



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

DATE: 11/9/2023

Location: USDA building 3275 Fountain Way, Winnemucca, NV 89445

Video/Teleconference Meeting

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

Commission Members Present:

Vice Chairman Commissioner Eric Rieman, Carson Valley Conservation District (CD).

Commissioner Mark Damron, CD of Southern Nevada;

Commissioner Agee Smith, Northeast Elko CD, member at large;

Commissioner Doug Martin, Nevada Tahoe CD;

Chair Commissioner Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD;

Commissioner Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD.

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

Commissioner Jerry Annis, Lander County CD

Commission Members Absent:

Commissioner Dr. Paul Meiman, University of Nevada, Reno College of Agriculture,

Biotechnology & Natural Resources and Cooperative Extension (CABNR/UNCE), Elko;

Others Present:

James A. Settlemeyer, Director Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR);

Dominique Etchegoyhen, Deputy Director DCNR;

Chad Stephens, Deputy Director DCNR

Melany Aten, Nevada Conservation Districts Program (NCDP) Manager;

Marlee Jenkins, CD Staff Specialist; NCDP

Jaime Fabre, State Conservation Commission Recorder, DCNR;

Gerry Miller, NCDP Elko Conservation Staff Specialist;

Lauren Williams, NCDP Ely Conservation Staff Specialist

Robert Adams, Nye County CD;

Joe Sicking, past supervisor and commissioner

Nancy Sicking, Humboldt County resident

Greg Ott, Deputy Attorney General (DAG);

Donna Lamm, Southern Nye County CD

John Pawlak, Southern Nye County CD

Carl Clinger, Big Meadow CD

Gloria Montero, Big Meadow CD

Chris Rose, Nevada Partner Coordinator, NRCS

Boyd Hatch, Santa Rosa Forest Ranger, USFS
Connie Lee, Coordinator, NVACD
Kevin Piper, Executive Director, NVACD
Wayne Nebeker, Lander CD
Justin Lambert, SETT, DCNR
Kathleen Steel, SETT, DCNR
Cheyenne Acevedo, SETT, DCNR
Cole Hustead, Winnemucca NDOW
Vickie Smith, Northeast Elko CD
Greg Becker, Acting NV State Conservationist, NRCS
Amber Pike, Admin, Lincoln CD
Ryan Shane, NDF, DCNR
Anna Vinogradova, Admin, Lander CD
Christie Sullivan, Admin, Lahontan CD and Stillwater CD
Loraine Colbert, Admin, Vya CD
Tony Parenti, NDF, DCNR

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

- A.** *Vice Chairman Rieman called the meeting to order at 9:14 AM.*
- 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). Meeting materials provided.

A. Approval of minutes from January 31, 2023. Melany will make the edits.

Commissioner Orr made recommended edits to minutes. The draft minutes had the incorrect date at the bottom of each page. This correction was made on the draft minutes presented to the Commission on the day of meeting.

Additional corrections made:

Item number 4, last paragraph spelling error of "recused" corrected.

Item number 5, second paragraph spelling error in sentence "impact by perches" corrected.

Item number 6, last paragraph spelling error of name "Tibbitts" corrected.

*Commissioner Orr motioned to pass **January 31st**, 2023, minutes after edits discussed. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion. Commissioner **Damron** recused himself from the action due to absence from meeting. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

4. Nomination of Officer position on the State Conservation Commission. (NRS 548.140)

A. Nomination and vote for Chairman of the SCC.

*Commissioner Rieman opened nominations for chairman of the SCC. Commissioner Tibbitts was nominated by Commissioner Martin for Chair. Nominations were closed. Commissioner Tibbitts accepted the nomination and the Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

B. Nomination and vote for Vice-Chairman of the SCC.

*Commissioner Rieman opened nominations for vice chairman of the SCC. Commissioner Rieman was nominated by Commissioner Tibbitts for vice chair. Nominations were closed. Commissioner Rieman accepted the nomination and the Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

**5. Review and Discussion of Conservation District Reports
(For Discussion Only)**

Review and discussion of all Conservation Districts' Proposed Budgets and Proposed Work Plans, and the Final Financial Reports and Annual Reports (NAC 548.110).

Program manager Ms. Aten said all reports were turned in. Southern Nye's report was late but on time for the meeting and sent out to the Commission for review. Tonopah conservation district completed their annual plan but could not get a quorum in place to sign the final submission. A draft was submitted on time along with the supporting minutes from their meeting.

All CDs used their entire fiscal award from the program and all fiscal reports were turned in on time.

All CDs held three or more meetings in the FY.

