



STATE OF NEVADA
SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
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FINAL MINUTES

Date: Thursday, October 8th, 2020
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Place: Teleconference Access:
Teleconference Number – 877.422.8614
Participant Code – 3983136#

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/)

Council Members Present: JJ Goicoechea, Chris MacKenzie, Allen Biaggi, Steven Boies, Sherm Swanson, Bevan Lister, Starla Lacey, William Molini, Cheva Gabor for Bill Dunkelberger, Marc Jackson, Jon Raby, Ray Dotson, Alan Jenne for Tony Wasley, Meghan Brown for Jennifer Ott, Jim Lawrence for Bradley Crowell.

Council Members Absent: Gerry Emm

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

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

Member Lacey moved to approve the agenda, Member Biaggi seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. ***ACTION**

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Member MacKenzie moved to approve the minutes for the meeting on August 13th, 2020. Member Boies seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. ***ACTION**

5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Member Swanson brought up the Free Roaming Equids Summit and requested for a future agenda to possibly feature an update on the Wild Horse and Burro status from Pete Coates.

6. MITIGATION STATUS UPDATE RELATIVE TO WESTERN OIL AND WESTERN GOLD EXPLORATION IN NEWARK VALLEY, NV – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Mr. McGowan began a presentation available on the program website. Mr. Lawrence asked if there were any lessons learned about how this type of thing could be coordinated in the future. Mr. McGowan agreed that coordination did occur, where BLM was aware of the issue and notified the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team. But perhaps a Clearinghouse type of thing could be created to keep everyone updated on projects. Member Boies asked if the 10-year mitigation was sufficient to mitigate what damage occurred in the area. Mr. McGowan replied that it a difficult question to answer due to all the disturbance associated with the actions. If the roads are not fixed or bonded in the

allotted timeframe, then a discussion may have to be had. Perhaps a 30-year timeframe may be needed. Chairman Goicoechea stated that jurisdiction for the disturbance was confusing and requested a future agenda item to present a flow chart for who is notified and who handles when a major disturbance like this happens again. He also suggested that the program revisits the 10-year exploration policy. ***NO ACTION**

7. REVIEW OF PAST, CURRENT, AND PLANNED REHABILITATION EFFORTS BY PUBLIC AGENCIES IN RESPONSE TO RECENT FIRES WITHIN THE SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Mike Feticc, Natural Resources Specialist and ESR lead, and Casey Addy, Range Management Specialist for the BLM presented powerpoints, which are located on the program website. Chairman Goicoechea asked for the precipitation monitoring results, to which Mr. Addy replied it was lower than normal, but not as bad as the rest of Elko County. Mr. Lawrence asked to what contributed the difference between the successful and not so successful rehabilitation sites. Mr. Addy replied that they did not realize the severity of the burn in the bad sections of the fire. Councilman Goicoechea asked if there was state and transition modeling done prior to the fire. Mr. Addy was unsure but guessed so. Member Boies asked when the BLM returned to the work site, will more varieties of plants be added to help with the rehabilitation, to which Mr. Addy replied that they initially seeded with a mix of native and non-native, then returned already and drill seeded with mostly native plants. Chairman Goicoechea asked if they are looking at the soil nutrients. Mr. Addy replied they are in the process of getting the soil samples tested, and once they are returned, the BLM will be meeting with members at the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the University of Nevada in Reno.

Next, Derek Messmer, Fire and Fuels Manager for the BLM presented a powerpoint, which can also be found on the program website. Mr. McGowan asked how much had been treated, how much more needs to be treated, and how much is left untreated. He also asked if the Council could play any roles in funding. He also mentioned that the program became aware of medusahead on the Martin Fire scar, and if the BLM was aware of that and treating it. Mr. Messmer replied that they do know about the infestations and they treated the far side of the fire. He requested that, if there are new infestations, it would be good for the BLM to be notified about them. He also replied that the BLM is treating 15,000 acres on the east side of the fire this year, but the rest of the fire we are leaving for natural recovery except for possibly sagebrush plantings.

Mike Feticc presented a 2020 program update that reviewed the numbers of ESR plans the BLM is working on throughout the state as well as the funds associated with the plans. He also reviewed ESR policy and timelines for the BLM. Mr. Mower asked if the vegetation action management portal was available to the public, to which Mr. Feticc replied that it was not available to the public at this time.

