



STATE OF NEVADA
SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
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MINUTES

Date: Thursday, June 8, 2017
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Place: Public Employee Benefits Program Conference Room – Bryan Building
901 South Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701

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: J.J. Goicoechea, Chris MacKenzie, Steven Boies, Starla Lacy, who left at 12:43 p.m., Bevan Lister, Tina Nappe, Sherman Swanson, Gerry Emm, Cheva Gabor for Bill Dunkelberger, Marci Todd for John Ruhs, Mary Grimm for Carolyn Swed, Jim Barbee, Bradley Crowell, who arrived at 1:55 p.m., and Tony Wasley

Council Members Absent: Allen Biaggi, Bill Dunkelberger, Ray Dotson, Carolyn Swed and Jim Lawrence

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman J.J. Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – None
3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**
 - A. *Approval of agenda for June 8, 2017* – Member Chris MacKenzie moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Member Sherman Swanson; motion passed unanimously. ***ACTION**
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Approval of minutes from the meeting held on April 5, 2017 - Member Swanson noted that the minutes reflect a statement attributed to himself, which he did not make, with regard to a Montana program. Member Steven Boies said that the statement was made by him. Therefore, the minutes were changed to reflect the following: “Member **Boies** advised the SEC of a successful program in the State of Montana wherein roadkill is removed and composted and it is his opinion that all types of efforts must be undertaken to control raven predation on the sage-grouse population. Member MacKenzie made a motion to approve the minutes with the proposed amendment; seconded by Member Steven 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.
None

6. PRESENTATION OF THE NEVADA COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION NETWORK (NCCN) ON THEIR PROGRESS AND MEETINGS HELD SINCE INCEPTION – Sheila Anderson, Governor's Office and Cheva Gabor, United States Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (USFS-HTNF).– ***FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Sheila Anderson noted that the NCCN is making progress. Cheva Gabor advised of activities the NCCN has been involved with, which included facilitator training, funded through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Collaborative Alternative Dispute Resolution (CADR). The goal of the training was to establish a roster of trained facilitators, geographically distributed throughout the state, who would then be available to support local groups working on sage-grouse conservation. She further noted that there are two groups continuing to meet, the Communications and Outreach group and Building a Collaborative Network. Ms. Gabor stated that there is a meeting scheduled for late August and invited the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (SEC) and all other interested parties to attend. Matt Magaletti (BLM) reported that the BLM, in partnership with the state and USFS are working on obtaining additional funding to assist with training, through the CADR program. Mr. Magaletti further reported that the NCCN is working on a proposal to assist in providing for and empowering Local Area Working Groups (LAWGs) to identify other funding sources. Member Swanson stated that it was his understanding that there was a long list of projects proposed within the Fire and Invasives Assessment Tool (FIAT) report and that the state would aggressively move forward with funding of the suggested projects. Member Swanson inquired if those funding opportunities are involved in this process. Mr. Magaletti responded that since the FIATs were completed, new tools and information is being used to prioritize the projects. Mr. Magaletti noted that the LAWGs are working with the local BLM district offices to ensure that those projects are being prioritized.

A full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website. ***NO ACTION**

7. REPORTS FROM THE LOCAL AREA WORKING GROUPS (LAWGs) AND REQUEST FOR SEC ASSISTANCE – Various LAWG representatives. ***FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Ms. Anderson stated that they had asked representatives from the LAWGs to address and provide updates to the SEC, in order to foster open communications between the SEC and the LAWGs. Member Bevan Lister provided the SEC with correspondence from the Lincoln County LAWG requesting assistance from the SEC. The letter requested assistance with the approved National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for treatment areas; increased funding for projects; increased match opportunities; relief from lawsuits on NEPA actions; increased capacity to work across ownership lines; reduction of wild horse numbers; and good neighbor agreements. The Lincoln County LAWG further requested that LAWG updates become a regular item on the SEC agenda. Ms. Gabor provided information that the USFS is working on a master good neighbor agreement for the entire state, between the USFS, BLM, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), Nevada Department of Agriculture (DAG) and the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), with a target date of completion for mid-July.

