



STATE OF NEVADA
SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
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MINUTES

Date: Thursday, August 13th, 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/

Council Members Present: JJ Goicoechea, Chris MacKenzie, Steven Boies, Sherm Swanson, Bevan Lister, Starla Lacey, William Molini, Kris Boatner for Bill Dunkelberger, Justin Barrett, Jon Raby, Ray Dotson, Allan Jenne for Tony Wasley, Jennifer Ott, Jim Lawrence for Bradley Crowell.

Council Members Absent: Allen Biaggi, Gerry Emm

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

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

Member MacKenzie moved to approve the agenda, Member Boies 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 June 17th, 2020. Member Boies seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. ***ACTION**

5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence.

6. REVIEW OF THE ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY THE SETT REGARDING POSSIBLE MITIGATION VIOLATIONS RELATED TO EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY WESTERN OIL AND WESTERN GOLD EXPLORATION IN NEWARK VALLEY, NV – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Mr. McGowan began a presentation available on the program website. Member Boies asked if most of the violations occurred on BLM land, if there was any private land affected, and if there was any action available for air quality disturbance. Mr. McGowan replied that it was BLM land, with a small amount of private land. Nevada Department of Environmental Protection assessed the dust levels and an agreement regarding the road conditions with the county is being worked out. Member Boies expressed concern about long term effects from the road damage. Mr. McGowan expressed that the county is engaged with the proponent to make sure that the county will not be left with road work.

Member MacKenzie asked if roadbed material that had been mounded could be considered as perches. Mr. McGowan replied that they were likely not conducive to perching. Member MacKenzie commented that there seems to be a question on liability in terms of company registration. Chairman Goicoechea commented that increased traffic might be observed due to hunting season. Mr. McGowan commented that there is a stop order in place. Member Lister commented that there are lights on at night and wondered how that existed with a stop order. Mr. McGowan responded that there are people living on site and the stop order related to active work. Chairman Goicoechea commented that there is gravel being hauled to the site for road work. Mr. Raby commented that he appreciated the interagency coordination, and that this was a complex situation, well outside the original authorization, with potential for future litigation. Mr. Raby mentioned that there was a letter that had been sent to Secretary Bernhardt and that he would supply the letter. Mr. Raby mentioned that the BLM has issued a suspension notice. Certain wells have been temporarily plugged. If incidences of non-compliance issues are not resolved, then civil penalties may be involved. BLM has several investigations in place and the BLM is taking the situation very serious and is not what the BLM expects from notice level activities. Mr. McGowan expressed his thanks for all the partners working together and mentioned that there are weekly coordination meetings regarding the situation. ***NO ACTION**

7. OVERVIEW AND FORECAST OF 2020 WILDLAND FIRES WITHIN HABITAT MANAGEMENT AREAS – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Mr. Dan Huser gave a presentation that is available on the program website. Member Lister mentioned that the fire in Lincoln County might be beneficial to sage-grouse as it burned much of the Pinyon/Juniper. ***NO ACTION**

8. REVIEW OF CCS MITIGATION TRANSACTIONS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVE USABILITY OF THE CCS – *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

- A. Ms. Kathleen Petter presented a GIS specific tool related to identifying uplift opportunities in the CCS. This presentation is on the program website. Member Boies asked about water availability during a drought and whether the system can calculate the benefit that might occur due to water subsidies. Ms. Petter responded that the system does not have the ability to quantify that. Member Boies asked if that could be addressed at some point in the future. Member Swanson commented that the SETT is requiring verifiers take PFC courses to capture how important riparian functions are. Member Swanson commented that he hoped that might to some degree address member Boies' comment. Mr. McGowan commented that the tool will be extremely useful due to the difficulty in identifying opportunities for uplift. Mr. Lawrence commented that the credits system has been preservation focused for years, and that this is a step in a direction to achieve more uplift, partially in response to USFWS asking for more uplift.
- B. Mr. Ethan Mower presented a tool developed to help situate invasive annual grass treatments. This presentation and tool are on the program website. Member Swanson commented that sagebrush cover becomes a problem as it increases in cover, and that those upper levels may be better having a lower value. Mr. Barret asked to what degree the SETT had developed this product with partners and commented that it is important to bring different tools and efforts. Mr. Mower responded that it had been sent for feedback from both UNR and Federal partners and that he thought it was also important to collaborate and bring tools together.
- C. Mr. Huser presented outreach materials related to credit developers entering the CCS.
- D. Ms. Petter presented outreach materials related to frequently asked questions for both credit and debit aspects of the program. This document is available on the program website. Member Boies asked if, regarding annual monitoring, there would be a standardized form for annual monitoring, if a landowner can do the annual monitoring, and if there would be multiple annual reports required if different sales were experienced. Ms. Petter responded that there was a standardized form, the annual monitoring was designed for landowners to be able to do it, and that there would only be one form required for all sales.
- E. Ms. Petter presented educational documents developed for helping determine what uplift opportunities might exist on different projects within the system. The document is available on the program website.
- F. Mr. Ethan Mower presented a tool that is in development using RShiny to provide a map-based interactive map that will be available online. This tool when finished will allow anyone to interact with project locations and types in order to find and match credits to debits and what is available in the system.
- G. Mr. McGowan gave a presentation update on CCS transactions to date. This is available on the program website. Chairman Goicoechea for clarification that projects that are amending a plan, which is an incremental expansion must use the CCS. Mr. Raby confirmed that yes, expansions with new proposals will need to be in conformance with federal and state requirements. Chairman Goicoechea began a discussion regarding credits on public land and why permittees cannot develop credits on public land. This conversation resulted in

