



STATE OF NEVADA STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES



The Nevada State Conservation Commission (SCC) held a public meeting on April 24th, 2024.

Meeting Location: Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Building, 901 South Stewart Street, 1st Floor, Bonnie Room in Carson City, Nevada.

*List of acronyms available at end of minutes.

Commission Members Present:

Chair Commissioner Jake Tibbitts, Eureka CD.
Vice Chairman Commissioner Eric Rieman, Carson Valley Conservation District (CD).
Commissioner Mark Damron, CD of Southern Nevada.
Commissioner Doug Martin, Nevada Tahoe CD.
Commissioner Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD.
Commissioner Jerry Annis, Lander County CD
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.

Commission Members Absent:

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

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

- a) *Chairman Tibbitts called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.*
- b) *A quorum was confirmed. **NO ACTION TAKEN***

2. Public Comments:

There were no public comments.

3. Review and consideration of approval of April 24th, 2024, agenda: (For Possible Action)

- a) *Commissioner Martin made a motion to accept the agenda as presented, Commissioner Orr second. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

4. Review and consideration of approval of meeting minutes: (For Possible Action) Meeting Materials provided.

- a) *Commissioner Orr made a motion to accept the minutes with corrections to lines 104-105 in the UNCE report and a few spelling errors as presented, Commissioner Martin second the motion. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

5. Review changes to the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC548) to add language for funding. (For Possible Action) Meeting Materials provided.

a) *The NAC is being considered for revisions to prepare for possible grant opportunities in the future. The NAC would create a new category for grant management by the SCC. This was first discussed as part of the Soil Health Bill legislation being introduced last legislative session. This NAC would allow for a renewable natural resource grant program. The language will be reviewed by the SCC, then through a public workshop and then be submitted for consideration, impact and adoption.*

b) *The edit of “renewable” was added to read renewable natural resources throughout the document, a few areas of language clarification was added and a line calling out the NRCS was removed for more general clarity in the reading.*

*Commissioner Damron made a motion to accept the NAC revisions as worked on and presented and to allow Ms. Aten to proceed with a public workshop and next steps for adoption, Commissioner Orr second. Motion passed unanimously. **ACTION TAKEN***

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

a) Nevada Department of Agriculture

none

b) University of Nevada Reno/ University Cooperative Extension

Holly Gatzke (Area director UNCE): There are some changes, realignments that we're doing within extension. We have struggled in the past to get extension educator positions filled and so with changes in budgets and changes in applicants that are interested in working in extension, we have changed a realigned our systems, especially in rural Nevada. We at this time have five open positions that are called an Extension County Coordinator and their job is to connect with the community and agencies within their region that they're working and be that person that connects and brings programming in. The new positions will not require the same level of education and will not require a PhD to apply. UNCE has a cluster in White Pine /Eureka, and a cluster in Humboldt/ Lander which gives the community an extension county coordinator.

New positions: One just closed with a good number of applicants covering Pershing, Churchill and Mineral Counties. There is one open in Lyon and UNCE will have one open in Carson City. There is also an Ag educator position to be flown in Fallon.

Gary McCuin is a full time Ag educator and is available for Ag education opportunities.

c) Natural Resources Conservation Service

Chris Rose: NRCS just announced today the third sign up period for the EQIP IRA funding for 2024, that application period is going to close May 31st.

NRCS still has approximately \$8 million available in that program for IRA specific projects under EQIP and will be getting more money next year. Asked for all interested parties in climate smart practices to get in touch with their local office.

NRCS is accepting proposals for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative through May 26th. It's a national level initiative with about \$22 million available nationwide which is mostly geared toward private grazing lands.

A couple of job openings, one is a civil and one is an agricultural engineer. NRCS is having a lot of difficulty filling the announcements are open to the public right now. It's being offered under our direct hire authority, which hopefully will streamline the hiring process for us.

Another position that just opened up is a hydrologist with our snow survey. We've got a couple of positions in Salt Lake City, but one position in Reno that's open to the public as well and closes May 7th.

Working on building a STAC agenda for the June 11th meeting planned.

And a quick update about the agreement work. NRCS has identified an additional \$200,000 plus dollars that can be added to the NvACD NRCS agreement.

