



NEVADA LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INTERIM STUDY CONCERNING WILDFIRES

([Assembly Concurrent Resolution \[ACR\] 4, File 46](#))

SUMMARY MINUTES

June 2, 2020

The third meeting of the Committee to Conduct an Interim Study Concerning Wildfires for the 2019–2020 Interim was held on Tuesday, June 2, 2020, at 9:30 a.m. Pursuant to Section 1 of Governor Steve Sisolak's [Emergency Directive 006](#), there was no physical location for this meeting.

The agenda, minutes, meeting materials, and audio or video recording of the meeting are available on the Committee's [meeting page](#). The audio or video recording may also be found at <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Granicus/>. Copies of the audio or video record can be obtained through the Publications Office of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) (publications@lcb.state.nv.us or 775/684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Heidi Swank, Chair
Senator Melanie Scheible, Vice Chair
Senator Chris Brooks
Senator Pete Goicoechea
Assemblywoman Sarah Peters
Assemblywoman Robin L. Titus, M.D.
Jon Raby, Nevada State Director, United States Bureau of Land Management

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Jann Stinnesbeck, Senior Policy Analyst, Research Division
Christina Harper, Assistant Manager of Research Policy Assistants, Research Division
Heidi Chlarson, Senior Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division

Items taken out of sequence during the meeting have been placed in agenda order.

AGENDA ITEM I—OPENING REMARKS

Chair Swank called the third meeting of the Committee to Conduct an Interim Study Concerning Wildfires for the 2019–2020 Interim to order. She delivered opening remarks and virtual meeting and testimony protocol.

AGENDA ITEM II—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Swank called for public comment; however, no testimony was presented.

AGENDA ITEM III—APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING ON MAY 12, 2020

MOTION: Senator Goicoechea moved to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2020, meeting. The motion was seconded by Assemblywoman Titus and passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM IV—PRESENTATION ON THE NEVADA SHARED STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE OF NEVADA; UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR; AND U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Cheva Gabor, Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, gave an overview of the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement between the State of Nevada, USFS, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ([Agenda Item IV A-1](#)). She submitted the signed Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement ([Agenda Item IV A-2](#)), which focuses on working together to achieve landscapes that are more resistant and resilient to wildfire and other disturbances for the benefit of Nevada's citizens and wildlife.

Dominique Etchegoyhen, Deputy Director, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), stated the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement is coordinated at the state level using state-specific priorities and works across jurisdictions to make the landscape more resistant and resilient to wildfire. He stated the Agreement established two primary commitments: (1) define a list of priority projects, completing two by 2021; and (2) increase acres treated across all of Nevada jurisdictions by 2025. To oversee progress towards these two commitments, the Agreement established an executive committee comprised of federal and state leadership. The executive committee established a technical advisory committee to assist in the prioritization of projects across Nevada, and the executive committee adopted the [Native Nevada Seed Strategy](#) to achieve shared stewardship in Nevada. Mr. Etchegoyhen recognized the engagement of agency staff at the local level with the tribal nations and other stakeholders is critical to identify and implement projects and monitor the results of shared stewardships.

Discussion ensued on the following:

- Stringent fire restrictions for the severe 2020 fire season outlook;
- High fire risk at higher elevations;

- A state-level coordinator for the Shared Stewardship Agreement; and
- An update on [Senate Bill 508](#) (2019) matching funds.

Kacey KC, State Forester Firewarden, Division of Forestry, DCNR, testified about the 100 to 300 percent increase in fire fuels, the potential for fires in the higher elevations, and the possibility of a severe fire season. She stressed the number one priority is firefighter and public safety.

AGENDA ITEM V—DISCUSSION OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON RURAL COMMUNITIES CAUSED BY WILDFIRES

Thomas R. Harris, Ph.D., Director, University Center for Economic Development, and Professor, Department of Resource Economics; University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), presented information on economic considerations for rangeland fires ([Agenda Item V A](#)). He discussed: (1) the need for the estimation of monetary impacts from natural disasters; (2) what is included in an economic analysis of rangeland fire; (3) the fiscal impacts to state and local budgets; and (4) the fiscal impact of COVID-19 on firefighting.

Sam Mori, President, Nevada Cattlemen's Association, shared a real-world perspective on the challenges a rancher faces trying to recover from the fiscal impact of a wildfire on infrastructure and livestock.

Brad Schultz, Professor, County Educator, Extension, College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources, UNR, detailed immediate postfire costs for additional feed, livestock replacement, and veterinary fees; and extended costs for infrastructure, livestock replacement, and various unknown costs ([Agenda Item V B](#)). He emphasized that profit and operation viability are always affected adversely from two directions—increased costs and lost production—both of which can occur for several years or more after a catastrophic fire.