John McCann, Forest Hydrologist and BAER Coordinator for the HTNF-USF and Alan Jenne, Habitat Division Admin for NDOW each gave presentations as well, which can be found on the program website. Member MacKenzie asked what percentage of the burns are truly lost, never to return to natural sites. Mr. Jenne replied that is unknown, but probably could be answered using remote sensing. He does know that some of the low resistance and resilience sites have already converted to annual grasslands. ***NO ACTION**

8. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE SHARED STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Cheva Gabor, Nevada State Liaison for the USFS-Intermountain Regional Office gave a brief update, which can be found on the program website, with the promise to readdress in December or February at the Council meeting with a more thorough review. ***NO ACTION**

9. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE CURRENT GUIDELINES FOR CCS CREDIT GENERATION ON PUBLIC LANDS AND POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Mr. McGowan began a presentation available on the program website. Ms. Gabor added that there may be another avenue where the state could be an intermediary in a mitigation banking model, but the commodity issue is a major issue. Member Boies mentioned that there was much interest about creating public lands credits, but the Council didn't seem to be involved and the language is not clear. He asked what the difference was between credit proponent and credit developer, to which Ms. Gabor replied that a proponent is the proposer of credits to cover the debits. There is not sale on the open market of public credits. Mr. Raby added that there are mechanisms in place that ensure all the money goes back into the ground for mitigation, that the credits are not benefiting anyone in particular. If a credit developer came in for generation of credits for sale, that becomes a public lands resource, no different than timber and

minerals, and there will be needs of fair market price assessment, open bidding, etc. Member Boies asked why then do we need public lands credits. Mr. McGowan clarified that the general makeup of land ownership that eventually we will run out of private lands credits. It's limited overall, those have to be in sage-grouse habitat, and not everyone who has private lands are willing to be in the program. And there are some areas that don't have private credit production but do have disturbance. He added that the program did develop a review to ensure that allow the conservation balance spatially the disturbance that is occurring. Chairman Goicoechea asked if mitigation money held in a mitigation account must be bid out, to which Mr. Raby replied correct. Chairman Goicoechea added then how is the program going to address the reserve account on public lands. Mr. McGowan explained that there are two pools, one for private and one for public projects. Mr. Lawrence added that the program increased the reserve account contribution requirement on public lands, which increases the overall cost. Mr. McGowan confirmed and replied that the debit projects will also have to replace any credits impacted by the debit project. Nancy Beecher asked if ranchers holding permits for the public lands can generate credits on those lands, to which Mr. Raby replied no, actions can be done on allotments, but only by the debit project proponent and credits cannot be sold. Mr. Boies expressed concern that this allows mining companies to own more ranches and land, and cautioned the Council moving forward. ***NO ACTION**

10. UPDATE ON CCS MITIGATION TRANSACTIONS AND STATUS OF CREDIT AND DEBIT PROJECTS – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Mr. McGowan began a presentation available on the program website. Mr. Jackson asked if there was any way for people to learn more about the type of credits using the system. Mr. McGowan invited him to peruse the program website's new tool that may answer his questions, but if not, then the details are found in each project's management plan. ***NO ACTION**

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

The next meeting was scheduled for December 10th at 8:30 a.m. Mr. Coates' wild horse presentation was requested, as well as a presentation from the BLM regarding the same. Chairman Goicoechea suggested we keep an eye on public lands credits and possibly discuss it more in the future. Member Swanson requested a talk on the power of collaboration to reduce litigation and how the USFS and BLM plan to use consensus collaborative processes to create a more understanding for long term solutions, with the state possibly assisting. Mr. McGowan also reminded the Council that the December meeting will have the program's semi-annual report as well. ***NO ACTION**

12. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

A. US Fish and Wildlife Service

Mr. Jackson introduced himself as the new field supervisor for the USFWS in Reno. The USFWS is working through the bi-state sage-grouse lawsuit and the Teihms buckwheat lawsuit. They also hired new employee in Winnemucca to work with NDOW. Nevada native seed partnership has finalized the native seed strategy.

