



STATE OF NEVADA  
**SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL**  
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### **APPROVED MINUTES**

**Date:** Thursday, April 7, 2016  
**Time:** 9:30 AM  
**Place:** PEBP Conference Room, Carson City, NV

A full audio recording of this meeting is accessible through the following website -  
[http://sagebrusheco.nv.gov/Meetings/Sagebrush\\_Ecosystem\\_Council\\_Meeting/](http://sagebrusheco.nv.gov/Meetings/Sagebrush_Ecosystem_Council_Meeting/)

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**Council Members Present:** Allen Biaggi, Steven Boies, Bill Dunkelberger, JJ Goicoechea (left at 2:20 p.m.), Ted Koch for Mary Grimm, Starla Lacy (arrived at 12:00 p.m.), Bevan Lister, Chris MacKenzie, John Ruhs, Tina Nappe, Sherman Swanson (arrived at 10:02 a.m.), Jim Lawrence for Leo Drozdoff, and John Tull for Tony Wasley

**Council Members Absent:** Jim Barbee, Mary Grimm, Gerry Emm, Leo Drozdoff and Tony Wasley

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Karen Boeger, Nevada Chapter Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, provided questions and concerns on agenda items scheduled for discussion during the meeting.

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 - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Member Boies moved to approve the Agenda for April 7, 2016; seconded by Vice-chair MacKenzie; motion passed unanimously. **\*ACTION**

Chair Goicoechea noted the agenda will be taken out of order during the meeting.

4. **REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF MINUTES – \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Member Nappe moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 12, 2016; seconded by Member Biaggi; motion passed unanimously. **\*ACTION**

Ted Koch, US Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service), asked if detailed minutes were needed or whether summary minutes would be appropriate. Chair Goicoechea noted he prefers the detailed minutes. Councilmembers concurred.

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

## **5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

A. Member Lister noted that he is not confident that mechanisms have been put in place to bring the Conservation Credit System (CCS) down to the local level, especially concerning the Conservation Districts. Chair Goicoechea stated this will be an issue discussed during this meeting.

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

## **6. PRESENTATION ON COMPATIBILITY OF GRAZING AND SAGE-GROUSE – SENIOR PROJECT PAPER**

A. Patrice Stewart, 96 Ranch (Paradise Valley), spoke about grazing and how it can be beneficial for sage-grouse.

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

## **7. UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECORD OF DECISION FOR THE GREATER SAGE-GROUSE AMENDED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS – \*FOR DISCUSSION ONLY\***

A. Jim Lawrence, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and Sheila Anderson, Governor's Office, provided an update on this item.

Mr. Lawrence announced there is a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service), and the State on utilization of the CCS. The MOU will be forwarded to Councilmembers. He provided background and reviewed the purpose of the MOU.

Mr. Lawrence also provided an update on the Regional Mitigation Strategy Meeting he attended in Utah. The Department of the Interior (DOI) has given the direction to federal agencies to work in cooperation with the State to come up with sideboards on mitigation strategies that are consistent across the western region of the United States, so there is some consistency in the implementation of the sage-grouse strategy across regions and across states. The DOI acknowledges that each state may have its own unique mitigation strategy. The next meeting will be at the end of May in Boise, ID. The goal is to have the draft strategy completed sometime in July. The mandate the DOI has set forth is this needs to be completed by September. Mr. Lawrence received a large amount of positive feedback in recognition of Nevada's progress.

Member Lister asked what the expected outcome will be in September. Mr. Lawrence noted his understanding is that it will be the mitigation strategy guidelines for the federal agencies in determining mitigation.

Mr. Koch noted that Mr. Lawrence stated the MOU includes Bi-state; he would like to be clear that it talks about applying the CCS in the Bi-state. Mr. Koch clarified that disturbances occurring in the Bi-state region would need to be mitigated within the same region and disturbances within the greater sage-grouse region would need to be mitigated within the greater sage-grouse region. Mr. Lawrence noted that is correct.

