



STATE OF NEVADA
SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
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DRAFT MINUTES

Date: Thursday, February 19, 2015
Time: 8:30 AM
Place: 901 South Stewart Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701 – PEBP Conference Room

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, Allen Biaggi, Steven Boies, Bill Dunkelberger (left at 2:45PM), Leo Drozdoff, Gerry Emm (left at 11:58AM), JJ Goicoechea, Mary Grimm, Starla Lacy, Bevan Lister, Amy Lueders, Chris MacKenzie, Tina Nappe, Sherman Swanson (arrived at 10:02AM), and Tony Wasley

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM.
- 2. PUBLIC COMMENT** – Gary Duhon, Prospector Pipeline, provided an overview of a proposed pipeline project by Paiute Pipeline, one of his clients. The purpose of his presentation was to provide the Council with knowledge of the project so they are aware of what is being done concerning Sage-grouse habitat.

Mr. Cliff Gardner, Rural Heritage Preservation Project, spoke about the Falcon-Gondor Study.

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

- 3. REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Member Lacy 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 January 8, 2015 – Member Biaggi moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Vice-chair MacKenzie; motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION**

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

5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE

A. Kacey KC, SETT, noted she included correspondence in the Council packets, including Mining Association comments, which will be discussed later in the meeting; information requests from Mr. Gardner, which were provided to Mr. Gardner on this date; and a PJ expansion "infograph" provided by Member Nappe.

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

6. INFORMATION ON USFWS ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BLM TO REFINE LAND USE ALLOCATIONS IN HIGHLY IMPORTANT LANDSCAPES

Mary Grimm, US Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service), provided an overview of Director Dan Ashe's memo from October 27, 2014. At the request of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), The Service provided written direction on where the most important areas are located for Sage-grouse throughout the range. The memo and maps are a result of a conversation between the BLM and The Service. The goal was to assist the BLM as they make land management decisions about which areas should be most protected. The conservation of these areas could have a meaningful outcome for the long-term persistence of the Sage-grouse. Ms. Grimm acknowledged that with the intention of using the best available science, The Service will be incorporating information from the recent Coates map. Ultimately, it is up to the BLM and the US Forest Service on how they manage and maintain these areas. Amy Lueders, BLM, noted the BLM is still working with The Service particularly on the Nevada piece, because of changes in the map from what The Service originally used and the State Map (Coates Map), which is the basis for both the State Plan and the BLM plan. The BLM is working on how to address the memo, but acknowledges that part of the strategy for the plans has always been to limit disturbance in the best habitats, ensuring for long-term viability, while providing for economic development opportunities. Bill Dunkelberger, US Forest Service, noted the US Forest Service is looking at specifically tailored vegetative objectives for the areas. Ms. Grimm noted the map shows approximately three million high priority acres in Nevada.

There was discussion on tribal participation with Ms. Lueders stating that the BLM is interested in possible opportunities for tribal land that contains priority Sage-grouse habitat. Councilmember Emm noted, with the new initiative, the tribes were informed there may be opportunities for participation.

Member Boies asked for clarification on what The Service proposes happens in the identified areas and how it pertains to the EIS. Ms. Grimm answered that the advice from The Service to the BLM and the US Forest Service is, to the extent possible, they be as protective as they can concerning the identified areas. One thing highlighted in the Dan Ashe memo is that the BLM has some limitation in their current management and regulations in reference to locatable minerals. The Service advised they withdraw all locatable minerals in these areas.

Ms. Lueders noted the BLM is still working on what will be in their final plan and acknowledged these lands should have the most restrictions in place. The longevity of these areas and the habitat are critical to Sage-grouse and its viability. These areas should be given the highest priority for conservation. The areas would be where the BLM limits new disturbances. The BLM recognizes in their plans they do not do anything with private property or valid existing rights regardless of what is put in the plans for allocations, all those still exist outside of that. Also, recognized in the BLM land use plan is that they cannot withdraw lands from mineral entry for locatable minerals. They can only

propose withdrawals, and it is a subsequent action by the Secretary that would actually withdraw any lands, but still doesn't affect valid, existing rights.

