



NEVADA LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS

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

MINUTES

April 24, 2026

The first meeting of the Committee on Public Lands for the 2025–2026 Interim was held on Friday, April 24, 2026, at 9 a.m. at Thompson’s Opera House, 644 Main Street, Pioche, Nevada 89043.

The agenda, minutes, meeting materials, and video recording of the meeting are available on the Committee's [meeting page](#). The video recording may also be found at <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Video/>. Copies of the video record can be obtained through the Publications Office of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) (publications@lcb.state.nv.us or 775/684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN PIOCHE:

Senator Melanie Scheible, Chair
Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson, Vice Chair
Senator Ira Hansen
Assemblymember Rich DeLong
Assemblymember Cinthia Zermeño Moore
Justin Jones, Clark County Commissioner

COMMITTEE MEMBER ATTENDING REMOTELY:

Senator Michele Cruz-Crawford

OTHER LEGISLATOR PRESENT:

Assemblymember Bert K. Gurr
Assemblymember Alexis M. Hansen

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Jered McDonald, Deputy Research Director, Research Division
Maria Velazquez, Research Policy Assistant, Research Division
Stef Sandoval, Research Policy Assistant, Research Division
Jeffrey Chronister, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Robert Lemus, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Dameon Meeks, Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division

Items taken out of sequence during the meeting have been placed in agenda order.
[Indicates a clarification.]

AGENDA ITEM I—OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Scheible:

Welcome everybody. I will call this first meeting of the Committee on Public Lands to order. Will the Secretary please take the role?

[Roll call was taken and indicated in Members Present.]

Chair Scheible:

Please mark Senator Cruz-Crawford present when she arrives. I have given her the opportunity to appear via Zoom as she is on a military deployment right now. She is unable to join us in person but has graciously offered to log in as she is able to between training exercises.

With that, I want to welcome everybody to our first meeting of the '25-'26 Interim Public Lands Committee. For those of you who are new to the Committee, this is the best Committee in the interim. We get to travel throughout Nevada and visit some of the more rural and frontier areas of our state. We get to learn all about wildlife, commerce, tourism, geography, everything Nevada, things that make Nevada special. It is really my honor to serve as the Chair again this interim. I have served as a member of this Committee, I think every interim that I have been a Legislator and as a Chair twice now, because I just think this is such an important part of our role as Legislators. I would also like to allow the Committee members to introduce themselves. We will start to my right with my Vice Chair Assemblymember Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you Chair. I have the opportunity to represent Assembly District 30, which is actually in Sparks. Thank you, fellow Sparksite, that is not actually what we call ourselves. I do not think we call ourselves sparklers either. We call ourselves lucky. Anyway, I have the pleasure of serving on this again. Thank you so much, Chair, for allowing me to do so. I have served as Chair of Natural Resources, and I have been in the Assembly for a few years. It is always a pleasure to get a chance to come out and celebrate our beautiful state, especially two days after Earth Day—or three days after Earth Day. Thank you so much.

Assemblymember Moore:

Thank you, Chair. I represent Assembly District 11 in Las Vegas. This is my first time serving on this Committee. I am excited to learn more about the different parts of Nevada. I am excited to be here. Thank you.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Good morning. I represent Assembly District 26 in southern Washoe County. This is my second time on this Committee, also. It is always great to get out to rural Nevada, particularly good to be in Pioche and Lincoln County. Glad to be here.

Chair Scheible:

Senator Hansen, you want to go ahead?

Senator Hansen:

Thanks, Madam Chair. I represent Senate District 14. It is about 34,000 square miles of the State of Nevada—western Elko County, northern Eureka County, all of Humboldt, Lander, Pershing, and a large section of, in fact, almost all of geographical Washoe County. I think this is my eighth time on the Public Lands Committee. I just finished my eighth legislative session—16 years. I think, all of them, I was on the Natural Resources Committee, too—I think, I am trying to remember. These are the issues I personally really love and am quite interested in, and love to be back in Lincoln County. My wife, Alexis, is in the audience. Her family, the Lloyds, go way back in Lincoln County to the 1870s. In fact, their family home is right down the street, about five houses down. It is great to be back to this part of the state, beautiful part of the state. Really love it, and it is a privilege to again serve on this Committee and deal with these issues. Thanks, Madam Chair.

Commissioner Jones:

I am the local government representative on the Public Lands Committee. This is my third and final time serving in this role. I represent the southwest part of Vegas, everything from Red Rock Canyon to the oldest bar in Nevada in Good Springs—Pioneer Saloon.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you all so much. I also want to introduce our staff to you. To my left is Jered McDonald, and he and Becky Peratt are our Committee Policy Analysts. Erin Sturdivant, Jeffrey Chronister, and RJ Lemus will serve as Legal Counsel. Dameon Meeks is our Fiscal Analyst. And we have Maria Velazquez, our Committee Secretary, and Steph Sandoval is also a member of our team. I am sorry, I do not know your title, but she is an important member of our team because these meetings are a lot of work to put together, not for me, but for our staff. They make it look easy. Thank you all so much for being here. You will hear from some members of our staff throughout the day.

I want to give a brief overview for those of you who are new to Public Lands or maybe even new to the Legislature. I see many familiar faces, but just to give you an idea of what you can expect for today. We have a packed agenda. We are covering a lot of different topics. We have presentations from counties to talk about public lands in their counties. We have presentations from the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition to talk about Nevada more broadly. We will take them roughly in order. I try to be flexible, because I appreciate that all of you are making a sacrifice to be here. If you do need to leave early or arrive late, and you let me know in advance, I will try to move you around. That also means that where you are on the agenda, if you do not tell me that you need to be there, I might bump you or ask you to come up early, but if you are not available, it is no big deal. We work together as a team to make sure we get all our presentations done during the day.

Presenters will come up to this front table and speak into the microphones. We will give you your opportunity to speak first, then members of the Committee will ask questions. I encourage members to keep their questions relevant to the presentations. I will try to get everybody out of here by 5 p.m. It is not that we want to stifle conversation, but if something needs to move offline, so to speak, then we will ask you guys to do that. Again, not because we do not want to have the conversation, but because what I find on this Committee is that we have so many important topics to dive into, we could spend all day on just one or two agenda items. I want to make sure that we have an opportunity to go through all of them.

We do ask that you silence your cellphones, laptops, beepers, babies, during the presentation. Our members are not using a lot of laptops today, but all our meeting materials are available online. That is how I access them. That is how a lot of our members access them. And if anybody—are we live streaming? Excellent. If anybody is joining us on the live stream, you can, I mean, anybody can, but especially those on live stream, can access all our meeting materials on the Committee website. We begin every meeting with public comment; we end every meeting with public comment. Yes.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Chair. I wanted to ask a quick question regarding that baby you just mentioned. How old is that beautiful baby? I believe you just had that baby three months ago. If you could let us know a little bit more about the noncrying baby that is in the room, that would be lovely.

Chair Scheible:

Yes, there is a baby here. She is mine. She was born 12 weeks ago and, if you give a really good presentation, you will be allowed to hold her. She traveled with me from Las Vegas along with my husband who is in the audience, and we had a great trip from Las Vegas to Pioche. She is super excited to see some more of Pioche and more of Lincoln County this evening and tomorrow.

AGENDA ITEM II—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Scheible:

I think that is a perfect segue. I do not think I had anything else I needed to go over with you all. In public comment, if you could keep your comments to about two minutes per person, that will allow everybody an opportunity to speak. With that, let us go ahead and open it up for our first public comment opportunity. If anybody would like to give public comment in person, now is the time to come up to the table. I do not see anybody coming up to the table. Oh, I do see somebody coming up to the table. Sorry. Please introduce yourself, spell your name for our secretaries, and go ahead.

Bevan Lister, President, Nevada Farm Bureau:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I live here, so it is a pleasure to welcome you to Pioche and Lincoln County. Nevada Farm Bureau is a private nonprofit organization that advocates for farmers and agriculture. We are truly grassroots in that our members set our policy, elect our officers, and guide our organization. This is important to us. This Committee is important to us because a fair share of my members are public land grazers. The grazing community over the last 50 plus years has been limited. I am trying to use nice terms here. Have lost a fair share, most of them about 70 percent on average of their grazing permits. Those grazing permits reflect livestock in the area, economic development for the county, and livelihoods for those farm and ranch families. Most of the private lands, especially in Lincoln County—and I think it is pretty true throughout the rest of the state—the private farmlands are usually tied to a grazing permit, so it is a combined operation of growing crops and raising livestock. Livestock grazing has a rich history. My family started grazing livestock in Lincoln County in about 1849. There is a lot to be said for the tremendous opportunities on the public lands in Nevada. You know me. You know our Executive Vice President and Lobbyist, Doug Busselman. We are here as a resource to you. Anything that you need from the Committee, please, we welcome your questions and hope to be able to work with you throughout this interim. Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you so much, and thank you for being here. The Nevada Farm Bureau is in fact a great resource for all of us, and we appreciate that you made the trip out here. Anybody else wishing to give public comment in person? All right. We will go to the phone. The phone line for public comment, in case anybody needs it, is (888) 475-4499; and the meeting ID is 827 9978 1570. AVH [Audio Visual Hearings Unit], do we have anybody on the phone?

AVH, Information Technology Services, Administrative Division, LCB:

Thank you, Chair Scheible. To provide public comment, please press *9 on your phone or raise hand in your Zoom window to take your place in the queue. Caller with the last three digits 458, please press *6 to unmute. You are unmuted. Please proceed.

Adrienne Snow, Snow Livestock LLC:

Good morning. I am here to represent my family's company, Snow Livestock. Thank you, Madam Chair, and members of the Committee for this opportunity. Our family has ranched in Nevada for generations, and this is not just our business, it is our way of life. It is how we raise our family. We care for the land and contribute to the rural communities that depend on agriculture.

Today we are facing a permanent loss of grazing access on our allotment due to the expansion of the Fallon Range Training Complex, and we are the first family to go through this process. This is not a temporary disruption but a long-term, generational impact to our operation. We want to be clear. We respect and support our military and the mission of national defense, and we understand the importance of that mission and the role Nevada plays in it. We are not here to stand in opposition to that. We are here because something is not aligning with the law or with fairness.

Under FY [Fiscal Year] 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 2993(c), the law clearly states that the Secretary shall compensate permit holders for all losses suffered when replacement for it is unavailable. That is a mandatory obligation, not discretionary. What we are experiencing does not reflect that standard. We are being asked to accept a one-time approach to what is a permanent loss. Grazing capacity is not something that can simply be replaced. It is tied to the land, to the water, to years of stewarding that land and to the long-term viability of our operations. There are established federal methods used across the country to value forage loss over time, and those methods recognize that these impacts are ongoing and should be treated as such. Those standards are not being applied here, and that is why I truly am hoping you guys hear me today, that those USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] standards—forage standards are not applied. There is a gap between the law and what is being delivered to us, and we are asking you to look into this and consider leaning on our U.S. Senators and Congressmen and the Navy to make this right by not just us but the families that will come behind us. Thank you on behalf of all of us in this position. ([Agenda Item II](#))

AVH:

Caller with the last three digits 677, please press *6 to unmute. Once again, caller with the last three digits 677, please press *6 on your telephone to unmute. You are unmuted. Please proceed.

Casey Kern, Member of the Public:

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I am an outdoor enthusiast here in Clark County. I spend a lot of time on our public lands, and that is why the wild horse and burro issue matters so much to me. It is hard to take conservation talk seriously when the Bureau of Land Management allows roughly 1.5 million privately owned cattle to graze on our public lands. A species that is definitely nonnative and activity that we know causes soil erosion, water depletion, and habitat degradation.

At the same time, our wild horses and burros are often dismissed when people call them feral, but that does not really mean they are disposable or do not deserve protection. They are actually a reintroduced native species. They evolved in North America, and when they were brought back by Spanish colonists, they were returning to their ancestral home. They have also been part of this land for centuries, deeply woven into Indigenous cultures and the history of our American West. They are also protected under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, which recognizes that they belong here. Yet the BLM [Bureau of Land Management] is removing hundreds of horses and burros from places like the Spring Mountains, while more than 60,000 already sit in government holding facilities. Many will never be adopted, and many will end up in the slaughter pipeline.

At the same time, cattle vastly outnumber wild horses and continue to dominate these landscapes. According to the BLM, Nevada has the most public land authorized for grazing, which is about 43 million acres. The BLM sets an artificially low population limit for horses and burros in some herd management areas. That number is only around 100, so the agency can claim they are overpopulated and then remove them. And if population management is truly even necessary, we have a humane science-based solution, and that is fertility control. We do not need helicopters chasing horses for miles, separating mothers and foals, and traumatizing and harassing entire herds. Humane fertility control allows populations to be managed without the cruelty, without the chaos, and without tearing families apart.

In conclusion, the message is clear. Wild horses are being blamed to make room for private cattle. If we are serious about conservation, we need consistency from the BLM. We cannot claim that wild horses are destroying the range while catering to commercial grazing on the very land we are supposed to protect. Thank you.

Cheryl Abbate, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:

My research focuses on animal ethics and animal welfare. I am also calling about the misuse of public lands and the related roundups of Nevada's wild horses and burros. Currently there are fewer than 75,000 wild horses on only 27 million acres of public lands in the U.S. [United States]. Meanwhile, between 1.5 and 2 million cattle graze on 155 million acres of public lands in the U.S. The fees ranchers pay for grazing livestock are so low that they do not even cover livestock grazing administration costs. What is especially concerning is that the public is ultimately all things considered "harmed" by public lands ranching. It is well-known that livestock grazing devastates the environment through high levels of methane production, soil erosion, desertification through overgrazing, intensive water use, and water pollution. Moreover, increased beef consumption is strongly associated with serious health issues like various cancers, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Finally, livestock grazing is arguably a main reason why many wild horses are being unjustly ripped from their homes.

Cattle ranchers and their advocates view our beloved horses as competing with their livestock and thus are pressuring the BLM to remove wild horses from public land, and this is evident from that recent KOLO 8 report. The general public does not want this. In fact, over 80 percent of Nevadans want our wild horses to be protected. So, I, and many others, are asking for, first, an immediate overhaul of the BLM's livestock grazing operations. We want cattle removed from public lands. Second, we want an immediate overhaul of the BLM's current wild horse and burro operations. We want BLM to end their practice of rounding up wild horses and warehousing them in overcrowded government holding facilities. And if there is a genuine need to manage certain wild horse and burro populations, we want the BLM to first consider rewilding options, such as those proposed by the group Wild Horse Fire Brigade, and second, implement humane fertility control. Public lands managers need to start prioritizing the interests of the broader public rather than focusing primarily on those of ranchers. Thank you so much.

AVH:

Chair, the public line is open and working and there are no additional callers at this time.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you so much. I think we have an additional Committee member though. I think Senator Cruz-Crawford has joined us from afar, and I wanted to give her the opportunity to introduce herself if she would like to.