*CDSN has some **vaccines** vacancies on their board and need a secretary, which is making it difficult for them to conduct business, but they have been meeting regularly and are setting a good schedule.*

Commissioner Tibbitts asked if we could help the CDs clarify in their budgets the fiscal spending. In some cases, they only reported the \$4,000 not the \$4,068 since the \$68 was additional money added after that subtraction of other CDs unspent funds. Ms. Aten will work with the CDs to clarify all spending.

Commissioner Tibbitts pointed out some incorrect information on the tracking form regarding incorporated cities for certain CDs. Ms. Aten will clarify and clean up those missing cities for future tracking sheet clarity. This is relevant to ensure the boards have a city representative if there is an incorporated city in the district.

The Commission had discussion about future training for CDs in open meeting law and updating the handbook for classifications. Ms. Aten will coordinate with Greg Ott on available resources.

Commissioner Orr asked Deputy attorney general Greg Ott for his input of resources.

Mr. Ott stated there is open training available online and some training information needs updates, but that he will work with Ms. Aten to provide information to the CDs, and we will reach out to the local Das for more guidance and training.

Commissioner Tibbitts had a question regarding Vya CDs County appointee and if she was elected or appointed. Ms. Aten clarified she was appointed by the County representative Jeanne Herman.

6. Determination of Districts “In Good Standing” for FY23, and Release of FY24 Funding. (For Possible Action)

a) List of those Districts that meet the criteria of “Good Standing” based on submissions. NAC 548.110.

*All CDs were found in good standing for the FY23, and no further questions were asked regarding the CDs status. Commissioner Tibbitts made a motion to find all CDs in good standing based on requirements in NAC 548.110, with the record reflecting that Southern Nye CDs report was submitted late. Commissioner Orr seconds the motion. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

b) List of Districts the Commission authorizes the release of funding from the State based on “good standing” requirements and eligibility in NAC 548.115.

*All CDs were found in good standing for the FY23 and were eligible for their full funding award of \$4,500. Commissioner Smith made a motion to release funding to all CDs in good standing, Commissioner Martin seconds the motion. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

Additional discussion was had regarding a request for increased funding in the next legislative year. Director Settlemeyer said there may be an opportunity to request more funding but that he encourages the CD and supervisors to speak to their assemblymen and senators to stress the importance of the increased funding.

Commissioner Tibbitts asked for the Program to work on a dollar-to-dollar match for future conversations.

7. Discussion and Approval to Release the 2024 Sage Grouse Request for Proposal forms and Discussion about early release for next year. (For Possible Action)

A. Review of 2024 SCC Sage grouse RFP document. Review selected release, and submission dates. *Ms. Aten said there are not many changes from last year’s RFP, and we would like to release this as soon as possible for funding. Ms. Aten highlighted the match and flexibility requests in the new RFP as requested by Commission. Ms. Aten also announced the increase in award money to \$75,000 this year and next year. Ms. Aten also explained the grading process, where a group of partners are requested to review the applications and provide their feedback to the SCC for the next meeting when awards will be made. The suggestions by the Partners will help the SCC in their review of the projects and grants. Commissioner Orr made a motion to release the funding announcement, Commissioner Tibbitts seconds the motion. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

B. Discussion about FY24 RFP being released in March 2024.

Ms. Aten explained it would be more beneficial to award the FY25 grant earlier so that CDs could spend an entire year completing the work. The request is for the FY25 grant to be released at the next meeting and awarded in June/July for the CDs to start work as early as July 1, 2025. Commissioner Orr made a motion to release the funding for FY25 earlier, Commissioner Tibbitts seconds the motion.

Motion passed unanimously. ACTION TAKEN

8. Setting a regular meeting schedule for the SCC. (For Possible Action)

A. Discussion and consideration by the commission to set a regular meeting schedule for better participation and inclusion of partners and programs.

Ms. Aten asked if the commission would be in favor of setting a regular meeting schedule and deciding which ones would be virtual and which ones would be in person. This will help budget more accordingly for the program and ensure there are enough funds for the program manager to travel to Carson to host since we share those monetary funds in the budget. The presented idea would be to have a meeting virtually in Jan/Feb, in person March/April, virtually June/July and in person Oct/Nov. A physical location will still always be hosted in Carson and at our Conservation staff specialist offices for in person requirements.

Commissioner Rieman made a motion to set a regular meeting schedule, Commissioner Smith seconds the motion. Motion passed unanimously. ACTION TAKEN

9. Updates from Agencies and Partners: (For Discussion Only)

a) Nevada Department of Agriculture

Commissioner Brown gave an update about funding agreements being developed to address noxious and invasive weeds and partner coordination in the state. There will be another funding release later in 2024 for CDs to apply for to address weeds. Commissioner Brown spoke about the EDRR program and staff efforts throughout the state to lead local groups to help prioritize, map, and treat species more effectively.