Ms. Anderson provided an update on information received from Region 4 of the Forest Service, from John Shivik, on how they intend to implement the Record of Decision (ROD). For the grazing part of the ROD, the Forest Service allows themselves 12, 24, or 36 months to get everything in place on Forest Service allotments, because they realize they have to do the habitat assessment, range health assessment, and they want this to be a collaborative process with permittees, therefore they are not expecting to get through all of the allotments in a 12 month period. They realize every state is doing things a little differently and they are approaching it on a state by state basis. They would like to work with each state individually in a way that is compatible with the way things are currently being done.

The Forest Service would like to create an interagency team of federal agencies (BLM, Forest Service, and The Service) and state agencies (Nevada Department of Wildlife [NDOW], DCNR, and Nevada Department of Agriculture [NDA]) to have a collaborative process in working through the implementation of the ROD. The Forest Service requested the state take the lead on organizing this new group. The BLM has already agreed to participate. The thought is there would be a tiered approach as it is recognized there is a need to for the agency head to be involved in this as they are the conduit to both Washington D.C. and the field level. The vision is there would be a manager level, a field level, and a third level of local area working groups with special task teams to address site-specific problems and issues. Ms. Anderson noted there is a role for the Council concerning this group. This is a preliminary update there is no definitive role or members determined at this time.

Bill Dunkelberger, Forest Service, noted he does not believe that a brand new group needs to be created because using the Council to fulfill many of the tasks is beneficial. He does see a need to involve members at the local level, but his preference is to keep that coordination at the executive level with the Council.

John Ruhs, BLM, noted he thinks this is a good effort to get people engaged with the implementation and talking about the issues correctly. He does not have any negative thoughts about using the Council as part of the process. It is the right way to go. He also noted the BLM timeline will mesh with the Forest Service's timeline. Mr. Dunkelberger stated the two agencies are learning from each other and he agrees with Mr. Ruhs that they will be on the same path.

There was discussion about how this new group will engage the Conservation Districts and others at the local level. Ms. Anderson noted they are following Utah's example of a tiered approach to this discussion and provided more detail on the group's organization and intent. The decision making authority would stay with the agencies. Ms. Anderson also stated there needs to be some level of assurance that the input from this group will be taken seriously and will be considered by federal agencies.

Chair Goicoechea stated there is consensus of the Council to be involved; however there are still a number of things needed to be clarified. Councilmembers should go back to the bodies they represent and bring any suggestions/ideas back to the Council.

Mr. Koch noted that over the last 20 years the BLM has gone from approximately 1,000 range conservationists in the agency to 400 today. Mr. Ruhs stated it is more like 250. Mr. Koch noted the Council has a great opportunity to help the BLM and the Forest Service because trends like this lead to frustrations and profound distrust expressed by people, like Ms. Stewart (earlier presenter at

meeting). There is often “fed-bashing” that ensues, however, when you lose three quarters of your presence on the ground as a federal ground management agency on a key issue, especially for a state like Nevada, you will get people who feel frustrated. We can either cut the federal agencies adrift and wish them good luck in implementing their new plan or we can help them. Let’s do something about it. The proposal Ms. Anderson laid out is an opportunity to help. More specifically, he notes he feels like they are already as a group and Council missing opportunities to help. He referenced the conversation that was had at the last meeting concerning Table 2.2. Mr. Koch, at that time, asked what the specific discomfort was about the Table and it ended up coming down to adding the word “state” to Footnotes 2 and 6. There seemed to be a lot more common ground than he anticipated. He noted he supervised folks who helped build Table 2.2 and helped persuade BLM to put it in their plan. As one of the entities responsible for creating Table 2.2, he too has concerns about it and how it will be used. He would like the Council to lead the conversation aggressively on things like that, things that he knows are sore spots for not just those who may be regulated through the auspices of Table 2.2, but for those who helped to create it and want to ensure it is used in ways that are helpful and not hurtful. He supports the Council helping.

