



Public Lands Committee June 6, 2008 – Testimony by NDOW Director Kenneth Mayer

Hello, my name is Kenneth Mayer and I'm Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife and this is Laura Richards Chief of Diversity. We've been asked to provide an overview of significant issues affecting the Department, and, to discuss the latest developments concerning threatened and endangered species.

Overview of significant issues for NDOW in the Biennium and beyond:

- Restoration of Habitat after wildfires
- Quagga Mussel Invasions
- Wild Horse Management
- Increasing challenges with less federal funding
- Lack of dedicated funding for Urban Wildlife Conflicts
- Renewable Energy in Nevada
- Disease Issues Affecting Wildlife and Domestic Stock
- Streamlining NEPA clearances on Federal Land
- Climate change in Nevada Ecosystems

Recent Developments Concerning Threatened and Endangered Species

Several native Nevadan species are of concern with regard to the Threatened and Endangered Species Act: First, the Sage-grouse.

Greater Sage-grouse – As you heard from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service earlier, the Greater Sage-grouse, a native species to the State of Nevada, have been petitioned for listing on nine separate occasions, and are once again being considered for listing as either threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, within the state. If the bird is listed it would lead to increased federal regulatory requirements that would create a very cumbersome and in some ways cost-prohibitive environment for industries such as energy development, livestock production, and mining. Significant complications in the states ability to manage wildlife would also be experienced.

What is NDOW doing to help?

War on Cheatgrass MOU

In light of these threats, the Nevada, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming Governors signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the "War on Cheatgrass," forming a strong and committed partnership for sharing resources and funding for a program that will include

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wildfire rehabilitation and stabilization, habitat protection through greenstripping and fuels management, and direct treatment of existing cheatgrass and encroaching Pinyon-Juniper to attain a more healthy and functional rangeland/habitat condition. Nevada is the lead state for the Memorandum; and the Department of Wildlife is the lead agency for the State of Nevada. As the lead, we are coordinating the development of a program designed to bring partnerships together for the restoration of Nevada rangelands and sagebrush obligate habitats, and to facilitate and coordinate the projects including wildfire suppression, cheatgrass reduction, and restoration projects.

Nevada Sagebrush Collaboration

The Nevada Sagebrush Collaboration is patterned after the Utah Partners in Conservation and Development. I was asked in January by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) to take the lead on Greater Sage-grouse for the western states' directors on these issues. In April, I traveled to Washington, D.C. to brief key legislators and federal agency leaders on our concerns and ask for their help to address our various issues. My primary mission was to meet specifically with Senator Reid to inform him of what is going on in Nevada regarding sage-grouse, the wildlife restoration throughout the state, and remind him of how important the native sage-grouse is to Nevada. Sen. Reid pledged his continued support for our effort. I also met with Deputy Secretary of Interior Lynn Scarlett to discuss our current sage-grouse efforts, and what we in the west believe the BLM can do now that would help us conserve and protect Greater Sage-grouse and the habitats across the west, at very little cost to the BLM.

1. Implement an aggressive wildfire initial attack program
2. Establish that the conservation and restoration of western sagebrush ecosystems and Greater Sage-grouse management is a priority for the BLM.
3. Establish a policy and procedure to streamline the NEPA process for BLM Districts in the western U.S. to facilitate wildfire restoration of sagebrush ecosystems and critical sage-grouse habitats.
4. Review all BLM policies for their potential negative effects on achieving conservation and restoration goals for of western sagebrush ecosystems and critical sage-grouse habitats.
5. Implement a "Core Conservation Strategy" concept to protect Greater Sage-grouse habitats in the western U.S.

And now, I'll hand off the presentation to Laura Richards to discuss the other species of concern.