There was dialogue on the following issues:

- Survey development for quality data collection;
- Concern with this season's fuel loads and potential for wildfire in the higher elevations;
- Interest in a rural rancher's fiscal impact data, including infrastructure replacement costs, to provide clear and concise information to legislators and the public;
- Composition of a one-page white paper containing the impacts of wildfire on land, livestock, and wildlife; and
- The impact of wildfire on wild horses on the range.

AGENDA ITEM VI—DISCUSSION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF WILDFIRES

Adam C. Watts, Ph.D., Associate Research Professor, Fire Ecology, Division of Atmospheric Sciences, Desert Research Institute (DRI), discussed how wildfires impact the climate, the environment, and Nevada's ecosystems. He also discussed: (1) fire ecology; (2) information and investments that support fire managers; (3) tools for wildfire management in Nevada; (4) wildfire response and operations support; (5) wildfire risk prediction and forecasting; and (6) wildland fire management ([Agenda Item VI](#)).

Discussion continued on the following:

- Public access to the DRI's [Western Regional Climate Center webpage](#) and weather information; and
- The use and conflict of flying drones in a wildfire area and their interference with fire-dropping retardant planes.

AGENDA ITEM VII—PRESENTATION ON INSURANCE ISSUES RELATED TO WILDFIRES

Barbara Richardson, Commissioner of Insurance, Division of Insurance, Department of Business and Industry, reported on how wildfires affect insurance markets and consumers. She covered four topics surrounding insurance markets: (1) the rate impact, (2) the differences in commercial versus personal insurance products; (3) the lessons learned from the California Pacific Gas and Electric wildfire incident; and (4) how livestock and grazing grounds are treated within an insurance policy for a wildfire ([Agenda Item VII](#)).

Commissioner Richardson encouraged individuals to annually review all insurance policies to ensure they have adequate insurance coverage, especially as replacement costs increase.

There was continued dialogue on the different types of insurance coverages and underinsured issues for policy holders, insurance brokers, and the community when there is a catastrophic wildfire.

AGENDA ITEM VIII—DISCUSSION OF IMPACTS ON NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES CAUSED BY WILDFIRES

Clifford Banuelos, Tribal-State Environmental Liaison, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, Division of Environmental Protection, DCNR, presented the wildfire impact on Native American communities ([Agenda Item VIII](#)).

AGENDA ITEM IX—PRESENTATION ON WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

Clifford Banuelos, previously identified, continued his presentation on the wildfire management strategies of Native American tribes and fire management plans for 2020-2021 ([Agenda Item IX](#)). He outlined the responsibilities of the Nevada Tribal Emergency Coordination Council.

AGENDA ITEM X—DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL BILL DRAFT REQUESTS RELATED TO WILDFIRES

Chair Swank announced that potential bill draft requests related to wildfires will be discussed at the July 2, 2020, meeting.

AGENDA ITEM XI—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Swank called for public comment; however, no testimony was presented.

AGENDA ITEM XII—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Harper

Assistant Manager of Research Policy
Assistants

Jann Stinnesbeck

Senior Policy Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Heidi Swank, Chair

Date: _____

MEETING MATERIALS

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item IV A-1	Cheva Gabor, Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, United States Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Department of Agriculture	Written testimony
Agenda Item IV A-2	Cheva Gabor, Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, USFS, U.S. Department of Agriculture	Shared Stewardship Agreement
Agenda Item V A	Thomas R. Harris, Ph.D., Director, University Center for Economic Development, and Professor, Department of Resource Economics; University of Nevada, Reno (UNR)	Microsoft PowerPoint presentation
Agenda Item V B	Brad Schultz, Professor, County Educator, Extension, College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources, UNR	Microsoft PowerPoint presentation
Agenda Item VI	Adam C. Watts, Ph.D., Associate Research Professor, Fire Ecology, Division of Atmospheric Sciences, Desert Research Institute	Microsoft PowerPoint presentation
Agenda Item VII	Barbara Richardson, Commissioner of Insurance, Division of Insurance, Department of Business and Industry	Report

Agenda Item VIII	Clifford Banuelos, Tribal-State Environmental Liaison, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, Division of Environmental Protection, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)	Microsoft PowerPoint presentation
Agenda Item IX	Clifford Banuelos, Tribal-State Environmental Liaison, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, Division of Environmental Protection, DCNR	Microsoft PowerPoint presentation

The Summary Minutes are supplied as an informational service. All meeting materials are on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. For copies, contact the Library at (775) 684-6827 or <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Library/About/Contact/feedbackmail.cfm>.