



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

**Date:** Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
**Time:** 8:30 a.m.  
**Place:** Nevada State Capital Building – Guinn Room  
101 North Carson Street  
Carson City, NV 89701

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**Council Members Present:** JJ Goicoechea, Chris MacKenzie, Bevan Lister, Steven Boies, William Molini, Alan Shepherd for John Raby, Kris Boatner for Bill Dunkelberger, Justin Barrett, Jim Lawrence, Sherm Swanson, Jim Gifford, Shawn Espinosa for Tony Wasley.

**Council Members Absent:** Gerry Emm, Kyle Davis, Starla Lacy, Jennifer Ott.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Goicoechea called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Nicolette Kerth (concerned private citizen): Stated the wild horse and burro act and role of BLM in protecting populations. The BLM mission is to sustain the health of public lands for the use of present and future generations. Instead, their proposed path forward is to remove this resource in order to sustain livestock on public lands. They justify this action by stating the chronic overpopulation of horse and burro populations are responsible for the destruction of the ecosystem, threatening native wildlife, including the sage-grouse. I am testifying to correct these allegations made by the BLM. The fact is the wild horse and burros in Nevada account for an extremely small number compared to the number of domestic livestock grazing on public lands as shown in the recent Peer report. To accuse them of being responsible for the ecosystem destruction is absurd. Worldwide studies have shown that these animals consume coarse dry vegetation which reduces fuels to wildfires and spread seeds that enrich the soil. Meanwhile BLM systematically removes wild horse and burros from their supposed protected grazing lands. Rounding them up with dangerous helicopters, hurting the horses, separating them from their families, and maintaining them in overcrowded pens. Then selling them to the public. Who after one year can resell the animals, often purchased by slaughterhouses in Mexico, Canada and other countries. Those left in the wild are sought after and given birth control devices. The BLM is then giving out grants to help them with these roundups and sales. I hope you will consider the real facts and steer the BLM back to their original mission to sustain our public lands for their original purpose. The horses are not hurting the sage-grouse - it's the cattle. It's always the cattle.

Craig Downer (Andean Tapir Fund, Wild Horse and Burro Fund branch): I am a wildlife ecologist, and my expertise is the perissodactyl, including the horse, burros, tapirs, and rhinos. I am also a member of the World Conservation Union Species Survival Commission. What I have to say is based on the recent Peer rangeland health assessment that was released last month. A thorough collection of BLM rangeland data was collected by the Peer non-profit and released to the public. This

revealed widespread ecological destruction of the environment by livestock, both by cattle and sheep ranchers. There have been assessments on more than 50% of the BLM livestock allotments. It sites livestock as a major significant cause of the land failing to meet standards- this amounts to around 54 million acres. The findings especially apply to the State of Nevada where BLM has major jurisdiction over the land. Being such an arid state, failing to control livestock in the face of climate change is reckless and imprudent. And an imprudent course for the future. We need to look outside the box and past tradition, if our state is to truly thrive. I recommend looking to past Native American ways of life, particular the moderate harvest of pinon pine nuts and juniper berries instead of blind emphasis on livestock. The large scale plans to destroy the states pinon forests through mastication is not the way to solve our states problems. This crushes the dens of small mammals, compacts the soil and disrupts the aquifers. As well as violently destroy the habitats of hundreds of valuable species such as the pinon jays and pinon mice, whose habitat are in less variable habitats across our state. Another scapegoat that is being targeted is Nevada's wonderful returned wild horse and burros. Just about everywhere they occur, they are being falsely blamed and targeted for elimination, or near elimination, and reduction to cripplingly low, genetically non-viable levels, and reproductively, and other ways altered in ways that are contrary to the Wild Horse and Burros Act. So, it is very wise that Peer has scientifically examined the role that wild horse and burros play in habitat destruction. They have found that BLM mostly focused on these legally protected animals instead of the livestock and other entities such as OHVs, mining and energy development, land development, and the pumping down of our aquifers; even though the latter has a much more destructive impact on public lands. As the national wild horse and burro administrator at this meeting, BLM has stated that they rounded up 20,851 wild horse and burros in 2022, permanently removing 19,000 individuals on federal lands, and was a record number. Even with the nationally recognized mega-drought, BLM has not issued an emergency reduction in livestock on public lands. This should have occurred, seeing the several million cattle and sheep permitted to graze public lands, and often at the most favorable season of the year. Leaving what is left for year around wildlife, including wild horse and burros whose rights are supposed to be protected in their legal habitats. Thank you.