Senator Cruz-Crawford:

Thank you, Chair. I am on active-duty military status right now, but I wanted, as the Chair of Natural Resources in last session, I am excited to be part of this Committee and thank you.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you so much for taking the time to join us.

AGENDA ITEM III—OVERVIEW OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS

Chair Scheible:

With that, we will move on to [Agenda Item III](#). I am going to turn it over to my very capable Committee Analyst to go over our Committee Brief and give everybody a better sense of what we are going to be doing this interim.

Mr. McDonald:

Thank you, Chair. I am going to quickly go over the Committee Brief ([Agenda Item III](#)) that is located in your binders, online, and we also have some available at the table at the back.

Most people are familiar with this Committee. I would point out that one big change this interim, if you will recall with the passage of Senate Bill 226, this Committee converts back to being a standalone Committee and is no longer a subcommittee of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources. The Committee may request up to four bill draft requests (BDRs) for the 2027 Session and must conclude its work by August 31st later this summer. At that last meeting, we will hold a work session where the Committee will vote on

those BDRs, and they can also direct staff to draft letters to relevant stakeholders or to include policy statements in the final report.

Going to the bottom of page 1 of the Committee Brief, you will see that the Legislative Commission has approved the Committee to hold four meetings. In addition to the meeting today, there will be a meeting in Winnemucca on May 15; another meeting in Fernley on June 26; and a final meeting on August 21 with a location to be determined—most likely down in Clark County.

Going to page 2, we have outlined the powers and duties of the Committee, which is rather extensive. The Committee considers a wide range of subjects covering all facets of forest and range science, methods of public land management and oversight, resources associated with public lands and rural infrastructure, and public services. All of these are defined in NRS 218E.520, and I will briefly go over a few of these. The Committee may review and comment on any administrative policy, rule, or regulation of federal land managers in the state. The Committee may recommend to the Nevada Legislature, as a result of its review, any appropriate legislation or corrective federal legislation. The Committee may advise the Attorney General of the state if the Committee believes that any federal rule, policy, or regulation encroaches on the sovereignty of the state. The Committee may review and comment on any other matter relating to the preservation, conservation use, management, or disposal of public lands deemed appropriate by the Chair or a majority of the Committee. Finally, the Committee must review the programs and activities of the Colorado River Commission; all public water authorities, districts, and systems in the state; and all other public or private entities who work with local governments regarding planning, development, or distribution of water resources.

At the bottom of page 3, we have all the staff listed who are assigned to this Committee and also contact information. Finally, the Research Division, as you know, is available to assist the Committee and its members on any issue related to matters that come before the Committee. Also, we have staff who will work with you on an individual basis in a nonpartisan and confidential matter on any topic, as you know. If you need anything, please give us a call or email us at the number in the Committee Brief or the email address in the Committee Brief or any other manner in which you already have. With that, I will turn it back over to you. I am available for any questions, if there are any. Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

All right. Members, do we have any questions for Mr. McDonald? Okay, then that closes Agenda Item III and takes us to Agenda Item IV.

AGENDA ITEM IV—OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC LAND ACTIVITIES AND IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES IN LINCOLN AND WHITE PINE COUNTIES

Chair Scheible:

We will start with an overview on activities and impacts on public land in Lincoln and White Pine Counties. We want to thank Lincoln County for serving as our host at this meeting and invite them to the table now for their presentation.

Diane Path, Commissioner, Lincoln County Board of Commissioners:

Thank you. We would like to welcome you all here and thank you very much for coming to Lincoln County. We love having you. That is like you are walking down a path. I say that because it is so short that everybody says what? What? Every time I get married my last

name gets shorter. I figure I will get all my jokes out of the way now, right? I also have with me Commissioner Mike Reese. Mike, do you want to stand up? He will be giving some input as well. I did bring some swag from Lincoln County. It is on the back table if you want to take some home. Just to let you know, the one is a little medical kit. There is ibuprofen in there, so do not get it around children.

Okay, good. Just a tidbit about me. One of my prior careers is I was a teacher, and as a teacher, when I first started, I made these elaborate PowerPoints and I thought, oh gosh, they were so good, so good the kids are going to love them. I taught high school, so I am teaching seniors and a group of them after I gave a PowerPoint come up to me and says, Miss, we gotta talk to you, and I am like, okay, and they are like, there are too many words in your PowerPoint. And I am like, oof, I thought they were so good, and they are like, no, no, it is just too many words. So, I thought, well, I gotta scale this back. So, I redid the PowerPoint for the next one, scaled it back, and they were like that was fabulous, not so many words. I thought, well if that applies to seniors in high school, it probably applies to adults as well, so my PowerPoints are pretty lean, but I talk in the interim, just to let you know.

My first slide please. ([Agenda Item IV A](#)) I want to welcome you to Lincoln County. It is what we call "the land of public lands." As one of the most rural communities in Nevada, Lincoln County residents are and have always been dependent on public lands, and that is because Lincoln County has one of the highest percentages of federal land ownership within the United States. The federal government owns approximately 95 percent of the land. You will hear some people say 92; you will hear some people say 97 percent. Out of that, the BLM owns about 83 percent of the land, and the Air Force and Department of Defense own roughly 12 percent of that land, and they manage it as well. This leaves about 5 percent of the county for private, state, or municipal ownership, and that is concentrated in areas and valleys like Caliente, Pioche, Panaca, and Alamo. We have five state parks here in Lincoln County as well. Consequently, with all this land, we only have about less than 5,000 people. The last I checked; it was about 4,800 people.

If you want to put everything out on this slide. These entities will be joining us today and locally I have asked for—can you go back please? Thank you. I have asked these entities to give me some input, and I used this input in these slides, so if you have questions, I am going to divert you to them. Again, I am a Commissioner. I live here. I know a lot about this, but some of the things that are in this have individually come from these entities. We collaborate very well here in Lincoln County. We have to. We have a large amount of land with a small population, and everybody pitches in. We wear a lot of hats. We have Lincoln County Fire District or EMS [emergency management services], the BLM State Parks, and NDOW [Nevada's Department of Wildlife]. They will all be, there is all information in this PowerPoint from them. Next slide, please.

The County use of public lands here in Lincoln County is dollars for us. That is what we see, especially as County Commissioners, dollar signs. It is estimated that about \$9.7 million last year was spent here in our county, and that comes from Travel Nevada. That would include things like going to restaurants, lodging, and anything spent at any stores here. I was like, that is a lot of money. I did not really believe that it was true, but we did some research and it looks like it is. Next.

That comes from things like recreation and events of all types. We have a lot of races—OHV [off-highway vehicle] races, UTV [utility terrain vehicle] races. We just had an endurance race here in Cathedral Gorge. We have great trailheads for hiking—Chief Mountain. Next.

And we have great dark skies viewing. In fact, was there somebody here that requested pamphlets for dark skies? I brought them with me. I have them if you want to see me at the end. This all equates to dollars for us. We have camping and family outings, and this not only goes on in state parks, but it goes on in BLM property. Next.

This is my friend, Tammie Gubler, in her race car when she was competing in one of the races in Caliente. She actually rolled over last year. She is doing very well, just to let you know. I loved the picture and asked her if I could use it. Next.

That brings us to Lincoln County needs and concerns, and they are going to be as old as the county itself. Next.

We have land development limitations. We need some of our land released to us. The high percentage of federal land ownership has historically been a barrier to large scale development and affordable housing here in Lincoln County, obviously. If you do not have land to develop, you cannot bring money in. We survive off tax revenue as a county for a lot of our monies, and if we cannot get tax revenue, we do not have money. Next.

And more control over our water rights and how they are handled. We would like to see more local control over water rights, decisions, and allotment. Currently, we have the State Water Engineer's Office, which controls pretty much everything. What we would like to see is a state panel that would act much like an appeal board to the State Engineer's Office. This Board would review and make suggestions to the State Engineer on behalf of any ongoing conflicts. Several people could make up this Board. As an example, you could have somebody from agriculture, somebody from the Farm Bureau, somebody from mining development, farming, different categories across the state, and they could help the State Engineer's Office and review any litigation that would be ongoing and give them suggestions and maybe curtail the time that the litigation takes. What small, rural counties like us desperately need is a way to resolve conflict without litigation, because it is costly and a way to have mediation without high cost of litigation. Next.

The next couple of slides were provided— Well, I made the slides, but the information was provided to me from Lincoln County Fire District. I asked them to give me some information, and the Positive Land Initiatives is the good collaboration and working relationships that they have with the BLM and NDF [Nevada's Division of Forestry]. Again, we have to collaborate—large amount of land, small amount of people. Next.

They have good incident support from the BLM on private fires and fires that threaten the public lands and good fuels reduction projects by the BLM and NDF. They work together very closely. Next.

Target concerns for the Lincoln County Fire District. A large amount of untreated public lands, obviously, have a large amount of lands. Several communities and ranches that need additional fuel reductions. It is tough to afford that as a county or as a private citizen. Next.

Solution consistent suppression and mitigation of the fires or of the funding and equipment to local agencies and efforts to help them out. Next.

Funding for small fuel projects. Basically funding, funding, funding cause in a small community, people-wise, that is where the biggest problems are. Next.

And limited water supply. Obviously, we have a lot of water underground, but when you are out there fighting a fire, you have to take the water with you, so the limited amount of water to suppress the fires and put them out. Next.

This is a picture I took in Rachel, Nevada, when we were storming Area 51. You can see, if a fire catches here, it is just going to take off. Those grasses will catch and it will just go. Fire is a big problem when it starts. Next.

This is some information of input I had from Nevada Division of State Parks. Again, we have five state parks here and they all offer their own little heaven. They are really nice. If you have never been to any of them, you need to go. We have Kershaw-Ryan, Beaver Dam, Cathedral Gorge, Spring Valley, and Echo Canyon. Most of the parks are surrounded by public lands, so there is a lot of recreation, wilderness, trail hiking. They offer a lot. Nevada State Parks collaborate with federal agencies. Obviously, they have to protect and restore and keep the areas clean and keep the wildlife safe. The NDF worked with the Nevada State Parks along with the BLM on the Beaver Dam Fire that occurred several years ago—large fire, worked in collaboration to get it out. Nevada State Parks works with public lands agencies quite a bit with education. They are always trying to educate the public, especially on Leave No Trace, that kind of thing, when people come in. Next.

This is a picture if you are in Cathedral Gorge. We call them the moon caves, and you are looking up, out, this is what you would see. Next.

Some of the public lands concerns for state parks are water. Again, top concerns throughout the county of conservation, preservation, protecting riparian areas. Drought conditions when they occur, which is all the time. Next.

Noxious weeds. We have a lot of different types of thistles here and they are extremely invasive—Knapweed white top. Next.

Then wild horse management, especially in times of drought. What people do not see in these habitat challenges is though, people graze their livestock, but they take care of their livestock. They have places to bring them in to water them. If there is not enough food, they bring them in and they feed them. The wild horses do not have that opportunity, so if you are out there in the wild, you will come upon dead horses or their skulls. They just do not have the people to manage them when they are in the wild, and it is horrifying, really. They starve to death and they do not have water. Next.

I did get some information from the Nevada Department of Wildlife as well. Again, we collaborate with them. Positive land use. They have wildlife management, species management, predator management, public involvement in education, quite a bit of that. We enjoy them. Hunting opportunities. Sagebrush and spring restoration. We thank them for their help.

Issues and concerns. Conifer encroachment. That is when native species, mainly pinyon pine and juniper, spread into habitat areas that are more for grazing and take over. And again, feral horse and burro management, right? Next slide.

This is from information—we probably have people here from the BLM—but this is from our Caliente Field Office and the BLM public land use. This is the Tempiute Mine. They are trying to get permitted to pull tungsten out of this mine. I was just at a conference in Elko and met up with a man named Fred Steinman from UNR [University of Nevada, Reno] and he was asking me how that was going, and I am like, well, you will have to talk to somebody

from the BLM Caliente Field Office. I know about it, but I do not know that much about it. This Tempiute Mine once supported two generations of Lincoln County residents, so they are looking at getting it open and trying to pull out any remaining tungsten there and go through tailings. We have a local native who is a geologist, Bruce Condie, who is overseeing the permitting. We are hoping to get that open and running—create some jobs, create some revenue. Next.

BLM grazing. The BLM, here they have N4 and N5 grazing board districts, and they play a unique role in this because their grazing revenue is local. Next.

They have the largest BLM allotment by AUM [animal unit months], and when they gave me that, I am like, what does that mean? I looked it up. The largest allotment means they are managing the authorized grazing rights for the highest volume of livestock forage on public land in the state. Measured in AUM, or animal unit months, a standard unit of measure in grazing. See, there is the teacher in me coming out. You need to, you know, instead of you saying what the heck is she talking about. Anyway, they only have water-based grazing permits and a special rule supporting them while maintaining summer and winter grazing. What is unique about this is they can move between the Great Basin Desert, which is a cold desert, and the Mojave Desert, which is a warm desert. This mimics how natural grazing would go. They follow seasonal green ups, providing consistent year-round forage while resting native vegetation when they are somewhere else.

They have grazing permittees partnered with the BLM and the NRCS [Natural Resources Conservation Service]. What this means is that the producers with a BLM grazing permit can apply for NRCS, or Natural Resources Conservation Service, environmental quality incentives program, which is funding to implement conservation practices on public lands. This requires coordination between the BLM, who is the landowner, and the NRCS. The program offers technical and financial assistance. An example of this would be removing invasive species, thinning trees, and creating firebreaks on nonindustrial private forest land. They might be able to get funding for that, and the BLM would allow that. Next.

This public-private partnership justified the purchase of a masticator; that is a machine that chews up. Forestry equipment, and that was a local contractor that bought it; he uses it and lends it out, and it helps with the local economy.

This is an area in Rainbow Canyon, and it is an area that is grazed. I took this picture when there was a super bloom down there. It is just absolutely beautiful when the flowers are blooming. Next.

The BLM Caliente Office, we are thankful for them. They do a lot of work. They process more than 20 special recreation permits annually, and while that does not sound like a lot, it is a lot. We are grateful for them because that equates to dollars for us. The quicker they can get them processed, the quicker we can get those people here, have the races. Next.

They are responsible for approximately 90,000 acres of federal land disposal. The Lincoln County Land Act requires the BLM to dispose of certain portions of land and right now we are working on rounds 3 through 11, but what we really need is areas of land disposal that are in portions of the county that are more viable with infrastructure. We need them closer to towns or closer to areas where the infrastructure can be put in instead of 40 acres up on a hill in Rachel. We are working with the BLM on that.

Management of three wild horse areas. They are currently conducting helicopter gathers, and we are thankful for that because of many, many reasons. One of the biggest ones is

because of the horses. I got this picture from the Caliente Field Office, one of the horse gathers. Next.

Again, collaboration between all the agencies here in our county, and it really is effortlessly. I texted or emailed these agencies, and they got back to me within a half hour. I said, can you give me some bullet points? Half hour, I had them. They are just amazing. They work well together. They get along and it is great.