Chair Goicoechea asked for clarification on valid, existing rights. Ms. Lueders noted any right that exists at the time of the Record of Decision is considered a valid, existing right. Chair Goicoechea asked specifically about RS 2477. Ms. Lueders acknowledged RS 2477 varies by situation, meaning each situation will be reviewed individually.

Member Biaggi noted his concern that the Dan Ashe memo creates exclusion zones, and it has been the strategy of the Governor's recommending advisory committee and the SEC to avoid exclusion zones. An exclusion zone in these areas will have a disproportionate impact on mining, mining claims, and exploration. Mining and energy exploration are not priority threats to Sage-grouse in these areas. The priority threats are invasive species and fires. If you want to protect the areas, utilize fire suppression crews in the months of May to October to address fires. There is no guarantee, even if there is a creation of exclusion zones, the Sage-grouse will not be listed. The State Plan does a good job of making additional protections with avoid, minimize, and mitigate. Member Nappe noted her concern about the State's willingness to avoid, minimize, and mitigate where it can and the value of the process.

Chair Goicoechea asked what the BLM specifically requested from The Service. Ms. Lueders noted that the BLM and The Service have been working together in terms of the land use plans, which is one of the pieces in terms of the regulatory mechanisms in which The Service will look at when making their listing decision. The BLM wants to ensure that the regulatory mechanism they provide to The Service meets the criteria The Service has to consider under their listing process, in terms of the certainty of effectiveness, the certainty of implementation, and addressing the risk and the threats. The BLM asked what will meet that bar in terms of the certainty piece, wanting clarification from The Service on what and how best to achieve it and find balance. This is the context of the memo. Ms. Grimm clarified it was not just about threats and land use allocations; it is also about prioritization of resources and investments, which includes fires and invasive weeds.

Chair Goicoechea asked how much involvement the cooperating agencies and local municipalities and counties had in the process. Ms. Lueders noted the cooperating agencies were involved in the review of the draft and the administrative draft. The BLM is still putting together the purposed plan. Once they complete the plan, they will go back out to the cooperating agencies for their review and input. Ms. Lueders was not sure when that would happen, but thought it would be in April. Ms. Lueders noted the cooperating agencies have not been involved in the process for the map.

Member Lacy asked for clarification on if disturbance caps were in place in these identified areas, would it prevent the listing of the Sage-grouse. Ms. Grimm stated having good protection in these areas would take The Service to a "Not Warranted."

There was discussion on the timing of the memo and map and how it legally affects the EIS process.

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

At this time, Chair Goicoechea invited the new Nevada State Forester, Bob Roper, to speak. Mr. Roper, Nevada Division of Forestry, introduced himself, stating he has been in the position for 16 days, and offered the services of the Nevada Division of Forestry to be a corporate partner with the SEC in addressing Sage-brush issues. Ms. KC has his contact information.

7. INFORMATION ON THE BLM/USFS LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT (LUPA) AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) FOR GREATER SAGE-GROUSE IN NEVADA

Cory Hunt, Governor's Office, noted there have been discussions between the State and the Department of Interior (DOI) in regards to the Sage-grouse Taskforce. Members of the Taskforce include Cory Hunt, Leo Drozdoff, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and Tony Wasley, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). The meetings occur every two to three months and include all the states and federal agencies involved in the Sage-grouse issue. During discussions with the DOI, it became apparent there was not a complete understanding on what the Nevada State Plan does and does not do. As a result, Governor Sandoval requested a meeting with members of the DOI to discuss the issues and concerns. The goal of the meeting was to ensure that Nevada's Sage-grouse issues were clearly explained, to clarify exactly what the State Plan does and does not do, and to understand the DOI's concerns. Mr. Wasley was present to address private land issues for the DOI. As a result of the meeting and discussions, there seems to be growing comfort in the merits of the CCS, how it was developed, and the value in the science behind it, especially on indirect effects versus direct effects. Still there is concern over the track record of the CCS. The CCS has not been in place for very long so the track record issue is legitimate. The goal of the meeting was to look for ways to allow the State Plan to move forward as proposed and also provide additional certainty for The Service and the DOI that when it is fully implemented, and as it develops a track record, it will provide for the greatest conservation for Sage-grouse. There have no commitments to the DOI. Mr. Hunt noted the need to include the SEC in the discussions and decisions. The primary goal for the discussions was to find a way to preclude the listing of the Sage-grouse.

