



STATE OF NEVADA
SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
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DRAFT MINUTES

Date: Thursday, July 10, 2014 – 8:00 a.m.
Time: The Nevada Legislative Building
Place: 401 S. Carson Street, Room 4100, Carson City, Nevada 89701

The meeting could be viewed on the internet at: <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Calednar/A/>

A full audio recording of this meeting is accessible through the following website -
http://sagebrusheco.nv.gov/Meetings/Sagebrush_Ecosystem_Council_Meeting/

Council Members Present: Jim Barbee (left at 11:30 AM, returned at 2:26 PM), Allen Biaggi (arrived at 9:29 AM), Steven Boies, Jeremy Drew, Leo Drozdoff (arrived at 8:23 AM, left at 12:48 PM, returned at 2:25 PM, and left at 3:26 PM), Bill Dunkelberger (arrived at 8:17 AM), JJ Goicoechea, Ted Koch (arrived at 8:51 AM), Starla Lacy, Bevan Lister, Tina Nappe, Sherm Swanson, Tony Wasley - Proxy: Raul Morales for Amy Lueders

Council Members Absent: Gerry Emm and Amy Lueders

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM.
- 2. PUBLIC COMMENT** – Meghan Brown, Congressman Mark Amodei's Office, noted Congressman Amodei was able to include in the FY 2015 Interior Appropriations Bill a one-year extension to delay the listing of the Sage hen. The measure would apply to the greater Sage-grouse, Bi-state distinct population segment of greater Sage-grouse, Columbia basin distinct population segment of greater Sage-grouse and Gunnison Sage-grouse. The quote from Congressman Amodei is, "More time is needed to convince the Department of the Interior, which controls the vast majority of the sage hen habitat, to undertake the necessary work to conserve the resource and prevent the ESA listing. Interior needs to stop ignoring its financial responsibility while simultaneously attempting to saddle state and private landowners with the obligation to fund fuels management and habitat restoration projects that are absolutely the responsibility of the federal government. Until that happens, funding for any potential ESA rule with respect to the sage hen should be withheld."

Mr. Greg McKay, Chairman, Nevada Commission on Off-Highway Vehicles, introduced himself to the Council and expressed interest in partnering with the Council in the future.

A full account of the comments is captured in the audio recording and is available on the Program's website.

3. **REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – Member Nappe moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Member Boies, motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION**

4. **REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. *Approval of minutes from the meeting held June 23, 2014.* – Member Boies made a motion to approve; seconded by Member Swanson, motion passed unanimously. Later in the meeting both Member Boies and Member Swanson retracted their motions, as Member Swanson had a correction to the meeting minutes. Member Swanson proposed changes to language under Item 7, Page 2, the last sentence of the first paragraph should read: "...*Disturbance Caps* allow for..." instead of "...*Ratios* allow for..." Member Swanson made a motion to approve the minutes with the proposed amendment; seconded by Member Boies, motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION**

5. **COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

A. Council members may make comments at this time and the Program Manager will bring forward any pertinent correspondence directed to the Council.

Member Swanson provided an update on the Monitoring Committee. As a result of the Greater Sage-grouse Monitoring Framework, which is a publication distributed by the Bureau of Land Management (released in May 2014), the Monitoring Committee asked the SETT to redraft the State Plan Monitoring Section. The SETT will present the draft to the Committee after July 24, 2014. The Committee will provide edits back to the SETT by July 28, 2014. The Committee will conduct a conference call on July 29, 2014. A third draft of the State Plan Monitoring Section will be presented to the Council at the August meeting. The Committee will then review Cooperative Stakeholder Monitoring. The BLM is making heavy commitments for monitoring of Sage-grouse and the Committee wants to ensure this is fundable in a sustainable way, and whether focus on one species may distract from a broader vision of monitoring for broad objectives of the entire landscape. There may need to be additional wording in the State Plan concerning this issue and it may also require recommendations for adjustment to the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook. Raul Morales, BLM, noted that BLM is committed to Sage-grouse monitoring and is using their Assessment Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) Program, which does monitor more than Sage-grouse. AIM was designed to look at all resources affecting the ecosystem. BLM policy is that Sage-grouse monitoring is a part of AIM. BLM does not want to miss other ecosystem components with monitoring.

