



STATE OF NEVADA  
**SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL**  
201 South Roop Street, Suite 101  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-5247  
Phone (775) 687-2000

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Date:** Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022  
**Time:** 7:30 a.m.  
**Place:** SEC Tour  
SEC Tour of Secret Pass Ranch, Lamoille Canyon Restoration, Owl Creek Ranch, and PJ Restoration Area.

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Thirty-four people, including SETT members, SEC members, agency staff, and general public were present on the tour. Tour handouts are available on the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program website. The tour began at 7:30 a.m. at the Shutters Hotel in Elko, visited the Secret Pass Ranch Credit Project, moved on to discuss the Lamoille Canyon post-fire restoration areas, traveled on to the Owl Creek Credit Project, visited a pinyon/juniper removal restoration area, and ended around 5:55 p.m. in Elko.



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**MINUTES**

**Date:** Thursday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022  
**Time:** 8:30 a.m.  
**Place:** Nevada Department of Wildlife  
60 Youth Center Road  
Elko, NV 89801

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**Council Members Present:** JJ Goicoechea, Chris MacKenzie, Bevan Lister, Sherm Swanson, Steven Boies, William Molini, Starla Lacey, Alan Shepherd for John Raby, Dominique Etchegoyhen for Bradley Crowell, Meghan Brown for Jennifer Ott, Josh Nichols for Bill Dunkelberger, Marc Jackson, Anthony Walsh.

**Council Members Absent:** Gerry Emm, Allen Biaggi, Tony Wasley, Ray Dotson.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Member MacKenzie moved to approve the agenda; Member Molini seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. **\*ACTION**

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Member Boies moved to approve the minutes for the meeting on April 28, 2022. Member Lacey seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. **\*ACTION**

**5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Member Lacey announced she was stepping down as a SEC member and introduced Matt Johns who would be taking over as the new Vice President for Environmental and Lands for Nevada Energy. Mr. McGowan announced having received a letter from the Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands Wildlife and Free-Roaming Horses addressing the Wild Horse and Burro overpopulation issues. He will send that out to the SEC when he returns to the office.

**6. PRESENTATION ON MCGINNESS AND TUSCARORA GEOTHERMAL STUDY, TOPOGRAPHIC IMPEDENCE LAYER, POPULATION MODELING, AND CONSERVATION PLANNING TOOLS, UPDATED HABITAT MAPS, AND ACTIONS AND SAGE-GROUSE RESPONSES. COUNCIL MAY RECOMMEND CONTINUED AGENCY SUPPORT OR INCLUSION**

**OF THE NEW SCIENCE INTO THE CCS OR GREATER SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION PLAN – \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Pete Coates from USGS presented his latest research and tools to the SEC members. His presentations are available on the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program website. A few clarifying questions were asked about the presentation. Chairman Goicoechea asked if the Science Work Group is working to incorporate this research into the System and how that is going to look. Mr. McGowan replied that they were not sure at the moment, but they are looking into it. Mr. Coates added that the model presented can help adjust the debits given where the disturbance is and what minimization measures have been taken. Mr. Coates continued his presentations with some interruptions for technical questions. The full discussion can be found on the recording on the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program website. Mr. Coates mentioned that they are seeing population increases in the bi-state populations due to the conservation efforts in the area increasing carrying capacity. There was interest shown in seeing the same in the greater sage-grouse populations using Mr. Coates' tools. Chairman Goicoechea expressed again the need to incorporate Mr. Coates' science and tools into the System. Mr. McGowan again expressed the complexity of doing so, but stressed the importance of it, especially in the Strategic Action Plan and having the tools available to Local Working Groups. Mr. Coates commented that they are working on a user interface for interested parties to be able to use these tools easily. **\*NO ACTION**

**7. DISCUSSION ON THE OPPORTUNITIES AND THE STATE'S ROLE IN RECEIVING AND ADMINISTERING FUNDING THROUGH THE "AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL" CHALLENGE. THE COUNCIL MAY SUGGEST THAT STAFF EXPLORE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION – \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

This agenda item was removed due to the presenter not being present at the meeting. There was a letter included in the packet, however, and is included on the website discussing this topic. **\*NO ACTION**