Mr. Hunt noted that it remains to be seen if a listing decision is worse than a Resource Management Plan (RMP). The RMP is still in draft form. The preferred alternative has not been identified and released. What a listing could look like is unknown. A listing for Nevada from a critical or crucial habitat perspective could apply to a greater area than SFAs and PACs. It could be a far more expansive area. The listing would affect both public and private lands. This would be significant for private landowners. All actions on federally managed land would require a Section 7 consultation. The Service would advise federal agencies on avoidance measures for habitat. The BLM and the US Forest Service would have to review all their land management plans. A listing is a worst case scenario.

Mr. Hunt understands the concerns about a RMP; however, he believes it is short-sighted to say the RMP would be worse than a listing. The Service advocated, and other states have gone to, a 3 percent disturbance cap. Mr. Hunt noted that Nevada's current disturbance levels in biologically significant units around the State are at an average of a half of a percent.

Member Biaggi noted the three percent disturbance cap is concerning. He wondered about timing and suggested writing into the EIS Terms and Conditions, once a track record is established with the CCS, these disturbance areas would go away or certain restrictions could be lifted. Member Biaggi noted the Nevada Mining Association has no position on a listing versus a RMP.

Vice-chair MacKenzie noted there is also no track record for a listing. This will all be new no matter what happens.

Member Lacy asked if there are 11 different states that will establish disturbance caps. Mr. Hunt noted that other states have been approached about disturbance caps. Wyoming has a five percent disturbance cap. At the next Taskforce meeting in March, Mr. Hunt will find out what other states are doing. He did acknowledge that Nevada is the outlier as far as disturbance caps and exclusionary zones go for other states. It has been made clear that Nevada does not believe this is

the best way to conserve Sage-grouse. Member Lacy noted there is no evidence that a disturbance cap can be reversed once in place. Member Lacy also asked if the State would sign an agreement with the DOI. Mr. Hunt answered, "no," the State has not agreed to sign anything and neither would the Council be directed to do so. Mr. Hunt wants to keep the Council informed about the discussions with the federal agencies. The State will not agree on anything until it has been reviewed by the Council. Mr. Hunt also noted litigation is another possible outcome. Member Lacy expressed concern over the State agreeing to do something and still ending up with a listing. The energy industry is surprised and feels strongly about the information Mr. Hunt is sharing.

Member Boies noted it seems that the State is seriously considering the restrictions and could support this proposal. Mr. Hunt noted the State is looking at what the implications might mean and wanting to know more about how the BLM, The Service, and the US Forest Service might incorporate those areas, what level of certainty they need, and how Nevada can provide it. The State is not proposing this is something that should be done. The State has advocated strongly for the State Plan and its implementation as it is and this continues to be the stance of the State. Member Boies agreed that the State Plan is important and noted this information could detrimentally affect the CCS.

Member Lister noted this issue has not been about Sage-grouse, or protecting species, it is about power and money.

Member Biaggi stated his understanding of Mr. Hunt's statements is the State and the Council really have no say in what is being brought forward by the federal agencies. Federal agencies can unilaterally place the three million acres into the EIS and the RMP with or without State input. Mr. Hunt noted being involved in the conversation only helps Nevada.

Member Nappe asked for clarification on if Sage-grouse were not listed. Mr. Hunt noted that if the Sage-grouse is not listed the Council and the SETT is all in State Statute, not an executive order, like other states. This is a program that will stay. All the efforts will continue because it is really about the Sagebrush Ecosystem which is the livelihood of many species of animals.

