JOE LOMBARDO
Governor

Sagebrush Ecosystem Program
201 Roop Street, Suite 101
Carson City, Nevada 89701
Telephone (775) 687-2000

www.sagebrusheco.nv.gov

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

STATE OF NEVADA
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

Minutes

MEETING OF THE SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL

Wednesday, August 26, 2026
8:30 AM

Physical Location

Nevada State Legislature Room 2149
401 S Carson St, Carson City, NV 89701

Zoom Access for the Public

Phone number: 888-475-4499
Meeting ID: 874 0478 0206
Live streaming can be accessed on the NV Legislature Website:
https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Calendar/A/

NOTICE: Items on this agenda may be taken in a different order than listed, combined for consideration, or removed from the agenda at the discretion of the Chair

1. CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 8:31 am. Quorum reached

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

Members and Ex-Officio Absent: Sherm Swanson; Jon Stansfield; J.J. Goicoechea;

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

The call-in number will be read aloud for the Public. Public comment will be made on any matter relevant to the Council. Public comments will be taken at the

beginning and end of the meeting and may be taken at the discretion of the Chair on specific agenda items. Public comments may be limited to 3 minutes per person at the discretion of the Chair. Comments will not be restricted based on viewpoint. No action will be taken on any matters raised during the public comment period that are not already on the agenda. Persons providing comments will be asked to begin by stating their name for the record.

No comments

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Member Davis motioned for approval of agenda for Wednesday, August 26, 2026. Member Johns seconded the motion. All were in favor.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*

Member McGowan motioned to approve minutes from the SEC meeting held on Monday, June 1-2, 2026. Member Lister seconded the motion. All were in favor.

5. COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS AND CORRESPONDENCE – FOR DISCUSSION:

Program Manager Steele discussed the executive order from the Governor's office to review active regulations. Public meeting will be held September 19th in the Bonnie room at the Department of Conservation and Natural resources.

Member Davis inquired about the status of regulations that the SEC and SETT created in the previous year. Program Manager Steele informed the SEC that the regulations in question have been approved and have gone to LCB to incorporate into our regulations.

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Deputy Director Etchegoyhen clarified the Governor's reasoning and details on potential changes to SEP regulations.

6. PRESENTATION AND CONSIDERATION OF SUMMIT LAKE PAIUTE TRIBE'S EXEMPTION REQUEST FOR A WEATHER TOWER *FOR POSSIBLE ACTION* *James Simmons, Summit Lake Paiute Tribe*

James Simmons of the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe presented his case and requested from the SEC that the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe be provided with a de minimus Exemption for a project they are completing on BLM public lands.

Mr. Simmons explained that the project will show scientific benefits because they will have 35 "Clients" put on the landscape, with 8 installed on BLM lands. This includes climate weather stations, PIT tags for LCT, Stream Gauges, audio bird detectors, and various types of cameras to gather holistic data on the entirety of the watershed. The information will automatically be transferred to UNR to inform landscape management at the watershed scale. This data can be accessed by the public.

Mr. Simmons discussed the need for an exemption based on the cost prohibitive nature of covering the Debit costs incurred through the CCS, along with Project Funding deadlines that require the installation to be completed in Fall of 2026.

SEC held discussions with Mr. Simmons.

Member Davis voiced concern about the possibility of the BLM creating a categorical exclusion that will create a precedence for similar projects. Alan Shepard, BLM, stated that this would be contained to this single project, and the project's footprint is small enough to warrant a categorical exclusion as is.

Member Tibbitts inquired about height limitations. Mr. Simmons discussed the efforts taken by the Summit Lake Paiute tribe to get the height down under what would be considered a large tower through the Conservation Credit System to limit the amount of debits they would accrue.

SEC discussed past exemptions that were similar, Program Manager Steele highlighted that there has been minimal exemptions throughout the life of the program. Member McGowan highlighted that most exemptions have been denied since before he was the Program Manager.

SEC, Mr. Simmons, and Program Manager Steele discussed past efforts of the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe to enroll in the CCS to generate credits and why the project did not move forward.

Discussion on Council authority to grant exemptions was held. has authority to grant an exemption. Deputy Attorney General Richard Yien informed the Council they have broad discretion to make exemption decision. Discussion was held on potential impacts.

Member Hooper discussed previous exemptions for Agriculture products. Program Manager Steele provided clarification on the agriculture exemption.

Member Tibbits moved to recognize NAC 232.460 applicability, recognizes exemptions that are de minimus and potentially beneficial to Greater Sage-grouse. He motioned that the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council recognizes this project as a de minimis project, contingent on commitments in writing signed by tribal leaders - the weather station will be <10 ft tall with perch deterrents included, it will be given a Cat-ex by the federal agency, there will be lek monitoring, the project proponents is committed to GRSG persistence, and camouflage and reflectors added to the structures. Member Hooper seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Member Davis asked for clarification that what we are doing here is not intended to be a template for the future and that any similar exemptions will come through the SEC. Member Lister added that any data will become available to the State for their use. All members were in favor.