The following groups provided information and requested assistance of the SEC. John Hiatt, Lincoln County, LAWG; Tracy Jean Wolf, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the Bi-State LAWG; Jake Tibbits, Natural Resources Manager, Eureka County Department of Natural Resources; Ed Ryan, Mason and Smith Valley Conservation District; Robin Boies, Stewardship Alliance of Northeast Elko; Gerald Miller, Elko Association of Conservation Districts; Jon Griggs, of Maggie Creek Ranch; and Bettina Scherer, North Central LAWG. The council members asked questions of the various groups and a full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website. During the discussion, Member Lister inquired if the SEC may be missing opportunities regarding sage-grouse preservation on state lands or in state parks. Chair Goicoechea questioned what the SEC can do, working in cooperation with state lands, NDOW and Conservation Districts, on state land and asked that a discussion be placed on a future agenda to

address the SEC's questions and concerns. Member MacKenzie asked about the East Walker corridor transfer to state lands and what role the SEC will play in sage-grouse habitat management. Ms. Anderson noted, in particular, that the Walker River state park area is located within priority habitat and that it was not assessed as to the risk once the area was established as a state park. Ms. Anderson advised that the LAWGs will be reviewing the land use change. Ms. Anderson further advised that a six year commitment was made by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to conduct the restoration of lands that are being taken out of irrigation.

Member Tina Nappe noted that she was impressed with the work being done by the groups and the collaboration that is beginning to occur. Chair Goicoechea echoed the sentiment and thanked the participants for their reports. ***NO ACTION.**

Chair Goicoechea called for a recess at 10:36 a.m., and reconvened at 10:51 a.m.

8. PRESENTATION ON "RECOGNIZING SITES FOR EFFECTIVE MITIGATION IN SAGE-GROUSE HABITATS" – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION Brad Schultz, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) Winnemucca.

Mr. Schultz reviewed a PowerPoint presentation, which is available on the Program's website. Mr. Schultz advised the SEC that his presentation is regarding recognizing sites for effective mitigation. Mr. Schultz noted that it is more than just quality sagebrush habitat and by putting the emphasis on quality sagebrush habitat the larger picture is missed. Mr. Schultz said that it is more important to look at the overall habitat and move inward towards the nest site. After the presentation the council members asked questions of Mr. Schultz. A full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website. Chair Goicoechea noted that the presentation was very informative and thanked Mr. Schultz for his time.

Member Nappe noted that Mr. Schultz's presentation brought to mind an article she had read with regard to lithium deposits in Nevada and requested that the SEC have a presentation on lithium mining, where the mineral exists, its relationship to sage-grouse and how the SEC, in the future, might look at this issue. - ***NO ACTION**

9. UPDATE ON UTILIZATION OF DRONE TECHNOLOGY TO COLLECT SITE SCALE DATA – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION Kirk Ellern, AboveGeo

Mr. Kirk Ellern and Dr. Peter S. Coates reviewed a PowerPoint presentation and distributed a hand-out entitled "Improving Sage-grouse Habitat Mapping with Drone Technology and Multi-spectral Imagery, a copy of which is available on the Program's website. Mr. Ellern noted that AboveGeo gave a presentation to the SEC in January of 2017, and today's presentation is to explain their objectives, provide a brief project overview and for the SETT team to discuss the eventual benefits of drone collection and deliver a current status of the project. Mr. Ellern noted that the use of drone technology to collect site scale data is considerably less expensive than the use of field verifiers. Mr. Ellern stated, for example, that Kim Summers, from the RDD project, had budgeted \$29.00 per acre utilizing field verifiers, while AboveGeo's budget was approximately \$3.00 per acre. He further stated that drone site scale data collection is also more efficient, covering ten square miles per day. Mr. Ellern advised the SEC that the first phase of the project will require funding in the amount of approximately \$290,000.00 and will take place this summer. The second phase will take place in spring of 2018 and will require funding in the amount of approximately \$300,000.00. Marci Todd, BLM advised the SEC that the BLM is excited about the project and the use of the new technology and has committed funding in the amount of \$150,000.00. Mr. Ellern noted that this is a highly supported project but they do need additional funding. Chair Goicoechea noted that the SEC is also supportive of the technology, and is looking forward to seeing a comparison of the field verifier's data compared to the site scale collection data before committing to any funding. Mr. Kelly McGowan, SETT also noted that they are supportive, but cautious,

and with the new fiscal biennial budget there is contract money available, if the SEC desires to move forward on funding the project in the future. Chair Goicoechea reiterated the SEC's support and asked that AboveGeo continue to provide updates to the council. - ***NO ACTION**

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

Chair Goicoechea called for a recess at 12:43 p.m., and reconvened at 1:55 p.m.