Meghan Brown, Congressman Amodei's Office, noted Congressman Amodei has also been in communication with the state and federal agencies. Last week Congressman Amodei, as a member of the Interior Appropriations Committee, and others met with members of The Service and the DOI, including Dan Ashe, to continue to advocate for budget requests from the federal level. They also requested the federal agencies ask themselves the same questions they have been asking of the states about having: consistency, track records, and budgets. Congresswoman Lummis, Wyoming, noted the uniqueness of each plan is key to ensuring the survival of the Sage-grouse, habitat, and the economy. Ms. Brown will send Ms. KC the budget proposal from the DOI in relation to Sage-grouse, which can be distributed to the Council. They have asked for more money in 2016.

Floyd Rathbun, F.I.M. Corporation, asked about different rights, including grazing, water, easements and rights-of-way and how they pertain to this discussion. Mr. Hunt noted they have definitely been part of the discussion. Mr. Rathbun also noted that some disturbances are beneficial and asked if federal agencies have been informed of this. Mr. Hunt responded that the State does not count human activities or livestock grazing as an anthropogenic disturbance.

Ms. Lueders noted there are three components on how everyone is looking at Sage-grouse conservation: limiting new anthropogenic surface disturbances in important habitat; improving the habitat condition in important habitat areas; and reducing the threat of rangeland fire through prevention, suppression, and restoration. No one component should overview the other two. Prioritizing for all three is very important in terms that agencies and others are collectively investing limited resources in the areas that give the most return on investment, and protect the most

important habitat. In the COT Report The Service talked about reducing threat to the PACs. The sage-brush focal areas are a subset of those PACs and provide greater clarity on the direction of the COT Report in terms of reducing disturbance within the priority areas.

Patrick Malone, Barrick Mining, noted that Barrick does not have a position on listing versus the RMP. He did reiterate they believe strongly in mitigation. The State mitigation program focuses on functional acres and the concept that there are certain types of habitat that are more important to the survival of the Sage-grouse. It seems the three percent disturbance cap is focused on disturbances on "real" acres, not functional acres like in the state plan. He asked if this had been discussed and if there is a proposal on how they fit together. Ms. Lueders noted there is not a final plan. The BLM and The Service are trying to balance this range-wide for consistency. There are 11 states and they recognize the uniqueness of each state. Certain habitat types are very limited. The CCS, although not having a track record, is robust in terms of the level of sophistication and the thoughtfulness. Mr. Hunt noted that focusing on indirect effects and functional acres is far superior than focusing on disturbance caps. The State would like a commitment from the federal agencies that at the time Nevada has an established track record, demonstrating that this is in fact the best approach, it would be integrated into the land use plans and the three percent cap will be reevaluated.

An account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website.

8. PRESENTATION ON THE FIRE AND INVASIVE ASSESSMENT TOOL (FIAT)

Mr. Doug Havalina, BLM, provided an overview, via telephone, of a PowerPoint presentation on the Fire and Invasive Assessment Tool (FIAT). The topics included: Background and Development of FIAT, FIAT Step 1, FIAT Step 2, and Outcomes of FIAT. Mr. Havalina included a brief description of the Sage-grouse Habitat Matrix and how it is used. The four program areas for the FIAT include: Fuels Management (proactive strategies), Habitat Recovery/Restoration (proactive strategies), Fire Operations (both proactive and reactive strategies), and Post-Fire Rehabilitation (reactive strategies).

Member Lister asked for clarification on where the data for the FIAT was generated. Mr. Havalina noted that the data came from different sources and the latest science. Some layers had to be created so they utilized an analyst as part of the FIAT team to help develop certain data. States provided some of the data, including information on leks. Some information was proprietary, such as NRS. Ms. Lueders noted that the BLM did use local experts from both federal and state agencies. The BLM recognizes there is a step three in the process, which is engaging local and the broad constituent base as well as stakeholders. Another piece is refining where to do treatments. The Strategic Action Plan (SAP) is an important piece in how to wrap this together for the BLM and the State.

Member Lister asked Ms. Lueders about the FIAT timeline. Ms. Lueders noted at the end of March is when the BLM hopes to have FIAT Step 2 analysis done. The FIAT Assessments exist outside of the plan. The Service is interested in how to address fire and invasive species. When Step 2 is complete the BLM will come to the SEC for a briefing on it. This will be before the BLM starts the NEPA process and engages the local working groups. The question is how to interface what is being suggested in the FIAT assessments with the SAP.

