paradise Sonoma \$30,000, Quinn River \$17,000, and Eureka \$18,000.

D. Chairman Sicking stated that the top three applicants should be scaled down and liked Jakes idea of how to separate the funds. Commissioner Tibbitts stated that the applicants set their own scalable amounts. Chairman Sicking asked for any comments regarding the applications.

E. Ms. Wichman commented that Tonopah needed help with their application due to decreased staff. Their project is ongoing and will continue with or without the grant. Ms. Williams commented that she helped with the Tonopah applications and welcomed questions regarding it. For clarity, Chairman Sicking asked where in Nye County the project is. Ms. Williams answered that it is up Monitor Valley an hour from Tonopah on west side of the valley at the foothills of mountain range. Ms. Wichman clarified location. Commissioner Tibbitts commented that it was unclear whether the project was on private property. Application is clear that it's a Forest Service project. Project might have ranked higher if the location was realized. Commissioner Martin agreed that there was not a clear enough connection that this project was a Forest Service one. Application could have been read more carefully.

F. Commissioner Smith commented on the ongoing project in Northeast Elko and the increase of Sage Grouse habitats since water improvement in rehabilitated meadows. Soils must be improved to have seeding improved to be self-sustaining.

G. Commissioner Tibbitts commented that some CD meeting minutes don't state amounts or don't match what was in their applications regarding project amounts. Funding of workshops should not be included in the CD's application. They are not a direct benefit to Sage Grouse habitat. Regulations state that applications with a higher match shall have a higher rank.

H. Chairman Sicking asked how the commission felt about Commissioner Tibbitts' proposal for the decision of the grant award. Commissioner Tibbitts noted Quinn River be awarded the \$17,000 scalable amount, reduce Paradise Sonoma to the scalable amount of \$30,000, and the balance of \$18,000 to Eureka CD.

I. Commissioner Tibbitts motioned that Quinn River be awarded a scalable amount of \$17,000, Paradise Sonoma to their scalable amount of \$30,000, with the condition that our grant funding not be used for workshops, and the balance goes to Eureka CD. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN**
Chairman Sicking thanked all the applicants.

Ms. Aten talked about other funding opportunities coming soon, such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in May, and SCC funds earlier next year. Private ground eligibility for funds from NRCS program. Chairman Sicking encouraged the other districts to look into those opportunities.

5. Presentation by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) (For Discussion)
Meeting materials provided

A. Ray Dotson of NRCS provided information about his program. He presented a map of contact offices, a list of district conservationists, and a summary of the programs run by NRCS.

B. Commissioner Tibbitts asked about domestic wells failing and whether there are programs for helping with that. Mr. Dotson stated that Rural Development would be able to help with that.

C. Commissioner Smith asked about the CIC program new to Nevada. Mr. Dotson responded that it is implemented in Nevada and has had two applications associated with the program.

D. Commissioner Brown asked about noxious weeds and getting funds for treatment for those. Mr. Dotson responded that Jose Rosado is the contact for that. Watershed fill work being done that can possibly create an opportunity for preventing or knocking down noxious weeds within the treatment area.

E. Chairman Sicking asked about programs with NRCS for Sage Grouse applicants that were not given grant money. Mr. Dotson stated the CD's should contact local district conservationists with NRCS. Ms. Aten asked whether CDs can be an applicant with NRCS. Mr. Dotson answered that RCPP Would be the only one they could apply to.

6. Updates from Agencies and Partners (For Possible Action)

A. Nevada Department of Agriculture: Commissioner Brown thanked applicants for the quality of the applications and the wide range of projects addressing the Sage Grouse. The department is working on recruitments and looking for more applicants. Asked for any suggestions. Jake Dick is having state meetings about working on training new staff on noxious weeds and native seed program. Ms. Aten has been helping with implementation of projects and asked that Commissioner Tibbitts present at a meeting to discuss the work. Native seed program is active. Stephen will be holding regional meetings this fall with producers and will be reaching out to the CD's for participation. Paradise Joint Chiefs Project is being worked on by Ms. Aten and NDA.

B. University of Nevada Reno CABNR/UNCE: No updates.

C. Natural Resource Conservation Service: Mr. Dotson spoke of new recruitments. Employees in Nevada are working with American Indians training. May 18th is next meeting. Programs have shifted to allow working on federal lands.

D. DCNR: Mr. Etchegoyhen discussed court decision on water law. Order number 1309 in the lower White River flow system. State Engineer determined there should be single hydrographic basin. NRS expressly encourages the State Engineer should use best available science concerning the basin, but it was a statement of legislative intent, not a grant of authority. Still determining how to move forward. Preparing wildfire brief for the Governor. Experts will be there to answer questions. Department is experiencing an historic number of vacancies, which is having an impact in accomplishing our main purpose. Internal changes are needed to fill the vacancies. Talked about Brad Crowell's nomination as a Commissioner to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Mr. Etchegoyhen also talked about available money to match conservation easements and about Question 1 working on regulations and bond sales. Legislation has some grant money marked for specific CD projects. DCNR is working on regulations to allocation other grant money.