10.UPDATE ON CERTAIN ITEMS OF SIGNIFICANCE RELATING TO THE SEP – FOR POSSIBLE ACTION – SETT Staff

Mr. McGowan updated the SEC with the information that a representative from Newmont Mining was not available for this meeting, per the request of the SEC, but that they will be available for the next council meeting.

A. State of State Sponsored Credit Projects

Mr. McGowan reviewed a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Credit Project Status", a copy of which is available on the Program's website. Mr. McGowan presented the four projects approved by the SEC in 2016, noting that the TumblingJR, Coleman and Cottonwood projects are nearing completion of the management plan. Mr. McGowan further stated that the Johns Ranch has completed their management plan and has produced 164 credits for the CCS, and more credit generation is anticipated by the end of summer, 2017. Mr. McGowan advised the SEC that he is aware of debit projects, and those projects could utilize the credits in the CCS. Member Boies asked about the reduction of the number of credits due to the three phase power line on the Johns Ranch project. Ms. Sara McBee, SETT responded that the reduction was approximately 100 credits. Mr. McGowan continued the update on the five projects approved by the council at the March, 2017 SEC meeting. The SETT will be conducting site visits at the Heguy and Earthton projects at the end of June, 2017. The SETT has previously conducted site visits at Crawford Cattle, Eureka Livestock and RDD, Inc. Ms. Grimm asked that the management plans be provided for review to the BLM and Mr. McGowan replied affirmatively. Chair Goicoechea asked that once the credits were generated with regard to the TumblingJR project would they then be immediately used to offset their debit projects and if so, would the funds expended on the project be returned to the CCS and available for future projects. Mr. McGowan replied that there is a possibility that a portion of the funds would be returned. The TumblingJR paid for all the upfront work and most of the state funding would then go to conducting the enhancement work. The enhancement work has not yet taken place and the project will require the funding to continue the enhancements. Chair Goicoechea advised that he is looking ahead to next year and the amount the CCS will have for funding should another project come forward.

B. Development of Benefit Index for Conifer Removal

Ms. Katie Andrie, SETT provided the council with an update regarding the changes to the habitat suitability index (HSI), which changed the process of the conifer removal benefit index value. The SETT is developing new methods to assess the effects of conifer removal in concert with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), who has contracted with NDOW. The goal is to identify the highest priority areas that would most benefit from conifer removal based on lek locations, late brood-rearing habitat and canopy cover of the existing pinon juniper (P-J). The SETT is still considering the best method to assess the impacts. The SETT was working with the USGS to develop a short-term solution, which was to re-run the HSI model without the conifer cover layer as a parameter, and the difference in the HSIs would be used to calculate the uplift. However, Ms. Andrie stated that when the HSI was run utilizing that method, the difference in magnitude was just a few percentage points of change, and therefore not an effective tool. The SETT then reviewed research

from the State of Oregon regarding P-J removal and the results demonstrating the effect of P-J removal on the demographic rates of birds. The research displayed a nest survivability increase by almost 20 percent in treated areas compared to control areas and adult female survival increased by 7 percent. The researchers predicted a 25 percent increase in population growth over time. The SETT will incorporate the benefit of conifer treatment to the bird into the HSI as a percent change. The SETT has not finished re-running the HSI with that change and do not have the results available at this time. Member Swanson pointed out that when you are dealing with a system that is changing, comparing what you have before the project with what you have right after the project is not a valid comparison. Member Swanson noted that you need to compare what you will have in the future with what you will have in the future with and without the project in order to deal with the future habitat effects. Ms. Andrlle replied that it is a complicated issue and is dependent on how the understory responds to the future habitat condition. Chair Goicoechea stated that he understood, but pointed out that if you do nothing in a P-J encroachment area, it will continue to degrade. Member Lister asked if the SETT's analysis and index included the information contained in Brad Schultz's presentation just given. Ms. Andrlle responded in the negative but noted in the future those parameters may be included. Ms. Andrlle noted that in moving forward, in order to even consider a potential P-J removal project, certain criteria need to be met for the CCS to fund the project. One of those criteria is creating a buffer around a project boundary and the canopy cover surrounding that boundary cannot be greater than 4%. The idea is to prevent cutting out blocks of P-J where no benefit will be gained.