Two items of major concern for all the agencies are keeping our water safe, usable, and managed here in the county locally. Next.

The wild horses and burros. They all seem to have the same thoughts that we have about that—that we are grateful for the BLM for their roundups, and releasing land for development would bolster economic growth here.

My last comment is I find it fascinating that more than 175 years later, after the first settlers arrived here in Nevada, we are still passionately debating the exact same two topics; land and water. Some traditions really do stand the test of time.

I thank you, and if you have any questions, I will try to answer them.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you so much, Commissioner Path. This was a really interesting presentation. I learned about an animal unit month; that was a measurement I did not know before. I am always excited to learn something new. I learned other things in your presentation, too, but that one stood out. I will open it up to questions from the Committee. I will start with Vice Chair Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Chair, and thank you so much for the for the presentation, Commissioner Path. Your role as a teacher came through beautifully.

Commissioner Path:

Oh, thank you, and I am my staff.

Vice Chair Anderson:

I have two questions. The first came from the last page when you talked about the collaboration of all agencies. Do you ever collaborate with any of the Native American tribal councils that are possibly around here? I think sometimes they are more out of the Las Vegas area. I believe that there are two or three different tribal councils that are involved in some of these discussions, and if so, which ones do you work with?

Commissioner Path:

It is funny you should say that because I just talked to somebody up in Elko. The tribe around here is the Shoshone, and I am having a—it is, oh gosh, I have so many of these conferences that are rural roundup, it is rural something day. Anyway, we are going to invite them to come and do a presentation, the Shoshone, and they said if they cannot find somebody local, they would get somebody from Las Vegas or they would come down from Elko; yes.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Follow-up, if I may?

Chair Scheible:

Yes, but I also forgot to tell you something at the very beginning. We have a fun tradition here where we say our name before we speak to make it easier on our poor recording secretary, so if you can just give your name before you answer the question.

Commissioner Path:

Oh, I am sorry.

Chair Scheible:

No, it is not your fault. I forgot to tell you.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Commissioner Path, for that answer, and just to verify and I hope that those are ongoing conversations.

Commissioner Path:

Yes, I agree 100 percent.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you so much. My second question has to do with the staffing. I literally just had this conversation with Assemblyman Gurr yesterday, who is also in the room, of just how small our county offices are. How many members are in your county office—one; and then two—do you know how many times your office is being asked to look into permits or other information that could be possibly for new buildings or for— I know you mentioned the BLM racing, but how many people are in that office, and how many times do you guys ask for that information?

Commissioner Path:

That would be our Planning and Building Commission, and we have two people in there, and they are sincerely extremely overloaded. We are trying to look in this budget season to hire a third person to put in there and a fourth person part-time. I mean, they really are just—I feel sorry for them. I do. They are really overloaded, so we are trying to cut other things in our budget in order to find room to give them more people.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you so much. Really appreciate it. Thank you, Chair.

Commissioner Path:

Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

I think Assemblymember DeLong had a question or two for you as well. Go ahead.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the presentation. A lot of really good information. I have a question around the communication and discussions you are having with the BLM with regards to getting land disposal through in the county. How are those discussions manifested? Is there a working group with the BLM? Are you sending letters? I am wondering to what level is that discussion occurring?

Commissioner Path:

Yes, actually that falls on the head of our Planning and Building Department, and they are the ones that handle all the discussion with the BLM for that, they loop the Commission in and we discuss that, then they take that information back to the BLM. We also have meetings with the Commission, the Planning Commission and the commissioners and the BLM, at times, when there are more things that we need to hash out, but mainly it falls on the head of the two people in the Planning and Building Department.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you very much.

Chair Scheible:

Assemblymember Moore.

Assemblymember Moore:

Thank you, Chair, and thank you Commissioner. When you mentioned affordable housing, that is a very important issue for me. Do you happen to know how many affordable housing units the County currently needs in order to meet the needs of the County?

Commissioner Path:

I would not have that exact number. I do know that the Nevada Rural Housing just put in a new unit—and there is, I believe, 32 or 38 units in that rural housing. Not only that, it is housing for single-family homes. One of the issues within this County is you either have a house that is \$120,000 and is something that you almost cannot move into—you have to fix up—or you have a high-end house that is \$800,000. There is just no— But I am not speaking about anything that is not occurring anywhere else, am I right? There is just no middle-of-the-road housing for people. It is either a very low-end or extremely high-end.

Chair Scheible:

Commissioner Jones.

Commissioner Jones:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Commissioner, for being here. First off, I want to say thank you to Lincoln County and all of its partners for being such a gracious host for recreational tourism. We know it is a \$6 billion industry in Nevada, which is a big deal. My son is going to be racing in a mountain bike race just south of Pioche tomorrow and has

raced in Caliente every year for the last five years, and it has really been a great experience on behalf of the Nevada South Interscholastic Cycling Association to work with Kershaw-Ryan State Park and Prospector Trails on those races, so thank you.

My question, following up on Assemblymember Delong's question. I was in D.C. last week lobbying on behalf of the Clark County lands bill, met with the entire delegation, and heard a lot from Congressman Amodei about some of the other lands bills that are moving through Congress right now. Does Lincoln County have its own land bill, or is it seeking disposal through the RMP [Resource Management Plan] process?

Commissioner Path:

The one land bill that we do have is called the Lincoln County Land Act, and it is of 2000, so it does describe the disposal of the lands here in Lincoln County.

Commissioner Jones:

Okay, but no new proposed legislation?

Commissioner Path:

New proposed legislation. I do not believe we do. Do we, Mike?

Chair Scheible:

I hate to be a stickler, but if you could come up and speak into the mic. It is a public meeting. We like to make sure that everybody has equal access to hear you, and if you could say your name before you start.

Mike Reese, Commissioner, Lincoln County Board of Commissioners:

Yes, right now, we are working in rounds 5 through 11. Actually, you guys probably seen it in the newspaper, stuff coming out of Vegas. We are getting calls—when is that land going to be going up for sale? Unfortunately, it takes a little bit of time. The news makes it sound like we are selling land next week. We are in that process. We are working with the BLM. We have been working with John Raby, and I realize his last day is going to be the 29th of this month. I am getting texts over there like, okay, we got our letter in from John and stuff like that. We are working on stuff like that. When our Land Act started in the 2000s, it was 90,000 acres. It is now down to 56,000. Of that 56,000, we are looking to get 6,500 released on rounds 5 through 11. By the way, round 5 started in 2015, so we are ten years behind trying to get some land. Hence, that is why she is talking about some of this stuff. It is kind of the “chicken or the egg.” We cannot have jobs here if there is no place to stay, but if there is no place to stay, we cannot have commerce here.

It is a real catch for us when we only have 5,000 people, but we are working on stuff like biofuels in our public lands. You guys probably got a presentation by Jeff Fontaine at the last meeting on that. We are working on that, but we have a couple other entities that are coming in and talking to us because Vegas is filling up. We are the next closest to it. You guys have 2.5 million people down there. We have 5,000. Our claim is on a three-day weekend, we can double in size, but we do not have the infrastructure for it. We do not have the EMS. We do not have— We are working at— Us, as the five commissioners are up here, we are all taking our own assignments and working. I just had a conversation with Touro University yesterday on nursing and stuff, some of the grants that they could get us

for our new clinic and our physical therapy that we are trying to build down in Caliente, so that is a huge welcome to us. We do not like to live on grants, but we do not have a choice.

We do not really have the tax base here, so that is why we have been pushing to get land disposed of, regardless of whether it is a 20-acre parcel or a 200-acre parcel. We were able to put about 1,700 acres into this round 11 that we are currently talking at, and we have been having discussions with John Raby. How do we fast-forward some of these others that we already have buyers for that want it? It is whether they are coming in. We are not sitting here idle. We are out. We are looking for some help, but we are doing what we can. I am my own staff; she is her own staff. We do not have a county manager. There is a lot of things that you guys probably would not understand, but we are a frontier land. Simply put.

Panaca, the next town down, second oldest town in the State of Nevada. I do not know if you guys knew that or not, but when you look at commerce, every town in the State of Nevada that borders another state has gaming, except Panaca. We are the only ones that do not have it. We border Utah. You have Wendover. You have Tahoe. You have Prim. You have Jackpot. We border it, but there is an ordinance that came in when the town was first created that no gaming is allowed within one mile of the town. Hence, that is why the town is a mile off the road. If you turned at the Y, Panaca is a mile down, so the bars and stuff used to be right in there.

Commissioner Path:

I wanted to add, in case you do not know—I am sure Mr. McDonald knows—that land disposals, when they are being disposed of, the ones that are the easiest to dispose of that have no complications with the deeds, those are the ones that they kind of streamline through so that they go ahead and they run them. But the ones that have complications— If we are in rounds 5 through 11, round 11 might have a complication. Those are the ones they work on. Round 6, if the deed is clear, they go ahead and they say, yep, let us put it out. Let us go. So that is how that works.

Commissioner Reese:

We feel in the close future, I am talking months, we should have some land disposed, like she said. I attended a call last week and he said, okay, with the BLM, and they are like this section over here, this parcel C, there is a few things about it. I said okay, let us take that, put that off, put that off for a year, and let us take parcels A and B. Can we put that up? Yes. Let us move forward. Some of these we are trying to go with a direct sale; some we are trying to go with competitive bid. We are trying to use every tool we have in our toolbox to create some commerce and some tax base.

Commissioner Jones:

I can say on behalf of Clark County, we feel your pain in trying to get lands. Thank you very much and thanks for the education on Panaca.

Commissioner Reese:

Yeah, a lot of people do not know that.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. Are there any other questions? I have one question; it might be for the Forest Service. I was curious. I do not know how you measure, or how often you have

wildfires, or how large the wildfires are, but if you could kind of give us a picture for how bad is the wildfire problem in Lincoln County.

Commissioner Path:

Kade, you want to come up here? Are you able to answer that? Okay, you can sit here.

Chair Scheible:

There is another microphone behind that computer, and you do not have to get that close to them, actually.

Kade Lee, Captain, Lincoln County Fire District:

I do not have a lot of information exactly on how many acres burned. The last two years have been actually kind of mellow, but three to five years ago we have had thousands upon thousands of acres burned in Lincoln County. Most of that private-earning public lands, but it does impact the private lands as well.

Chair Scheible:

Could you speak a little to whether you have enough firefighters to handle those fires? I know that we heard a little bit about BLM assisting. What is the staffing and the equipment like?

Captain Lee:

We have grown exponentially over the last five years, up to ten full-time firefighters, coming from one fire chief was the only thing we had. So, we have grown, still not enough for the impact that we do have. These large-scale fires take hundreds if not thousands of people depending on the size. But we do have really good mutual aid agreements with the BLM and have integrated with them and NDF as well. Staffing is definitely an issue; we are looking for grants to get that going more.

Commissioner Reese:

If I could add to that, we have staffed up to ten, but part of that was because we had a contract with NV Energy. That was a lifeline for us to keep people here in the county for the first time in a lot of times. I know Kade is glad that we have got that. The MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] we have with NV Energy is if we have a fire here locally, we can immediately drop what we are doing wherever we are at, whether we are in Clark County, Mount Charleston, or whatever, we can come right back here. We are three hours away. So that has been a big use of, a big reason for income coming in, to do that, to help keep our residents here in town without having to work out of town that much and staffing up our ambulance service and our firefighting capabilities.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. All right. I do not see any other questions, and unless you have anything to add, we want to thank you so much for joining us today. Go ahead.

Commissioner Reese:

I do have a little presentation.

Chair Scheible:

Oh, wonderful.

Commissioner Reese:

I brought my computer, but I did not know we had to go through Carson City to do that. There is a couple of things that I wanted you guys, as a panel, to know that has gone on in the last couple of years here on our public lands. We are one of the ones that put together a collaring project for our mule deer. Right up the road here, about 30 miles up the road, we collared 43 mule deer—does and fawns. We were trying to do a fawn mortality study with that. It is sad to say that we have already got a 35 percent mortality of that because of predation.

One of the highlights we have here in our community is, as we have all talked about, is the hunting. The heritage tags, the two mule deer heritage tags that are given out by NDOW through the auction for the last decade or more has been harvested right here in Lincoln County—Area 22, 23, 24. That is where the majority of the bigger ones throughout the state come from. We do not have the largest population, but we have a gene pool that is here, that is unique to other deer throughout the state. We grow some big deer from our forage and stuff.

With that being said, we have talked about our public lands and wild horses. Yes, we have a wild horse problem, but the statement I am going to make is—the first time in my life I thought I would be making this statement—but we have more wild horses in Nevada than we have mule deer. Let that sink in. We have gone from 240,000 mule deer down to about 60,000. That is a 32-year decline. That is not a hills and valley; that is straight down. Part of that is because of predation with predators. I know that the Legislature controls NDOW and what they can do, but I talked to the Governor right across the street here about three months ago. He said, "What is our biggest limiting factor?" It is coyotes. It is coyotes; it is bobcats; it is mountain lions; and it is our fawning grounds. There has been legislation to—I am just going to say put a protection on the coyotes—and I am baffled to find out why, because if you, just the average person, if you look at the birth rate starting today, you have some does that are going to have some fawns here if they have not had them already. They generally, by NDOW statistics, have one and a half fawns per one doe. A female coyote has six to eight. You have a 400 percent bigger army over here in the coyote than you do on our fawns. My question is, at what point in time do we start protecting our fawns rather than protecting the coyotes? The coyotes have a place. We are not asking—You will never eradicate coyotes ever. It is the most robust species we have out on our lands that all you can do or try to do is mitigate it. That is the best you can do.

As I have looked, I have been here 50 years, and I have looked and seen what is going on. I did have a face-to-face meeting with Alan Jenne with NDOW about a month ago that the Governor helped me set up, and I asked him about how much are your hands tied or why or why not are they tied, because I thought we were here to bring back our deer population. I thought that was our main goal, but as I have looked at the last 18 months' worth of agendas, it has been to put a protection on an unprotected species. I do not understand that, because I am asking to have agenda items of how do we bring our mule deer back.

This collar project costs \$80,000 of public money to put up. I raised the \$80,000 from five different NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] to put that up. The reason we did that is for the last 20 years there has never been a study in the southern part of the state. Most of the collar projects are done because of our mines, and rightly so. I am not knocking that, but most of that data that we have to manage comes from the northern part of the state,

none of it from the southern part. So, because of that, we did that and we found out that we have a 35 percent mortality rate. That is with no cars; that is predation right there.

I am hoping this next legislative session, if they come up, we do take a closer and more in-depth look at predation on what is happening now. As our mule deer has gone down, our horse population has gone up. Is there a correlation? I am asking that to the officials. I have seen where— We are at 400 percent going over, and I have heard earlier today, and I hear it as we go throughout, fertilization, fertilize these. I am going to give you guys a news flash. Do you know who owns the patent on the PCP [Phencyclidine] for fertilization drug? It is the Humane Society. They own it. Every time a dart gets fired, they are making money. I have called some of these groups now the "Donate Now Group." They are trying to make money off the backs of our demise of our public lands. That is a travesty. I hope it gets out and so everybody of the last five years has been pushing the fertility, because I cannot prove it, but I believe they probably get a cut of some of that money that funds them.