Robyn Norlof (Carson City resident and outdoor recreator): Speaking from my own experience as an outdoor enthusiast. We take our OHV out into rural Nevada and we read maps and look for springs, ephemeral streams, washes, creeks, and that is where we go. We recently discovered Marietta Wild Burro Range and found burro tracks and followed them. I have been reading about the horse round-ups, and I am trying to educate myself about this issue. I have been reading the EAs. I went to Panamint Valley in California, and I noticed that at the springs there were thickets, and we couldn't get to them unless off the shoulder. In terms of impacts of horses and burros I am trying to understand that. I understand that livestock is an important resource for Nevada. When I came here from the east coast I was baffled by open range, with cattle in the middle of the road. I am wondering if there is a way we can integrate everything, the livestock, the horses. Keep the horses where they are supposed to be, and the livestock where they are supposed to be using fencing or other means. As for Marietta, there are 400 burros out there and they are trying to get it down to 80. The herd I saw were very healthy. It's a huge mountain range, why can't all the animals coexist there. I did go to Cucamonga Spring, north of Death Valley and sadly that was devastated by cattle. The springs were full of cow feces. I understand these impacts, I wonder why can't we have areas for wild horses, burros, and cattle and as issues arise in their different area we can address them as we need to. I appreciate the discussion and look forward to learning from all of you.

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

Member Molini moved to approve the agenda with no changes. Member MacKenzie seconded the motion. **\*ACTION**

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Member Boies moved to approve the minutes for the meeting on September 01, 2022. Member Molini seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. **\*ACTION**

**5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

No council member items.

Program Manager correspondence, Kelly McGowan, SEP was notified from BLM that the cooperating agencies will be involved in the update to the greater sage-grouse ARMPA. McGowan introduced that the NDA has hired a new SETT representative and allowed Emily Hagler to introduce herself. Emily Hagler discussed her background, professional experience, and education in her introduction.

**6. REVIEW SEVERAL MAPS PRODUCTS BEING CONSIDERED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 'CORE' SAGEBRUSH HABITATS AND THE AVAILABLE TOOLS THAT CAN ENHANCE THE ABILITY TO PRIORITIZE AND IMPLEMENT**

## **CONSERVATION PRACTICES WITHIN AND NEAR THESE AREAS. THESE MAY BE INCORPORATED INTO THE NEVADA STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

McGowan introduced a need for updating of the Nevada Strategic Action Plan for the conservation of greater sage-grouse and the sagebrush biome. Updated mapping tools have become available in the last year. The previous Strategic Action Plan has sound mapping tools, many of them are outdated. They are primarily resource and threats based, heavily relying on GIS for implementation. Introduced context of map products, core habitat, growth opportunity areas. Next step is establishing a series of meetings across Nevada. It is the hope that this update will incorporate the population and habitat based adaptive management process like the State Plan.

Mr. Small presented on SAP proposed update; presentation available on website. Discussion proceeding presentation: Chairman Goicoechea complemented the SETT for getting out into Nevada communities to present the new mapping tools available. He states that the habitat and fire maps overlap greatly, and asks Mr. Small to further explain the metrics for the identified growth opportunity areas. Mr. Small explains that the Rangeland Analysis Platform is driving the growth opportunity areas. Proposed that we could have the developer of these tools come speak with the council and explain how the model is developed. Mr. Lister stated he finds it challenging to put any validity to the maps, as they came out of WAFWA. Mr. Lister asks Mr. Small if there has been a comparison between our current sage-grouse habitat designations compared to the presented map. Mr. Small described the comparison and indicated that a majority were consolidated within the map. Mr. Lister suggested that Mr. Small use transparent layers to show the comparison in a map for the SEC. Chairman Goicoechea asked Mr. Small if in these key sagebrush areas there is the potential to have decadent sagebrush stands present in the mapping analysis, as they are not desirable for sage-grouse habitat. Mr. Small informed that the maps were driven by 30 m resolution Rangeland Analysis Platform. He gave an example of how PJ phases are commonly misidentified and ground truthing is necessary. Chairman Goicoechea suggested that local knowledge acquired through planned regional meetings would improve map validity. Mr. McGowan added that there will be several meetings, and annual follow-ups throughout Nevada to improve interagency collaboration on local priorities, projects, funding etc. resulting in improved conservation implemented across the State of Nevada. Further mapping refinement will be necessary. Mr. Swanson complemented maps, sees potential in using maps in strategically aligning this data with the SEC. The maps are indicative of sagebrush and are broader than sage-grouse focused. These maps support resilience, the maps depict an ecologic approach to highly divergent risks to habitat. Risks are cumulative and represent a readiness to ecologically transition from one habitat type to another. Management can make a difference, take information from these mapping tools and make a management change that makes a real impact on the ground. This would guide those that want to produce credits in areas where credits are hugely important and not in areas that are risky. We can accomplish a lot with remote sensing. Mr. Small responded in support of Mr. Swanson and talked about the mapping tools and ability to make important improvements. There is a lot to consider when looking at population thresholds, legacy effects and different areas have different needs. It is not a one-size fits all, but when we get down to the local level it's going to get prescriptive on a site-scale. Mr. Swanson responded discussing the connection to ecological site descriptions, and disturbance response groups. The depiction of what is predicted to happen in various places based on ecological potential and functionality. Projects like this need to be strongly linkable to existing NRCS tools. Mr. Molini asked Mr. Small if the sage-grouse connectivity map is a depiction of where there is a concern for connectivity? Mr. Small confirmed the map was where there are concerns. Mr. Molini asked a follow up question inquiring if these tools could inform meaningful site-scale management? Mr. Small responded in detailing the resource selection-based model for all life-history stages at the local-scale. Adding that there are known areas that the maps are not picking up that are sage-grouse corridors. However, the SETT will work to capture those unmapped areas too. Mr. Boies added to the question and comment by Mr. Molini stressing the need to be able to zoom in and look at habitat and fragmentation, giving an example of predator management. Mr. Boies stressed the need for the SETT to get out into the rural communities to engage the local communities and stakeholders in these discussions. Mr. McGowan addressed the coarseness of mapping tools and stressed that when the tools are implemented at the local-scale it is going to be an involved exercise, giving an example of PJ project ranking and prioritizing projects for the benefit of sage-grouse. Reiterating that these tools were build for sage-grouse. It will come down to the local groups to make management discussions with the support of all the ecological tools we can provide them. Ending in stating that he hopes there will be many additional visited outside of the four planned visited forthcoming. Mr. Lawrence addressed the growth opportunity mapping and indicated his confusion on the disconnected areas identified. Supported the use of these maps in investment decisions. Would like to see more information on the presented layers, how they are developed and what they are depicting in more details. Adding that these tools would be beneficial to other agencies in making management decisions to prioritize funding. Applying similar approaches to other species of concern at a more granular scale would be beneficial in the long run. Mr. MacKenzie asked Mr. McGowan to elaborate on how the SETT is going to conduct outreach for upcoming meetings across the state. Mr. McGowan responded confirming he will be reaching out to all entities both private and governmental for the upcoming

meetings; including the conservation district programs to improve participation. Will be looking to the local government agencies for feedback to incorporate local knowledge into the mapping tools. Mr. Barrett addressed Mr. Lister's previous concern regarding WAFWA map units (stated above). Stating that USGS, USFWS, and other agencies were involved in the creation of these map units. When we see draft maps come out many agencies work to scrutinize maps to improve them. We are starting to see a lot of commonalities among mapping tools. We all work together to make sure we are all telling the same story. This map should be seen as an opportunity to be strategic. Chairman Goicoechea expressed his support of the proposed work to share the mapping tools, get feedback and refine the tool. Mr. Lister spoke to the presented mapping tool should be used for guidance and stressed the need for this tool not being used for management decisions. It's guidance due to its broad scope, but not for site-specific management actions. Mr. McGowan, followed with confirming that the presented mapping tool will be a standing item on future SEC meetings. The SETT will continue to provide updates to the SEC on the process and products until the SETT and SEC reach a point where the product will become as an action item for consideration for approval by the SEC. **\*NO ACTION**

**7. INTRODUCTION OF METHODOLOGIES BEING CONSIDERED FOR A POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT TO THE CONSERVATION CREDIT SYSTEM THAT ACCOUNTS FOR POPULATION IMPACTS TO GREATER SAGE-GROUSE DUE TO AUTHORIZE DEVELOPMENTS. THE SEC MAY INSTRUCT STAFF TO CONSIDER A SPECIFIC STRATEGY - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Mr. McGowan gave background and intro to the presentation given by Mr. Small. Mr. Small gave presentation on methodologies being considered to improve CCS to include population impacts. Presentation available on SEP website.

Discussion proceeding presentation: Mr. MacKenzie responded to presentation, stating concerns about how to roll the population component into the CCS. In terms of bird numbers, there are fluctuations in population that we see annually and other factors impacting bird numbers exterior to the mitigated impact. Mr. Small responded and discussed population oscillations and lek trends. Indicating if bird numbers are low the population tool will show a reduced impact, reiterating that the tool is driven off space use. Mr. Mackenzie followed up with a question about leks that are below carrying capacity that are under utilized for an unknown reason, are we accounting for this? Gave example of a disease driven die-off event that doesn't impact the habitat quality. Is this tool elastic enough to account of these types of events? Mr. Small responded that these types of events will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, but the model are based on a Bayesian framework model, allowing for the addition of layers and makes it elastic enough to take these events into consideration. Smaller leks will have this issue, this may be where we need to incorporate a multiplier. Ensuring we are representing the impact accurately. Mr. McGowan added that, alongside Dr. Coates, we can use our knowledge of boom bust population cycles to reduce the need to repeatedly adjust the estimate to account for stochastic events, at least on a 10-year basis. Something we are considering and exploring as we move forward. Mr. Small added that in areas that we have habitat functionality that is shown to be low, especially areas that have cumulative impacts, but the birds are there, our current maps are not picking up these population impacts. Gave an example of cumulative impacts that have extirpated leks over time. Mr. Molini complemented the SETT in the effort to enhance the HQT tool. In considering population, if the habitat looks good, and the birds are not responding. This tool can lead to looking at other factors that maybe causing a population decline. Mr. Boies commented on population numbers and reasoning behind not using it in the past. Emphasized the need for caution, questioned how SETT is quantifying space use. Mr. Small articulated how the tool predicts space use. Mr. Lawrence commented on the need for caution. Emphasizing the need to be more granular, and that this tool can make better management decisions. Mr. Lister commented that the tool will be beneficial but will require more site-specific data which can be challenging. Mr. Swanson suggested that the tool would be helpful in a strategic action plan and that some information be extrapolatable to be used in the CCS. Chairman Goicoechea requested the SETT give a timeline on the proposed tool roll out. Mr. McGowan stated the goal is to have it ready for the 2023 field season, April 15<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Goicoechea requested that the SETT have an interactive demonstration at the next SEC meeting using GIS. Mr. Swanson requested a synthesis of the science supporting the mapping tools be provided to the SEC. **\*NO ACTION**

**8. CONSIDERATION OF DECEMBER 2022 SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT AND THE ANNUAL CCS PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNORS OFFICE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NRS 232.162. THE SEC MAY APPROVE THE DOCUMENTS AS SUBMITTED BY STAFF OR MAY PROVIDE EDITS - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Mr. Huser presented the Semi-Annual Report and Annual CCS Performance Report. Discussion ensued after presentation: Chairman Goicoechea requested that the SETT put the number of qualified verifiers in the Semi-Annual Report. Mr. Lawrence commented on the status of the program and complemented the CCS for its programming and foundation. Asked SETT to articulate why some producers dropped out. Mr. McGowan and SETT staff responded and articulated the reasoning behind some producers leaving the program. Emphasizing that those that left committed to the program for 5

years. They conducted uplift work which was completed prior to exiting the program. Articulated that all producers that left the program were in compliance with their terms and conditions of contracts. Mr. Boies confirmed that as the program grows we are going to see some producers come in and drop out. Asked the SETT to articulate more on unmitigated debits. Mr. Huser discussed how slow the EIS process is, how it takes upward of 3 years to come together, companies merge which slows the process, some projects are tentative. Chairman Goicoechea confirmed that the unmitigated debits being discussed are anticipated projects, no disturbance has taken place. Mr. McGowan confirmed that all disturbance actions to date, after 2019 ruling, have been mitigated through the CCS. Gave an example of two debit projects and mitigation actions that took place prior to the 2019 ruling to require debit producers to mitigate through the CCS. Include more detail into report as needed. Mr. Huser added that there is credit phasing taking place as well. Mr. Boies asked Mr. McGowan if the interest in credit projects has come down over the years? Mr. McGowan confirmed continued participation in the program. Several credit producers with credits on the books for 5+ years waiting for the market to favor selling. We get an increase in participation when we open state funding to credit producers. We have not offered funding for 3 years; we are at a place to potentially open funding opportunities in the next year. We may need to talk about cost sharing in the future to make our funding dollars stretch further. Mr. Boies mentioned producers that are frustrated they have not sold credits yet, but as debit projects come down the line this could change dramatically. Mr. McGowan added that this could change on a year-to-year basis, and we could get to a point we don't have enough available credits to mitigate. Mr. Lister commented that we are not capturing all the work that is happening on the ground. Gave examples of work getting accomplished on the ground annually. This type of information would be beneficial to have in a semi-annual report. Mr. Huser responded we are further along than we have been in the past, and it would be beneficial to be able to show in a report. Mr. Swanson added that he was happy that we have not had to dip into the reserve account yet. Suggested that future funding be allocated to those that stress collaboration in accomplishing priority projects.

Chairman Goicoechea motioned to approve the document with the suggested changes. Member Swanson made the motion and Member MacKenzie seconded the motion. Vote passed unanimously. **\*ACTION**

**9. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF WILD HORSE AND BURRO GATHERS AND HOLDING FACILITIES, FERTILITY TREATMENTS, EFFECTS ON APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVELS (AML), AND OVERVIEW OF AML WITHIN HERD MANAGEMENT AREA AND HERD AREAS. THE SEC MAY CONSIDER PROVIDING SUPPORT TO ONGOING EFFORTS - \*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION\***

Mr. Shepard gave presentation; presentation can be found on SEP website.

Discussion proceeded after presentation: Mr. Swanson supported BLMs effort to increase facilities to improve the management of wild horse and burros. The numbers presented show slow progress. The slower the progress the higher the cost in the long-term. The State of Nevada has a goal to get to AML in 5-years which will reduce the long-term costs. If BLM could gather the number of horses needed to be on track for the 5-year AML goal, how many horses would need to have been gathered in the last year? Mr. Shepard responded indicating the BLM would have to gather and remove around 16,500 animals annually to achieve this goal. We are functioning at 40-50%. Mr. Swanson responded and articulated the cost of not reaching the annual goal. With a 20% annual growth rate, we are slipping away as opposed to making an advance. Mr. Shepard responded and referenced the survey numbers. Surveys affects the numbers; animals are being missed in the surveys. In gathers, we can round-up 70-80% of the population at any given site with a helicopter. It can be difficult to locate all animals in some areas based on vegetation. There are areas that have a higher growth rate. Better surveys will improve the accuracy of the numbers, numbers could fluctuate 10%. BLM runs a model based off survey numbers to get the outputs in the data presented. Mr. Swanson responded and discussed the limitations faced with budget restrictions. Often costing taxpayers more money in the long-term, stressed that BLM needs a budget increase to reach their goal. There is a potential bill coming forth that would help push an increase in the budget to save money in the long-term. Asked what budget BLM would need annually to meet AML in 5-years? Mr. Shepard responded that gathering 16,000 animals, the care of the animals, etc., it would cost a minimum of 34 million dollars (Nevada). Adding another 3.5 million dollars for labor and inventory. Mr. Huser asked how much it would cost to get to AML at the present pace. Mr. Shepard responded and explained how they are calculating the numbers, the cost, current funding available, and the assumptions BLM is dealing with. Costs are compounding as more animals are in holding from year-to-year. No progress can be made without an increase in funding allocated to BLM for horse management. Mr. Swanson responded and indicated without an increase in funding allocations the progress that has been made will be diminished. The long-term cumulative costs need to be told to congress. Mr. Shepard responded, describing how BLM interacts with congress on budget allocations. Mr. Swanson stressed the risk of not telling the story to congress and the consequences of such. Nevada had 56% of the national herd but we only conduct 43% of the gathering of horses. How do we get Nevada recognized higher in the prioritization for national funding? Using the pop-equis model, do you see it being beneficial to horse management in Nevada? Mr. Shepard indicated the model is a predictor tool, it could use some adjustments, some