Mr. McGowan, in response to Member Swanson, noted that where the P-J removal projects occur, a proponent may have up to three credit releases: The initial release would be for preservation of existing habitat; the second release may be enhancing forb diversity or P-J removal; and the third release could occur when the site responds. Mr. McGowan also noted that P-J removal must remain economically viable, as you want to encourage the credit producers to implement P-J removal. Mr. McGowan noted that there must also be a defensible ecological reasoning for the habitat preservation.

C. GIS Automation for CCS

Ms. Andrlle provided the council with an update on the Geographical Information System (GIS) automation. Environmental Incentives has been working on the automation process to take the Habitat Quantification Tool (HQT), Desktop GIS analysis from a manual version to an automated version. In May of 2017, the automation process was finalized. The automation adds consistency and repeatability, and reduces processing time to less than one hour, once the anthropogenic features and map unit delineation layers are complete. Mr. McGowan also noted a significant cost reduction for both the SETT and credit and debit producers. - ***NO ACTION**

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

11. UPDATE ON CREDIT DEVELOPMENT ON PUBLIC LANDS – FOR POSSIBLE ACTION – SETT Staff

Ms. McBee provided the council with a summary of progress made regarding credit development on public lands. Ms. McBee advised that the SETT has had two meetings with BLM and one meeting with USFS, and on May 19, 2017, the SETT met with BLM, USFS, the United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and NDOW to discuss the status of using the CCS to develop credit projects on public lands. The goal of the meeting was two-fold, 1) To come together as a multi-agency group to inform all parties on the developments and status of implementing credit projects on public lands, and 2) Agree that enhancement and restoration type projects will move forward for credit development consideration. Ms. Andrlle noted that at this time, preservation projects are not being considered with federal land management agencies for credit generation. Ms. McBee's interpretation of this decision is that the projects must include action on the ground with measureable uplift. Ms. McBee further noted that all parties are in

agreement that enhancement and restoration projects will move forward on public land and stated that the next scheduled meeting with USFS and BLM will be held on June 23, 2017. Once that meeting has been held, an additional meeting will be scheduled with the larger group of agencies. Chair Goicoechea asked how this will compare to the Barrick Enabling Agreement (BEA) and its ability to generate credits on public land—is it modeled in the same manner. Ms. McBee replied that the BEA is modeled differently and she has not been involved in those meetings, but in reviewing the final report, she noted that the BEA measures baseline under current field conditions, so uplift projections are higher. Mr. J.A. Vacca, BLM, interjected that the BEA uses The Nature Conservancy (TNC) landscape forecasting model which reviews baseline conditions as they currently exist and models the changes in the habitat over time based on the current trajectory. Mr. Vacca noted that unless the two methodologies were compared, he does not believe that it is an accurate statement to say that one methodology gives more or less credits—both use a quantification tool that is based on the ecological site and driving habitat to a desired objective. Chair Goicoechea advised the SEC that Eureka County had just received an update from Barrick Mining and he is frustrated that Barrick is able to generate public land credits while the SEC is still attempting to get public land credits off the ground. Chair Goicoechea further stated that he didn't believe this was an even playing field. - ***NO ACTION**

There were concerns and questions from the SEC; a full account of the discussion is captured in the audio recording, which is available on the Program's website.

12. REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT – FOR POSSIBLE ACTION – SETT Staff, NRCS Staff

Mr. Dan Huser, SETT reviewed a PowerPoint presentation entitled "NRCS Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Funding Relevant to the Nevada CCS", a copy of which is available on the Program's website. Mr. Huser provided an overview of the RCPP, noting that the program is provided funding from NRCS, which was created by the 2014 Farm bill. The program allows partners to propose innovative changes to current programs and to maximize new conservation efforts. It is essentially a joint effort between the States of Colorado and Nevada, including the Partners for Western Conservation (PWC), Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA), DCNR, Nevada Conservation Districts Program (NCDP), Colorado Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Incentives, LLC. The program includes \$1.9 million in USDA funding with a \$1.9 million match. Mr. Huser noted that the RCPP includes approximately \$400,000 in conservation project funds for potential credit projects for 2017 and the same amount for 2018. The SETT will assist with project selection, implementation, the HQT process and project monitoring. Mr. Huser said that there will be a contract between the applicant and the SETT to ensure that the HQT is run prior to expenditure of awarded funds and that the applicant agrees to attend a workshop and utilize project partners to provide technical services. The SETT has attended multiple meetings regarding the project and drafted announcements, screening tools and ranking questions to select the applicants for the awards. Mr. Huser noted that a formal announcement is expected soon. Member Swanson inquired if federal money is spent for the purpose of enhancing the process of credit development by utilizing the SEP evaluation tools, without actually allowing those projects to generate credits that are saleable. Member Nappe also inquired if an applicant would be using federal money for private gain. Mr. McGowan stated that the SETT is unsure at this point, which is why the SETT will run the HQT prior to expending federal funds on the projects, as the HQT does allow for preservation credits to be developed on private lands. Mr. McGowan noted a concern that many of the types of enhancement projects that may be done on fairly well managed private lands are going to generate a small amount of uplift in the way of generating additional credits. The SETT has received a written opinion from NRCS that once NRCS' contract ends with their clients, there are no further obligations. Mr. McGowan noted that there is a difference of opinion as to how long those federal dollars should be considered as additionality. Mr. McGowan is uncertain as to how USFWS is going to treat these types of projects—after the NRCS contract ends, will they allow the credits generated above what was there to begin with, into the CCS. Mr. McGowan stated that the initial feedback the SETT has received is that only the portion of credits generated from the infusion of the federal funds would be the cost share that the landowner is required to put in to the project.