She provided an update about funding for producers to grow native seed and enroll in the foundation seed program which has funding assistance. NDA recently acquired more funding to develop the future of the program and what connectivity with the CDs will look like.

b) University of Nevada Reno/ University Cooperative Extension NONE

c) Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mr. Becker gave an update on the NRCS trying to fill vacancies in offices around the state and gave him a timeline for acting. He re-introduced the new Nevada State Conservationist Heidi Ramsey and said she would be starting in Dec/Jan. He provided an update regarding the new Urban Ag position in Southern Nevada and encouraged the SCC and CDs to reach out to Chris Rose for future updates, Mr. Rose will also be doing outreach meetings in January. He gave a brief overview of the IRA money which is intended to reduce carbon impacts and said there is a list of climate smart practices available for IRA funds. Specifically on rangelands there is money for the following practices under IRA funding: brush management, no-till, crop rotation, and weed treatments. He also provided information on his conversation with the SEC and SETT about their programs complimenting each other and that those enrolled in the credit program could also likely enroll in CSP.

d) Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

NDF – provided information about the shared stewardship money across the state and provided updates about the connectivity with CDs. Mr. Shane recommended CDs to reach out to Ms. Aten or other shared stewardship contacts for more information.

Mr. Shane also addressed the conservation camp closures and shared the new process moving forward would be to hire firefighter one and two positions which would work out of the camps like the previous crews and be available for hire when they are not working an active fire.

Commissioner Orr asked about the closure of the camp in Pioche. Mr. Shane clarified that the camp would stay in place for now with the cooperation of the DOC.

DWR – developed a new buy back water program and has provide maps and handouts to water holders who are eligible for retirement and water rights and the buyback program in identify over allocated basins in Nevada. There are basin maps and more information on the DCNR website.

Deputy Etchegoyhen gave an update about the Conserve Nevada grant opportunity and laid out information on eligible projects and said the competitive funding can match other funds.

He also described an idea discussed with Ms. Aten to utilize the existing local work group process to help provide that same information to our state stakeholder for connectivity and clarity on where funds are needed on landscapes to either assist NRCS or find alternative funding pathways. The information sharing will allow the SCC and other boards to get localized information to guide spending and funding needs on the state side like it does the NRCS side.

Commissioner Rieman asked about the permitting issues on the river and in waterways.

Director Settlemeyer said DCNR is working on making the permitting process easier on the state side and removing roadblocks. CD program and other divisions will be meeting soon to further those discussions and create more clarity and outline areas that can be improved. Many of the issues are also on the ACOE side with the 404 permit, and the state and federal systems do not work well together. Within DCNR we are working on creating just one template instead of two to make the process faster. Director Settlemeyer also mentioned the Channel Clearance snag fund which has money for working waterways, more information can be found on the DCNR website.

e) Nevada Conservation District Program

Ms. Aten gave a few more brief updates, about the updates to the handbook and the work on the state website. Ms. Aten gave an overview of the Nevada native seed partnership and the collaboration with many other federal and state agencies to build a native seed program in Nevada. This includes outreach to farmer and growers and providing information about natives to buyers like CDs. She also described the work with the Shared stewardship group and the coordination with our state and federal partners to do collaborative work in at risk landscapes. This includes the Joint chiefs grant currently underway in the Santa Rosa range in Humboldt County.

The program staff can assist CDs interested in the joint chiefs funding throughout the state. The program has also been regularly working with the USFWS Partners program staff to find funding opportunities on private lands. These funds come with the assistance of a partner biologist who can help the CDs execute the agreements and funds. They are focused on wet meadows, riparian areas, sensitive habitats, and migration corridors, but are willing to review any projects. Ms. Aten mentioned the opportunity to attend the Society for Range management (SRM) annual meeting in Sparks, NV this January. We have local funding for ranchers and producers to get a free room if they decide to attend. The summer SRM tour was in Winnemucca, reviewing aspen stands on the range and determining regeneration and expansion over decades. The tour was guided by Brad Shultz from UNCE who has collected recent pictures and compared those to decades of photo monitoring of the aspen stands on the mountain.

Ms. Aten brought up again the issues with getting SAM numbers for CDs. Due to most CDs not having a physical address most CDs are being turned down for the numbers. This continues to be an issue for grant funding and partner projects.

f) Sagebrush Ecosystem Program & Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team

Mrs. Steel gave SETT updates and introduced her new staff. They will start to move staff focus to project work and restoration planning as outlined in the conservation plans enrolled in the credit system. They have one more person to hire before all SETT positions are filled. There were three new credit projects in 2023, which is the largest jump in a single year ever. She encouraged people to seek debit project information.

g) Nevada Association of Conservation Districts

Commissioner Martin gave a brief update on the NvACD meeting, which was held the day before, and provided the scholarship fundraiser made \$2,200 for scholarships this year.

He and Mr. Piper will be visiting the CDs and starting to release information on the NRCS and NvACD agreement.

Commissioner Martin asked if NvACD could use the NCDP public information officers (PIO) to help develop content to share the new grant. Deputy Etchegoyhen said yes NvACD could work with Ms. Aten and the PIO staff for future updates.

h) All Other Partners and participating agencies

NDOW - Mr. Husted from gave a brief update regarding open Heritage funding opportunities and said he would continue to coordinate locally with the CDs in the Winnemucca area.

USFS Boyd Hatch – Mr. Hatch gave a brief update on the work being done through the joint chiefs grant with the CD program and Ms. Aten. The Santa Rosa region has been hiring people to help with meet the shared stewardship concerns and has been treating medusahead and other invasive weeds on FS lands.

10. Commissioner Items: (For Discussion Only)

A. Commissioners will provide comments and any reports for the Commission.

Commissioner Rieman extended thanks, along with the entire Commission and staff, for Joe Sicking's dedication and involvement over the years to the SCC and the local CD. A plaque and award was given to Joe at the NvACD annual meeting the night before.

Commissioner Annis stated he was sorry he couldn't be here in person for the first meeting, but wanted to say thank you and is excited to join.

Commissioner Orr gave thanks to the State involvement and specifically for State Parks employee Ethan Mower for assisting at Range camp, the assistance has been incredibly supportive and has made a difference for the range camp and all the volunteers.

Commissioner Orr said there is consistency across the reports showing limited involvement and assistance from BLM. She asked if this is something we should inquire about at the top level or address at a future SCC meeting.

11. Next Commission Meeting: (For Possible Action)

A. Future Agenda items for consideration:

None

Date, time, and location of next meeting.

The Commission had discussion about setting a regular meeting day for the SCC. But for now, decided we will continue to poll for the day, but will have the newly regularly set months to set 4 meetings a year, two in person and two virtual.

12. Public comments

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.

NVACD- Connie Lee asked about grant opportunities in the state and where that information is being shared. She stated how difficult it is to find all the funding opportunities on each individual page. She asked state representatives in the room if there is one consistent place for all grant opportunities for CDs? She asked for any ideas or information to be forwarded to herself or Ms. Aten for ideas and sharing with the CDs.

The Commission and partners had discussion about building more interlocal agreements with partners to execute funding.

Christy Sullivan admin for Lahontan and Stillwater CD – Wanted to give thanks to NvACD treasurer Adriane Tibbitts for all her help and work over the years, she also thanked Kevin Piper for his assistance. She acknowledged Jake Dick with NDA and his staff for all their assistance and hard work in addressing noxious weeds and providing information about the noxious weed programs.

She also extended thanks to Ms. Aten and Marlee Jenkins with NCDP for their support and helping with grants.

Carl Clinger supervisor for BMCD state his concern with private wells and the DWR buyback program. He is concerned there will be an increase in domestica domestic wells in place of the agricultural water being bought back, and those wells could cause more of a draw on the system than the ag water would have.

13. Adjournment (For Possible Action)

A. Motion to adjourn: *Commissioner Tibbitts motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 2:44 PM. **ACTION TAKEN***

ACOE – Army Corp of Engineers

BMP – Best Management Practice

BWQP – Bureau of Water Quality Planning

CABNR- College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources

CD – Conservation District

CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program (a program within NRCS)

CDSN – Conservation District of Southern Nevada

CVCD – Carson Valley Conservation District

VCD – Carson Valley Conservation District

DAG – District Attorney General

DOC – Department of Corrections

DCNR – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

FS – Forest Service

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

NDOW – Nevada Department of Wildlife

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

PIO – Public information officer

RCPP – regional conservation partnership program

RFP – Request for Proposal

SCC-State Conservation Commission

SEC – State Environmental Commission

SEP – Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

SETT-Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team

SNOTEL-snow telemetry

STAC – State Technical Advisory Committee (NRCS)

TAC - Technical Advisory committee

UNCE – University Nevada Cooperative Extension

USFS – United State Forest Service

VC – Vice Chairman