But the saddest part of the whole deal is our mule deer population is going down, which is a huge economic input to our state, and our wild horse issue is going on up. I understand it is a federal issue. My plea to this group right here is if you have contact with our delegation, I think our delegation, it is hard for the Congress to take our wild horse issue serious. When somebody from Ohio asks somebody from Nevada how bad is it, and they, well, I do not know it is, you know. We have seven counties—I do not know if you guys know this—in the State of Nevada that have declared a state of emergency on wild horses in a two-month period. That declaration of emergency is two years old now. Nobody has picked up that tool of our Congressional Delegation and used that. I would plead with you guys if you have some contact with it. I know it is a sensitive issue, but how sensitive is it when we have gone from 240,000 deer to 60? It is sad.

When we started our draw program in 1977, we had 135,000, and the reason we put in our draw system was to be able to control the population and help it grow by helping concentration on the take, the harvesting in certain areas. From the outside, I would look and say the draw system does not work because we are at half of the population.

With that, thank you for coming. I think this is huge. I think this is warranted, and I personally feel good to be able to educate you guys on some of the stuff that is going on in the county as well as the state. Thank you, and if you guys had any questions for me, I would be happy to answer them.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you, and thank you for your presentation as well. Sorry we did not get the PowerPoint coordinated, but I think it is some good information. I think somebody over here has a question, maybe more of a comment. Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen:

Madam Chairwoman, now why would you think that? Commissioner Reese and I go way back, and I certainly share a lot of his concerns. I will say a couple of things. We talk a lot about \$10 million in recreational monies coming into Lincoln County. For all of the rural counties, when you had 240,000 mule deer, the number of tags that were sold, the number of motel rooms that were occupied, the amount of commerce that came into rural Nevada from hunters from Clark County and Washoe County disproportionately was enormous, and that is in my life. That was 1988, so it is not like 1,000 years ago or something.

The question of fertility of the horses. Virginia Range Wildlife, Virginia Range Horse Management Program, or whatever it is called, I cannot think of the official name in basically Storey County, they have been trying to do this fertility thing. I have got five years now of all their studies every single year. It has not worked a bit. The population, in fact, went up during the same window that they were doing all of their fertilization programs.

Secondly, you have got to give them a shot of the birth control stuff basically every year. And once you have given them an initial shot, it is very difficult to get the horse back to do it a second time. Anyway, so that is one of those things that they are always bringing up that frankly has not worked. It is not practical. I do not want to get off on a tangent on the horse thing because I hate, you know, the people that called about the 60— I think BLM is going to do a presentation, so I am going to ask them about that.

But the reality is there is an absolute relationship between a huge spike in the number of feral horses and the decline in the native populations of wildlife, not just the ones we hunt, but all of them.

Commissioner Reese:

Yes.

Senator Hansen:

And when you have these enormous populations of very large ungulates on the public domain year-round, the one thing we do not talk about, and that is the livestock industry is very targeted windows of time, then they are removed completely. When you leave these huge herds of horses out there on the public domain, the public lands we are worried about year-round, their impact's enormous, and even sadder is, as Commissioner Path mentioned earlier, the suffering of the horses. They do not bring that up. They are dying of dehydration and starvation, and everybody looks the other way, but the minute the BLM does a roundup and there is three or four horses that end up dying in the process, it is national news.

Commissioner Reese:

Yeah.

Senator Hansen:

Anyway, I just wanted to bring to the Public Lands Committee's attention the fact that there is very definite relationships and the focus earlier was on the economic aspects of rural Nevada. One of the biggest economic drivers that we could do is to restore our mule deer herds and bring those people back out of Clark and Washoe Counties that only 40 years ago were a significant economic driver in rural Nevada, and it is now gone.

Yes, Madam Chair, I did not have a question. I just want to— I was biting my tongue over here during the phone calls and stuff. I think as we look, as we go forward, as you know, representing rural Nevada, especially for me, these issues are super sensitive. I realize that when you are dealing with the political aspects in Clark and Washoe Counties, in particular, on the horse issue, you have this enormous gap between the realities of what is happening on the public lands versus the perception that is being pushed, like the phone callers frankly today. The reality is so different than this image that they are trying to project about how the BLM is handling it and the impacts to our native lands, our native species, our ranching communities. We can go on and on about that. Anyway, I have said enough. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Commissioner Reese:

If I could, Chairwoman, just to add on. If you are talking statistics, we talk about the economic input. Congressional Sportsman's Foundation does a five-year study every five years about how much of an economic impact in every state in the United States. Nevada, from 2020, the sporting families of Nevada at Nevada's cash registers spent \$414 million. What does that mean to you guys? That means they created \$39 million in sales tax that John Q. Public is to benefit from. That happens every year. I was at a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor Stavros Anthony, talking about our tourism being a \$2 billion industry. And I go, yeah, and the hunters, we are a quarter of that. So just wanted to throw that out there for you.

Commissioner Path:

Madam Chair, may I make one more comment? Senator Hansen, I just want you to know that when I lived in Henderson, I was one of those people that was an activist to keep the wild horses, and then when I moved here and saw the destruction of the habitat and the grazing lands, and the dead horses, and the starvation and the dehydration, I did a 180. So, I mean, people that do not live here do not know.

Commissioner Reese:

Yeah. Thank you for coming to our County.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you again for having us.

Commissioner Path:

I am going to end with a joke.

Chair Scheible:

We also have a comment from Assemblymember DeLong, but do not lose your joke.

Assemblymember DeLong:

I want to follow on the Senator's comments about the management of wild horses. I think we all know it is mostly a federal issue and Congress has constrained us—the BLM, the state, the counties—on how they can be managed. There is never enough money to do the roundups to get the right herd size on the land. There are only so many people that want to adopt the horses, so we have a glut of horses. And Congress has limited the other options to deal with essentially excess horses, so we leave them on the land. They starve; they degrade the land. I think the best thing we, as a legislative body, can do—is actually do a referendum to Congress saying you need to act on these issues, and whatever we decide to put in that referendum is probably the best thing this body could do.

Chair Scheible:

Go ahead.

Commissioner Reese:

One comment I will make to that. One wild horse in March does more damage than 100 cows in September. Think about that. That horse in March on that green up takes the whole plant out. That plant cannot live its life to feed off that year for that AUM.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you.

Commissioner Reese:

Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

All right. Commissioner Path, we want to hear your joke.

Commissioner Path:

I really want to thank you all for being here. This is absolutely wonderful. Love having you here. As I used to tell my students, because they never wanted to be first to go in the presentations, I would coax them. I would get one of the best ones and I would say, "Look, if you go first, just think, you are done and you can sit back the rest of the time and do nothing." Well, let me tell you, I am done, and I am going to sit back the rest of the time. Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you so much. Really enjoyed having you here and learning more about Lincoln County. With that, we will close Section 1 of Agenda Item IV, and we will invite up our presenters from White Pine County.

Jose Noriega, Commissioner, White Pine County Board of Commissioners:

I am the newest County Commissioner in White Pine County. Some of you may remember me from the past. I have testified before this Committee on 12 previous occasions with the Forest Service. I retired from the Forest Service last October and on March 1 was appointed by the Governor to this position. I will let Cody introduce himself.

Cody Odgers, Chair, Natural Resources Advisory Committee, White Pine County:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am the Chair of the Natural Resource Advisory Committee in White Pine County.

Commissioner Noriega:

Do we have the presentation? ([Agenda Item IV B](#)) There is us. Let us go to the next slide. Today we are going to talk about a summary of these issues: renewable energy and transmission within the county; major rights-of-way; greater sage grouse issues; wild horses; water; multiple use on public lands; and the impacts on the community. Cody asked me to take the lead on this. When I screw up, he is going to jump in and correct me, and he is here to make sure I behave myself. Go ahead and go to the— We are up on it.

As of right now, the Ely BLM District, we believe, has 34 renewable energy project applications being processed. Some of the big ones: the White Pine Pump Storage; 100 megawatts near McGill; the Samantha Solar in Jakes Valley; the Pantheon Solar in Jakes Valley; and the White Pine Solar in Steptoe Valley near McGill.

Some other stuff that is going on right now. The construction is just about to begin on the Southwest Intertie Project, the SWIP [Southwest Intertie Project] North. What we have in the County right now is four major power lines coming from the south, the north, the east, and the west. Everything coming to the Robinson Substation in Jakes Valley. That substation is going to be huge. We have been meeting frequently with Nevada Energy and stuff, and it sounds like that substation is critical for energy needs within the County. Cross-Tie is the one that is coming from the west. GreenLink North is one that has got NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] pending, and that goes over to the west side of the state from the Robinson Substation.

There is some real challenges with these. I would say there is a lot of questions about the location of where they are going on some of them and is there better choices about where they should have gone. One of the concerns from the county, that we will probably address a little bit later, is there is a domino effect related to some of these projects that the County has some concerns about.

There is your map. It is hard to follow in your packet and stuff. You can kind of see it, but it shows, for instance, all the wilderness areas, and the forest, and the BLM, and all the different projects that are being proposed around us. As you look at that whole scattering there, White Pine County is very rural. Got a few more people than Lincoln County does. I think we are right around 10,000 population. The people in White Pine County live in White Pine County like I have for most of my life. I was born and raised there. We really enjoy living in that remote setting and the wide-open spaces, which is why I am going to— I retired there, and I am going to die there. We like that remote space, but there is some challenges that we are facing right now in a really quick time frame that could happen, that could change the culture of the entire county. Which, by the way, I have to drive 200 miles to go to Walmart. Go ahead and go to the next slide. Oh, that one went backwards. Let us go the other direction.

Pantheon's— That is not Pantheon. He will keep me in line. Caltech, the Deep Synoptic Array (DSA). Robbie, here behind me, will keep me in line, too. As I call it, ET phone home. Over 57,000 acres in North Spring Valley, that will have these things scattered throughout it to, I guess, to talk to see if we get any stuff coming from space. This will affect livestock grazing and everything around it. Now, everyone will ask, okay, you look out there, you will say, okay, there is grazing still allowed under this. There is. However, there is a lot of disturbance that will occur to put these in and the lines that lead back to other places. And in the areas where you are putting these in, it is low precip. And if you disturb these areas, most of the time, what we get back is halogeton and cheatgrass—and halogeton is poisonous to everything out there. We have concerns with some of this type of stuff being proposed. Go ahead and go to the next slide. Yes. Cody is going to take over on this.

Mr. Odgers:

The two pictures on the screen now—and I am sure the BLM will have some more information later on—on the left is a picture from DSA's application showing the underground fiber to each one of those antennas on the 57–58,000 acres. Not all of that will be permanent access road to those antennas, but that is the fiber that would be ripped in, on through the Valley floor to communicate so those towers communicate. And then on the right-hand side is just the— There was a couple of different sizes and areas that they were looking at, and so that gives you an idea of the total size of that project.

Commissioner Noriega:

I will add one other concern that is there but has not fully been answered yet by the project. There is concern. One of the reasons they chose this place is there is very little interference. There is not a lot of cell coverage. There is not much in any way that would interfere with their signals going up. However, this is an area where White Pine County may have to respond for fires. They have to respond for law enforcement, emergency management staff, hunters out there using two-way radios. We do not know what the long-term impacts for sure on those things are, and we have to work with the proponents cause we do not want to restrict the ability of those other uses out there to communicate. So let us go ahead and go to the next slide.

Sage grouse. We are constantly replanning on sage grouse. Do you want to take this on—sage grouse?

Mr. Odgers:

Okay. The BLM has issued the 2025 decision record on the sage grouse in White Pine County, and ultimately, our concern as a community is keeping the bird numbers that we have. We constantly make exclusions to benefit certain industries and having to have three different sets of maps or two different sets of maps that we are constantly going back and forth on. Jose, you have anything else to add to that?

Commissioner Noriega:

Yeah, and go ahead and go to the next slide. I will be honest with you, one of the things that concerns us about this is some of the restrictions on this was put upon different industries and so forth, and that is, you know what, sometimes we have to do that. But now we are hearing that an exception is being made for the construction of the GreenLink North project. And if we are going to have exceptions that impact mining, or grazing, or whatever else, we probably need to be consistent on how those are implemented. And if we are going to provide exceptions for one industry, then we probably need to have that ability for others out there using it. That is the new map showing kind of where the sage grouse areas are. They are primarily focused around lek and nesting type of stuff. Go ahead and go to the next map.

Let us go ahead and go to this one. We will talk wild horses. We support wild horses out on the range at a sustainable level. That is a list of all the HMAs [herd management areas], I believe, in White Pine County: Triple B; Antelope; Pancake; Eagle; Silver King; Diamond Hill South. And there are gathers going on out there, but I am going to tell you this much. After 34 years on the other side working in the government, there is no answer on the wild horse situation at this point. Absolutely no answer. There are some things that were mentioned earlier that could be done, but there is not the political fortitude to implement the decisions that need to be done, and it is very unfortunate on that forefront. I can tell you based on

comments I heard earlier that said, well, it is livestock, it is not horses. I can take you to a site on national forest where livestock has not grazed for 30 years and all the vegetation around springs and stuff is gone and it was 100 percent horses.

Mr. Odgers:

The HMAs in White Pine County are from 200 percent over AML [appropriate management levels] to 1,000 percent over AML. I will say that the BLM has had NEPA done on all of their HMAs, and when funding is available, they are ready to gather. They finished the Pancake. They did a water bait trap in the Pancake each May and gathered 300 horses and have 2 more bait trap gather scheduled for Triple B and Antelope this summer. It is not that the BLM is not doing their job, it is just having the place going with the horses and the funding to be able to do it.

Commissioner Noriega:

BLM is running out of space where to put horses. I mean, that is just it. I have to behave myself or Robbie back here will beat me up, but they are just— There is not enough money to continue to gather and not enough money to hold them in facilities.

Okay. Water. We are dealing with drought. I will tell you this winter is probably one of the most open winters I have ever seen in White Pine County. It was just absolutely crazy, and the snowpack is just not there. The drought conditions that we see are not as severe as what it has been at previous times in the past, but that is only because of some carryover from the previous winters. There is concern about wildfire. The one thing I learned over the years is sometimes in years like this, we do not have a huge wildfire because nothing is going to, very little is going to grow. There is just not the fine fuels to carry it, but if we get a really good year coming up or we get some good rains, then the following year is going to be a really bad year for wildfire.