Vice-Chairman Drew noted there will be a conference the week of July 14, 2014, at the Nugget in Reno on Pinyon-Juniper. For questions or information, please contact Vice-Chairman Drew.

Member Lister asked about a new program from US Department of Agriculture (USDA), NRCS concerning funding for Sage-grouse. Member Wasley clarified there was an NRCS letter of commitment. Several agencies, including the Department of Interior, USDA, Mono County, California Fish and Wildlife, and Nevada Department of Wildlife were able to secure commitments for approximately 46 million dollars towards the implementation of the Bi-State Action Plan.

6. **PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF MITIGATION RATIOS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CONSERVATION CREDIT SYSTEM (CCS)**

Jeremy Sokulsky and Eoin Doherty, Environmental Incentives, provided a PowerPoint Presentation on the Conservation Credit System, including: credit system goals and objectives; key design elements and terms; project scenarios used to illustrate proposals; and mitigation ratio proposals and feedback. The goal of the presentation is to "Gain clear direction on how to refine proposed mitigation ratio numbers." Member Swanson asked about baseline in reference to riparian areas at risk of losing water due to channel incision. He asked for clarification of the baseline and what it is based upon when some project areas are not at risk of losing water. Protecting functionality is a good thing for Sage-grouse. Where does the loss of functionality, or restoration, fall concerning the

baseline? Member Koch provided another example of Member Swanson's question. The first step is to evaluate the quality of the habitat, whether it is above or below the baseline. The second step is what is being done in the habitat to move the needle. If it is already above baseline are you going to commit to make sure a road does not get built? If it is below the baseline are you going to commit to make the habitat better? If you have high-quality habitat what will you do to make it better? From the bird's perspective you can do nothing, unless on private land and the landowner has a conservation easement to stop development. Mr. Sokulsky and Mr. Doherty confirmed Member Koch's statements are correct. ***NO ACTION TAKEN**

A full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording and is available on the Program's website.

Lunch break at 12:49 PM – 1:58 PM

7. DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF NEW SECTION, COMBINING AND REVISING SECTIONS OF THE 2012 STATE PLAN

Melissa Faigeles, SETT, provided an overview of the new Section 7.6 of the State Plan entitled, "Anthropogenic Disturbances." The SETT took the Council's suggestions from the June 23, 2014, meeting to create this section. The Council provided edits to the Section and staff captured them within the document on the presentation screen during the meeting. A full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording and is available on the Program's website.

Member Biaggi moved to approve Section 7.6 – Anthropogenic Disturbances with the Council's proposed amendments; seconded by Member Lister, motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION**

8. DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO SECTIONS OF THE 2012 STATE PLAN

A. Section 7.2 Pinyon-Juniper Encroachment

John Copeland, SETT, reviewed revisions to Section 7.2 of the State Plan. The Council discussed the Section and provided edits to the SETT; revisions were recorded in the document during the meeting. A full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording and is available on the Program's website.

Member Swanson moved to approve Section 7.2 - Pinyon-Juniper Encroachment with Council's proposed amendments; the motion was seconded by Member Boies; Vice-Chairman Drew abstained from the vote due to a possible conflict of interest, motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION**

B. Section 7.7 Recreation and Off-Highway Vehicle Activities

Kelly McGowan, SETT, reviewed revisions to Section 7.7 of the State Plan. The Council discussed revisions and provided edits to the Sett; revisions were recorded in the document during the meeting.

Chairman Giocoechea allowed public comment under this item. Mr. McKay stated the Council's suggestions are well-taken and after regulations are passed the Nevada Commission on Off-Highway Vehicles plans on conducting a combination public education/law enforcement program to further the goals of both the Commission and the Council.