Member Lister stated there have been local groups planning for years and bringing ideas forward that have been bypassed by federal agencies. Member Boies noted as producers and participants the Council does need to be a part of what Ms. Anderson is proposing. This does not imply that Member Boies agrees with everything within the document. He does have reservations on how much the Conservation Districts and local area working groups will be included. Member Swanson noted that another important conclusion from the February meeting was the emphasis not to use any *one* line from Table 2.2 without considering the balance of the Table. Mr. Koch noted that he thinks he agrees with everything Member Swanson said, however, his only point is that if the Council does not talk about things like Table 2.2, it will not get resolved. He urges this group to facilitate conversations on things like Table 2.2. In fact, in February the Council agreed to talk about it more between now and then and they did not. He is trying to be specific in urging the Council to do what everyone has agreed upon. He spoke about his experience with the upper Salmon River, noting that people say nothing happens from the top down, however, he has direct experience that contradicts that. It can be done. He urges the Council to be hopeful.

Ms. Anderson stated there will be another meeting to discuss the organization of the group and if it will be a committee, a working group, etc. The State will take the lead on it. It would be informal as this is the best way to foster collaboration. Mr. Lawrence noted from the discussion there seems to be agreement. There will be continued work on this.

Chair Goicoechea stated there will be an action agenda item for the next meeting on this. Member Lister noted it is important to have a structure for communication between the Conservation Districts, the local area working groups and the Council.

Chair Goicoechea acknowledged there are discussions concerning Table 2.2 happening. They may not be happening with the Council, but others are having the discussions.

Ms. Anderson asked if it was possible to compile ideas and send them to Councilmembers for comments and suggestions to help formulate this group so they can bring a proposal that incorporates these ideas to the Council. Bryan Stockton, Nevada Attorney General’s Office, noted there needs to be compliance with Nevada’s Open Meeting Laws. If it is a sub-committee that reports to the Council it would be subject to the Open Meeting Laws. There have been working groups formed in the past that do not report to the Council, but report to an executive of some kind. The executive would then report to the Council. This would not be subject to Open Meeting Laws as the group would be considered staff to the executive.

Chair Goicoechea asked Mr. Stockton about using a conference call to address Ms. Anderson's question. Mr. Stockton noted there needs to be an agenda, notice to the public, an opportunity for the public to participate and it would be subject to Open Meeting Laws.

Mr. Lawrence asked about using email for this purpose. Mr. Stockton noted as long as the emails are between two people, not including other members of the Council or ideas from other members of the Council, it would not be a violation of the Open Meeting Laws.

Member Swanson asked if an email was be sent to all Councilmembers and the members replied only to the sender (as long as this person is not a Councilmember) and not "reply all," if that would that be okay. Mr. Stockton noted this would be acceptable as long as the sender does not provide the input to everyone.

Chair Goicoechea clarified this is only for the Greater Sage-grouse.

Mr. Dunkelberger noted the BLM and the Forest Service are still working on the ROD on the Bi-state for the final amendment, which they hope to have out soon. Once that is done, he could see the need for maybe a smaller sub-committee to help gain consensus on implementing the Bi-state plan amendments.

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

## **8. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR (DOI) PROPOSED MINERAL WITHDRAWAL**

A. Rich Perry, Nevada Division of Minerals (NDOM), and Ms. Anderson reviewed a PowerPoint presentation, providing background and details about: claims in mineral withdrawal area and lands in plans of operations in Nevada; NDOM development of "High Mineral Potential" areas within mineral withdrawal; NDOW lek density maps in proposed mineral withdrawal; proposed new boundaries; and a synopsis of the Governor's comment letter. They also addressed Council questions and/or concerns during the presentation.

John Tull, NDOW, noted NDOW's analysis was to attempt to examine the Sage-grouse Focal Area (SFA) Boundaries, as there was no discussion with the State in the development of these. NDOW tried to explore ways to look at the peripheral pieces that did not appear to have a lot of biological justification and within that context they were looking for other areas that would have better biological justification concerning points on the maps being presented.