Industry development. Oh, rPlus Pump Storage. We have a pump storage project that is being proposed and anyone that knows anything about it knows the County, the previous County Commission leased water to this pump storage project. The current County Commission has concerns, and I personally have concerns. We have got some of these things that are being proposed, and I will be blunt and honest with you, if this project goes through, there are about 200 residents, rough guess, in the Valley whose wells are going to be dry, and mine is one of them—and Pump Storage is oblivious to this issue. When I say that, I say that with some educated information behind it, because I was involved in the planning on the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) pipeline and the testing that was done to determine the potential dewatering. I was involved with the Robinson Mine dewatering, which actually dewatered a 1,000-foot deep well at the Ward Mountain campground. And so, some serious concerns with some of that.

Then water export, that is always a challenge and with the drought and what is occurring, especially now in Vegas and with Lake Mead and all that, water is a big issue right now in the County.

Mr. Odgers:

Southern Nevada Water Authority returned all of the water rights that were destined for southern Nevada, but now, White Pine County is facing the Pine Wah Wah Valley Pipeline from Pine Wah Wah Valley across in Utah to Cedar City, which has a connection to Snake Valley and the Great Basin National Park. The County has signed on to a coalition with four or five Utah counties in opposition of the Pipeline to Cedar City.

Chair Scheible:

And if I could ask you guys to say your names before you speak. Helps our recordkeeping.

Commissioner Noriega:

Sorry. Go ahead and go to the next slide. This is the slide he was talking about right on the Nevada-Utah border. Water would be pumped down to this Cedar City-Saint George area to provide water, but it has the potential to affect aquifers over on the Nevada side, which would affect Nevada water rights holders. Let us go ahead and go to the next slide.

Mining. It is funny. Right now, mining is kind of status quo in White Pine County. There is a lot more exploration, but we do have very active mines at the Robinson Nevada Mine and at the Bald Mountain Mine. And then like I said, exploration going on at the other areas. Surprisingly, with the price of gold and stuff, exploration has not increased dramatically, I do not believe, in the County. There is some projects going on in BLM, doing exploration, and there were some on the Forest Service when I was leaving, but, it is, as I said, kind of status quo. Go ahead and go to the next slide.

Access on public lands is really important to White Pine County. Many projects within the county were funded by SNPLMA [Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act]. Now, Robbie is going to beat me in the back cause a lot of these projects are more tied to Forest Service. So right off the bat, I am going to add one that is not on there. The Garnett Hill Recreation Area that is currently moving through the process funded by SNPLMA. The Ward Mountain Bike Trail projects on forest is currently in the process through a partnership with the mountain IMBA [International Mountain Bicycling Association], and so that is actually being constructed now. The Mount Moriah, working with Friends of Nevada Wilderness, is ongoing now with trails being reconstructed and as well as roads washed out that have been totally reconstructed for access. The Ranger OHV Trail has been ongoing and building an OHV trail route that is just out of Ely going north on the Schell Creek Range. The Kalamazoo Campground, I think other than maybe a few patches, has been completed in the Schell Creek Range. And then there is other watershed restoration projects and vegetation treatment projects on both BLM and Forest Service ongoing that the County is very happy with. Let us go ahead and go to the next slide.

We saved the best for last, and I may have touched on some of those already. If the pump storage project were to be implemented, this is just an example, they are estimating over 500 jobs for a two-year period to construct this. Most of those, that workforce is not available in White Pine County at this time. In a community of 10,000 people, where are you going to put 500 new employees and/or families? Our concern is the county does not want man camps established everywhere in the Valley trying to house this, and that is just for one project. At the same time, you got power line projects, you have got solar projects, there may be road reconstruction. We just do not have the capacity for the housing. It puts increased pressure on county facilities. County EMS, County Sheriff's office, all of that type of stuff that is not always prepared to deal with that huge influx of people. Some of these projects like solar, we potentially may lose a reduction in AUMs on grazing, and so that is of

concern. And some of these solar projects are thousands if not more acres of land that are no longer becoming multiple use out there on the public lands. Yeah, just an overall reduction in multiple uses.

Increased tax revenue. I am going to give you a little bit of a personal perspective on this one, a concern I have. As they construct all of these, most all of these projects are being constructed, they are selling the product that they are going to be installing in White Pine County. There is a sales tax that come in that benefits the state and the County. However, there is some history of abating green energy projects, and if that occurs in White Pine County, we could lose tens if not hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands out there that could be abated where little or no property taxes come back to support the County where it is being placed in. If we are going to lose a lot of the reason why we live in a County based on its rural, remote area and then not receive an appropriate amount of property tax to support our county to deal with it, that is not fair. There would be some long-term employment associated with these projects, and that would be good. How much, we do not know for sure on most of these.

And then it does— The projects do provide some economic diversity. I am going to share one of the things that gets me wound up on these projects, especially some of the green energy projects. I saw a map the other day from NV Energy on the locations for these, like the Robinson Substation. You look at where all the green energy projects are proposed now in White Pine County around it, and it looks like someone took a shotgun and shot the map with it. It is this huge blob of dots all over the place. The companies are coming in and there is no early communication or thought or talking with the local residents or the county about where the best place is to place some of these facilities. They come in with an idea of where they want it, where they are proposing it. We have one that is being proposed that will destroy the largest white sage population or ecosystem in the State of Nevada. We have another one that will come in that will eliminate a huge area of agricultural development, alfalfa fields, and replace it with solar. When right next door, and this is what frustrates the hell out of me—right next door is the tailings below McGill, where Rio Tinto just finished capping those tailings to address some issues on it, and nothing is going to grow on that capping for many years. I am not against renewable energy. I just believe that we need to do a better job of selecting where it is at. And if you need a renewable, a solar field or something in the Valley there, put it on the tailings where nothing else is going to grow. On that note, I will turn it back.

Chair Scheible:

All right. Thank you so much. I imagine we have some questions. I will start with Assemblymember DeLong this time.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the presentation. Lincoln County touched on this. I would like to hear the same thing from White Pine, and that is, how many available housing units are there in White Pine?

Commissioner Noriega:

I listened to what they said earlier. We do have from a lower-income type of situation, affordable housing. We do have multiple larger units. Rentals can be a little bit difficult in Ely at times, and sometimes the selection is not the best, but there is not a huge volume of rentals. I pay close attention to Realtor.com and probably look at it three or four times a week. There are homes available, but we have run into the same problem Lincoln County

talked about. There is a bunch in the range from 50 to 150, and then there is some really high-priced ones, not always a good selection in the middle. There is some effort to build new homes, but the challenge I think we are running into in White Pine is the cost to build homes in White Pine. We do not have a lot of companies building homes up there. There is a few that are doing it, and the others are coming from the outside and it is running the cost up on the houses. But I will put a plug in cause I saw an article here the other day, anyone that wants to move to White Pine County, the most affordable housing in the State of Nevada is in McGill, and the second most affordable place for housing costs is in Ely.

Chair Scheible:

All right, Vice Chair Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Chair. I actually have a few questions, but I am going to refer to specific slides. I do not think you need the slides in front of you to be able to answer them, but the first has to do with the major right-of-way slide and when you mention the data centers. Do you have— That kind of brought up a similar question to what I had asked earlier. What is your current staffing when it comes to permitting? And how many applications do you currently have pending of other companies that wish to come in to either create data centers or other companies that you might know of at this time?

Mr. Odgers:

DSA 2000 is the only data center that is proposed in White Pine County. Originally in their original application or pre-application to the BLM, they were going to put their data center in Spring Valley and has since then moved it into town into the industrial park. We currently do not have any other data centers proposed in the County.

Vice Chair Anderson:

And then do you know how many current employees you have in your County office for any sort of permitting like this or any other sort of permitting? And then, do you know if there is a backlog at this time?

Mr. Odgers:

There is an MOU between the City of Ely and White Pine County for a building official and that office has one building official and one clerical staff.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you so much. It is kind of what I thought it was, not going to be a large amount of people.

My next question actually has a little bit more to do with what just happened in the Washoe County, Storey County, Carson-Douglas area where we recently had, and continue to have, earthquakes. Are any of these areas—especially around the Spring Valley maps that you just showed us—are there any sort of fault lines that you know of that could possibly be that has been considered as to where exactly those items would be built?

Mr. Odgers:

On the major right-of-ways, the pump storage is on a major fault line. That is what created the mountain range that they are building on top of. We have not seen any activity like the west side of the state has in recent times, but of course, we are covered in mountains, so every one of those mountains have a fault line.

Vice Chair Anderson:

I thought so, but I was like I got to make sure that those are still dormant.

My last question actually has to do with the last comments, the last slide, especially with the —and I agree with you—with where exactly these companies are coming from. There needs to be a little bit more of an understanding of both how the property has been used in the past and how it—what you can do with the property in the future. Who makes the decision? Does the County Commission have the ability to not allow that, to deny it, or are their hands pretty much tied and then they have to deny it and then it gets caught up in litigation, cause I know that has happened in other counties. Who makes that final decision as to what, if an item can go where it is currently being planned for?

Commissioner Noriega:

Boy, I am going to get myself in trouble. We have a problem.

Vice Chair Anderson:

I did that to you on purpose.

Commissioner Noriega:

I know. We have a problem, and I do not know what happened or where it occurred, but we have a Regional Planning Commission. Yeah, a group of individuals that is responsible for reviewing projects and special use permits and so forth that go with those projects. At some point along the way, the Regional Planning Commission got the autonomy to make the final decisions. And so, that is an issue that as a County Commission, we are going to have to tackle because ultimately, in my opinion, the final decision on the issue of special use permits on highly controversial projects needs to come to the Board of Commissioners.

Vice Chair Anderson:

And just to verify that Regional Planning Commission is appointed, it is not elected, and just to verify, again, that those Regional Planning Commissioners do not go through a vetting process where individuals of the community can question their ability to serve.

Commissioner Noriega:

That is correct. They are appointed. Yes.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Chair, for so much time.

Chair Scheible:

Assemblymember Moore.

Assemblymember Moore:

Thank you, Chair. I am sorry if I missed this, but who appoints the folks that serve on this Regional Planning Commission?

Commissioner Noriega:

I believe, and Cody can correct me if I am wrong, a portion of the membership is appointed, I think, by the County, and a portion of the membership is appointed by the City of Ely.

Assemblymember Moore:

Just follow-up on that. How many folks serve on this Regional Commission?

Commissioner Noriega:

There is probably five or six members on the Committee.

Chair Scheible:

Commissioner Jones.

Commissioner Jones:

Thank you, Madam Chair. First off, Commissioner Noriega, congratulations and condolences on joining the ranks of County Commissioner, since the last time that I saw you. With regards to housing, an issue that is raised, come up in the rural parts of Clark County is NRS 278 prohibits the transfer of a manufactured housing unit if the unit is more than six years old. Is that an issue that has come up in White Pine County? And if so, how are you dealing with it?

Commissioner Noriega:

Cody may have some more— There are some restrictions on housing, on manufactured homes. The age requirement in White Pine County is older than that, and I want to say it goes back around to the late '80s or '90s. The other issue is the ability, or— I think there may be some issues regarding putting it on a full foundation if it is moved. In my experience, the county is probably a little more friendly towards doing that, but Cody may—.

Commissioner Jones:

That is what we have heard, but I just sort of— This Committee might not be the right one to consider this, but certainly something to be— As we are trying to provide more affordable housing in the State of Nevada, prohibiting people from moving a manufactured housing unit that is only six years old is dumb, just to be honest.

Commissioner Noriega:

Moving one of that age would not be a problem in White Pine County. And that, to be honest, on the affordable housing stuff, that is what is happening a lot in the county. Because of the inability to find people that are available to build stick homes, people are bringing in manufactured homes and putting them on foundations.

Chair Scheible:

Other questions? Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen:

Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, the one thing about all this, it makes the whole Southern Nevada Water Authority project seem really kind of nice now, does it not? I mean, that was the big issue here in this very Committee, you know, ten years ago. I see the rep from— In all seriousness, this is a disaster, what you are describing for White Pine County. I mean, you guys are being nice about it. You are going to have tens of thousands of multiple-use acres eliminated. You are going to have abatements on all the property and sales taxes, or whatever, so you are going to get nothing from it. You are going to have bypassing the County Commission process to allow these projects to move forward. You are going to eliminate multiple-use— Oh, exemptions for sage grouse. Not that long ago that was a huge issue. We were worried that we were going to be facing extinction of the bird, and now after ten years of that kind of backing off, now we are going to give exemptions to these solar projects. This whole thing—and looking at your maps—it is just flat scary. I guess the question is—and it was already touched on by a couple of others—and that is, it appears to me that these projects, as they move forward, traditionally would have been, they would have to have some level of approval at the County Commission level. It looks like you guys do not have any veto power at all over any of this stuff that is going on in White Pine County, even though it is—I see you shaking your head no. Is the answer no, then?

Commissioner Noriega:

Yes. Right now, we have very limited decision space and—

Senator Hansen:

But you guys will be expected to provide all the services normally provided through tax revenue, which they are going to abate, so you guys get this, you get stuck with all the responsibilities and none of the revenue?

Commissioner Noriega:

We are going to work on some processes to make some adjustments to that process. We are looking at a county ordinance right now related to all of this and actually looking forward to working with some other counties in the state like Lander, and Esmeralda, and Nye—I believe, were the ones that have implemented ordinances or are working on them that provide the County more decision space. For instance, one of the ideas that I have, a requirement that anyone proposing to develop within the County has to come to the County and to the community and have a discussion about it. And that failure to do that early on under the ordinance, they would not be issued a special use permit if they do not do that. And then my hope—and this is where I am going to go back to my County and I will not get elected here this fall, but oh well—we have to change the structure of how the Regional Planning Commission works so that those very heated or potentially contentious projects come to the Commission for a decision.

Mr. Odgers:

If I may add, the White Pine County is a little bit behind the rest of the counties. The only renewable energy project that we have in the county is the Spring Valley Wind from Pattern Energy, and they were the first green project in the state. Our experience with the

special use process and development agreements is really just SWIPs online, the south portion of the SWIP corridor and then Spring Valley Wind. The County finds themselves a little bit behind on the renewable energy ordinances and the policies and procedures to best serve the community and make sure that the community gets something out of the use of our natural resources as we require from our partner mines and everybody else.

Senator Hansen:

Well, I would have to say that after— When the whole— I have been through this whole thing from the beginning, when suddenly we are going to have all this renewable energy stuff and everybody is all for green energy, and then when you drove— First time I drove into Spring Valley and saw that ugly eyesore that you just described as the wind farm, or whatever it is, it looks like a bunch of aliens there, and it covers thousands of acres. I am seeing around the state in all these little valleys that are beautiful little pockets of Nevada, these solar panel things being put out there, totally destroying the aesthetics of the state. You know, there are so many issues involved in this.

Real quick, Commissioner Noriega, you actually have a very unique background, having served for so many years in the Forest Service. Now you are outside, now you are in county government. As I look at these issues over the years— Because the last time you and I met, I think we were watching a fire burn in North Spring Valley up on the ridge, and you were saying, "Good, it is eliminating all that pinyon-juniper; in the long run, it will be better for the state." So your background is very unique.