assumptions made that could be adjusted. Its going to take time to get it refined. The model will be able to look at potential management tools to reach the goals of targeted areas. It is a projection tool to guide management. Mr. Molini complemented SETT for having this presentation. Questioned Mr. Shepard as to if the presented numbers include the Susanville herds. Mr. Shepard responded indicating that they are not included in the number. BLM does not add the numbers administered by that agency. Mr. Molini proposed that the SEC consider sending a letter to Director Raby and providing support for this current program and urging even more aggressive gathers within BLMs financial capabilities. Mr. Molini motioned that the aforementioned potential letter be developed. Mr. Swanson seconded the motion with the amendment that the SEC copy the delegation and whomever else is important to encourage speed in getting the understanding and support for the 5-year plan. Continued debate took place with no action on the motion on the floor. Mr. Boise asked if HA areas are managed when addressing gathers in HMAs? Mr. Shepard discussed how animals move within HMAs and into HAs, in executing management in HMAs the BLM implements work in nearby HAs that have issues. Field information guides this. Mr. Shepard also discussed horses that are not the jurisdiction of the BLM. There are BLM horses, State of Nevada horses, USFWS, private lands horses and tribal horses. BLM working with USFWS closely on joint management of horses. Mr. Swanson articulated that there is an estimated 10 thousand horses that are not counted under the management of the BLM. Chairman Goicoechea stressed that the number was conservative, and that there is likely twice that. Ms. Kuypor mentioned the last numbers she saw there were 25 thousand horses on national forest in Nevada. Mr. Shepard followed the comment with the framework of surveys and the numbers coming out of USFS and BLM. Chairman Goicoechea referenced the motion from Member Molini and Member Swanson on the floor, articulating the approved context of the letter to Director Raby in support for his 5-year plan and that the SEC would lobby for increased funding. The motion passed unanimously. **\*ACTION**

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

After discussion the next meeting was proposed for Friday, February 10, 2023. Items to be discussed include an update on potential changes to the HQT. **\*NO ACTION**

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

A. US Fish and Wildlife Service

Mr. Barrett informed the SEC that the USFWS Field Supervisor position is open, in the interim Kelley Barry (Deputy Supervisor from the Southern Nevada Office) serving the position. Listing packages for endangered species were presented. A status review on LCT is in final stages for conservation recommendations. Anticipated to be complete and available to the public in early 2023. Fifty million dollars to be distributed over 5 years, distributed over 8 states, for sagebrush ecosystem conservation. Projects are being prioritized through this funding in FY22 and FY23. In NV, we have funded 17 restoration projects over this time with 2.5 million dollars; 150 thousand for two Nevada science projects; and 3 projects in the Bi-State area. In allocation of FY24- FY26 we are interested in working with partners. Will continue to coordinate to the best of their abilities to put money in the right locations across Nevada.

Question: Mr. Boies questioned a listing and Mr. Barrett responded.