Mr. Stockton stated the mineral withdrawal only affects federal lands not private lands. Member Boies noted it could affect grazing permits.

There was discussion about the maps and the SFA Boundaries, including the issue of valid existing claims and split mineral estates. If it is a split estate, even on private land, the federal government still holds the mineral rights and those rights will be unavailable if they are in the mineral withdrawal area.

Pam Robinson, Governor's Office, noted this EIS is specific to the mineral withdrawal. It is not intended to affect grazing or other uses. They will be regulated the same way they are in other types of habitat areas. These were reviewed with two particular resources in mind and it was a collaborative effort with NDOM, NDOW and the Governor's Office. It is prescriptive on what the EIS is looking at.

There was discussion concerning the maps.

Ms. Robinson noted the Governor's Office proposal requests the Secretary of the DOI (Secretary) modify the length of time the BLM can withdraw to only 5 years. In 5 years the areas would need to be reviewed again to adjust for any changes so it is not a 20 year withdrawal.

Chair Goicoechea asked if a socio-economic study would be done on both alternatives. Ms. Robinson noted there have been extensive conversations with the University of Nevada – Reno (UNR) on this issue and they have provided information. The information was forwarded to federal agencies with the recommendation that the information and criteria be accepted, and the hope is they work with UNR to ensure the analysis is done thoroughly.

Councilmembers expressed appreciation for the efforts of all the agencies involved in this process and the proposed alternative.

Ms. Robinson reinforced the Governor's support of the State Plan. The Governor believes the State Plan is the right approach for Nevada.

Chair Goicoechea noted as this goes forward and the EIS is drafted, there will be an opportunity for the Council to provide comment on it.

Mr. Dunkelberger asked if other states are following this same strategy. Ms. Robinson noted that Montana has looked closely at the model used by Nevada. As of January, Nevada was the only state that had analyzed both the habitat and mineral potential and came in with strategically proposed modifications. The recommendation to the Secretary was that she proposes an amendment to the boundary.

Mr. Koch asked about the comparison of number of acres mined versus number of acres burned. Mr. Perry noted they are separate. Mr. Koch asked if it is the State's position that this is the correct way to represent acres disturbed by mining. Mr. Perry noted that for this exercise, plan of operations was utilized and he explained the process and provided a description. Mr. Koch stated approximately 2 years ago when he worked with Joe Tague he made similar comparisons between number of acres burned versus number of acres developed for mining, emphasizing the degree to which invasive species and fire is a threat compared to mining. At the time, it was direct acres impacted; however he knew there were indirect impacts. The Habitat Quantification Tool (HQT) has helped reveal the extent to which indirect effects can significantly play a role. He asked that when the Council is having a discussion they consider not just the direct effects from the point of view of the DOM, but the direct effects combined with indirect effects from the perspective of the Council. This would be more meaningful to him. The HQT captures these well. His thinking about the effects of mining has been most closely informed by the products the state has produced, HQT and the Governor's letter with the proposed exclusions for mineral withdrawals. He is working closely with Mary Grimm, The Service, who is the lead on this issue for his organization. He is still struggling to catch up on the numbers.

Member Biaggi noted not all mining is in habitat. Some is well outside any habitat. Therefore, the actual impacts to the sage-grouse are significantly smaller. It is important to remember even though some of the areas for the mineral withdrawal may be requested to be removed from the Governor's plan, the mining plan is still in place and those protections are in place for these areas therefore it is not as if they are "sacrifice areas." There are significant protections in place for those habitat areas. Mr. Koch noted this is the conversation that needs to be had and to be more precise to Member Biaggi's first point, the way that Mr. Koch and Mr. Tague characterized their thoughts about mining impacts was that the BLM foresaw, going into the final EIS preparation, that up to 32,000 acres of additional disturbance from mining may occur over the life of the plan (direct impacts) to sage-

grouse habitat, therefore to Member Biaggi's first point he agrees. He believes this is the conversation that needs to be had to better understand this issue. To Member Biaggi's second point, the fact is that what the plan does when it comes to mining is it requires mitigation so the indirect impacts occur on that landscape and so the mitigation may occur nearby or not so nearby depending on how the CCS plays out. He is just offering feedback on his response to this presentation.

