

## **NEVADA’S LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS**

*(Nevada Revised Statutes [NRS] 218E.510)*

### **OVERVIEW**

Nevada’s Legislative Committee on Public Lands monitors dozens of natural resource and public lands matters crucial to the State’s economy, lifestyles, and traditions. The Committee considers an extremely wide range of subjects, covering all facets of forest and range science; methods of public land management and oversight; resources associated with the public lands; and rural infrastructure and public services. Because most of Nevada’s lands (more than 85 percent) are under federal management, issues associated with public lands have long been a topic of interest of the Nevada Legislature.

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF**

The Legislative Commission appointed the following members to the Committee:

Senator Pete Goicoechea	Assemblyman John Ellison
Senator Donald G. Gustavson	Assemblyman Ira Hansen
Senator Ben Kieckhefer	Assemblywoman Heidi Swank
Senator David R. Parks	Assemblywoman Robin Titus
Ron Cerri, Humboldt County Commissioner	

The following Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) staff members will provide staff support for the Committee during the 2015-2016 Legislative Interim:

Jered M. McDonald, Senior Research Analyst, Research Division  
Alysa Keller, Senior Research Analyst, Research Division  
Heidi Chlarson, Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division  
Erin Roohan, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division  
Natalie J. Pieretti, Senior Research Secretary, Research Division

### **PROPOSED WORK PLAN**

The following sections outline the tentative work plan for Nevada’s Legislative Committee on Public Lands during the 2015-2016 Legislative Interim.

#### **Meetings**

The budget allows the eight legislators on the Committee to conduct up to six hearings throughout urban and rural Nevada. Certain meetings may last two days due to tours or other activities, but this contingency was not included in the budget. Tentative meeting locations for

this interim include Elko, Ely, Las Vegas, Winnemucca, and Tonopah. The meeting locations are subject to change based on the preference of the Chair and or a majority of the Committee members. Pursuant to NRS 218E.515, the salary and expenses of the ninth member of the Committee (the local government representative) are paid by his political subdivision.

With this budget, Nevada's Legislative Committee on Public Lands will continue its numerous oversight duties and active participation in the crucial public lands debate. Each meeting will typically be regional in nature, which will allow the Committee to focus on issues pertinent to each area.

### **Recommendations and Bill Draft Requests**

Pursuant to NRS 218D.160, statutory legislative bodies, including the Legislative Committee on Public Lands, may request the drafting of not more than ten proposed legislative measures that relate to matters within the scope of the Committee. These requests must be submitted to the Legal Division of the LCB on or before September 1 preceding the commencement of a regular legislative session. Recommendations may be considered and acted upon at meetings throughout the interim. Traditionally, however, the members take action on most recommendations, particularly those involving bill draft requests, at the final scheduled in-state meeting of the interim. Members look to those individuals appearing before the Committee to help develop a set of recommendations for consideration at the final work session. The final report is then completed by staff prior to the start of the legislative session.

## **OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE DUTIES AND ISSUES MONITORED**

### **Powers and Duties of the Committee on Public Lands**

Pursuant to NRS 218E.520, Nevada's Legislative Committee on Public Lands has many broad responsibilities and powers. Specifically, the Committee may:

1. Review and comment on any administrative policy, rule, or regulation of the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, which pertains to policy concerning or management of public lands under the control of the Federal Government;
2. Review and comment on any administrative policy, rule, or regulation of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, which pertains to policy concerning or management of national forests;
3. Conduct investigations and hold hearings in connection with this review, including but not limited to, investigating the effect on the State, its citizens, political subdivisions, businesses and industries of those policies, rules, regulations, and related laws;

4. Consult with and advise the State land use planning agency on matters concerning federal land use, policies, and activities in this State;
5. Direct the Legislative Counsel Bureau to assist in its research, investigations, review and comment;
6. Recommend to the Nevada Legislature, as a result of its review, any appropriate State legislation or corrective federal legislation;
7. Advise the Attorney General of the State of Nevada if the Committee believes that any federal policy, rule, or regulation which it has reviewed encroaches on the sovereignty respecting land or water or their use, which has been reserved to the State pursuant to the *Constitution of the United States of America*;
8. Enter into a contract for consulting services for land planning and any other related activities, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Advising the Committee and the State land use planning agency concerning the revision of the plans pursuant to NRS 321.7355;
  - b. Assisting local governments in the identification of lands administered by the Federal Government in this State, which are needed for residential or economic development or any other purpose; and
  - c. Assisting local governments in the acquisition of federal lands in this State.
9. Apply for any available grants and accept any gifts, grants, or donations to assist the Committee in carrying out its duties; and
10. Review and comment on any other matter relating to the preservation, conservation, use, management or disposal of public lands deemed appropriate by the Chairman of the Committee or by a majority of the members of the Committee.

Furthermore, NRS 218E.525 stipulates that Nevada's Legislative Committee on Public Lands shall:

- ❑ Actively support the efforts of state and local governments in the western states regarding public lands and state sovereignty as impaired by federal ownership of land;
- ❑ Advance knowledge and understanding in local, regional, and national forums of Nevada's unique situation with respect to public lands; and

- ❑ Support legislation that will enhance state and local roles in the management of public lands and increase the disposal of public lands.

*Senate Bill 216 of the 2003 Legislative Session and Senate Bill 267 of the 2007 Legislative Session*

Senate Bill 216 of the 2003 Legislative Session (Chapter 408, *Statutes of Nevada*) and Senate Bill 267 of the 2007 Legislative Session (Chapter 210, *Statutes of Nevada*) set forth additional duties for the Legislative Committee on Public Lands. Both measures are codified as subsection 2 of NRS 218E.525, which states that the Committee shall review and report to the Legislative Commission on the programs and activities of:

- ❑ The Colorado River Commission of Nevada;
- ❑ All public water authorities, districts, and systems in the State of Nevada including, without limitation, the Southern Nevada Water Authority, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, the Virgin Valley Water District, the Carson Water Subconservancy District, the Humboldt River Basin Water Authority, and the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District; and
- ❑ All other public or private entities with which any county in the State has an agreement regarding the planning, development, or distribution of water resources, or any combination thereof.

The Committee may also review and comment on other issues relating to water resources in this State, including the laws, regulations, and policies regulating the use, allocation, and management of water in Nevada and the status of information and studies relating to water use, surface water resources, and groundwater issues.

*Assembly Bill 198 of the 2015 Legislative Session*

Assembly Bill 198 requires the Legislative Committee on Public Lands to conduct a study of water conservation and alternative sources of water for Nevada communities. The measure sets out the scope of the study, which includes a review of issues relating to water resources and water use and the apportionment of groundwater. In addition to its other duties, the Committee must submit its findings and recommendations to the next session of the Legislature.

## **Issues Monitored and Discussed**

As an introduction to some of the public lands issues that may be addressed during the 2015-2016 Legislative Interim, this section briefly highlights the topics typically reviewed and discussed by the Committee:

### ***I. Ongoing Programs and Review of Specific Proposals***

- a. Federal budget proposals affecting public lands:
- b. Land transfers/exchanges:
- c. Military activities and land and airspace proposals:
- d. Mining and reclamation:
- e. Rangeland management:
- f. Riparian management:
- g. Wilderness:
- h. Wild horses and burros:
- i. Wildlife:
- j. Other topics of interest:

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