7. PRESENTATION AND CONSIDERATION OF MT. WHEELER POWER'S EXEMPTION REQUEST FOR A POWERLINE <u>*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*</u> *Jake Brunson and Kevin Robison, Mt. Wheeler Power*

Jake Brunson and Kevin Robison from Mt Wheeler Power presented their request for exmeption.

Member Davis asked for clarification on existing powerline and new powerline construction and removal. Mr. Robison provided further clarity on placement, reason for

such, and what would occur with the old powerline. The new powerline is placed where it is to cut down the distance, while the old powerline will stay and be maintained.

Member Tibbits stated that he is a customer but that there is no conflict of interest based on needs or finances.

Member Tibbits discussed that removal of Anthro can be a credit project. However, Mt. Wheeler will leave the features in place. Further discussion was held.

Member Lister asked for clarity about Habitat Management Areas (HMAs) associated with the program and asked where advantages are in locating the powerline where they did. Mr. Robison clarified the route was chosen based on miles of line.

Member Tibbits held a discussion about public land credits that can be generated in lieu of buying credits.

Member MacKenzie discussed the need for protections and the purpose of the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program. During this discussion, Mr. Robison highlighted the cost prohibitions.

Member Tibbits asked about Habitat Management Areas impacted. Program Manager Steele clarified that HMAs are present but that the impact is mainly indirect.

Discussion was held on the powerlines proximity to roads, and avoidance measures taken by Mt. Wheeler Power in planning the location of the line. Member Lister asked for clarification if powerlines were along roads and the affects that has on debits.

Member Davis motioned to deny the request and encourage the SETT to continue to work with proponents to come up with alternatives. Member McGowan seconded. All members were in favor.

8. PRESENTATION ON NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE'S SOIL MAPS AND ECOLOGICAL SITE DESCRIPTIONS <u>*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*</u> *Chris Savastio, NRCS*

Chris Savastio, NRCS, presented on the updated Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) and changes to requirements.

Member Tibbits discussed the use of ESDs and state and transition model benefits and ability to work with NRCS for technical assistance to map areas after disturbances. Member Lister inquired on how the data and information can impact the conservation credit system. Discussion was held.

9. OPTIONS TO REDUCE RAVEN DEPREDATION IN THE WESTERN STATES - <u>*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*</u> *Michelle McDowell, USFWS*

Michelle McDowell, United States Fish and Wildlife Services Migratory Bird Program, presented Options to Reduce Raven Depredation.

Member McGowan asked about special purpose utility permits and if, for utilities, they can receive permits on annual basis if they apply so they don't have to wait long periods of time? Ms. McDowell responded that yes, they can, and the CFR Allows utilities to work quickly in cases of emergencies.

Discussion was held about effectiveness of the program and other efforts occurring.

Member Tibbitts asked about the Status of a letter in which the SEC asked for max take through a Conservation Order. Ms. McDowell informed the SEC that it is unlikely to move forward based on legal vulnerability.

SEC and Ms. McDowell discussed that the state is still below the take level authorized.

10. UPDATE ON ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE'S OPERATIONAL RAVEN DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN NEVADA - <u>*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*</u> *Mark Ono, APHIS and Joe Bennett, NDOW*

Mark Ono from APHIS, and Joe Bennett from NDOW presented on raven control efforts and methods by APHIS (6000 eggs) and NDOW (3000 eggs) throughout Nevada and future strategies for Raven control.

Discussion was held about the winter window for treatments and evaluation of raven presence on NDOW and state properties.

Member Lister inquired about the limitations of getting to full take. Discussion was held.

Member McGowan asked if we have seen changes at leks and what extent the effectiveness has been in work with other partners. Justin Small, NDOW, explained that they have seen minor improvements but not enough to increase SAGE grouse and reduce nesting pressure at a local scale.

Ex-Officio Ramsey inquired about feedback from communities and opportunities for them to report ravens - Can there be a link that people could easily get to provide that information and feedback.

11. DISCUSSION ON THE SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL'S STANCE ON SAGEBRUSH FOCAL AREAS - <u>*FOR POSSIBLE ACTION*</u> *SETT Staff*

Program Manager Steele presented on Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) and the SEC held discussion of what the SFAs are and the activities and permits that would be affected by SFAs.

Member Tibbits outlined previous decisions by the SEC and Governors on the stance of not supporting SFAs. Further discussion was held around SFAs and the CCS.

Member Lister motioned to restate support for adopted GRSG management plan for the state of Nevada. Will let CCS count for processes and uses on the land. Member Tibbits seconded the motion. Member McGowan was the only dissenting vote.

12. STAFF BRIEFINGS AND UPDATES TO THE COUNCIL - *SETT Staff*

A. CCS Projects Update

A. SETT member Sarah Hale presented an update on the SETT activities.

B. PMU Discussion
    A. Program Manager Steele presented on the background of PMUs and options for altering the PMUs given habitat exists outside of them, decision will be made by the SEC at the next SEC meeting.

13. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING THIS MEETING AND SCHEDULING NEXT SEC MEETING - *<u>FOR POSSIBLE ACTION</u>*

A. With staff assistance, the Council will review items discussed, as well as items acted upon during this meeting, and determine which of those they wish to direct staff to do further work on, as well as which items the Council wishes to act on that may not have been acted upon during earlier discussion.
    A. Adaptive Management
    B. Credit Project Issue
    C. Governor's Office of Energy Presentation

B. Determination of any specific items the Council would like to work on at their next regularly scheduled Council meeting.
    A. None

C. Scheduling of the next Council meeting date, time, and place.
    October 21st at the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

14. FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS – FOR DISCUSSION:

A. US Fish and Wildlife Service – Justin Barrett
    A. Mr. Barrett informed the council that the USFWS is anticipating reorganization in the near future.
    B. USFWS staff have provided resource support on fires in 2026.
    C. Staffing Updates: USFWS lost 10 people over the last year and a half and are now backfilling two of the positions.
    D. Mr. Barrett informed the SEC that the Bi-State GRSG Listing is on hold.
    E. Mr. Barrett informed the SEC that the Pinyon Jay listing is moving forward.
    F. Update: There has not been much movement on the Pigmy Rabbits listing.

B. Bureau of Land Management – Alan Shepard
    A. Mr. Shepard informed the SEC that Steve Pierce is the new director of the BLM.
    B. Energy development applications are still at the top of priorities list.
    C. BLM completed a few emergency permits for a mine and a few energy projects.
    D. Wild Horse and Burro Update: Almost 6,200 horses gathered in FY26, which ends in October.
    E. Mr. Shepard updated the SEC on the well over 200,000 fires throughout the state, 135,000 acres of horse management areas. Offices are creating emergency stabilization plans for those fires.

C. US Forest Service
    A. No Updates were provided by the US Forest Service.

D. USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service – Heidi Ramsey
    A. Ms. Ramsey informed the SEC that USDA has been in a reorganization over the last few months. Approval was given for the plan in Nevada; no field offices will close and footprint will remain the same.
    B. USDA funding year is almost over, and a report will come out shortly after.

C. Ms. Ramsey stated that there is a lot of opportunity for emergency funding from EQIP funds post-fire.

15. STATE AGENCY UPDATES AND COMMENTS – FOR DISCUSSION:

A. Office of the Governor
    A. No updates were provided by the Office of the Governor.

B. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – Deputy Director Dominique Etchegoyhen.
    A. Closing budgets for FY 26
    B. Working on BDRs and statutory updates for the SEP.
    C. 18-123 BDR that would provise provisions related to SEC.
    D. Healthy Soils Initiative 8B86 – 100,000 to go to CD for healthy soils planning

C. Department of Wildlife
    A. Kristin Fratella Introduction
    B. Shawn Espinoza's retirement was briefly discussed.
    C. An update on the 2026 Lek counts was given: 879 Leks were visited – 535 leks active with 8,373 males counted.
    D. NDOWs informed the Council that the lek database will be finalized within the week of the SEC meeting.
    E. Restoration update included fires being watch, acres burned, acres of invasive grass and Pinyon Juniper treated.

D. Department of Agriculture
    A. No updates were provided by the Nevada Department of Agriculture.

16. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments may be made on any matter, provided that the comments will be limited to matters relevant to the Council. Public comments may be limited to 3 minutes per person at the discretion of the Chair. Comments will not be restricted based on viewpoint. No action will be taken on any matters raised during the public comment period that are not already on the agenda. Persons providing comments will be asked to begin by stating their name for the record.

No comments

17. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn - 2:29 PM

NOTICE: Items on this agenda may be taken in a different order than listed, combined for consideration, or removed from the agenda at the discretion of the Chair.

Notice of this meeting was posted in the following location:
Department of Wildlife, 6980 Sierra Pkwy #120, Reno, NV
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program, 201 S. Roop Street, Ste. 101 Carson City, Nevada
Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, Nevada
Department of Agriculture, 405 South 21st Street, Sparks, Nevada
Department of Wildlife, 1100 Valley Road, Reno, Nevada
Capitol Building, 101 North Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada

Notice of this meeting was also posted on the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program website at:

http://sagebrusheco.nv.gov and the Nevada Public Notices Website at http://notice.nv.gov/

We are pleased to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities who wish to attend the meeting. If special accommodations or assistance at the meeting are requested, please notify our office by writing to the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program, 201 S. Roop Street, Suite 101, Carson City, NV 89701; or by calling 775-687-2001 no later than two (2) working days prior to the scheduled meeting. You can also email Kathleen Steele at sage-admin@sagebrusheco.nv.gov.

Please contact Kathleen Steele by calling 775-687-2001; or email sage-admin@sagebrusheco.nv.gov, to obtain support material for the agenda. Meeting materials will also be posted on the http://sagebrusheco.nv.gov website.