SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 218E.320

This summary presents the recommendations approved by the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources at its meeting on August 12, 2026. The bill draft requests (BDRs) will be forwarded to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau for transmittal to the 84th Session of the Nevada Legislature.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATION

Agriculture

1. Propose legislation to:

    a. Establish a Healthy Soils Initiative based on Assembly Bill 80 (2025) Reprint 1; and

    b. Appropriate $100,000 from the State General Fund for the Renewable Natural Resource Competitive Grant Program pursuant to NRS 548.178 and codified in the *Nevada Administrative Code* 548.300 through 548.340, inclusive, to be available to conservation districts on a competitive basis for purposes of implementing healthy soils programming. **(BDR 49–419)**

2. Propose legislation to revise NRS to clarify which enforcement responsibilities related to the distribution and sale of certain hemp and synthetic products belong with Nevada's State Department of Agriculture and the Cannabis Compliance Board. **(BDR 51–417)**

3. Propose legislation to address the agricultural use of paraquat in Nevada. **(BDR 49–415)**

Water

4. Propose legislation to:

    a. Amend the Board for Financing Water Projects grant program in Chapter 349 of NRS by:

        i. Amending subsection 3 of NRS 349.983 to require that all recipients of grants awarded by the Board for Financing Water Projects pursuant to NRS 349.981 provide a match; and

        ii. Expanding the financial support capacity for the grant program in NRS 349.981 by increasing the bonding authority in NRS 349.986 from $125 million to $200 million;

b. Ensure that retiring water rights will not incur a tax penalty by expanding the definition of "agricultural use" in NRS 361A.030 to include lands left fallow as a result of the permanent retirement of their appurtenant groundwater rights under the statutory water rights retirement program, thereby retaining the agricultural use assessment for property tax purposes;

c. Authorize the State Engineer of the Division of Water Resources, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), to extend the deadline for filing proofs of claims of vested rights, for cause shown, on or before the current deadline; and exempt the federal government from the deadline to file such claims;

d. Amend language in NRS 533.353 related to monitoring, management, and mitigation (3M) plans to:

    i. Clarify the authority of the State Engineer to require a 3M plan as a condition of approving change applications;

    ii. Require the State Engineer to allow counties to participate in an advisory capacity without counties having to request such participation, and extend the same treatment to water authorities if a water authority furnishes water in the county;

    iii. Extend the State Engineer's duty to consider information submitted by the county prior to approving a 3M plan to also include 3M plan amendments, as well as information submitted by a water authority that furnishes water in the county; and

    iv. Require the State Engineer to include any comment, analysis, or information submitted by the county or water authority in their files as part of the official record;

e. Add language to the appropriate chapter of NRS to:

    i. Authorize the board of county commissioners, in designated groundwater basins (DGB), to establish a groundwater board;

    ii. Require groundwater board headquarters to be located in the county seat of the DGB, or in the county seat of one of the counties if there are multiple counties; and require such meetings to be held in compliance with Nevada's Open Meeting Law;

    iii. Authorize the board of county commissioners of one or more counties to establish a single groundwater board for multiple DGBs that have shared issues local solutions could solve;

    iv. Authorize the State Engineer to provide advice or feedback to a groundwater board;

v. Provide that such groundwater boards are established to provide recommendations to the board or boards of county commissioners on local actions to achieve certain goals;

vi. Authorize the board of county commissioners to establish and collect a fee from groundwater users in the DGB each calendar year upon a two-thirds vote, not to exceed $30 per acre-foot of permitted groundwater, or a flat fee of $30 for owners of domestic wells (collectively, for purposes of this document, identified as a groundwater fee);

vii. Authorize groundwater fees to be adjusted once a year for inflation in accordance with the Consumer Price Index;

viii. Authorize the board of county commissioners to impose late fees and seek collection of unpaid annual fees pursuant to existing authority;