A full account of the discussion, including Mr. McKay's remarks, is captured in the audio recording and is available on the Program's website.

Member Nappe moved to approve Section 7.7 – Recreation and Off-Highway Vehicle Activities with Council's proposed amendments; seconded by Member Swanson, motion passed unanimously.

***ACTION**

C. Section 5.0 Implementation Responsibilities

Ms. Faigeles reviewed the revisions to Section 5.0 of the State Plan. The Council discussed the revisions and provided edits to the SETT; revisions were recorded in the document during the meeting. A full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording and is available on the Program's website.

Member Biaggi moved to approve Section 5.0 – Implementation Responsibilities with Council's proposed amendments; seconded by Member Boies, motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION**

9. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS DRAFTED ON FLIP CHARTS DURING THIS MEETING

A. With staff assistance, the Council reviewed items discussed, as well as items acted upon during this meeting, and items directed to the SETT.

2012 State Plan:

- Approved Section 7.6 Anthropogenic Disturbances, with amendments
- Approved Section 7.2 Pinyon-Juniper Encroachment, with amendments
- Approved Section 7.7 Recreation and Off-Highway Vehicle Activities, with amendments
- Approved Section 5.0 Implementation Responsibilities, with amendments

B. The Council determined specific items they would like to work on at their next regularly scheduled Council meeting. Due to Council members scheduling conflicts, it was decided to move the next meeting to Thursday, August 21, 2014, 8:30 AM, at the Nevada Legislative Building, room 4100. The following items were requested to be placed on the upcoming agenda.

- Conservation Credit System (Environmental Incentives)
- Monitoring Plan and Mapping
- Review and Adopt Overall State Plan
- Juaristi Demonstration Project
- Bi-State EIS (USFWS, NDOW, and NRCS)
 - Lessons Learned
 - Public versus Private
- Review of Water Resources Listening Sessions (Jason King) – Water Availability for Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitat Dependant Species

The Council discussed how to proceed after the approval of the State Plan, including what Federal Agencies should do with the Plan, and that the Plan will be a "living document" that will change as needed with the progression of new science, time and necessity. A full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording and is available on the Program's website.

10. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

- A. US Fish and Wildlife Service – Member Koch noted that the Bi-state Plan is out for public review and comment for the next 90-days.
- B. Bureau of Land Management – Mr. Raul Morales stated that BLM is currently analyzing the comments received from cooperating agencies on the Sub-Regional EIS.
- C. US Forest Service – Member Dunkelberger stated that the Bi-state Plan is out for public review and comment for the next 90-days.
- D. Other – No other federal agency updates.

11. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

- A. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – No current updates.
- B. Department of Wildlife – Member Wasley discussed how LEK attendance is better this year than past years. He will present final statistics at a later date.
- C. Department of Agriculture – Member Barbee noted the Department of Agriculture will finish interviews for the Range Science Ecology Position tomorrow and hope to announce a selection the week of July 14, 2014.

As of two days ago, the Department of Agriculture only received one application for the available grant funds concerning invasive species. The grant closes tomorrow. Member Barbee encouraged the Council to spread the information on the grant.

The Nevada State Agriculture License Plate will be released on Monday, July 14, 2014.
- D. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team – No update.
- E. Other – Member Swanson confirmed the Monitoring Committee will have a conference call on July 29, 2014, at 3:30pm.

Vice-Chairman Drew announced that this is the last meeting he will be attending for an undefined period of time. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to participate and noted he will be with this body in other capacities. He is not resigning from the Council, rather appointing Chris MacKenzie to fill the Wildlife Commission Seat, which is allowable under the statutes passed during the 2013 Legislative Session.

12. PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comment.

13. ADJOURNMENT - Chairman Goicoechea moved to Adjourn. Meeting adjourned by acclamation at 3:52 PM. *ACTION