**8. REVIEW OF PROPOSED BILL DRAFT REQUEST TO ESTABLISH AUTHORITY FOR THE SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM PROGRAM TO COLLECT AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE ASSOCIATED WITH TRANSACTIONS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION CREDIT SYSTEM. THE COUNCIL WILL CONSIDER SUPPORT OF THE BILL DRAFT REQUEST – \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Mr. McGowan presented to the Council a Bill Draft Request outlining a request to establish fees. It will have to go through public hearings. He reminded them that this didn't outline the specifics, as it was just a request. He also reminded the Council that the SEP has two subcontractors- Environmental Incentives to integrate the science and develop the tools and Pete and the science. That work is not cheap and is labor intensive. His thought is that the fees may help get more surgical and how they assess debits and offset those debits. They have support for an additional staff and need a fiscal person to assist with the financial side of the System and to help discover other avenues for credit producers to not be taxed so hard. The Council voiced support for the Bill Draft Request and Member Swanson moved to support it, seconded by Member Molini. **\*ACTION**

**9. STAFF BRIEFINGS AND UPDATES TO THE COUNCIL**

**A. REVIEW OF THE JANUARY – JUNE 2022 SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE. THE COUNCIL WILL CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE REPORT – \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Mr. Huser reviewed the Semi-Annual Report with the Council. The report is available on the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program website. Member Lister asked to amend the Lincoln County Local Area Working Group's report, as they have not met since Covid, but have had several projects, primarily PJ removal projects. Member Boies asked why there are debits that have not been mitigated for, to which Mr. McGowan replied that several projects are still working on their mitigation, but all the debit projects post-regulation have been compliant with the Regulation. Member Boies requested to be kept up to date on the SWIP Powerline project. Member Lister moved to accept the report with the correction, and Member Swanson seconded the motion. **\*ACTION**

**B. STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN STATUS UPDATE**

Mr. McGowan updated the Council that staffing issues over the past year have created limitations. Justin Small got saddled with the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) when he started working for the SETT. But he's making inroads on that. These new tools proposed by Mr. Coates are going help make the SAP a more useable document. There will be more of an update on this front next meeting.

**C. SCIENCE WORK GROUP UPDATE CONCERNING THE INCORPORATION OF NEW SCIENCE AND TOOLS FOR POSSIBLE INCORPORATION INTO THE CCS**

Mr. McGowan mentioned that this agenda item was discussed thoroughly with Mr. Coates.

**10. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING THIS MEETING AND SCHEDULING NEXT SEC MEETING – \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Member Boies requested an update from Mr. Jackson of USFWS regarding how the USFWS is dealing with the predation from ravens and if there are any useful engineering designs for powerlines to prevent perching or nesting. Member Molini requested an update on Greenlink North, to which Mr. McGowan reminded the SEC that Greenlink West does not go through sage-grouse habitat, but it does go through Bistate, and the SETT is working to use the tool to analyze the impacts for mitigation. Greenlink North is significant, and the SETT has been analyzing the route and siting and how to reduce impacts as well. Another powerline coming in from Utah to Ely through undisturbed habitat that will be impactful, and the SETT has been vocal about the need for minimization. Member Lacey added that, officially, Greenlink is not in the NEPA process yet. They have been asked to look at alternatives, but they have been working with the SETT. Mr. Coates voiced the offer to present a tool called the SMART Tool that helps design projects. The next meeting was proposed for Friday, September 1, 2022. **\*NO ACTION**

**11. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:**

**A. US Fish and Wildlife Service**

Mr. Jackson notified the Council that the USFWS recently hired a new Assistant Field Supervisor. The decision to not list the bistate was remanded, and they are doing some assessment to figure out how to carry on. There is no decision yet. Bipartisan infrastructure law has \$1.3 focusing on private lands anticipate branching out to public lands in 4 years. They will be soliciting more projects, as this is a 5-year process. Chairman Goicoechea asked what impact the rescinded 2020 bi-state ruling will have, to which Mr. Jackson replied he was unsure of the impact at this time. Member Molini requested an update on the petition to list the pinyon jay. Mr. Jackson commented that the 90-day finding should be coming out by the end of August or September. Member Lister requested continual updates on that.

**B. Bureau of Land Management**

Mr. Shepherd reminded the Council that the BLM has issued an approved plan maintenance for sage-grouse. They are allowed to use the 2016 map that everyone is using so they are similar to their partners. Second piece is updating Table 2-2 to bring in newer science, and the appeal period for that is done any day now but they are using the new Table and looking at it. Some of the work in progress is going to have to be looked at again because of changes. He will send a copy of the updated proposal. The BLM is staying on top of drought actions around state. Operators are reducing numbers and asking for meetings. They are in great need of range management specialists. The Battle Mountain District has 1. The BLM in Nevada is 40% under-staffed. They have a Human Resources problem with universities changing course names, and they don't match the qualifications. HR specialists cross them off the list and they don't qualify. John Raby will take into account any powerline impacts to sensitive species and require the appropriate poles and perch modifications. First horse gather this summer is going to be on BBB and is in two weeks, and they have three other ones. Connective action with CA in Buffalo Hills in July. There will be one in August near Lovelock and one in September in the Calico area. So far, they have removed 3,250, so this will put them at 8300 or 8400 removed. Mr. McGowan asked about the status of the new holding facilities, to which Mr. Shepherd replied that expansion of the Fallon facility is close to contract, and they hope to be done in July. That will take facility to 7600 max capacity. Other facilities in Paradise Valley and Winnemucca are working through permitting process. The goal is to double treatments against wildfire fuels reduction. They are meeting with USFS and USFWS to figure out how to partner bill money and projects and work as a group. Member Boies asked for an update on SWIP powerline. One segment must be readjusted, other than that, they are just wrapping up a few things. Some discussion on mitigation funds that have been used and how to use whatever is left. Member Lister asked if the BLM has any intention submitting their findings on the 2019 Plan back to the court, to which Mr. Shepherd replied that they are looking at how to satisfy the judge's concerns.

**C. US Forest Service**

Mr. Nichols notified the Council that there are approximately \$5000 allocated for sage-grouse habitat improvement across the forest. They are working with Shared Stewardship for the America the Beautiful funding to fight invasive species. Additionally, they will be returning the special use application for the Greenlink, due to concerns. Santa Rosa District funded under Joint Chief's to conduct fuel breaks and noxious weeds. Locally, meeting tomorrow with Shared Stewardship to put in America the Beautiful proposals. He also thanked everyone for letting them participate in the field trip.

D. USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mr. McGowan notified the Council that Mr. Dotson has accepted a new position in Texas. He will send the notice to the Council.

E. Other

**12. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:**

A. Office of the Governor

B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Mr. Etchegoyhen reminded the Council that the Director of DCNR has been nominated to serve on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and while his last day in the office was a week ago, he will continue to represent the governor until August 1. The internal proposal is for Jim Lawrence to be appointed Director, but in the meantime, he is acting. They will continue to split duties as in past with Mr. Lawrence sitting on the Council. Some of work seen yesterday was helped from NDF. There are challenges statewide with the conservation camps. Some of the camps are made of crew bosses, not prisoners. They are looking for additional staff for internal firefighters full time. Shared stewardship is an incredible opportunity for the state to be engaged in conservation collaboration. Off highway vehicles program has dollars used to mitigate impacts, so for a sagebrush ecosystem program view, he requests to be notified if there are any ideas or work with the local groups to do those conservation actions out there.

C. Department of Wildlife

D. Department of Agriculture

Ms. Brown commented about Shared Stewardship and that NDA is engaged. Priorities for department is invasives and production, and they are looking for other funding opportunities. They are working on recruitment process for SETT team member.

E. Other

**13. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Walsh reminded the Council the Off-Highway Vehicles Program is governed by NRS 490, and he encourages the Council to attend any of the meetings to see if any conservation cooperation can occur. The more information shares, the better.

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

Member Swanson moved to adjourn, and Member Lister seconded the motion. Chairman Goicoechea adjourned the meeting at 12:31 pm.

All details not covered in these minutes can be heard on the meeting recording at <https://sagebrushco.nv.gov/Meetings/Meetings/>.