ix. Require groundwater fees to be used for promoting education and groundwater conservation; conducting well inventories; preparing cost benefit analyses related to recharge and recovery or underground storage and recovery for use by the groundwater board; developing recommendations for additional activities to manage the basin and protect the aquifer, and conducting such activities if approved by the board or boards of county commissioners; paying to abandon and plug wells, purchasing and retiring water rights, and mitigating conflict between groundwater and surface water rights; and performing other duties as necessary;

x. Require the board of county commissioners to contribute matching funds or impose a groundwater fee if seeking funding from the Board for Financing Water Projects grant program to make improvements related to conserving water pursuant to subsection 1(b) of NRS 349.981;

xi. Require any of the actions outlined above to be jointly approved by the boards of county commissioners if the DGB or DGBs are in more than one county; and

xii. Provide that if the DGB is located within the boundaries of a water authority, only the water authority is authorized to carry out these provisions;

f. Repeal groundwater boards established by the State Engineer in NRS 534.035; and

g. Amend NRS 534.040 pertaining to special assessments levied on all taxable property in a basin or area administered by the State Engineer, or money appropriated from a county general fund to:

i. Require that money collected from the special assessment—or appropriated from the county general fund—is used for salaries and expenses associated with administering provisions in Chapter 534 of NRS related to the conservation and distribution of groundwater in designated basins;

ii. Institute a maximum charge on the special assessment that can be levied in areas where the primary use is not municipal supply. The maximum charge is equal to the charge that exists as of June 30, 2027, plus an annual increase that is equal to or less than 20 cents per acre-foot permitted or certificated;

iii. Authorize the State Engineer to increase the charge beyond the maximum charge for services and projects that provide a direct and special benefit to water users in the designated basin if the State Engineer provides reasonable opportunity for public comment and holds a public meeting; and

iv. Require the Division of Water Resources to post a budget that shows money collected from the special assessment or county general fund and how it was used. **(BDR 48–416)**

5. Propose legislation to create a forum for long-term water planning. **(BDR 48–414)**

Wildlife

6. Propose legislation to authorize additional funding for wildlife crossings by:

   a. Increasing existing tire recycling fees in NRS 444A.090 with exemptions for certain industries;

   b. Amending Chapter 482 of NRS to provide an option for motorists to voluntarily contribute to wildlife crossings when renewing their motor vehicle registration; and

   c. Dedicating 0.05 percent of the existing 3.5 percent Insurance Premium Tax in NRS 680B.027 to wildlife crossings. **(BDR –418)**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEE ACTION

7. Send a letter to the United States Department of Agriculture and the Congressional Delegation that draws attention to the exclusion of alfalfa growers in federal regulations and relief packages, such as the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program and the Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Program.

8. Include a statement in the final report to support efforts to expand the entities which can distribute nutritious food through the Home Feeds Nevada Agriculture Food Purchase Program.

9. Send a letter to Governor Joe Lombardo, the Senate Committee on Finance, and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means to request funding in the amount of $1.5 million be included in the *Executive Budget* for the 2027–2029 Biennium to support the Nevada State Cloud Seeding Program.

10. Send a letter to Governor Lombardo, the Senate Committee on Finance, and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means to request funding in the amount of $3 million be included in the *Executive Budget* for the 2027–2029 Biennium to support groundwater rights retirement.

11. Send a letter to Governor Lombardo, the Senate Committee on Finance, and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means to request funding be included in the *Executive Budget* for the 2027–2029 Biennium to support the ALERTWest Early Detection Camera System.

12. Send a letter to Governor Lombardo, the Senate Committee on Finance, and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means to request funding in the *Executive Budget* for the 2027–2029 Biennium to support the Shared Stewardship program.

13. Include a statement in the final report to support efforts undertaken by Nevada's Division of Outdoor Recreation, DCNR, and other stakeholders to mitigate visitor induced threats to Nevada ecosystems through stewardship and education initiatives, investment in recreation infrastructure, and cultivation of an outdoor recreation workforce pipeline.