NRCS is working on developing an agreement with Duck Valley tribe to staff a full-time person with the tribe to provide technical assistance full time in that area.

d) Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Deputy Director Dominique Etchegoyhen: Nevada Water Conservation Infrastructure Initiative. DCNR had received \$100 million from the legislature of ARPA funding that was for water conservation. We worked to ensure that \$25 million of that was reallocated without any of the restrictions. \$75 million was really for water treatment, both sanitation and clean water, but the \$25 million is more flexible so that DCNR could run a pilot program for the buyback of water rights in basins that were over appropriated and over pumped. DCNR is continuing to move forward with that.

The dollars have been allocated to specific entities: The Central Nevada Regional Water Authority, the Humboldt Basin River Water Authority, and the Walker Basin Conservancy and a project for Southern Nevada Water Authority. They are in the process of developing language for the deed restrictions for the land management once water rights are retired. The hope is to show significant water savings in the over appropriated basins so that a follow up request can be made in the future for another round of buybacks.

DCNR has been moving forward with the environmental protection dollars awarded through the violation and settlement process. These awarded dollars can in lieu of fee assessed and can be dedicated to conservation work in various ways. Currently Ms. Aten worked to submit a

couple projects for award to utilize these funds in the areas requested and outlined in the settlement agreements. Two projects were selected one in Kings River and one at Flat Creek Ranch near Orovada. These funds will match efforts already in place to remove fine fuels on the landscapes and treat noxious and invasive weeds.

NDF is working on a helicopter pad in Elko for more immediate responses on that side of the state. The conservation camps are continuing to hire seasonal staff in place of inmate crews. A few sessions ago AB-84 developed into the Conserve Nevada Funds. Those are bond dollars specifically mandated in the bill. The NACs have been adopted to develop a competitive grant program in which CDs are eligible to apply for. Of the \$3.6 million that we had put out for the competitive grant program, \$350,000 of that was awarded to the Carson Valley Conservation District for some of the Carson River restoration work they're doing to repair some of the flood damage. This has been a successful program, and we hope we continue to be able to provide those dollars to other conservation districts for proposed projects.

e) Nevada Conservation District Program

Program manager Melany Aten NCDP: Program staff continue to work with the Shared Stewardship process throughout the state in the priority landscapes.

f) Sagebrush Ecosystem Program & Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team

Jake Tibbitts SEC member: At the last meeting there was discussion about the new BLM sage grouse land use plan amendment EIS document. The SEC will be setting up a few special meetings to review the comments.

g) Nevada Association of Conservation Districts

Executive Director Kevin Piper NvACD: The board has been meeting to discuss and develop the annual meeting with the partnership of the Nevada Weed Management Association, NWMA. The meeting will focus on urban and rural agricultural landscapes. The announcement and save the date will be out soon. The NWMA will be developing their content to award continuing educational credits.

h) All Other Partners and participating agencies

Susan Abele USFWS Partner Program: The USFWS service has been recruiting for a while for the field supervisor position and a recent round of interviews were completed and they may be in the process of hiring.

The Service received funding for sagebrush ecosystem restoration through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. Staff are working with partners on FY25 funding proposals.

Funding can be used for treating invasive annual grasses and weeds, reduce conifer encroachment, address human modification to adjust to climate change, and wet meadow and mesic system enhancements. Proposals should be developed in June for funding. The USFWS Partner website shows examples of the projects being funded and all interested parties should contact Partners program staff.

Kaelie Pena (Pheasant's Forever coordinator): Just a quick introduction to her and the position. They are working with state and federal agencies to place staff throughout the state. She asked for anyone interested in working with the partner program please contact her.

James Steed (NDF): Resource program manager for NDF. He provided an update that they will be helping host Nevada Youth Range Camp this year and said they have conservation grant funds for any students who are interested in participating in the camp. They have set aside \$1,500 for six scholarships. All interested parties can contact James or Kelly Nevilles at knevills@forestry.nv.gov

7. Commissioner Items:(For Discussion Only)

- a) *Commissioner Martin gave an update about a company in Fallon which have capability to treat large acreages of weeds with a drone. The drone can spot spray and broadcast herbicides in many landscapes. He recommended looking up the drone and its capabilities, it is a T40 drone.*

b) Next Commission Meeting: (For Possible Action)

- a. *Future Agenda items for consideration.*
 - i. *SCC Sage grouse grant review and award.*
 - ii. *SCC Strategic Plan*
 - iii. *Legislative Updates*
- b. *Date, time and location of next meeting.*
 - i. *July 30th, 2024, meeting date - virtual*

c) Public Comments:

There were no public comments.

d) Adjournment:

Chairman Tibbitts moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:26 AM: