

JOE LOMBARDO
Governor



Kathleen Steele, Program Manager
Casey Adkins, Forestry
Sarah Hale, State Lands
Vacant, Wildlife
Skyler Monaghan, Agriculture

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STATE OF NEVADA
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

Minutes

MEETING OF THE SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL

Monday, June 01, 2026
1:00 PM

Physical Location

Nannini Administration Building
540 Court Street
Elko, Nevada 89801

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1. CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 1:00 pm

Members and Ex-Officio Present: Chris MacKenzie (Chair); Jake Tibbitts (Vice-Chair); Kyle Davis; Martin Paris; Bevan Lister; Sherm Swanson; Daphne Emm Hooper; Mathew Johns; Kelly McGowan; Jon Stansfield; Kristen Jule; Alan Shepherd for Jon Raby; Heidi Ramsey; J.J. Goicoechea; Vinson Guthreau; Justin Small for Alan Jenne

Members and Ex-Officio Absent: None

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Member Johns moved to approve the June 1, 2026, agenda. Member Swanson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Member Swanson moved to approve the April 16, 2026, minutes. Member Paris seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE – FOR DISCUSSION:

Kathleen Steele, Program Manager, gave general information about the field tour scheduled for June 2, 2026.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION OF RENEWAL STANDARDS FOR DEBIT PROJECTS IN THE CONSERVATION CREDIT SYSTEM *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*
SEP Staff

Casey Adkins, SETT, presented information about proposed CCS renewal standards for debit projects.

Council members asked questions and made comments:

Member McGowan asked if there would be an exception for debit projects that were only continuing operations for a small number of years and conducting concurrent reclamation.

Ms. Adkins answered that the only term less than 30 years right now is for mineral exploration. If beyond that, they'd likely be subject to the minimum CCS 30-year term.

Member Davis asked if there could be a provision for allowing shorter periods than 30 years.

Ms. Adkins answered that this would be something that the SEC would need to approve. The SETT can explore and bring forward if interested.

Member Davis discussed his interest in considering this as a policy.

Kathleen Steele, SEP Program Manager, clarified that minimum term length is already 30 years on the front end, regardless of actual NEPA term length.

Member Davis stated that projects may just need a little more time than they originally thought.

Member Johns asked whether a project could acquire the subsequent credits earlier than 1 year following renewal

Ms. Adkins confirmed.

Member Johns asked for clarification on the CCS term, specifically if the NEPA term is a 30-year term, is it 30 plus then?

Ms. Adkins confirmed.

Member Swanson asked if somebody who needs credits because they have debits for a 30 year term can only find, or chooses to buy, credits that are longer in duration than their disturbance, does the length of the credits they bought extend their debit lifespan or cover them for additional years beyond what they were required to buy?

Ms. Adkins clarified that this is discouraged. This way the credit term matches the debit term. If that happens, right now those extra years are just considered net conservation gain.

Member Swanson asked whether anyone realized they bought for too short of a term and corrected?

Ms. Adkins stated not to her knowledge. Only alterations we've had have been through a new NEPA process.

Vice Chair Tibbitts stated that NEPA doesn't bind the project to the timeframe in their documentation, so this can result in extensions. He asked how we dealt with projects like this whose project timeline extends past their CCS timeframe but doesn't require new NEPA.

Ms. Adkins answered that this would fall under the renewal process in the CCS, and is something we'd work with the BLM on.

Vice Chair Tibbitts asked what the interaction to kick that off was/how a proponent would know they need to renew.

Ms. Adkins clarified that the SETT keeps track of the timelines internally, so would be the ones to let them know.

Member Davis asked if a permanent debit is a case where a debit project makes an impact that is not planned to be reclaimed.

Ms. Adkins confirmed.

Member McGowan discussed his support for considering extensions in the CCS when projects are behind schedule, or would like to extend their term, without altering their disturbance footprint.

Member Johns asked for clarification on how term length is factored into the calculation of debits.

Ms. Adkins provided clarification that credits can be prorated for 10-year debit terms, and proponents can buy 30-year credits since this is the minimum credit project term length in the CCS.

Chair MacKenzie asked for further clarification on term lengths.

Ms. Adkins provided further clarification that the project term length doesn't go into actual calculation of debits, but it goes into calculating the project's credit obligation to purchase; can prorate only if the debit project is a mineral exploration project.

Chair MacKenzie clarified that he was referring to non-mineral exploration projects. Asked for clarification on whether a 10-year debit project received a reduction in their debits.

Ms. Adkins clarified that even if a non-mineral exploration debit project is only 10 years, it has a minimum CCS term of 30 years.

Ms. Steele clarified that the term length of a debit project has to match the term of the credit project used to offset.

Member Davis stated that he likes Member McGowan's idea and wants to explore further.

No action taken.

7. DISCUSSION OF THE CREATION OF RECLAMATION STANDARDS FOR END OF LIFE OF DEBIT PROJECTS IN THE CONSERVATION CREDIT SYSTEM *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION* SEP Staff

Casey Adkins, SETT, presented proposed CCS reclamation standards for debit projects.

Member Lister asked whether all conditions had to be met, or if there is one failure, it all fails.

Ms. Adkins confirmed but clarified that it would be per map unit.

Member Lister asked for clarification on why sagebrush count and cover percentage were incorporated, but grass, forbs, and [other] shrubs are 100% by cover, not by count.

Ms. Adkins clarified that the count for sagebrush would be of individual sagebrush shrubs (any species), whereas forbs would be unique count of different species (as it already is in field verification). Don't count individual forbs along a transect. Sagebrush shrub count is not something that is currently recorded by verifiers, but something that can be inferred from verification data. Added that forbs also germinate and grow much more rapidly than sagebrush, so standards would pre-project conditions to be met much sooner for forbs than for shrubs, so forbs aren't as much of a concern.

Member Davis pointed out that it was listed that the SETT is working with NDEP on the standards. Expressed the concern that NDEP already has fairly extensive standards, so would like to make sure SETT standards are in concert with them, not duplicative or conflicting. Member Davis asked whether the SETT would be collecting data, or the verifiers as well.

Ms. Adkins responded that it was planned for just the SETT to collect data right now, but if the proponent wants to hire verifier to do so we can offer that as well.

Member Davis inquired as to whether data collection on reclamation would be as labor intensive as original verification.

Ms. Adkins confirmed that it would be less intensive, but similar to NDEP's process.

Member Davis asked if it would come back to the council if there was a disagreement about whether standards were met

Ms. Adkins confirmed that it would.

Member Davis stated that he would like to gather more information on how realistic the proposed standards are and how they compare to other standards.

Member McGowan stated that it might be challenging for the staff to meet this obligation, suggested that this body and the state consider whether fees should be incorporated to offset these types of costs for reverification, and stated that it shouldn't become the burden of the state. Stated that, similarly to Member Davis, he had looked at the numbers, and they seem reasonable but asked for Member Swanson's input about succession of plant communities. Member McGowan expressed that he was unsure whether sagebrush canopy cover is that important of a metric, and stated that as long as shrubs are present, it should be fine. Posed the questions, if grasses and forbs are sufficient, and sagebrush not, what can be done realistically to increase sagebrush cover? What are they [the proponent] on the line for? Stated that if there's a good component present, canopy should come in time.

Member Swanson stated that the original sagebrush cover strikes him as an odd metric if the original percentage was more than the site should support (competes with understory). Should have upper limit based on ecological site description. Some opportunities here to not shoot ourselves in the foot.

Vice Chair Tibbitts 'dittoed' what other members had stated and expressed concerns about there being a clear line between reclamation standards and restoration. Stated that there is alteration of soils and ecological potential from the soils that are put back on the ground, which may alter what can grow on-site (e.g., saltbush and rabbitbrush), but is still considered successful reclamation. Stated that he is leaning towards total cover rather than sagebrush cover, forbs, and grasses.

Member Swanson asked to what degree the science committee had been engaged in this process.

Ms. Adkins gave background on all of the sources where the proposed standards came from, and confirmed that the science committee had met, discussed, and contributed to the proposed standards. Stated that this is just the start of the discussion, and future meetings with the science committee will take place, and some members of the science committee will be brought into the working group that is to be proposed. Stated that we will be creating working group meetings for all interested parties to further refine and contribute to the policies.

Member Lister asked for clarification on timelines. Asked if it's a 15-year project, at what point would you assess reclamation.

Ms. Adkins clarified that the SETT wouldn't assess whether standards have been met until year 10 of the reclamation period. So if it's a 30-year term for the project, it would be year 30 (E.g., 20-year NEPA term, 10 years for reclamation, creating that 30-year CCS term).

Member Lister asked if the NEPA term were 15 years, and the reclamation term would be 10 years, you would evaluate in year 25?

Ms. Adkins clarified that CCS terms are rounded up to 30-year minimum terms, but yes, that is correct.

Member Lister asked if you would extend the reclamation time out to the 30 years, or you'd evaluate at 25 and they'd still have 5 years of credits left if there are deficiencies in reclamation.

Ms. Adkins stated that they would still have 5 years left in this framework.

Member Lister asked if you would do the assessment at the 25-year point.

Ms. Adkins stated at the 30-year.

Kathleen Steele, SEP Program Manager clarified that it would be assessed at the end of the CCS term (30-year mark), so the proponent would just have longer to reclaim.

Member Lister wondered whether at year 25 the proponent would hire someone to assess whether there's still work to be done or if they just assume it's done and stated that it was something that needed to be talked about.

Member McGowan clarified that we're only talking about the footprint of the actual project.

Ms. Adkins confirmed that the reclamation would only apply to the direct disturbance, and no indirect Map Units.

Member McGowan asked if a project finishes at year 15 and wants to do reclamation, would it be possible to go out at 25 years to reverify? Can they request assessment before the end of their term?

Ms. Adkins stated that the SETT could do this upon request.

Chair MacKenzie stated that a proponent could be meeting standards at 25 years, but then a drought occurs so at 30 years they don't meet standards, so the option to assess early would be beneficial.

Ms. Adkins stated that the SETT fully expects that to be a desire, and this is why we want feedback from proponents as well.

Ms. Steele added that some of the mines are conducting concurrent reclamation. Our [the SEP's] requirement is to satisfy their impact as long as the impact is there. Once the impact is gone, if they are up to standards, we can consider it satisfied.

Member Swanson stated that sage grouse live where sagebrush lives. What determines resilience is presence and abundance of perennial bunchgrass. Sagebrush will eventually 'invade' the bunchgrass, but good to have the grass there so that cheatgrass doesn't dominate. What is it that defines resilient state, that's what's important? Exact composition is not very important to how well the site is going to continue to be sage grouse habitat into the future,

because it has ability to periodically burn and return to sagebrush state, it depends more on the grasses.

Member Davis asked Chairman MacKenzie if this topic could be opened for public comment.

Chair MacKenzie opened the item for Public comment:

Chris Jasmine, NGM: agreed with both Members McGowan and Swanson. Important discussion about healthy community rather than specific composition. Mining projects have 100s of millions of bonds wrapped up in reclamation, important to see reclamation through and get bonds released. Caution you to ensure that our standards are aligned with reclamation bonds. Will be hard for companies to balance if not aligned. Sometimes get bonds released with fourwing saltbush, only thing that will grow on the site.

Alan Morris, employee of a junior exploration company: What is the goal, are we trying to get back to original condition, or upgrade it? Is there a goal as to which we would like to reach?

Member Swanson stated that we don't want to have requirements that it go back to what it was if it would be worse off.

Margaret Walch, Western Biological: echoed what others said. Need to err on the side of caution to make sure not duplicative on reclamation bond release criteria. Cost bearing associated with reverifying new standards needs to be considered greatly. Suggested that there be fees implemented, but proponents weren't aware of fee structure when they became involved. Who is footing bill for reclamation standards?

Chair MacKenzie stated that these standards are a work in progress, and the SETT should take into account what was stated here.

Member McGowan clarified that fees would be specific to new projects, not existing ones.

Ms. Steele suggested additional staff could be beneficial.

Member McGowan asked how the staff felt?

Ms. Adkins stated that this is a good start, but the SETT is still working through the standards and needs much more feedback.

Ms. Steele stated that if anyone in attendance would like to be part of the working group, please email her or Ms. Adkins. The SETT will be putting together a series of meetings to which the public is also invited.

Member Swanson stated that it would be useful to have a conversation at a statewide level about lower cost standards.

Member Davis stated his desire for close communication with NDEP while developing these standards.

No action taken.

8. DISCUSSION OF THE CREATION OF REVERIFICATION STANDARDS FOR THE PERIODIC CHECKS OF CREDIT PROJECTS IN THE CONSERVATION CREDIT SYSTEM *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION* SEP Staff

Skyler Monaghan, SETT, presented background on proposed CCS reverification standards, gaps, and the desired direction for developing them. Requested a subcommittee be formed to further develop standards at subsequent meetings.

Chair MacKenzie, Council Members, and Skyler Monaghan discussed the formation of the requested subcommittee. Would like to see the subcommittee composed of SEC members and other non-SEC members (e.g. from NRCS, NDOW, BLM, and USFS) who are subject-matter experts.

It was decided that Vice Chair Tibbitts, and Members Lister, Paris, and Swanson would participate as SEC members on the subcommittee, and that the SETT would reach out to potential non-SEC members to join the subcommittee.

Kathleen Steele, SEP Program Manager, stated that she had also reached out for feedback from credit proponents on these standards, and will continue to involve them and seek feedback.

Member Lister motioned to create a formal subcommittee of the SEC to evaluate credit project analysis, and it be mixture of members of the council as well as invited members of science and community. Member Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. CONSIDERATION OF THE JUNE 2026 SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT FOR SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNORS OFFICE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NRS 232.162. - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION* SEP Staff

Sarah Hale, SETT, presented the June 2026 Semi-Annual Report.

Member McGowan noted some missing dates and discrepancies in the math for percentage differences. Members McGowan and Swanson held brief discussion about fire in credit projects.

Member McGowan moved to approve the June 2026 Semi-Annual Report for submission to the governor with the discussed changes. Member Swanson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

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

Potential future items discussed were:

USFWS presentation

USFS presentation

Still working on PMUs

Update on everything from today

Potentially adaptive management

Adding other restoration efforts to CCS net gain reserve account

Summit lake report.

Next SEC meeting will be decided via a doodle poll.

11. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS – FOR DISCUSSION:

A. US Fish and Wildlife Service - none

B. Bureau of Land Management - Alan Shepherd provided an update.

Staffing: Steven Pearce began as new BLM director. In NV, Jon Raby retired. Acting Nevada State Director is Justin Abernathy, acting Associate State Director is Kim Dow, and Acting Carson City District Manager is Matt Magaletti. Didn't lose as many personnel as expected to most recent DRP (NV only lost 12).

Updated on recent and planned horse and burro gathers throughout the state, stating a target of reaching AML by 2029. Have removed 4,800 total from the landscape and have adopted out 5,800.

Horse rules are being revised.

Range rules out for comment until July 13.

MOU with USFS for grazing programs and looking at vacant allotments/how to reopen them.

C. US Forest Service – Jon Stansfield provided an update.

Recently attended governors fire briefing and testified in front of committee of public lands; getting ready to go for fire season. With mineral exploration uptick, USFS is utilizing NEPA authorities they do have in their toolbox right now and awaiting public comment on streamlining that process. Welcome letter lays out needs and expectations to project proponents upon notice of interest. Identifies design features, BMP, and directs to SETT if the project is greater than 5 acres. Working to meet with tribes about projects and answer questions. Washoe and other tribes declared PJ state of emergency. Still want to proactively reduce fire risk. USFS is working on unavailable allotments and what it is going to take to bring those back online. Staffing: mostly affected regional and Washington offices, not the forest office. Once the dust clears with the reorganization, they should be able to start rehiring and filling critical positions. Sitting without district ranger in Ely for about a year, vacancy announcement closed and will hopefully have someone by end of summer.

Member Emm Hooper would like to discuss enhancement of tribal communication offline with Mr. Stansfield.

D. USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service – Heidi Ramsey provided an update.

Chief just stepped down, and associate chief has moved into chief's role. Have been able to get a few positions flown in NV: team engineer in Elko position open until June 6; State office position flown for a financial resources professional. Lost a lot of admin roles to DRP last year. District conservationist position in Elko will be flown soon after a yearlong vacancy.

Regenerative pilot program focusing on soil health: set aside 25% of EQIP and CSP for this program. As of today, made the mark of 25% of those funds. Program has received good feedback, so will likely remain. CIG (conservation innovation grants) was announced for the agency. Have \$65 million set aside for this year. Apps close July 27th. In NV, last year was best programs year ever, due to inflation reduction act funds, and had three different easements that were obligated. Were at \$24 million last year, may end up a little higher this year. Currently contracting and busy in the field and spreading staff where needed. Had a good year last year even though the Program was down a staff member.

Member Swanson asked about the Humboldt River Corridor Project. MS. Ramsey said not officially a project yet, but had met to look into inventorying the corridor for 1-2 years to see what type of irrigation producers have, and in doing that maybe they can quantify whether any need to update irrigation to something more efficient, and to see what could be saved throughout if producers improved irrigation efficiency. After meeting with NDA about this, new agreements were halted. This might be a 2027 discussion.

E. Other

12. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS – FOR DISCUSSION:

A. Office of the Governor – none

B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – Vinson Guthreau, Director, provided an update.

Governor's fire briefing was attended on May 20. All agencies are at the ready, so prepared as can be for this year. Hiring 2 deputy administrators at NDF. Seasonal fire restrictions in place.

C. Department of Wildlife – Justin Small, Wildlife Staff Specialist, provided an update.

QA/QCing lek data, coming down on the backside of recruitment we saw last year. A lot of people are retiring, Shawn Espinosa, Mike Scott, Mike Cox, Carl Lackey.

D. Department of Agriculture – JJ Goicoechea, Director, provided an update.

Mormon crickets are down this year, a few reports but significant improvement from previous years. Don't anticipate any aerial treatments this year. Meghan Brown is departing NDA on Friday. Small business administration had a hearing on wild horse impacts this morning.

13. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm.

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Draft Minutes

SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL TOUR

Tuesday, June 02, 2026
8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Twenty-six people, including SETT members, SEC members, agency staff, and general public were present on the tour. Tour handouts are available on the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program website. The tour began at 8:00 a.m. at the Stockman's Casino parking lot in Elko, visited the Zunino Ranch Credit Project outside of Jiggs, stopped for a quick discussion and group photo outside Smith Bros Credit Project, concluded with a presentation on USFS and NFF projects and the development of a CCS Public Lands Project, and ended around 12:28 p.m.