B. Bureau of Land Management

Mr. Shepard updated the SEC on modernization project, wrapping up survey work. BLM is being considered for funding in FY23 for contracts and survey work. In national sage-grouse planning efforts the first cooperative agency planning meeting will take place next week. Partnership MOUs are being developed. BLM is requested to identify up to three areas for consideration for bill funding, bipartisan infrastructure bill, and the inflation reduction act, for conservation work at the watershed level. BLM will be working with state agencies to identify these areas. Areas will be prioritized based on capacity to benefit LCT, sagebrush habitat, and potentially the Mojave Desert. Collaborating with neighboring states to maximize the restoration work being conducted in the proposed areas. The President has proposed to create another national monument in southern Nevada, in the Spirit Mountain area. BLM has been working on public outreach for this action. In range management, the BLM is hosting drought EA, and annual grass meetings across Nevada. Working with producers to know the process to request flexibility in responding to drought. As well as prescribed and targeting grazing of annual grasses. Participation has been good. Looking at how we can continue meeting with producers more regularly to improve management, various topics have been proposed for future meetings. Solar and wind development continue to be proposed and developed across the state. The public draft of the proposed Green Link West document will be coming out in early 2023. Nevada BLM did 198,000 acres of restoration through the fuels program last year, a

record for BLM programming. Cleaning up areas where PJ is encroaching and taking it back and making positive gains to improving wildlife habitat.

Questions: Mr. Lawrence asked BLM to reconfirm the number of areas for consideration for bill funding, three Nevada sites. Additionally, requested elaboration on how agencies will be involved in this process for the identification of priority areas. Mr. Shepard identified initial outreach to NDOW (habitat), USFS, NRCS, USFWS, and SEP. Every state is getting bill and IRA funding considered. BLM will work with outside agencies to identify the highest priority areas. Not guaranteed NV will be selected.

#### C. US Forest Service

Ms. Boatner gave update, sitting in for Bill Dunkelberger. The USFS is working on fire shed approach to funding and shared stewardship effort. USFS submitted proposals for consideration for bill and IRA funding, with a 48-hour turn-around notice the USFS took from their previously identified collaborative shared stewardship projects. USFS is optimistic of the selection of two priority landscapes in this process. Hoping this funding could contribute to fire resiliency, invasive species, invasive plants, habitat restoration, improving infrastructure and recreation. USFS is conducting a large hiring effort. USFS is also creating new positions. USFWS will be engaging in BLMs effort to update the 2015 greater sage-grouse plan and listing decision. Green Link North is a project that USFS is working with BLM on and trying to push an alternative route to avoid greater sage-grouse habitat. In range management, Santa Rosa Range Management Project is in its 45-day objection period. We have released the final environmental assessment and draft decision notice and finding of no significant impact. This project allows for more flexibility in grazing and allow the vegetation to guide management instead of hard dates. USFS also has targeted grazing efforts being conducted with UNR, at three locations (Santa Rosa Mountains, Ruby Mountains, and East Humbolt Range). We were only able to turn out in the Santa Rosa Mountains in 2022. Turn outs in the Rubys Mountains and East Humbolt Range were not allowable until infrastructure is improved, e.g., cattle guards and additional fencing. USFS is also starting a planning effort for considering aerial application of herbicides. Also working on updating the approved herbicide list for the USFS.

Question: Chairman Goicoechea commented on update that the application of herbicides across jurisdictional boundaries would greatly improve habitat conditions.

#### D. USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mr. Gifford, gave update, sitting in for Suzy Daubert (active state conservationist). The focus around NRCS is inflation reduction funds. The USDA is scheduled to get between 18-20 billion dollars nation-wide. NRCS is anticipated to receive this funding in FY 2024: 8.45 billion for environmental quality incentives program for infrastructure, 3.25 billion conservation stewardship program, 4.95 billion regional conservation partnership program, 1.45 billion for agricultural easement conservation program, and 1.0 billion for conservation technical assistance. A lot of this funding application is focused on SEC priorities (invasive annual grasses, range improvements, and fire resilience). Hoping for input from the SEC and develop partnerships for this funding. NRCS is also conducting a hiring effort.

Questions: Mr. Swanson commented on the update and emphasized ecological site descriptions in strategic planning for sagebrush and greater sage-grouse conservation. Asked how staffed NRCS is to work on continued development to implement and public conservation tools. Mr. Gifford responded confirming NRCS effort to hire the staff needed. Mr. McGowan, asked about the funding available to state agencies and the types of applications desired. Mr. Gifford responded with Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and for conservation efforts.