Mr. McGowan also noted that there were many private landowners that have used NRCS funding in the past and should there be a term, at some point, that the federal funds used on a project essentially expire. Mr. McGowan again stated that the HQT would be run prior to any federal funding and if the HQT generated credits on that proposed project, they would be available for sale. The question is, after the conservation funding is put into practice and uplift is measured, how will those credits be treated? Ms. Grimm noted that it has long been the policy of the USFWS that they cannot accept anything from mitigation that was funded by federal funds. She noted that there has been debate over the matching piece, but at this time, the policy is that matching funds may not be used either. Ms. Grimm also stated that in the situation of NRCS funds that are under contract that at the point the contract expires, USFWS has the ability to consider that land for mitigation. Mr. Brad Crowell, DCNR asked Ms. Grimm if this is a USFWS policy, law or regulation and noted that the federal government funds multiple projects that have a public and private benefit. Ms. Grimm replied that it is a policy. Mr. McGowan responded that an option the SETT has discussed is if a landowner received a grant from NRCS, and credits were generated and sold, the landowner would have to repay the federal funds. Mr. Wasley stated that there is a reasonable scenario wherein a landowner can enter into an NRCS program and bring the land up to baseline and beyond and then the contractual obligation with NRCS ends. At which point, the landowner can then get credit for everything above baseline, whether it is a preservation or conservation easement—the landowner can use both funding sources, the funding just cannot be used simultaneously. Member Boies asked for clarification stating that as of today, if a landowner has had an NRCS project and the contract is expired can the landowner then generate credits through the CCS. Chair Goicoechea stated that was correct, but the baseline would be what the land is today, not the way it was before the NRCS project. Mr. McGowan noted that they do need to move this forward, as the end of NRCS' fiscal year is near and the SEC wants these funds implemented in Nevada. Mr. McGowan requested direction from the SEC and USFWS that if a landowner enters into RCPP funds and implements a project, and in two years that contract has ended, would all the credits available be used for mitigation purposes. Ms. Grimm replied affirmatively. Mr. McGowan thanked her for the clarification. Chair Goicoechea asked that the SETT work with USFWS on this issue and report back to the council. - ***NO ACTION**

13. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION ON THE SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE – FOR POSSIBLE ACTION – SETT Staff

Mr. McGowan advised the SEC that the semi-annual progress report to the Governor has been drafted and placed on the Program's website for the SEC's consideration. Member Swanson moved that the SEC adopt the progress report for submittal to the Governor's office; seconded by Member Boies; motion passed unanimously. - ***ACTION**

14. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING THIS MEETING AND SCHEDULING THE NEXT SEC MEETING – FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. With staff assistance, the Council will review items discussed, as well as items acted upon during this meeting, and determine which of those they wish to direct staff to do further work on, as well as which items the Council wishes to act on that may not have been acted upon during earlier discussion.
- B. The SEC requested an update from Jeff White, Director of Renewable Resources, Newmont Mining.
- C. Presentation on proposed Lithium exploration within the State of Nevada.
- D. Presentation by State Lands regarding habitat preservation on state land.
- E. Report from the SETT on the NRCS RCPP program.
- F. Discussion on Secretary Zinke's secretarial order to improve sage-grouse conservation.