Member MacKenzie requesting an agenda item at the next council meeting informing the council more specifically about why permittees cannot develop credits on public land. ***NO ACTION**

9. 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 October 8th at 8:30 a.m. An update on Western Oil was requested. Member Lister expressed the desire that a face to face meeting could be scheduled. Member Lister also asked for a fire rehabilitation discussion for implementation for both agencies. ***NO ACTION**

10. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

A. US Fish and Wildlife Service

A petition for listing Tiehm's Buckwheat was received. A 90-day assessment found it warranted and is moving into a 12-month finding. A review of three spring snail species will be completed in September. Mark Jackson is the new field supervisor.

B. Bureau of Land Management

Programmatic fuels reduction EIS is nearing completion and perhaps available in August. Targeted Grazing Programmatic is final, application forms and decision templated will be created. Outcome Based Grazing projects are advancing. Public comments are being responded to regarding the 2019 Sage-Grouse Plan. Final is expected by Fall. Proposed rule for grazing regulations revisions are expected by early next year. Wild Horse and Burro gathers continue, and several lease sales are planned, none in sage-grouse habitat.

C. US Forest Service

Stage 2 fire restrictions all across forest. The shared stewardship identified three areas to reduce fire risk in areas where values are high and responsibilities. Future agenda could contain a formal report for shared stewardship to the council. Prescribed fire NEPA analysis is being contemplated which can increase prescribed fire for two areas, habitat and public safety risk reduction. Four million acres analysis area, with 100,000 acres burned per year. State and Federal partners will receive a proposed action for review. Completed by Fall of 2020, and actions could be a Categorical Exclusion. Greater Sage-Grouse Plan is close to being finished, and any changed will be communicated.

D. USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS chief is resigning, with Kevin Norton as current acting chief. Field offices are process applications according to priorities. NRCS is willing to assist in the development of publications for native seed planting methods, as well as seed cleaning and grow-out. NRCS will need to keep germplasm. NRCS has \$360 million available for RCPP. Applications are due November 4th. NRCS is moving away from Sage-Grouse Initiative and into Working Lands for Wildlife.

E. Other

11. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

A. Office of the Governor

B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Nevada interim committee on public lands has requested an update on the CCS. CCS has experienced a large increase in workload, priorities remain with making the system work well. Western Oil response has been strong, and Mr. Lawrence expressed appreciation with collaboration regarding Western Oil.

C. Department of Wildlife

Mr. Wasley would appreciate the opportunity to highlight fire revegetation efforts in the next council meeting. Trend lek data were not used because of data collection complications due to COVID. In March – May ~300 leks were counted, 182 leks were considered active, and there was 12.7 mean male lek attendance. Units 184 and 081 closed to hunting, 155, 144 reduced. NDOW staff participated in multi-state long term population monitoring tools that can inform adaptive management. NDOW staff has developed a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy under the direction of WAFWA to provide a guidance document for the management of sagebrush landscapes and conservation actions in the sagebrush ecosystem. NDOW staff assisted in developing mining and energy chapter of a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy. NDOW is assembling a Sagebrush Conservation Initiative that is built off of the Sagebrush Conservation Strategies that have come from WAFWA that include working lands, mitigation, connectivity, invasive species, and weed actions plans. This is not intended to be redundant to other documents.

D. Department of Agriculture

Ms. Ott mentioned that the invasive weed coordinator position is being advertised.

E. Conservation Districts Program

Mr. McGowan mentioned that the Conservation District Program plans to assist the SETT in local group engagement during the adaptive management process.

F. Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team

An analysis for additional powerlines is forthcoming.

G. Other

12. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Member MacKenzie moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Lister seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.