And one thing, when we started the meeting, I thought was interesting was the terminologies—animal unit months. Chair, that is new to me. There were several that have been mentioned in this that I want to make sure everybody on the Commission understands. Herd management areas. Real quick, from your government perspective, would you enlighten us a little bit? Then I am going to ask you about AMLs as well, but let us start with that so everybody knows what we are talking about. What is a herd management area?

Commissioner Noriega:

A herd management area is an area on a map. Oftentimes, mountain range or big valley—and again, Robbie is going to beat me up on this—where at some point in the past, it has been designated as an area where the federal agencies are going to manage for wild horses. And then within the herd management area, the objective then is to set an AML, appropriate management level, for the number of horses in there. With the challenges now, though, with controlling them and everything else and the limitations, it has been very difficult for the federal agencies to keep the numbers under AML.

Senator Hansen:

Well, the reason I asked, too, though, is the reason they selected those specific herd management areas was they were recognized as areas that were environmentally possible to support a horse herd year-round.

Commissioner Noriega:

Yes.

Senator Hansen:

Okay, [inaudible]. Well, because they were after years of study, they recognized that this could for a year, yeah, you can have areas in the state, you can have a horse herd for four months, six months, but not year-round. So now appropriate management levels, there is actually two of them. There is a high and a low.

Commissioner Noriega:

That is correct.

Senator Hansen:

We do not even talk about the low because—and I want to get this on the record—because I think it is extremely important. When we talk about appropriate management levels of horses in herd management areas, the original concept in the Wild Horse and Burro Act was that there was going to be a low herd management level, let us say it is 500. And then as the horse herd reproduces, which they do about 20 percent a year, in other words, in four years your horse herd will at least double. So, you are supposed to be 500 low. You get to 1,000, then that is up three or four years, then the BLM was going to go in and remove the surplus horses and reduce it back to the low appropriate management level that is safe environmentally for that herd management area. We do not even talk about low anymore. We are just begging for them to get back to the high AML. When BLM talks AML they do not even mention the low idea anymore.

And I do want to say to the Chair, traditionally, in this Committee, when the BLM people come up, it was like my chance to really nail these guys for not doing their job. But after being around the state BLM people, they are very much aware of the problem. They have their hands tied by the federal government. They want to get the herd management areas property in. They need the resources and they get beat up no matter what they do. I am not here to beat up any BLM people anymore because I see the much bigger picture for you. I do think as a Nevadan and somebody who is worried about the public lands that the horse issue is one of the biggest by far, although now, you have brought a whole bunch of new ones. For the first time, like, my gosh, this whole solar energy stuff, green energy stuff is literally going to eliminate enormous areas of rural Nevada from what it is, you know, so the wide-open spaces.

Commissioner Noriega:

I will give you a caveat that we do not know yet. The big power lines coming in, from what we are being told, do not have the capacity for all the solar that is being proposed. That means either new power lines have to be built, and we are going to go through this again, or some of those projects are just going to disappear. But what is going on right now, it is just wreaking havoc with the County, trying to plan ahead to deal with what could happen and not knowing what the outcome is. And afterwards, Robbie will beat me up in the alley.

Senator Hansen:

Well, thank you for your presentation. I would love to talk more but I have used more than my fair share of the time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. I think we had some excellent questions, and unless there are any further questions or you want to make any closing remarks. I do not know who this Robbie character is, but they sound very formidable.

Commissioner Noriega:

Right here.

Chair Scheible:

I am glad that we are here.

Commissioner Noriega:

I want to thank you to allow us to come present White Pine County to you and for the opportunity to testify before this Committee in a different role.

Chair Scheible:

Yes, thank you so much for being here.

All right, that closes out Agenda Item IV. It is a little after 11:00 right now for everyone's planning purposes. We are going to take a lunch break, probably around noon, maybe a few minutes after that, but I would like to get through Agenda Item V and maybe even VI before we do that.

AGENDA ITEM V—OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Chair Scheible:

Let us go ahead and roll into [Agenda Item V](#). Our friends from the BLM and the Department of Interior are here. Oh, it is Ms. Robbie.

Robbie McAboy Purdie-Williams, District Manager, Ely District Office, BLM, U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI):

Yes, you guys have heard a lot of me today.

Chair Scheible:

Yes. Please impart your wisdom upon us.

Ms. McAboy:

Do we have our presentation ready? ([Agenda Item V](#)) And while that is coming up, I will just say good morning, Chair, Committee members, and guests. I was asked to give this presentation today on behalf of our outgoing State Director Jon Raby, and after hearing some of the commentary this morning, I wish he was here. The next slide, please.

I will start by sharing some key facts about Nevada's public land and their significance. The Bureau of Land Management oversees 48 million acres, which is about 68 percent of the

State of Nevada. Our presence covers 6 districts and 11 field offices. We engage and consult with 20 federally recognized tribes and 28 tribal communities. Public lands in Nevada contributes \$9.2 billion in economic output supporting jobs and businesses statewide. Our wild horse and burro population sits around 38,000, and that represents about half of our Agency's total population. We are home to several of the largest special recreation permits issued by the agencies, events like Burning Man and Vegas to Reno OHV race. Next slide please.

One of the many things that Jon Raby took pride in was ensuring that our BLM Nevada employees knew and understood what our priority areas were. This list guides our decision-making and ensures that staff and resources are properly being utilized. I will go over this list real quick. It has not changed much over the last few years with the exception of Jon and our state leadership team recognizing the need to highlight our tribal engagement, so we did create one specifically for that.

Support for our local communities and economies. We work diligently to support our multiple use and sustained yield mission. In turn, we support over 30,000 jobs that results in nearly \$9.2 billion in economic output across Nevada.

Public and employee safety. Our emergency responders and wildland fire and law enforcement engage immediate threats to life, property, and resources. We have a strong commitment to safety.

Energy, mineral, and infrastructure development. Nevada is a leader in the promotion of balanced, responsible energy and mineral development. The energy and mineral resources we manage are some of the most important in the nation and we are vitally important to state and local economy.

Sound, effective resource management. Managing millions of acres of land, habitat, special areas, and mineral estates across Nevada can present some unique management opportunities. Using the guidance in our resource management plans and other decisions crafted with extensive public involvement, we apply the highest quality of information and cutting-edge technology and techniques in implementing projects on the ground. Our actions are designed to protect, use, restore, and enhance public lands for current and future generations in support of our multiple use and sustained yield mission.

Public access to public lands. Recreation is a \$6 billion industry in Nevada. Nowhere else does the passion to get out and enjoy public lands run as deeply as it does in Nevada. Some of those recreational activities you can participate in include camping, four-wheeling, fishing, hiking, biking, boating, hunting, and target shooting.

Workforce development. Our people are our most valuable resource. We are committed to creating a supportive, healthy, and productive work environment that values respect, inclusiveness, and teamwork. We aim to help every employee reach their full potential while developing our future leaders.

Fiscal responsibility. We make prudent and responsible decisions that align with our priorities in order to derive the greatest gain from each and every financial commitment and expenditure entrusted to us.

Support for our tribal nations. In Nevada, our tribal relationships are foundational to our everyday work and government-to-government responsibilities and relationships. We are

committed to ensuring that tribal voices are integral to all of our decision-making. Next slide please.

We rely heavily on our partnerships to accomplish our mission. In order to be a good partner, here are a few highlights for some of the— In order to value those partnerships, we also in turn have to be a good partner. So here are a few highlights, and one of those includes working closely with the 17 counties across our 6th district. In Nevada we have contributed over \$28 million in PILT, and that is payments in lieu of taxes, to our local governments. Those funds are used to support vital services such as firefighting and police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search and rescue operations.

The Nevada Native Seed Partnership is a coalition of 11 agencies and organizations in Nevada that work with the vision of keeping Nevada lands diverse and functioning by using the right seed in the right place at the right time. This Coalition's goal is to create an adequate supply of locally adapted native seeds that can be used to meet Nevada's restoration and rehabilitation needs.

We also have listed here military partnerships with Naval Air Station Fallon and Nellis, and our goals with both of those units is to be as supportive and responsible as we possibly can. Next slide please.

This slide really touches on our emergency permitting processes. Last year, emergency permitting procedures were implemented that were designed to strengthen our domestic energy supply. Projects that receive or that are allowed to go through under emergency permitting are projects that focus on the identification, leasing, siting, production, transportation, refining, or generation of energy. Of significant note with these procedures was the timeline change for processing our environmental documents and environmental assessment (EA), and EA typically has a timeline of about one year to complete. Under emergency procedures, we get those completed in 14 days. For EISs, our environmental impact statements, those have a timeline typically of 2 years, and under emergency procedures, they are to be completed within 28 days. Next slide please.

Minerals on federal lands are generally managed in three categories: locatables; leasables; and saleables. So locatables are those hard rock minerals that are subject to the 1872 Mining Law and includes minerals such as gold, silver, and copper. Leasables are those minerals like coal, oil, and natural gas, and saleables are the sand and gravels that are essential to roads, buildings, and construction activities. In Nevada, we manage about 48 percent of all mining claims in the nation. We are home to the largest gold mine permitted in North America, the Carlin Trend, which is located near Elko. It produces between 1.5 and 1.7 million ounces of gold annually. And just a little fun fact, the total gold produced in Nevada is over 3.4 million ounces annually.

Outside of our emergency permitting procedures, BLM Nevada, under the leadership of our State Director Jon Raby, has set a standard for all of our other permitting activities to be completed in a much shorter time frame. For our environmental assessments, our EAs, those have a timeline of being completed within six months, and our EISs, those environmental impact statements, are to be completed within one year. Next slide please.

From our recreation program, \$552 million in economic benefit is generated from recreation activities on BLM-managed lands in Nevada. We are home to some of the most iconic permitted activities on public lands. It seems there may only be a few places in the world that have not heard of Burning Man. And it has been said at one point that for one week out of the year, Black Rock City is the third largest city in Nevada, and I think they tend to have

between 60 to 80,000 participants. Some of our other large-scale, notable events include the Reno Rodeo Cattle Drive and the Vegas to Reno off-highway race. Next slide please.

BLM continues to work with ranchers and other stakeholders to streamline permitting and rangeland management and improve range conditions. We are currently reviewing and revising our grazing regulations and the associated manuals and handbooks to look at where we can cut red tape and reduce costs. We want to provide more flexibilities to the permit holders so that we can maximize planning for and responding to environmental changes through outcome-based grazing. And just a little side note—I have heard Jon Raby on many occasions state that—reiterate the importance of the grazing community to Nevada and that he has committed to not having a negative net loss in grazing AUMs associated with any of our projects. Next slide please.

Just a couple of resource programs where we have had some recent planning activities. It has been discussed previously; the Greater Sage Grouse Resource Management Plan Amendment was signed in December. The goal of that planning effort is on preserving habitat and managing activities to keep the sage grouse from becoming listed. I think it was Commissioner Odgers that mentioned the challenge with having to look at multiple documents when you are wanting to apply the standards in our current or recent sage grouse plan. We are actively working on resolving that issue and putting all of that information in one location.

The Lahontan Cutthroat Trout recovery. That plan aims to restore self-sustaining populations by protecting habitat, managing threats, and guiding delisting under the Endangered Species Act.

I mentioned outcome-based grazing on the previous slide, and our goal there is, again, to just allow for greater flexibility and livestock management by allowing the ranchers to adjust their grazing practices based on current conditions such as drought and wildlife. Next slide please.

We will go through this one really quick. The program's goal here is to manage for healthy wild horses and burros on healthy public rangelands. You can see by the slide that our population through some of our efforts and some of the gathers that we have conducted has gone down from 49,200 animals down to 38,000 animals. We do have three holding facilities in Nevada: Palomino Valley, that is in the Reno-Sparks area; Indian Lakes Corrals in Fallon; and the Stewart Conservation Camp, and that is housed with the Northern Nevada Correctional Center. We do host an annual horse and burro adoption each year in which we tend to adopt out between 60 to 90 animals, and that has generated, since 2021, over \$851,000 in revenue. Next slide please.

Earlier this year, all of our interior fire resources were consolidated into a new agency, the U.S. Wildland Fire Service. For Nevada, our budget has increased by \$16 million between both our fuel management side and our suppression side. We tend to have about 460 fire personnel in Nevada. Next slide please.

For our law enforcement we have about 30 uniformed officers and 5 special agents. We are managed in zones, so we have four zones in Nevada. Southern Nevada is a zone by itself. Carson City is a zone by itself. Elko and Ely is zoned together, and Battle Mountain and Winnemucca are zoned together. Our officers do support 20 national detail operations each year, and in Nevada, they respond to over 12,500 incidents statewide. Next slide please.

At this time, I believe we have about 20 solar projects and gen-tie lines in the State of Nevada that has received concurrence from the Secretary as required by a secretarial memo that was issued in July of last year. I will just say for Ely, despite the large number of applications that we do have pending for solo projects, we only have one project that has been—has received concurrence to move forward that we are actively processing.

On the transmission side, we have talked about GreenLink North. That is a 500 kV [kilovolt] transmission line slated to go from the Robinson Substation in Ely over to Yerington, and one of their primary goals was to improve grid reliability with that project. The decision for, the original decision, I think it was remanded back to us, and we had to do some supplemental environmental analysis. Those documents were posted on our e-planning website in February, and a new decision is slated to be issued in May.

And data centers. Data centers are required to support AI [artificial intelligence] development and advancement. We do not have any in Ely. There are a couple proposed in the State of Nevada. Let us see, they are in Carson. I believe there are a couple proposed in Carson City and southern Nevada, and those are in various stages of being processed. Next slide.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some of BLM Nevada's highlights. The presentation covered the entire state so I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you, Ms. McAboy, so much for being here and for your excellent presentation. I am sure we have some questions. You know what, I will start on this side this time with Commissioner Jones.

Commissioner Jones:

Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you very much for being here. Director Raby's been great about trying to speed up permitting, and we are sad to see him go. I know that there are also others that are stepping down. Staffing is important in order to keep the processes moving. What are you aware of in terms of trying to replace existing positions and keep the hiring going within BLM Nevada?

Ms. McAboy:

Excellent question. We are still under a hiring freeze, nationally, so we are not at this point allowed to hire positions outside of law enforcement and fire on a permanent basis. With Director Raby's departure, we have identified an acting. Justin Abernathy, who is our current Acting Associate State Director will move up into the position of Acting State Director. Moving in behind Justin we have Kimberly Dow. She is the District Manager in Carson. She will move in to fill behind Justin. But to address the overall question of all of our vacancies across the state, we just look at reviewing our priorities to make sure we are addressing that most critical need with the staffing we have available. We do have the option to bring in employees within the Agency from other states on detailed assignments or acting assignments and where we can, we have utilized that to fill those gaps.