Mr. Dotson would like to call Mr. Etchegoyhen to check on progress.

Chairman Sicking asked where the grant funding is coming from, and Mr. Etchegoyhen answered from bond sales.

Commissioner Martin asked about the wildfire briefing and whether he can have a copy of the agenda. Mr. Etchegoyhen responded that he has a copy of the power point presentation to give him. Commissioner Martin is working with Ryan Shane on a presentation to the National Association of Conservation Districts for a webinar.

E. Sagebrush Ecosystem Program/Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team: No updates.

F. NvACD: "Make Every Drop Count" meeting is scheduled for November. Commissioner Smith has several meetings scheduled and soil subject will be woven into the water topic at the NvACD meeting. Commissioner Martin has been appointed to serve on Forestry Working Group and is developing a webinar on megafires and fuel breaks. Stated money is necessary for fuel breaks. There are 35 applicants for scholarships and there is \$8,000 to award them.

G. All others: No updates.

7. Commissioner items (For Discussion only)

A. Commissioner Damron discussed the retirement of county appointee Shane Amberman with CD of Southern Nevada. Is waiting for a new appointment from county in order to have a quorum. Cannot legally have a meeting. Commissioner Tibbitts asked about other vacancies. Commissioner Damron stated he cannot fill any vacancies until a county appointment for a quorum. Ms. Aten offered to help reach out to the county.

B. Commissioner Martin commented on Nevada Tahoe Conservation District fulfilled its statutory responsibility to appoint a replacement for Supervisor Cook. Statute stated that the SCC must be notified of the appointment. Ms. Aten needs oath of office and dates of appointment and term.

C. Commissioner Tibbitts stated statute says remaining supervisors must immediately appoint replacementsto fill vacancies. Commissioner Damron stated that county has appointed legal representation and will consult with them. Mr. Ott offered to help confirm open meeting law. Commissioner Damron will look for people interested in being on the board.

D. Commissioner Smith discussed educational opportunities at the ranch. June 21st and 22nd are Rancher PFC Classes. July 7th and 8th are range plant identification classes with Commissioner Meiman and Mr. Miller. On 21st and 22nd there will be a soil workshop by Nicole Masters from New Zealand. August 5th-7th is the Sage Grouse festival. There is a State and Transition Model Workshop scheduled at the ranch for September 14th and 15th . Northeast Elko CD has grants for these opportunities.

8. Next Commission Meeting (For Possible Action)

A. Future agenda items:

1. Commissioner Martin asked that a future agenda item of Thacker Pass and asked DCNR for help to talk about it. Ms. Aten stated that Water Resources could help also, along with DCNR and that she will contact Nevada Lithium for more information.
2. Ms. Aten stated CD work plans for must be submitted by June 1st.
3. The next SCC meeting is tentative for July or August and will send a reminder at the end of June.

9. Public comments-None

Public comment may be made on any issue, provided such comment is limited to areas relevant to and within the authority of the State Conservation Commission. Public comment is limited to 3 minutes per person. No action will be taken on any item raised during public comment that is not already on the agenda. At the discretion of the Chair, public comment may be received prior to action on individual agenda items.

10. Adjournment (For Possible Action)

A. **Motion to adjourn:** Meeting adjourned 2:42 PM.

BMP – Best Management Practice

BWQP – Bureau of Water Quality Planning

CABNR- College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources

CD – Conservation District

CDSN – Conservation District of Southern Nevada

CVCD – Carson Valley Conservation District

VCD – Carson Valley Conservation District

DAG – District Attorney General

DCNR – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

NACD – National Association of Conservation Districts

NACO - Nevada Association of Counties

NCDP – Nevada Conservation Districts Program

NDCNR – Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

NDEP-Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

NDOR-Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation

NDOT-Nevada Department of Transportation

NE Elko – northeast Elko Conservation District

NRCS-Natural Resource Conservation Service

NTCD- Nevada Tahoe Conservation District

NV - Nevada

NvACD – Nevada Association of Conservation Districts

OHV – Off-Highway Vehicles

RCPP – regional conservation partnership program

RFP – Request for Proposal

SCC-State Conservation Commission

SEC – State Environmental Commission

SEP – Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

SET-Sagebrush Ecosystem Team

SNOTEL-snow telemetry

STAC – State Technical Advisory Committee (NRCS)

TAC - Technical Advisory committee

UNCE – University Nevada Cooperative Extension

VC – Vice Chairman