

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS

*Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 218E.320 and 218E.510*

This summary presents the recommendations approved by the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources at its meetings on August 23, 2024. The bill draft requests (BDRs) will be forwarded to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau for transmittal to the 83<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Nevada Legislature.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATION

##### *Public Lands*

1. Propose a resolution on land use planning to encourage: (1) locally led efforts; (2) coordination between federal, State, and local government; and (3) multiple use of public lands while providing for the sustainability of these lands economically, socially, and environmentally. **(BDR –380)**
2. Propose a resolution declaring “Smart from the Start” solar development concepts and preference for placing solar development on certain sites as the State policy for Nevada. **(BDR –388)**
3. Propose legislation to amend Title 26 (“Public Lands”) of NRS to add a policy statement related to public lands to add language that prioritizes “tribal expertise and knowledge” as local knowledge of public lands in Nevada. **(BDR –392)**

##### *Water*

4. Propose legislation that revises various provisions of water law that would encourage water conservation. This includes, but is not limited to: (1) revising [NRS 533.024](#) to include the encouragement of the efficient use of water as a matter of State policy; (2) adding language to NRS related to filing conservation plans with the State Engineer; (3) revising [NRS 533.0241](#) to require the State Engineer to treat water conserved under a conservation plan as appropriated water; and (4) excluding water conserved under a conservation plan from the abandonment provisions of [NRS 533.060](#) and [534.090](#). **(BDR –379)**
5. Propose legislation to: (1) remove the minimum charge and establish a maximum charge for a special assessment levied upon certain designated basins where groundwater use is predominately for agricultural purposes; (2) limit the use of the special assessments to activities that are directly related to the groundwater basin; (3) require annual reporting on the expenditures and activities funded by the special assessments; and (4) appropriate \$1 million to the Division of Water Resources of the State Department of Conservation and

Natural Resources (DCNR) to support the Nevada State Engineer and the Nevada Water Initiative. **(BDR –386)**

6. Propose legislation to authorize a board of county commissioners to establish a groundwater board for areas designated as a groundwater basin in need of further administration by the State Engineer pursuant to the provisions of [NRS 534.030](#). **(BDR –385)**
7. Propose legislation revising [NRS 533.0243](#) to extend the time limit of a temporary conversion of agricultural water rights for wildlife purposes or to improve the quality or flow of water from three to ten years. **(BDR –391)**
8. Propose legislation based on [Senate Bill 99](#) from the 2023 Session that appropriates \$600,000 per year for each year of the 2025-2027 Biennium from the State General Fund to the Desert Research Institute of the Nevada System of Higher Education to support the Nevada State Cloud Seeding Program. **(BDR –389)**
9. Propose legislation that revises various provisions of water law. This includes, but is not limited to: (1) an addition to [Chapter 445A](#) of NRS to encourage and promote water reuse as a policy of the State; (2) an addition to [NRS 445A.520](#) related to standards of water quality that authorizes the State Environmental Commission to consider the establishment of a water quality standard variance, pursuant to federal law, which meets certain criteria; (3) defining “eligible property owner” in [Chapter 439](#) of NRS for purposes of a district board of health voluntary financial assistance program to pay for costs related to abandoning existing septic systems served by a municipal water system to connect to community sewerage; and (4) the establishment of the Account for Retiring Water Rights in the State General Fund and the Nevada Voluntary Water Rights Retirement Program, which would expire on June 30, 2035. **(BDR –383)**
10. Propose legislation based on the amended version of [Senate Bill 176](#) from the 2023 Legislative Session, excluding the sections creating the Account for Purchasing and Retiring Water Rights and the appropriation from the State General Fund to the Account. The bill would: (1) create the Nevada Conservation and Recreation Program, consisting of the Nevada Water Buy-Back Initiative and a grant program; and (2) establish an advisory committee for the Initiative. **(BDR –384)**

### *Agriculture*

11. Propose legislation to create a Healthy Soils Initiative to support regenerative agricultural practices in Nevada. The Initiative includes the creation of a Soil Health Advisory Board, run through the Conservation Districts Program of DCNR, which would oversee educational programming as well as grants to agricultural producers as they transition to regenerative agricultural practices. **(BDR –387)**

### *Outdoor Recreation*

12. Propose legislation to create the Transit-to-Trails Task Force that is charged with: (1) identifying and securing funding for public transit that runs to trailheads; and (2) identifying high-priority areas for a potential future transit to trails program. **(BDR –382)**

*Wildfire*

13. Propose legislation to authorize the Governor and Nevada's Division of Forestry of DCNR to enter into certain fire compacts. **(BDR –381)**

*Wildlife*

14. Propose legislation that appropriates \$5 million from the State General Fund into the Wildlife Crossings Account to support the construction of new wildlife crossings in Nevada. **(BDR –390)**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEE ACTION

15. Send a letter to the United States Congress expressing support for congressional action, such as the [Historic Routes Preservation Act](#) (H.R.3270, 115<sup>th</sup> Congress), to provide clarity on a protocol to address *Revised Statute 2477* rights-of-way.
16. Send a letter to the Bureau of Land Management expressing support for the Nevada Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan and its Conservation Credit System in managing greater sage-grouse in Nevada.
17. Send a letter to the Governor and the Director of the State Department of Agriculture expressing support for the Home Feeds Nevada Agriculture Food Purchase Program.
18. Send a letter to the U.S. Department of the Interior urging the Secretary of the Interior to enact an administrative withdrawal of public lands in the Amargosa Valley from new mining for a temporary period of 20 years.
19. Send a letter to the Governor encouraging a State General Fund appropriation to support the continued work of the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement.
20. Send a letter to the Governor encouraging appropriations to the Wildlife Crossings Account for the construction of new wildlife crossings and wildlife fencing in Nevada.