- G. Discussion on continuing relationship building with LAWGs.
- H. Presentation by Sherman Swanson on mowing projects.
- I. Presentation by Dr. Peter Coates regarding wildfire and its impact on the sage-grouse population.
- J. Presentation by NDOW on updated lek counts.
- K. The Council scheduled their next meeting for Thursday, August 3, 2017, location and time to be determined.

15. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS –

- A. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – (USFWS) Mary Grimm reported that Secretary of the Interior Zinke executed the order to Improve Sage-Grouse Conservation and Secretary Zinke will appoint a team comprised of USFWS, BLM and USGS to lead that review. The purpose of the review is to look at the plan and see if those agencies can further increase coordination with the States and consider any changes that may be needed for oil and gas development, managing predation and bird enhancement.
- B. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – Marci Todd reported that there are several Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) in the process. The DCNR and SETT MOU has been completed. The BLM and USFWS MOU is in the Washington D.C. office for review. Ms. Todd advised that the BLM is working with NDOW on finalizing the MOU to define the roles and responsibilities prescribed in the Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA). Ms. Todd reported that as of yesterday, the BLM has completed 30,000 acres of veg treatments and P-J removal, fuel removal, fuel breaks and barriers to enhance, restore and conserve sagebrush.
- C. US Forest Service (USFS) – Cheva Gabor reported that ROGER group will be meeting. State level officials will be attending from the other agencies, and the Deputy Forest Supervisor for the HTNF will also be in attendance. USFS will be discussing internally whether it is appropriate for the USFS to be involved with that group, or look at a similar parallel group.
- D. US Department of Agriculture (NRCS) – No update.
- E. Other – No update.

16. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS

- A. Office of the Governor – Brad Crowell provided a report that there was a stakeholder call with Secretary Zinke and an implication was made by Secretary Zinke that Governor Sandoval supports a plan which relies less on habitat preservation and more on sage-grouse population, which is not accurate and the Governor will be correcting that on the record.
- B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) – Kelly McGowan, SETT provided a report on behalf of DCNR stating that the 2017 legislative session has approved the SETT budget and within that budget is approximately \$250,000 available to the SETT for contract work.
- C. Department of Wildlife (NDOW) – Tony Wasley reported that staff has expended a considerable amount of time in preparing the progress report for the Bi-state Action Plan and the final draft is expected to be completed by June 21, 2017. Staff has also been working with the Bishop BLM – Mono County staff to develop a bi-state specific website, which should be live by July 7, 2017. NDOW biologists have gathered all lek count data for their areas of responsibility and approximately three-quarters of the total data has been submitted from a state-wide perspective at this time. The data will be compiled and a summary analysis will be available in late June or early July in preparation for the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife (WAFWA) meeting.

NDOW staff has been working with the BLM in developing suitable, marginal and unsuitable metrics for the objectives and indicators identified in the habitat assessment framework. The recommendations are based largely on the best available scientific information, as well as a recent synthesis of data from several different research efforts currently being conducted in Nevada and northeastern California. NDOW research crews are busy monitoring nests and are in the early to middle stages of monitoring broods. A recent visit to the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge sites shed light on UNR's use of dual remote video camera placement on brooding hens as an effective method for counting brood members as they disperse from the hen after she leaves the nest to feed. The cameras are placed before dawn and retrieved after sunset. This is a less invasive method than some traditional brood counting methods. NDOW staff will be attending the upcoming Results Oriented Grazing for Ecological Restoration meeting in western Elko next week. The discussion will include successes, challenges and limitations to achieving desired conditions.

D. Department of Agriculture (NDA) – Meghan Brown reported that the NDA has received funding for drought monitoring, drought coordination and water conservation projects that will begin in October of this year. As those grants become available, the NDA will engage with the SEC, the SETT and Jason King, State Water Engineer. NDA received a cooperative grant from USFS in the amount of \$400,000.00 for invasive species/noxious weeds in sage-grouse habitat, conservation and restoration enhancement work. Ms. Brown noted that the grant is for private land projects in priority habitat to promote and create connectivity for sage-grouse. Ms. Brown also noted that they are still recruiting for the open position available on the SETT.

E. Conservation Districts Program – No update was provided by the CDs, however, Member Nappe requested that Chair Goicoechea draft a thank-you letter to Tim Rubald on behalf of the SEC for the work he did as Program Manager for the Conservation District Program and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program during his career.

F. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT) – No update

G. Other – No update.

17. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

18. ADJOURNMENT – There being no further business to come before the Council, Chair Goicoechea adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.