Member Biaggi reminded Mr. Koch that the federal land agencies still have the three percent disturbance cap in play as well as other things. Habitat will still be preserved and protected per the federal requirements and per the State Plan. Chair Goicoechea concurred the indirect impacts are addressed in the State Plan. There was discussion about this topic.

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

**9. REVIEW AND POSSIBLE FUNDING RECOMMENDATION FOR CONSERVATION CREDIT SYSTEM PROJECT PROPOSALS SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO THE STATE SOLICITATION FOR CREDIT PROJECTS - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

A. Mr. Lawrence acknowledged the hard work done by members of the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT). He provided background on this agenda item, including the appropriations (the purpose) and the process on how the SETT arrived at the recommendations being brought before the Council.

Chair Goicoechea asked about the terms for repayment of the money. Mr. Lawrence noted there have been discussions on the structure of repayment and the best solution moving forward is based upon the amount of credits generated per project and based upon the State's investment. You can do a per credit calculation so at the time of the sale the State would be paid back. Mr. Stockton noted the Nevada Constitution has a prohibition against lending state money to private individuals; therefore, this cannot be a loan. In essence what the legislature has said is this money should be used to generate credits therefore this is the main purpose of the money. When the credits sell, the State recaptures the money. It is not being repaid in the sense of a loan as much as repaying the State the value which was generated by State money. This is how it must be structured. It cannot be structured as a loan. There was discussion about this.

Vice-chair MacKenzie asked what happens if the per credit costs exceeds the going price for credit purchase how will the State recapture the funds. Mr. Stockton noted this is part of the analysis that it is not a loan. If the State loses money, that is the way it goes, because the State is investing in sage-grouse credits rather than providing a loan to a private individual, therefore if the State generates credits that are not valued at as much as they were paid for, the State will lose money.

Mr. Lawrence noted the cost of credits per project is different because of what the applicant requested. The intent of the funds was never to fund 100 percent of a project, it was to provide assistance. Each project proposal requested different levels of assistance, which is why it does not necessarily compute to the dollar cost ratio.

Mr. Lawrence provided background on the process used by the SETT to review projects and ultimately come up with the recommendation of the final projects. The next step, if the Council moves to approve the recommended projects is to move forward with the full proposals and agreements, as well as doing the verification work on the ground. Because the market has not been determined for the credits and the State is investing in these projects there needs to be assurances that the projects will be maintained for a minimum of five years. This does not mean they can sell credits at a five year duration. The way it is set up is when the credits go to market, the agreement

between the buyer and seller comes into play and that is when the endowment account is created to ensure the maintenance and management is going to occur. This is when the management plan is fully implemented and when the minimum 30 year duration begins.

Mr. Koch asked for clarification on the contractual agreement asking if the landowner implements the project for five years and no one ever buys their credits, they do not have to pay the money back to the State. Mr. Lawrence noted this is a safeguard for participants. Mr. Koch asked if that was what the five years mean. Mr. Lawrence noted at a minimum the State will get a minimum of five years habitat protection and improvements.

Member Boies asked if there will not be a contract for less than 30 years. Mr. Lawrence noted the CCS is set up to ensure the life of the credits outlasts the life of the impact. If there is an impact that was 5 years then it is conceivable that there could be a 7 or 10 year credit. There was discussion on this topic.

Mr. Lawrence stated there is a recommendation to get approval from the Council to move forward with all five proposed projects.

Kelly McGowan, SETT, noted that the SETT established regional baselines from the AIM data that was collected for the projects in each of the WAFWA Management Zones. Therefore the SETT uses the actual regional baselines as a starting point and then made an assumption they would land somewhere between the regional baseline and the 100 percent function. They selected the mid-point. He provided some examples.

Mr. McGowan, and Chris Katopothis, SETT, reviewed each project individually and answered Council questions during each review.