An account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website

Lunch Break at 11:58 AM to 1:09 PM.

9. PRESENTATION AND UPDATE ON THE REFINEMENT ECOLOGICAL SITE DESCRIPTIONS AND DISTURBANCE RESPONSE GROUPS IN NEVADA

Professor Patti Novak-Echenique, University of Nevada (UNR), and Professor Tamzen Stringham, UNR, provided two PowerPoint presentations.

Professor Novak-Echenique's PowerPoint was on Identifying Ecological Sites, She provided an overview of NRCS. NRCS develops soil surveys. All BLM lands are complete. US Forest Service lands are currently being worked on. Only portions of the Sheldon Wildlife Refuge and the Nevada Test Site have been done. Professor Novak-Echenique spoke about the use of soil surveys and the correlated ecological sites.

There was discussion on interpretation of the data and the fact that there could be misinterpretation of the data, which is dependent on the reviewer to make determinations.

Professor Stringham's PowerPoint was on Landscape-Scale Management Planning: Disturbance Response Groups and Ecological Sites. Professor Stringham reviewed maps divided by Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA), a methodology of classification that NRCS uses for dividing up landscapes into large physiographic regions. She also reviewed fire issues by MLRA and Sage-grouse habitat areas. She explained the development of Disturbance Response Groups, which is a group of ecological sites that respond similarly to fire or drought. The BLM uses Disturbance Response Groups for their AIM Strategy.

There was a discussion on seed availability during a large fire with Ms. Lueders noting there is sometimes an issue with the availability, however, there is currently a National Seed Strategy out for review. There is concern about local seed availability. Tina Mudd, Nevada Department of Agriculture, stated that currently in Nevada the seed certification process is voluntary by seed growers, if exporting to another state that state would have their own requirements for certifying seed. Ms. Mudd noted that Nevada does have an NRS Statute requiring certified seeds for germination, viability, and noxious weeds.

There was discussion about setting management objectives using Disturbance Response Groups. Professor Stringham noted public land management agencies can set objectives at a Disturbance Response Group level, however, a private landowner would use the Ecological Site Scale.

An account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website.

10. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE CCS IMPROVEMENT LIST DOCUMENT TO MAINTAIN AND UPDATE THE CCS

Ms. KC outlined the process concerning the CCS Improvement List. The SETT received a number of comments for the Improvement List and is currently exploring how to address each of the comments with limited resources and funding. The SETT listed each comment on a spreadsheet and is looking at how to prioritize them. The improvement items are classified by need, ability to change, cost benefit, and then put in categories of changes to the manual, the HQT, or both. The SETT has worked with EI on the process and the list. Ms. KC noted the idea is the spreadsheet would be included monthly in Council packets and if there is something more substantial that requires Council approval it will be listed as an agenda item. Member Biaggi asked about typos and/or text changes that were submitted earlier. Ms. KC noted they will be made to the documents in an update as they are not policy changes. The spreadsheet is for policy items only. Member Lacy proposed having an opportunity to review the spreadsheet and then offer possible action at the next meeting. Member Biaggi wanted assurances that all received comments will be addressed. Ms. KC answered in the affirmative and

noted if someone does not see an item that they submitted on the list they should contact the SETT so it is included. Member Biaggi also asked about timing concerning the EIS and if the changes/suggestions will be completed in time to be included in the document. Ms. KC noted that some items on the list can be completed in a short amount of time, others need additional review. The SETT is attempting to address the significant items first. Ms. Lueders noted CCS is an adaptive piece and the BLM is aware that components will change overtime and the BLM expects there to be changes. Ms. Lueders also stated that the timing does not create a problem for the final EIS. There is not a hard deadline to have everything in.

Ms. KC and the SETT will create an additional task list for the Council of items that will not be included on the spreadsheet as they do not concern the CCS.

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11. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS DRAFTED ON FLIPCHARTS 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.

Approved Items

- Approved Agenda for February 19, 2015
- Approved Minutes from meeting held on January 8, 2015

- B. The Council determined specific items they would like to work on at their next scheduled Council meeting.