Commissioner Jones:

Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

Senator Hansen

Senator Hansen:

Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, first of all, Jon Raby, I think he came in 2019. He has been phenomenal as far as communications. The guy has really been an excellent man to work with, so I am hoping whoever replaces him will follow in his same tradition of having completely open communication. In fact, I have Jon on speed dial in my cell phone. He has been really good to work with, so I am very, very sorry to see him go.

Your slide on BLM Nevada law enforcement. One of the biggest problems I see right now is—and Lincoln County and White Pine County mentioned it—closing public access. And while the BLM enforcers, the travel management plans, kind of, they do not push that so much anymore. The biggest problem I see now is actually private landowners illegally blocking public access. One of the worst are the people that— You know, we have been talking about the grazing. The ranchers that are using these public grazing allotments by BLM regulation and federal law are not allowed to close the gates, excuse me, lock the gates. To do that, I mean, to utilize that because public land is supposed to be for multiple uses. Grazing is one of those multiple uses. Now I have filed, I think I have got eight or nine current legal complaints with BLM law enforcement over very specific examples of people that have locked gates leading to public grazing allotments, and they are being allowed to graze on those lands, but then the other multiple uses that everybody in the state should be allowed to access those lands, they are denying that. I know that is not an answer for you, but there is a question in that, and that is who at the BLM level in the law enforcement community should the average person be able to contact when they run into these situations where access is being denied to the public, to the public domain?

Ms. McAboy:

Thank you, Senator. I say the best person to contact would be that local district or field office. I agree with you. Those areas should not be— General public access should not be cut off or excluded simply because of grazing. If gates are being locked, that local office can address that more readily than law enforcement. It could be something as simple as needing to engage more with that rancher or permittee and remind them of that need for those gates to remain open so that the public can access. Again, without specific situations, it would definitely be best to engage with the local office. They are the ones closest to the ground. They are the ones who have those more direct relationships with those permittees, and they would be the ones that would be in a position to affect change in those situations quicker.

Senator Hansen:

Excellent. I reached out to Blaine Parnell, who is the head law enforcement guy, as I understand for Nevada BLM, and requested a list of the officers to reach out to, and I have never received it. I want to just make sure that today, as part of your presentation and whoever replaces Jon Raby, that information should be public. They are public officers. They are public law enforcement officers, and as a member of the general public, I want to know who I can reach out and talk to, to file a criminal complaint, if necessary, to try to help with that access stuff. I do not know who you talk to after this presentation, but if you could help me out and get me that information, that contact information, because that is part of the problem. When I reached out and tried to file the complaint, I actually went and talked to Jon, who passed me on to Parnell, and then it kind of died there. And then when I filed it, I

ended up talking to some guy in Salt Lake City who is some special investigator for BLM. But if there is a local person that I could reach out to, I would love to get their contact information, and I would assume that should be public information anyway, should it not?

Ms. McAboy:

That is correct. All of our contact information for our district offices and our field offices is located on our BLM website. If you know the area, if it is in Carson, or Vegas, or Ely, just look up that field office or district office. There is an email address that you can email it to as well as a phone number that goes to that district office and that would be the best place to start with providing for those complaints.

Senator Hansen:

Very good. I will follow up on that. Now, of the 30 uniformed law enforcement officers that you have in Nevada, I assume their contact information, because they are— That would be public also, would it not?

Ms. McAboy:

I am not sure if the individual officers' names are listed, but if you contact the district, they can definitely put you in contact with that respective ranger.

Senator Hansen:

Very good. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. And if you just want to check in with our Secretary, Ms. Velazquez, before you leave and give her the full spelling of your name, we want to make sure that we have it right for the record. I think we have some more questions. I will go now to Vice Chair Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the presentation. My question about the hiring freeze and everything was already asked so thank you so much for giving that information because the timeline sometimes that I am hearing from others felt a little bit off of 24 months sometimes. Is that consistently across all districts or does that change based upon the district that you are attempting to file for a permit or anything like that?

Ms. McAboy:

I thought you were asking about hiring there for a minute. The permitting timeline—we do have several different timelines in play. From a national perspective, our statutory timeline for processing an EA, the environmental assessment, or an EIS, ranges between one and two years. One year for an EA; two years for an EIS. That is our national statutory timelines based on the RFA. Cannot remember what that stands for right now. Cannot remember that, but that is what that one calls for. In Nevada, Jon has set a different standard for all district offices in Nevada. He has reduced that timeline to one year for EAs, or environmental assessments, sorry, six months for EAs, and one year for EISs.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Sorry, I did not mean to mix you up with that. I totally understand. My other question actually has to do with the statement that you made about the data centers and that it is a requirement with the AI. Could you dig into that a little bit more? I was a little bit confused by it.

Ms. McAboy:

That may not have been an accurate statement. I would not say "required," but I know that the data centers are needed to support the AI and all the amounts of data that they need to continue to grow and advance and improve because they are constantly running and learning.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you for that clarification. My last one actually is not part of this presentation. It has more to do with a bill that got out of the Senate but then did not get out of the Assembly and it was Senate Bill 31. That bill has to do with the vested water rights that are held by the federal government. Do you know where—and BLM definitely is part of this discussion, I would think with that—is there any way to know how many of those vested water rights are owned by the federal government at this time?

Ms. McAboy:

I am going to have to apologize for not having any information related to that. I would imagine that we should be able to track down the number of vested water rights that the government holds, but I do not want to comment on that since I am not—I dated on that one.

Vice Chair Anderson:

I so appreciate that answer because absolutely this is something that I believe our state has been asking for some time and why we had that bill and why we continue to try to figure out how many vested water rights are owned by the federal government. Not putting you on the spot, but at some point, as we have heard from every county, water is number one. And until we know how many vested water rights are owned by the federal government, it is very difficult for us to be able to make some plans. Thank you so much and thank you for standing in. You did a great job. Thank you, Chair.

Chair Scheible:

All right. Any other questions? Assemblymember DeLong.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the presentation. First, I just want to reiterate Assemblywoman Anderson's request on the vested water right claims. Getting that information from the BLM would be extremely important in completing the State Engineer's job.

I did not want to let you go without asking a question about wild horses. I was actually very disappointed, not in your presentation, but to see that there is only about 100 horses adopted every year. But the BLM has robust gathering scheduled and annually generally gathers more than 100 horses. What happens to those horses when those three facilities are full?

Ms. McAboy:

We tend to manage our gathers based on the capacity of our holding facilities, so not just the facilities here in Nevada, but other areas where we could transport those animals to when needed. That number for 100 adoptions a year, that is just for BLM Nevada, not for all of BLM.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Follow-up, Chair? Thank you for that. That implies, then, there are going to be years where you have the money to gather, but you are not going to gather because you do not have capacity in the storage facilities. Are you allowed to then roll that money over so you can continue to do the gathers, or do you have to go through a new appropriations process?

Ms. McAboy:

Those financial decisions regarding the funding, that is made at the congressional level and at our headquarters level so I would not be able to provide a comment on what happens with those funds if there is a year where we would not be able to gather due to capacity, and I think we have been pretty successful in our adoption.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Chair, just one more, quick? What does it cost per horse to do the gathers?

Ms. McAboy:

I do not have that figure handy. I am pretty sure we would be able to look that up online. I do apologize.

Assemblymember DeLong:

If you could do that, I would appreciate it. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. All right. Not seeing any further questions. Thank you again for being here with us and for your presentation. At this time we will close [Agenda Item V](#), and we are going to go ahead and take Agenda Item VI at this point and then we will break for lunch after that.

AGENDA ITEM VI—UPDATE ON PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, IN THE ELY RANGER DISTRICT

Chair Scheible:

If we have our representatives here from the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service, please come on up.

Lance Brown, Acting District Ranger, Ely Ranger District, United States Forest Service (USFS), USDA, and Austin-Tonopah Ranger, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest:

Good morning, Madam Chair, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Supervisor, John Stansfield, will provide a forest-wide overview at the Committee May meeting in Winnemucca.

My remarks today will highlight the activities on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Ely Ranger District, particularly as they align with the priorities identified for the Agency by the Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz. I will list those priorities:

- Prioritizing safety in every action we take;
- Protecting communities and natural resources from wildfire;
- Actively managing forests for health and productivity;
- Unleashing American energy and resource potential;
- Supporting disaster recovery;
- Expanding access to outdoor recreation;
- Cutting bureaucratic red tape through deregulation or an organizational efficiency;
- Strengthening partnerships that deliver results on the ground.

Today I will focus on wildfire response, active forest and rangeland management, minerals and energy, and outdoor recreation, and I hope that the strength of our partnerships is clear throughout.

First, I would like to share some general information about the Ely Ranger District. It is one of the seven managed by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, the largest national forest in the lower 48 states. It is located in Lincoln, Nye, and White Pine Counties here in eastern Nevada, and the office is located in Ely. At around a million acres, the District has some of the most rugged backcountry on the forest. Nine designated wilderness areas offer all kinds of solitude-filled backcountry opportunities and adventures. It is made up of rugged mountains, mountainous terrain with elevations ranging from 6,500 feet to over 12,000 feet on Mount Moriah. Some of the highest points in Nevada are found here. The higher elevations are covered with subalpine vegetation including bristlecone and limber pine trees. Dry pinyon-juniper forest land dominates most of the lower elevations. The Ely and Austin-Tonopah Ranger District maximizes staffing and resources through a zoned approach. You often hear me reference to the Central Zone throughout this presentation.

Wildfire readiness and response. The 2025 and '26 precipitation has been trending below normal in most portions of the Great Basin. As a result, the National Interagency Fire Center predicts a higher risk fire season for the Great Basin with elevated probabilities for large rangeland fires and above significant fire potential in many areas. The recent pattern of precipitation has slightly reduced the immediate threat, but the overall significant deficit in annual rainfall and lack of accumulated snowfall at elevations leaves the seasonal outlook unchanged. The National Interagency Fire Center forecasts are updated monthly and are used to guide proactive fire management, including fuel treatment, ignition control, and resource deployment. With an active fire season ahead, the Ely Ranger District is focused on fire prevention and ensuring effective initial attack to protect communities, watersheds,

livestock forage, wildlife habitat, mining infrastructure, recreation access, and tribal cultural resources.

Mobile fire patrol throughout central zone is covered in a wet fire prevention apparatus. Daily activities involve interaction with the public, checking fire permits for compliance, and responding to fires and smoke checks as required or requested through dispatch. This Unit is often first to respond to wildfire incidents, sizing up the fire potential, and confirming needs for incoming resources or more aggressive initial attack options to aviation responses and other ground support.

One of the greatest strengths of the Ely Ranger District is our relationships and partnerships. Our most recent success story is a partnership between the Forest Service and the Nevada Division of Forestry to fully staff an Arc Dome Wildland Fire Module. Both agencies have struggled to hire fire personnel in Nevada in rural areas. This is a first-ever partnership in Nevada for a state fire and federal agency to bring together their employees to fully staff a crew. The crew is composed of ten Nevada Department of Forestry personnel combined with ten Forest Service personnel, and we will work out of train and report to the Ely Ranger District. To date, the crew has supported several prescribed fire projects on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The miss and early season training and recertification programs that recertifies, physically tests, and provides refresher training for all individuals involved in firefighting and first responder activities. When not engaged in fire response, the crew provides a significant workforce to help prepare for prescribed burning activities and other fuels reduction operations. Fire response in the greater Ely area is also well supported through collaborative fire response agreements with agencies like Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service.

Moving to active forest management, fuels timber, and reforestation. Active forest and rangeland management allows us to reduce the risk of wildfire while restoring and enhancing habitat. I will highlight several vegetation management projects that use mastication or hand thinning to improve sagebrush, mountain brush, and mahogany communities. Selected pinyon and juniper trees, with a heavier focus on juniper, will be targeted for removal to open the understory to promote the establishment of brush, grasses, and forbs while also encouraging pinyon pine nut production. Mastication is a mechanical vegetation management technique that uses specialized machines to shred, grind, and chip small trees, brush, and woody debris. The resulting mulch on the forest floor reduces wildland fuel, controls erosion, and improves forest health by creating defensible space.

I am going to now speak to a few individual projects. The Cooper Meadows Mastication Project is part of a larger multiyear SNPLMA project in Cooper Canyon, Schell Creek Range, White Pine County, Nevada. This project falls under the South Schells Restoration Project decision memo signed April 25, 2025. It includes a mastication of 264 acres of national forest system lands and 167 acres of state lands.

The Queen Springs Habitat Restoration Project is a shared stewardship partnership project with Nevada Department of Wildlife. Its location is in North Schell Creek Range, White Pine County, Nevada. This project falls under the North Schell Restoration decision notice and finding of no significant impacts, signed January 10, 2012. It includes hand cutting the pinyon-juniper trees on as many as 4,932 acres of national forest system lands. This project is planned for an 18-month implementation timeline and intended to be started in July 2026.

The current Summit Mastication Project is a partnership project with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Nye County, Nevada. This project falls under the current Ellison Watershed Restoration Project decision notice and finding of no significant impacts, signed March 29, 2017. Project includes mastication of 315 acres of Forest Service lands over 18 months, and that project is intended to start in July 2026.

North White Pine Mastication Project is in the planning and is a potential partnership project with Nevada Department of Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and a future Round of 21 SNPLMA, Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Program project that is located in White Pine County, Nevada. This project likely would fall under a categorical exclusion for planning and would encompass a 9,500-acre area analysis. It would include mastication of up to 5,000 acres of national forest system lands over the next seven years starting July 2027. Access to these projects utilize existing established roads. Project disturbance would be a short nature and avoid any critical timelines for wildlife. Because areas will be accessed on foot or used in specialized equipment, activities will cause very little overall ground disturbance and result in habitat restoration that will benefit the area far into the future.

Moving to restoration projects. Active management also includes those projects to restore watershed and wildlife habitat, and our current projects include several here. The South Schell Pipe Rail Fencing Project is part of a larger multiyear SNPLMA project of the South Schells Restoration Project in Duck Creek Basin, Schell Creek Range in White Pine County. This project falls with that decision signed in April 25, 2025, and includes a new pipe rail fence construction and existing pipe rail fence to protect riparian areas, springs, and wet meadows on national forest system lands and state lands. These structures will improve, restore, and enhance wildlife habitats within the area by protecting important riparian communities from livestock. This project is planned for two and one-half year implementation timeline. The project is to be started in July 2026 and estimated for completion in December 2028.

The Illapaw Watershed Restoration Project. This project is a multiyear joint Forest Service, BLM, SNPLMA project located in North White Pine Range in White Pine County. This project analysis likely will fit a categorical exclusion analysis. The primary objective is to implement landscape scale restoration activities across administrative boundaries to benefit the Illapaw Watershed. Restoration activities may include: vegetation treatments; riparian vegetation plantings; seeding; channel stabilization and restoration; wildlife restoration; habitat improvements; fisheries habitat improvements; riparian exclosures; beaver dam analogs; inventory and treatment of noxious weeds; inventory and closure of unauthorized roads; road crossing and culvert insulation to reduce impacts from flooding; improve soil stabilization; reduce sedimentation; and possible introduction of beavers into the watershed. This project has three-year implementation timeline once the NEPA is completed.