#### E. Other

## 12. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

#### A. Office of the Governor

Mr. Robb had no significant comments and thanked the SEC for presentation, information sharing, and overall work being accomplished.

#### B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Mr. Lawrence update focused on fiscal updates. In October at the IFC meeting, two items were approved specific to AMPHA. One funding for 6.7 million to the Division of Water Resources contracts to update model for state water budgets; 1.3 million to modernize and digitize DCNR programming; 100 million dollars in AMPHA funds for water infrastructure and conservation projects. Focusing on projects that move the needle to improve water conservation and provide the infrastructure in order to meet federal and state water standards. All money will be funneled through the director's office. There is a strong connection to NDEP programing, however through a

broader lens. Coming up in January 2023, in reference to bill funding, the Division of Forestry is going to propose a 1.1 million for implementation of priority projects outlined in the shared stewardship agreement, and to bolster community assistance, equipment and staffing. The Conserve Nevada Program has a competitive grant program for watershed restoration, conservation credit system, and local governments and NGOs for conservation easements. The program is funded through the sale of general obligation funds.

C. Department of Wildlife

Mr. Espinosa gave update, sitting in for Mr. Wasley. Mr. Wasley will be retiring end of 2022. Working to revise the Bi-State Action Plan. Estimated 90-95% of the 2012 plan was implemented. Bi-State Coordinator was hired. Implementing a conservation easement on the Nevada side of the Bi-State area. High priority projects for NDOW are the Wildcat Fire restoration, and Monitor Basin to rebuild enclosures. Commented on BLMs wild horse and burro presentation and quantification of numbers in HMAs. There are a lot more horses in areas that the BLM has identified as zero. These areas do not have established AMLs, joint management is not implemented, or surveys have not been done. The monitor basin is not currently grazed by cattle, all degradation is being done by horses. It's important that enclosures are completed.

Questions: Mr. MacKenzie complemented Mr. Wasley in his commitment and work in Nevada conservation.

D. Department of Agriculture

No updates from NDA, no representatives available to participate in meeting.

E. Other

### 13. PUBLIC COMMENT

Colette Kaluza (Wild Horse Education): Wild horses are unique in American conservation. Public lands are unique to anyplace in the world. I heard a lot today about management. Everyone here heard what management was, and that is rounding up the horses. Why was there not further discussion on management, what is the definition of that word? It is not rounding up and removing horses. BLM is not mandated to round-up and remove wild horses, they are mandated to create plans for the horses, herd management plans. Ms. Kaluza read from report to congress. Today you are asking for money, not to allow the horses to remain on the landscape. Cited page 21, herd management plan development. Every major management action on a HMA starts with a NEPA process, herd management area plans summarize management goals for HMAs, and the actions anticipated to reach those goals. For many HMAs the BLM needs to develop and/or update herd management area plans to include new and improved population growth suppression methods, and population management goals. In addition, these plans need to consider new research results, and the potential change to AML. The process of developing and updating these plans would continue to provide the opportunity to inform and involve the public in determining the best actions to take on an HMA into the future. Just as with surveys and monitoring, HMAP development is a key component in the decision-making process for BLM wild horse and burro management activities on the ground. In addition, these documents include public involvement through the NEPA process. To accommodate the level of removals and fertility control treatments projected over the next decade and beyond the BLM would have to update more plans. As it pertains to the law, Amy Ludders in 2016 wanted herd management area plans. The state was committed to creating the herd management area plan in every district and then it stopped in 2017 in Nevada. Is the SEC aware of this? The SEC is asking congress for more money to remove horses as opposed to keeping them on the land. The process of preparing herd management plans and the document itself are indispensable. They address transparent AMLs, focus downgraded lines, fences, data deficits, drought, climate change, range improvements to mitigate damage to the wild horse and burro habitat for livestock, recreation, mining, profit driven industry, etc. and fulfil the purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act. The heart of everything is the law, I ask that you follow the law.

### 14. ADJOURNMENT

Member Boies moved to adjourn, and Member MacKenzie seconded the motion. Chairman Goicoechea adjourned the meeting at 12:42 pm.

All details not covered in these minutes can be heard on the meeting recording at <https://sagebrusheco.nv.gov/Meetings/Meetings/>.