The Council decided the date of their next meeting will be:

- Wednesday, March 11, 2015, TBD

The following items were requested to be placed on the upcoming agenda.

- US Fish and Wildlife Service Staff – Bi-State Action Plan – March
- Council Roles and Responsibilities on Bi-State – Cassandra Joseph, Attorney General's Office
- Strategic Action Plan (SAP) - March
- Draft BLM MOU – March
- CCS Improvements List - March
- Sage-grouse Taskforce Update – April Meeting – Cory Hunt
- Final EIS – BLM – Future Agenda Item

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

12. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

- A. US Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service) – Ms. Grimm noted that a representative from the US Fish and Wildlife Service will provide an update on the Bi-State at the next SEC meeting. The Conservation Efforts Database on Greater Sage-grouse, which will be used for analysis and assessment, will be up and running in the spring.

- B. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – Ms. Lueders noted in reference to Greater Sage-grouse, the timeline for the final EIS is late spring. The Record of Decision is scheduled for late summer. The BLM is still working on when they will go out to cooperating agencies as the plans are finalized. There will be a 30-day protest period and a 60-day Governor Consistency Review. This results in a minimum of 60 plus days from the publication of the final EIS to the signature on the Record of Decision. Ms. Lueders highlighted terms important for BLM plans: improving habitat condition, reducing the threat of rangeland fire (Secretarial Order [SO] 3336), and rangeland fire prevention management and restoration. There are a number of components within SO 3336 that relate to suppression, prevention, and restoration. Ms. Lueders encouraged members of the Council to review the SO. There will be a March 1, 2015, plan in terms of what the BLM can do between now and the 2015 fire season. There will be a May 1, 2015, implementation plan of broader information for mid to long-term use, which can be located at ForestandRangelands.gov. Ms. Lueders also noted there is a teleconference at 8:30 AM on Friday, January 20, 2015. The goal of the call is to look comprehensively at how to bring the fire pieces together.
- C. US Forest Service – Ms. Lueders provided the update for the US Forest Service as Mr. Dunkelberger was not present at the time of this agenda item. The Bi-state FEIS draft Record of Decision was released by the US Forest Service on February 6, 2015, and by the BLM on February 10, 2015. It can be located on the US Forest Service website. This starts a 60-day objection period for the US Forest Service and the BLM has a companion 60-day Governor Consistency Review. Key tenants of the Record of Decision are conservation standards and guidelines that are based on both avoidance and mitigation for most discretionary activity. Contrary to what was reported by Wild Earth Guardians, there is no moratorium on grazing. Permits are subject to terms and conditions for Sage-grouse habitat. They are largely already in place in Bi-state habitat and have been for last 5 to 10 years.
- D. Other – None.

An account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website.

13. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

- A. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) – Mr. Drozdoff noted there is a Sage-grouse Taskforce meeting in Denver in March. He also acknowledged the Rangeland Fire SO 3336 and noted that Ms. KC will be the main contact for the State of Nevada concerning this issue. Ms. KC has familiarity with the Nevada Division of Forestry and Sage-grouse issues, her experience and knowledge will be beneficial. In regards to the SO, Mr. Drozdoff also noted that a DCNR sponsored bill in the legislature (AB163, Rangeland Fire Protection) has a hearing on Friday, January 20, 2015. The timing of both the SO and AB163 is good. Mr. Lawrence noted that in Council Packets is a one-page summary of the Sage-brush Ecosystem budget, and he provided a quick overview. Member Nappe expressed concern over the mapping item being funded by the NDOW. She noted that perhaps there could be monies in the General Fund that could be utilized for the mapping piece, as NDOW has been underwriting it for two years. Member Nappe stated it is unfair to NDOW to utilize funds from their budget that should be utilized for on the ground items and staff positions. Mr. Wasley appreciated Member Nappe's comments and noted there is value in NDOW contributing to the scientific aspects and components of the budget. It provides a great opportunity for NDOW to be involved. Member Biaggi asked about the line item in the budget for Forestry crew boss upgrades. Mr. Drozdoff replied that it is imperative to have the workforce to do the work on the ground so this upgrade is to limit turnover in rural camps in particular and to retain qualified firefighters. Ms. KC added that it is based on crew boss qualifications, not an automatic upgrade, to provide for upward mobility within the Division, which also retains qualified employees.

