From:	Jaina Moan
To:	Interim Natural Resources; Natha Anderson Assemblymember
Cc:	Mauricia Baca
Subject:	Public Comment from The Nature Conservancy for June 28 meeting of the Interim Natural Resources Committee
Date:	Tuesday, January 27, 2026 5:41:05 PM
Attachments:	The Nature Conservancy Public Comment for Interim Natural Resources Committee_28Jan26.pdf

Dear Interim Natural Resources Committee and Chair Anderson,
Attached please find a written public comment from The Nature Conservancy for the June 28, 2026 meeting of the Interim Natural Resources Committee.
Thank you,

Please consider the environment before printing this email

Jaina Moan
External Affairs Director

jaina.moan@tnc.org
(702) 208-8377 (Cell)

The Nature Conservancy
N. Nevada Field Office
639 Isbell Rd.
Suite 330
Reno, NV 89509

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

nature.org

The Nature Conservancy
Nevada

Northern Nevada Office
639 Isbell Rd., #330
Reno, NV 89509

Tel (775) 322-4990

Southern Nevada Office
8215 S. Eastern Ave., #225
Las Vegas, NV 89123

Tel (702) 737-8744

nature.org/nevada

January 27, 2026

Assemblyperson Natha Anderson, Chair
Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources
Transmitted via email: NRInterim@lcb.state.nv.us

RE: Public comment for January 28, 2026 meeting

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Interim Natural Resources Committee:

The Nature Conservancy appreciates the opportunity to provide information that is relevant to agenda items regarding geothermal energy and dissolved mineral extraction for the January 28, 2026 meeting of the Nevada Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources. As a non-governmental, science-based conservation organization that works nationally and internationally to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) works in Nevada to understand the impacts of energy and mineral development on groundwater dependent ecosystems and biodiversity. With this comment, we are sharing for the Committee's consideration recently published research that pertains to the intersection of geothermal energy, dissolved mineral extraction, and groundwater in Nevada.

Groundwater in Nevada is under growing threat, with nearly 40% of thousands of wells analyzed across the state showing significantly declining water levels, according to a scientific paper published in the journal *Hydrological Processes* by Saito et al. (2025, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hyp.70229). The study warns of mounting risks to groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDEs) like springs, wetlands and riparian habitats that sustain rare plants and wildlife and offers science-based strategies to protect and restore these vital ecosystems amid intensifying drought and rising water demand. Outside of the Colorado River Basin, most of Nevada's economy relies on groundwater, including mining, agriculture, electricity generation, industries at the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center, and now an increasing demand for data centers. In addition to industry, groundwater is critical for biodiversity, provides drinking water, supports agriculture and recreation, and is integral to a healthy Nevada. While groundwater is a renewable resource, it can take a long time (sometimes centuries) to replenish, so we must ensure that we are balancing our state's economic growth with the available groundwater for the long term. If we run out of groundwater, the industries, economic growth, communities, and our ecosystems could also disappear.

In December 2025, researchers from The Nature Conservancy, Desert Research Institute and California Botanic Garden and Claremont Graduate University published a scientific research

paper examining the "Potential impacts to biodiversity of rare and vulnerable species from proposed lithium extraction" in Nevada and California in the journal *Global Ecology and Conservation* (Clifford et al. 2025, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989425005761). The researchers analyzed potential impacts of 55 proposed lithium extraction projects (40 sites in Nevada and 15 in California) and broad areas identified as containing lithium reserves on the biodiversity of imperiled to vulnerable species (ranked G1-G3 and S1-S3 by NatureServe and Nevada's Natural Heritage Program). In Nevada, the land area analyzed totaled 309,339 acres of proposed lithium projects with 724,593 acres of buffered lands to identify impacts beyond the project site. The results identified over 80% of the most critically imperiled species in Nevada are wetland dependent species. There were 18 projects in groundwater basins that are over-appropriated and 7 projects in groundwater basins that are over-appropriated and over-pumped. There were 388 springs identified within proposed projects and the total wetland area in proposed projects was 98,626 acres. The results highlight the importance of balancing conservation of biodiversity with solutions to mitigate climate change. To limit biodiversity loss, there is a need for a holistic planning process that prioritizes the lowest conflict sites for development over high conflict sites. Frameworks and tools have been developed by the Desert Research Institute for assessing the potential hydrological impacts of lithium mining (Shaftner et. al 2023, https://www.dri.edu/project/potential-hydrologic-impacts-of-lithium-extraction/).

There are many benefits to geothermal energy. Geothermal energy can deliver affordable, reliable energy, support economic growth and provide cleaner air for our communities while also tackling climate change by reducing emissions. At the same time, we must consider that all energy development has the potential to pose adverse impacts on land, air, water, wildlife and cultural resources. In June 2024, The Nature Conservancy completed a literature review of the potential impacts, design criteria, and mitigation of solar, wind, and geothermal energy development in the Western U.S. (Clifford et al. 2024; https://www.conservationgateway.org/content/dam/tnc/conservation/cg-documents/r/e/Renewable-Energy-Literature-Review_UPDATED.pdf). The review found that utility-scale geothermal energy can impact natural resources in several ways: 1) land disturbance that fragments habitats and disturbs, removes, and displaces vegetation and wildlife, 2) creation of noise from construction and operations, which has been shown to be detrimental for the imperiled greater sage-grouse, 3) hydrological impacts to groundwater systems from exploration, production, and reinjection of groundwater, which could potentially affect flow and temperature of seeps, springs, geysers and other surface water features to which species and communities may be particularly adapted, 4) degradation or destruction of culturally important places and sources of traditional foods and medicines. In arid environments like the western US where geothermal potential is high, care is needed to ensure that geothermal energy production and technological expansion is advanced through responsible planning, siting, and permitting.

We appreciate your consideration of these resources as you consider the implications to groundwater and other natural resources from geothermal energy and resource extraction.

Please feel free to contact external affairs director Jaina Moan at jaina.moan@tnc.org or 702-208-8377 if you have any further questions on our comments.

Sincerely,

Mauricia M.M. Baca
Nevada State Director

References

Clifford M, Gower P, Anderson T, Moan J. 2024. Renewable Energy In Nevada: Potential impacts, design criteria, and mitigation of renewable energy in the Western U.S. The Nature Conservancy Nevada. Available at https://www.conservationgateway.org/collections/nevada/energy-infrastructure-lands/renewable-energy-in-nv-literature-review/

Clifford MJ, Parker SS, Saito L, Cohen BS, Fraga NS, Heintz K, Saftner D. 2025. Potential impacts to biodiversity of rare and vulnerable species form proposed lithium extraction. Global Ecology and Conservation 64:e03974. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2025.e03974

Saito L, Byer S, Munn L, Badik K, Provencher L, McEvoy DJ, Rohde MM. 2025. Strategies to address risks to groundwater dependent ecosystems. Hydrological Processes 39(8):e70229. https://doi.org/10.1002/hyp.70229

Saftner, D. M., Heintz, K. M., & Hershey, R. L. (2023). Identifying Potential Hydrologic Impacts of Lithium Extraction in Nevada, DRI Report No. 41297 https://www.dri.edu/project/potential-hydrologic-impacts-of-lithium-extraction/