B. Bureau of Land Management

Mr. Raby started off by saying that their Fire and Fuels did complete nearly 160,000 acres of fuels treatment. Wild Horse and Burro gathers in Winnemucca were completed, over 1,650 horses gathered, with other gathers successful. The supplemental EIS is being reviewed by the department, with no knowing when the judge will review. The draft EIS on grazing regulations is being prepared for publication. There will be 90 days review, starts at the end of October, early November. Then published in January or February, and there will be a 60-day public review. The Argenta Allotment decision and Wilson Creek Allotment decision are out and will be public soon. They have a new Wild Horse and Burrow division chief, Lisa Cook, out of Reno starting October 26. CCDO district manager Colleen Dulin is now the Regional Greater Sage-grouse Coordinator, and they are looking to fill her old position. State director Alan Shepherd is acting, and the selection will be made soon for permanent director. The Fuels Reduction and Restoration EA is out for review and Targeted Grazing is planned for this next year.

C. US Forest Service

Ms. Gabor stated that the prescribed fire NEPA has been sent out as an administrative draft. They received good comments back and are working to provide answers for that and send that out again for a 30-day comment period. For targeted grazing, the USFS has some funding to work with UNR to do some studies of fine fuels reduction in the forest. They do have the pilot going in the Jacks Valley area through a fuels contract. They are also looking at sites in the Santa Rosa and Jarbidge Districts for targeted grazing. They have received

\$175,000 last year from Joint Chiefs Funding, and they have put in a request for second year funding. HTNF has hired a new deputy supervisor, starting December 7th.

- D. USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- E. Other

11. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

A. Office of the Governor

B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Mr. Lawrence stated there is nothing to report

C. Department of Wildlife

Mr. Jenne announced that the sage-grouse season is open. Staff recently attended Prairie Grouse and Wind forum, with the findings being that energy development on prairie grouse is negligible but substantial on sage-grouse. NDOW is doing noise monitoring to establish baseline sound levels. Additional sites have been monitored this year but there is no data yet. A partner position for USFWS housed in NDOW in Winnemucca for Pheasants Forever. NRCS and NDOW hired a new partner position in Winnemucca, and a new position in Elko has been flown. The NRCS/NDOW shared position in Reno should be flying soon as well.

D. Department of Agriculture

Ms. Brown noted that the NDA has been engaged in many activities already been presented on. Additionally, they will be hosting the Nevada Native Seed forum in the spring, virtually and possibly in person. They are also engaged in the BLM grazing regulations.

E. Conservation Districts Program

Mr. Ormsby announced that the State Conservation Commission has issued \$65,000 through the Sage-Grouse Grant Program to three conservation districts. This year, they will be working with the SETT in helping to change the grading and ranking criteria to encourage some of the partners in the work they are doing. There's a capacity issue for everyone, and they are looking into folding the Local Area Working Group meetings into Conservation District (CDs) meetings which helps with capacity issues. They will also work with the SETT on adaptive management trigger responses. The CDs may need help furthering the Resource Needs Assessments (RNAs). Mr. Ormsby requested the Council to start thinking of other funding mechanisms to develop the RNAs. The state is working on the climate initiative and the focus is on natural and working lands. The talks attracted people who live in the cities primarily from the southern part of the state, and rural members were not represented. Assistance to get more rural people to attend would be great. Program is updating the State Conservation Commission Strategic Plan and creating a strategic plan for the CDs.

F. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team

Two days ago, the SETT began the process for holding the adaptive management analysis for 2020. Mr. Mower took over to explain that the SETT had our meeting to review the habitat warnings. They do not have population data or triggers, so they are pushing ahead with habitat warnings. None of the recommendations from the prior year are in any stage of implementation, so they are going to work with the CDs to get a select number of recommendations to get on the path to be acted upon. But they did come up with new triggers for this year in the Shoshone, South Fork, Buffalo-Skedaddle, and Cortez PMUs, two of which contain population triggers with associated recommendations. Mr. McGowan added that they are in very initial stages of working with partners to establish funding that would go to fund a position to help us implement the adaptive management process and to work with the local work group level to ensure they are heard and incorporated. The team is working their way to begin to look for more funding to address invasive weeds and work on the prioritization they developed to get funded actions on the ground.

G. Other

12. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Goicoechea adjourned the meeting at 12:29 p.m.