- B. Department of Wildlife (NDOW) – Mr. Wasley provided the results of the Wing Ding. This year they looked at just over 1,000 wings. The number of wings is not used to determine population as they have a lot more to do with weather conditions. The number of wings was up from 855 last year, but still 50 percent of the ten year average is closer to 2100. NDOW also looked at nest success this year with over 47 percent nest success up from last year's 45.7 percent. The ten year average is 44.8 percent. NDOW is engaged in developing analysis on the Sage-grouse populations at biologically significant unit levels. This analysis is developing male population estimates derived from lek counts over 15 to 20 year periods as well as developing population growth rates and graphing over the same time period. NDOW is trying to determine if it is better having more precise data over a long period of time with a smaller sample size, or having a larger sample size, which is a better effort for true population trends and levels. NDOW is also working with other members of the Bi-state Technical Committee to develop a progress report of efforts completed over the last year with respect to the Bi-state conservation actions and monitoring efforts. NDOW is trying to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Bi-state Action Plan and continues to participate in coordination meetings with the BLM and The Service with respect to both the Greater Sage-grouse and the Bi-state.
- C. Department of Agriculture – Member Barbee noted Department of Agriculture continues to invest \$250,000/year on invasive species, noxious weeds, funding Ms. Mudd's position, and putting money on the ground. Member Barbee also noted Department of Agriculture contributes \$46,000 in general fund to invest in the Governor's Initiative. Ms. Mudd reported on Sage-grouse projects, planning, and contracting throughout the fall, primarily on medusa heads and other noxious weeds that are moving into Sage-grouse habitat. Department of Agriculture is looking at prioritizing projects into areas that are close to leks. Department of Agriculture's monitoring app development is underway. It is focused on landowner and permittee use. Department of Agriculture will incorporate changes into the Monitoring Handbook as they come through the app. The app will be piloted in April. Department of Agriculture continues to coordinate with the Conservation Districts and the Cooperative Weed Management Areas in regards to invasive species and noxious weeds. There will be a Medusa Head Symposium October 26-27, 2015, in Sparks, Nevada. Ms. Mudd will send the invitation to Ms. KC for distribution to the Council. Ms. Mudd reminded Council the Department of Agriculture has a fully functioning seed lab. The certifying body is the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies.
- D. Conservation Districts Program (CDs) – Tim Rubald, Conservation Districts, noted the program is back to full staff with the addition of Ben Bolton who is coming from the Nevada Division of Forestry. The Program now has a forester, range-management specialist, and wildlife biologist. The staff can address a lot of different issues. Mr. Rubald also announced a new Local Area Work Group that will have their first meeting tomorrow in Humboldt County. The Program will be applying for a conservation innovation grant from NRCS for approximately \$300,000, which will address significant water PFCs and issues in the upper Humboldt area.
- E. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT) – Ms. KC noted the SETT has been working on the federal MOU concerning the CCS and State Plan. It is in draft form for agencies to review. Thanks to Melissa Faigeles, SETT, and Sandra Brewer, BLM, for getting something on paper for review. The SETT did pick the first three areas from the SAP for review: HOV recreation, predation, and wild horse and burro. They are working on getting the updated data to incorporate and draft a BSA for Council review to see if the format will work for the Council. The EI contract has been extended through December 2015. Member Nappe expressed concern over the selected areas of focus on the SAP as they have no representation on the Council. Ms. KC noted the SETT is reaching out to representatives concerning the three areas to ensure their input is included, and will ensure the representatives know about meeting dates and locations. Member Lister asked about the timing of the MOU concerning the EIS. Ms. Lueders noted the MOU needs to be in place no later than the signing of the Record of Decision.

An account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website.

14. PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

15. ADJOURNMENT – Member Biaggi moved to Adjourn. Meeting adjourned by acclamation at 3:51 PM.
***ACTION**

DRAFT