Robert Veldman, on behalf of Mark and Martin Etcheverry, spoke about the Diamond Cattle Company project noting the landowners put in 2700 acres, which is their deeded private land; however, the HQT indicated that some of the private land entered did not correspond to significant credit production. It would have brought the credits down if all the private land would have been submitted. He answered questions from the Council concerning this project.

While reviewing the Johns Ranch project, Mr. Koch asked what would be the seed source for the project, and if it would be native species. Mr. McGowan noted it was a mix. Mr. Koch stated The Service has concerns over any non-natives used and would be interested in trying to help support finding sources for native seeds. He will talk with Melissa Fageles, SETT, about this in more detail. He also noted The Service is working this summer to develop seed teams to collect native seed. Chair Goicoechea noted alfalfa is a non-native species and is beneficial to sage-grouse. It is a great source for them and so is clover, which some are non-native as well. There is concern about Mr. Koch's comments about the use of non-native seeds. Some non-natives work extraordinarily well for all wildlife. There was discussion on this topic. Mr. Lawrence noted the State Plan has guidelines and parameters concerning seeding and revegetation therefore it will be consistent with what is in the State Plan. Mr. Koch stated he is not a "black or white" type of person, however, to the extent there are non-natives, it raises questions. Mr. Ruhs stated the BLM has a national seed strategy that does provide for the use of non-natives as necessary to ensure habitat gets to where it needs to be.

Mr. Lawrence spoke about the Tumbling JR Ranch project stating when there is a buyer and seller relationship that is one in the same, it still has to go through the system, all the verification processes and contracts are still in place. The vision on how this will work in the case of Tumbling JR Ranch is that at the time credits are used to off-set debits, the state would get the full awarded amount back. Josh Vittori, Stantec, noted the current debt obligation is less than half of what this project may create in credits. This will help get additional credits into the system. There was



discussion about this project. Mr. Lawrence noted this type of project is appropriate because the legislative appropriation was to make sure there were credits in the CCS. Mr. Lawrence also noted that in the ROD for the BLM, the CCS is stated as a mitigation option but it is not mandatory. It is a mitigation tool. This project has someone coming forward showing they believe in the CCS and would like to participate. Vice-chair MacKenzie asked if there is a potential to bank the credits and not have them available to other buyers. Beth Ericksen, Kinross Gold Mining, noted there are options available and banking is one of them. The decision has not been made. It is being looked at as an opportunity to support the CCS.

Member Nappe asked about mule deer. Mr. Tull noted the NDOW is comfortable with the results of negotiations on the mule deer issue. There was a compromise the NDOW felt generally comfortable with. They continue to work through this issue. It is still in the NEPA process therefore nothing has been finalized. The sage-grouse issue was set to the side because of the land use issue. The BLM came to an agreement separately to go ahead and use the CCS. Ms. Ericksen noted it has been a diligent effort on the mule deer. They have offered to "no pay" to off-set their impacts to crucial winter range.

Member Nappe noted that as new projects come on board will the NDOW do the initial assessment to evaluate the impact on a particular species of wildlife. Mr. Tull noted that NDOW will be involved in all discussions about wildlife habitat impacts. They will have a role as a cooperating agency. He is confident that the NDOW will maintain a role in early discussions.

Mr. Koch asked what is the vision for seeding or the basis for vegetation. Erica Freese, Stantec, noted nothing would be done with this project that would be contradictory to the mule deer habitat. A lot of the projects coming through the CCS would be beneficial for other wildlife species. They have done a preliminary assessment on the project area. They have herbaceous seeding planned for many of the parcels. Some will be forb seeding and some will be forb and grass seeding. Mr. Koch noted in his experience the larger the area the more likely you will need to use non-native seeds because of the lack of a native source and wondered if this is a fair assessment. Ms. Freese noted it was not a fair assessment. She stated as often as they can, they will certainly include native species. She also noted if there are areas with no understory, as a range ecologist, there is a need to do what is best for that property and the choice will be for something that will actually grow there. Mr. Koch noted The Service can use non-natives in pursuit of restoring native habitat. He provided an example. He noted he has spoken with other mining companies who lamented the lack of access to locally derived native seed sources. The Service is driving to try and improve that along with the BLM, NRCS, and others. Recently, there have been communications with the Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF). The NDF noted significant program efforts in their organization. He stated currently some of the native seed they receive is from Canada, which fails to grow within Nevada. The reason he is bringing this up, especially in the context of the CCS, is that reseed excites The Service and they are endeavoring to make that more efficient and more in support of the purposes of this vary body, the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council, to restore sagebrush ecosystems. So, what he would like to say to the SETT and to Councilmembers on this particular project is that The Service would really like to explore partnering with everyone and with the NDF to try and get efforts off the ground this year to do this. They want to do this in a way (they are already working closely with the BLM and the Forest Service) that 5, 10 years from now gives us a broader variety of tools to be able to apply to projects like this. Mr. Koch made the "ask" of the Council or the SETT and DCNR that he would really like for the state to provide leadership, maybe through implementing some of these projects in working with The Service staff and NRCS. They are eager to advance the cause. He clarified that Ms. Kacey KC from DCNR is a point person on this. Mr. Lawrence noted Ms. KC is supportive of what Mr. Koch is saying. He also stated that Mr. Katopothis is the NDF representative on the SETT and will be communicating closely with Ms. KC. Chair Goicoechea noted the Council is committed to doing what they have to do.

Member Biaggi made a motion to approve the funding recommendations for the Conservation Credit System; Member Nappe seconded the motion. Member Lister asked Mr. Stockton if the Council acts on the motion and approves the motion is the Council authorizing the expenditure of the funds and if so, is that within the Council's responsibilities. Mr. Stockton noted tacitly the Council is authorizing the expenditure and the Council is the approving body for these projects. The legislature has delegated that to the Council. The Council is not the final authority. These projects will have to be reviewed through the contracts process. Member Lister also asked Mr. McGowan and Mr. Katopothis if they are finding any resistance with a 30 year commitment for durability. He asked if the people who submitted these projects are aware of the durability commitment. Mr. McGowan noted they are aware of the commitment. Motion passed unanimously. **\*ACTION**

Member Nappe asked about the process for the credit purchasing and if it would be brought in front of the Council as an informational agenda item since it is between the buyer and the seller. Mr. Lawrence noted the SETT could provide the Council with an update and informational report. As the administrators of the CCS, although the transaction is between the buyer and the seller, the SETT does ensure the proper contract and mechanisms are in place. There was discussion on this topic.

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

## **10. 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 April 7, 2016
- Approved Meeting Minutes from February 12, 2016
- Approved the Funding Recommendations for the Conservation Credit System

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

- Proposal, including review of structure and communication strategy, on interagency team of federal and state agencies, Sheila Anderson, Governor's Office
- Discussion on the implementation of Table 2.2 within the Greater Sage-grouse Land Use Plan
- Review of Draft Strategic Action Plan (SAP), SETT
- US Forest Service Implementation Plan, John Shivik, US Forest Service

The Council decided the date of their next meeting:

- Thursday, May 12, 2016, location and time to be determined.

Items still needing dates for a future agenda:

- Review how Powerlines are Weighed in the CCS
- Review Debit Projects, Processes, and Demand
- Public Relations, Communications Concerning CCS
- Federal Update – Congressman Amodei
- FIAT Working Group Update
- Reports from Different Agencies on Sage-grouse items

- Review adding areas of the Bi-state to be eligible for the CCS
- Review a comparison between the BEA and the State Plan, specifically looking at ratios
- Concept of SETT to host a central database for the State on conservation actions
- Establish measurables for the next two years

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

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

- A. US Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service) – Mr. Koch noted a lawsuit was filed against The Service regarding the Bi-state.
- B. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – Mr. Ruhs stated the BLM has sent out invitations to a stakeholder meeting being held on April 27. He appreciated the partnerships with getting the MOU signed and ready to go. There will be a BLM briefing with the Director to finalize the Bi-state decision.
- C. US Forest Service – Mr. Dunkelberger noted the US Forest Service is doing its own FIAT process. It is different from the BLM process. They are looking at all Forest Service sage-grouse habitat. They had an informational stakeholders meeting a couple of weeks ago. If anyone would like to provide input on this or would like more information send Mr. Dunkelberger an email. They are working on the ROD implementation. The Forest Service is a little behind the BLM. They will be implementing things over the next 18 to 36 months. The Forest Service did send a letter to all their permittees concerning grazing that have allotments in sage-grouse habitat and let them know there will not be any changes to their permits this year, however, the Forest Service will be meeting with them and working with them individually doing a habitat assessment on their allotments and as a result there may be changes to their permits in the future. John Shivik will attend the next Council meeting to provide an update on the Forest Service implementation strategy, which is different from the BLM. The regional office has been putting together teams and they have been distributing guidelines and protocols for the implementation by discipline. There is a discipline for: fire, habitat, roads and recreation, minerals, lands, vegetation and range. These are not to reinterpret the ROD. They are intended to help field staff practically implement it on the ground. The Bi-state ROD is ready to go ahead and they are waiting on the BLM for consistency and to release the RODs on the same day.
- D. Other – No update.

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

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

- A. Office of the Governor – No additional update.
- B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) – Mr. Lawrence noted the SETT conducted Verification Training over a three day period. This training is a requirement to be a verifier for the CCS. Approximately 50 people signed up for the training. The State Purchasing Office let Mr. Lawrence know that based upon the amount of people going through the training they are working on the final contracts to get the verifiers under contract. They are working with 15 companies. This will increase the SETT's capacity. There was a large amount of positive feedback on the trainings. Mr. Lawrence did receive a list of qualified applicants for the SETT's

Program Manager's position. He will work on getting interviews set up and hopefully a new person will be in attendance at the next Council meeting. The NDOW is also working to fill their position on the SETT as well.

- C. Department of Wildlife (NDOW) – Mr. Tull noted that they do have qualified candidates for the position on the SETT. They will move forward with interviews. With the plan amendment, the NDOW has a requirement for seasonal habitat delineations as one of the process steps and they had to over 90 to date. Their lek survey activities are still underway.
- D. Department of Agriculture (NDA) – No update.
- E. Conservation Districts (CD) Program – Tim Rubald, Conservation Districts (CDs), noted the State Conservation Commission went through a grant process. It was the first time for a competitive grant process. He provided background and details on the grant process. Projects were awarded in Lincoln, White Pine, Humboldt and Eureka Counties. He provided specifics on the projects. They hope to have another process in late summer. Two of the CDs' staff completed all courses for the verifier training and one completed the field course, as he does not do a lot of work in GIS. There are verbal agreements with two of the projects approved earlier in the meeting for the CCS to will go through a CD. He spoke about interest in the CCS and reviewed possible CCS projects throughout the State. The CD staff along with the Habitat Division of the NDOW staff had a meeting. In the meeting it was decided the NDOW staff along with NRCS staff will mirror the locations of the CD staff. With the NDOW's help, the CDs will be starting a new Local Area Working Group (LAWG) in Winnemucca. They will also look into starting a LAWG in Nye County. There was discussion concerning the CDs' webpage. Mr. Rubald noted Meghan Brown, Department of Agriculture, will be participating as the Department's representative on the commission.
- F. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT) – Update provided during DCNR update.
- G. Other – No update.

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

- 13. PUBLIC COMMENT** – Member Swanson noted there would be a one day conference on plant materials on Wednesday, May 4, at the NDOW office located at 100 Valley Road, Reno, NV 89512. He also provided an update on the Council's Monitoring Committee stating there will be an update to the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook. The Committee will share the updated version with the Council.

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

- 14. ADJOURNMENT** – Member Lister made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Member Boies; meeting adjourned by acclamation at 2:31 p.m. **\*ACTION**