The Ellison Meadows Restoration Project is a Round 18 SNPLMA project, and its intention is to restore and improve Ellison Meadows where downcutting, encroachment of nonriparian vegetation, and unstable stream channels are affecting the health of the meadows and the stream. Project activities include bank stabilization; allotment and pasture fence reconstruction; vegetation treatments and plantings; noxious weed treatments; a riparian exposure; some road improvements; and seeding and other activities. We have been working closely with NDOW, livestock permittees, and tribes on the details on this proposal.

Noxious and invasive weeds degrade habitat and livestock forage and dramatically increase wildfire risk and severity. Restoration efforts, such as a multijurisdictional noxious weed and invasive weed partnership, which from Round 18 SNPLMA and Ely District noxious invasive weed phase 2, which is a Round 19 SNPLMA project, seek to inventory and treat noxious weeds across administrative boundaries. Treatments can occur on federal, state, county, city, tribal, and even private lands. The Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition has taken a lead on the educational component, working with the cooperative weed management areas. Tri-County Weed has taken the lead on the inventory and treatments.

Cover a range topic. I would like to close to briefly connect our vegetation management and restoration work with our range program. The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest has one of the largest range programs on any national forest, supporting the livestock industry, which is one of the foundations of our rural economies. The District has 29 active allotments with 18 permittees, and we do have 4 allotments that are vacant due to resource conditions. As I described just now, our vegetation management programs seek to improve forest conditions and protect our allotments from wildfire.

Okay, recreation program overview is next. A recent economic impact study commissioned by the Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation illustrates the importance of public lands recreation in Nevada's economy, particularly the rural districts like Ely. The Central Zone Recreation Program continues to focus on providing safe, well-maintained, and accessible recreation opportunities for both local residents and traveling public who have long relied on the recreation sites across the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. In alignment with forest supervisor direction, the program will maximize the use of recreation personnel across the Central Zone to support core campground operations, enhance visitor experiences, and maintain infrastructure, and certainly work towards compliance with Forest Service standards.

The Ely Ranger District Recreation Program is anchored by a recreation and wilderness program manager who administers four of our SNPLMA projects to improve recreation access and infrastructure. For the 2026 field season, the recreation program will have two seasonal employees, one of which is supported by a SNPLMA Round 19 funds incorporated into an agreement with Great Basin Institute. Additional support with hazard assessment and chainsaw work will be provided by the Central Zone Prevention Technician, Rich Martinez. In addition, we are projecting a total of two crew leads and a small youth conservation corps, YCC crew, of 4 to 6 youths, all between the ages of 15 and 18. All personnel are funded by SNPLMA Round 19 funds. The YCC program is geared to help aspiring youth interested in gaining information, experiences, and knowledge for a career in natural resource management.

I am speaking to recreation access and infrastructure. The Ely District continues to leverage SNPLMA funding and partner capacity and strengths to improve the recreation sites and expand public access. Ely has a large capita ratio of avid mountain bikers and is becoming a mountain biking destination. The Warren Mountain Bike Trails Project brings the Forest Service together with the International Mountain Biking Association and local club, Great Basin Trail Stewardship, to expand mountain biking opportunities on the district. This project is funded by Round 18 SNPLMA grant with the International Mountain Biking Association implementing most of the work through a cooperative agreement. The project includes up to 40 miles of trail, multiple trailheads, upgrades to access roads, and informational kiosks. Most of the trail network has been completed with additional work scheduled this field season. Over the winter and spring, cooperation with the International Mountain Biking Association and Great Basin Trail Stewardship continued with a sign design

coordination and acceptable names in collaboration with White Pine County Recreation and Tourism grant around updating trail signs.

Another SNPLMA trails project focuses on reconstruction of trails in Mount Moriah wilderness. A Round 19 project is being completed using Forest Service roads crew and a cooperative agreement with Friends of Nevada Wilderness. Much of the road crew portion of this project was completed in 2024. Roadwork on the Horse Canyon Trailhead is slated for this season. The Friends of Nevada Wilderness has been working on the priority portion of this project, reestablishing the Hampton Creek Trail, and the Friends are rotating their hitches throughout the summer incorporating volunteers and trail crews.

Another SNPLMA Round 19 grant has supported renovation of the District's Kalamazoo Campground renovation project. This is nearing completion this year. Sites have been upgraded with new grills, fire rings, tables, an informational kiosk, and RV [recreational vehicle] pads. The project will also construct a small OHV trailhead, install new fencing cattle guards to keep the cattle out of the campground, and reconstruct the access road to provide better RV access from Spring Valley.

I am now moving to the minerals projects on the District. The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest has the largest locatable minerals program in the national forest system. Interest in exploring or mining for minerals that support our national security and way of life is increasing across the forest. The Ely District, I will briefly describe our current projects. Note for the project's reclamation is required once project activities are completed and finalized. For the Muncie Creek Exploration Project, the proponent is Falcon Copper Corporation. This is a ten-year mineral exploration project on the east side of the Schell Creek Range in White Pine County, approximately 30 miles northeast of Ely. A final decision and finding of no significant impacts was issued, and the project is authorized on April 10, 2026. Project includes up to six drill sites in phase one. Exploration drills will be drilled with truck- or track-mounted core drills, with vertical and angle drill holes. The depths of these holes are up to 5,000 feet. Nine additional drill pads are proposed in future phases. The exploration project is planned for a ten-year implementation timeline.

The current Creek Exploration Project, the proponent is SSR Mining. The project is located in the White Pine Range, 45, almost 46 miles southwest of Ely, and is accessed via Highway 6. The project includes 14 drill sites. Again, with holes being drilled with truck- or track-mounted core drill rigs with vertical and angle holes with a maximum depth of 700 feet. The exploration project is planned for a one-year implementation timeline.

The Eliza Exploration Project proponent is Silver Hammer Mining Corporation. The project is located approximately five miles southeast of Mount Hamilton Mine on the eastern flank of the White Pine Range in the White Pine Mining District. The project includes up to 17 drill sites with holes being drilled with truck- or track-mounted core drill rigs with vertical or angle drill holes and a depth of 650 feet. This project is also planned for one-year implementation.

Griffin Exploration Project. Proponent is NTOR Resources Corp, a Nevada Sunrise Metals Corporation company. A plan of operations is being evaluated as a categorical exclusion with one-year implementation timeline. Project area is located 28 miles southeast of Ely, Nevada, in White Pine Range, White Pine County. This project includes up to 26 drill sites with holes to be drilled with a truck- or track-mounted core drill rigs with vertical or angled holes, and the depth on these are 1,500 feet. This exploration project is planned for a one-year implementation timeline.

The Strata Mineral Exploration Project proponent is White Pine Metals Incorporated. Project is a one-year minor exploration project located in the Schell Range 50 miles southeast of the City of Ely. The project plan of operations was approved in August 2025 and approval to begin workers awaiting bonding. The project activities here includes 21 drill pads and holes being drilled from truck- or track-mounted vehicle with a reverse circulation and wireline core drill rigs will be used. This project is planned for a one-year implementation timeline.

The Enterprise Exploration EA is a multiyear project proposed by White Pine Minerals U.S.A. Incorporated. They are revising an existing plan of operations for submittal to the Forest Service. There is a small waste generator site that was recently cleaned up with the Taylor Mine, which needs to be completed before a new plan of operations could be processed. The Enterprise project will overlap two other mineral plans of operations, the Argus and Estrada projects. The project is located 15 miles southeast of Ely, and the activities include initial drilling program of up to 356 exploration drill sites and 2,800 feet of trenching. The second drilling phase would include up to 92 acres of disturbance. Follow-up drilling locations will be identified based on results of the first drilling programs within the project boundary.

For the Ward Mountain Notice of Intent, and a notice of intent requires a Forest Service acknowledgement for a proposal, the proponent is Robinson, Nevada Mining Company, and proposing hand collection of soil samples and road maintenance to permit road maintenance permit to access adjacent BLM exploration project. The location for this area is the Egan Range southeast of Ely in the vicinity of Ward Mountain.

Mount Hamilton Mine plan of operations has been impacted by multiple changes in ownership requiring documentation from seller to buyer. An existing 2014 Forest Service decision notice, which is an EA level analysis, will be reviewed to identify what updates or changes are required for a new plan of operations as well as the status on ongoing reclamation.

There is a Wheeler Ridge plan of operation that has been also impacted by a change in ownership, and so confirmation of the existing new owners is required. A 2013 decision notice will be reviewed for consistency and determination on any updates or changes required for a new plan of operations as well as the status of the ongoing reclamation. Quite a few mineral exploration projects on the District there.

Commissioner Jones:

Madam Chair, can we just get a status check on how many more projects the presenter can go over?

Chair Scheible:

Sure. How many more projects do you have for us?

Mr. Brown:

We have two more projects to discuss under energy development.

Chair Scheible:

Go ahead.

Mr. Brown:

I would like to highlight two energy development projects on the District. Trans Canyon is a proponent for Cross-Tie, which is a 500 kV power line project, 217-mile transmission line project from Cloverdale substation Mono, Utah, to Robinson Substation in White Pine County. Crossing eight miles to designated utility corridor in Cooper Canyon. The Forest Service was a cooperating agency with the Bureau of Land Management being the lead agency for the CIS. The final EIS and Forest Service draft record decision was published on September 24, 2025, and no objections were received. The Forest Service and BLM final records of decision were signed on December 18, 2025. The special use permit will be issued in 2026.

There is also a National Telecommunications and Information Administration Project, which is a lead federal agency for a proposal to install approximately 450 miles of fiber telecommunications infrastructure following the U.S. Highway 93 corridor. That route goes from Wells to Las Vegas across multiple agencies including BLM, BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] state and county with 5.1 miles across the national forest on the Ranger District. The project will provide high-speed Internet access to rural Nevada. Resource surveys ongoing with project implementation estimated to be late fall 2026.

This concludes my overview of current projects and activities on the Ely Ranger District. I certainly thank you for the opportunity to present today, and I would be happy to answer questions, best of my ability.

Chair Scheible:

All right. Is that the conclusion? Wonderful. Thank you so much for all of that information. I imagine we have some questions. Vice Chair Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you. I have two questions. First, I noticed that it was written down. Can you possibly submit that or email it to our Committee manager? That way we can all get a copy of it, because I am not going to lie to you, there is a few parts I kind of zoned out of a little bit. So, would love to be able to dig into that.

Then my second question. It sounds like the Mount Hamilton mining status is now not happening or it is. I got a little bit confused with— That was one of the last ones that you were bringing up and that it was because of the different ownership and then their permit was denied. So very quickly, if there is a way to say whether or not it is in fact being utilized or if it is still dormant.

Mr. Brown:

Certainly we will have this, sure the package is provided. For the Mount Hamilton Mine, it was an existing mine. With a new interest in operations there, there really needs to be a chain of custody for that earlier plan and ownership of the claims in the plan as it transitions to an old owner to a new owner. And so, that was my understanding. They are working on the communication and documentation to support that.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you so much, and thank you, Chair.

Chair Schieble:

Other questions? Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen:

More of an overview question—'70s, '80s, '90s, the Forest Service used to do a lot of its own trail clearing. They had crews that would actually go out and do that. Forest Service roads used to be maintained by Forest Service crews, BLM, too. That seems to have gone completely away. I noticed in the— When I looked at the wilderness folks that they are doing some of the work that traditionally were done by the Forest Service. Is there like a change in policy or something? There is a lot of roads out in Nevada that have Forest Service and BLM road signs and stuff from back in the days when you guys would do that. Is there something that has changed internally, or why is it in Nevada in the backcountry Forest Service no longer really maintains roads or apparently with only volunteer labor trails?

Mr. Brown:

Certainly. I will start with our trail, the trail question. Our funding within the Forest Service for the trail crews, the typical funding that we used to receive on a regular basis, that has gone by the wayside, and it has been quite a few years where that funding pot has dwindled down. We really rely on partnerships to really support the trail maintenance and repair work within the national forest. Largely, trail systems that are in designated wilderness and we also have non-wilderness trails as well. We have great partnerships through Friends in Nevada Wilderness and Great Basin Institute that are securing grant funds to help support the mission—their mission for providing public access. It is a great partnership the Forest Service has because we do not have the funds to hire the crews that we used to have to maintain those trails.

For your second part of the question for the roads. The Forest Service does have a road crew, and the staffing of that road crew over the last two years has been significantly reduced. The Forest Service has been, for Nevada for an example, we have been utilizing road crews from other forests in Utah that have some availability to come to the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest for some maintenance and repair. And to be honest, a lot of the focused roadwork that the Forest Service crews have been completing has been in response to emergency disaster relief and Hurricane Hilary damages. And so, that is where a lot of effort has gone here the last two years is work on a repair of those sites. But for future support and stand up of the road crew and what that looks like on the national forest, I will maybe take a good note and pass it along to Forest Supervisor John Stansfield, so you will be able to follow up with that.

Senator Hansen:

Very good. Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

All right. Any other questions? Okay, I do not see any questions. Thank you so much for being here and for answering all of our questions. We very much appreciate it. That will close out Agenda Item VI for today.

We are going to go to lunch. I am sorry we cannot provide lunch for everybody, but for the staff and members of the Committee, we will be having lunch next door at the

Overland Hotel. We will see all of you back here at 1 p.m. Well, I mean, you do not have to come back, but we hope that you will. That is when we will be starting—1 p.m. Thank you.

AGENDA ITEM VII—OVERVIEW OF THE RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE DIVISION OF STATE PARKS, STATE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Chair Scheible:

All right; I will call this meeting of the Public Lands Committee back to order. We are moving on to Agenda Item VII with a presentation from the Division of State Parks. Please go ahead.

Robert Mergell, Administrator, Division of State Parks, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR):

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and members of the Committee. Thank you for asking me to come down and chat with you guys for a bit, and also, thank you for the much-coveted right-after-lunchtime time slot. That is great. I do have a PowerPoint. ([Agenda Item VII](#)) Hopefully they have it. That is me, so next slide.

Because I was not sure how many of the Committee members I have ever presented to before, so I do not like to assume that everybody already knows everything about State Parks, so, that is our mission statement. After working for Parks for 30 years, you would think I could memorize that thing, but I have not. I will let you guys read that on your own. In a nutshell, we get to manage all of the state's super cool stuff and make sure that it is here for our grandchildren's grandchildren. Next slide.

I thought you guys might enjoy a quick hour and a half history presentation on Nevada Division of State Parks, but then I thought I should condense that a little bit probably. I will tie this all back together, so stick with me till the end of this thing. Back in the early '20s, there was a big push for putting aside public lands, public spaces for the use of all of us. Thankfully, Governor Scrugham, at the time, decided to set aside a couple of properties, one of which some of you might have already got to see, some of you will get to see tomorrow. But he set aside the property for the— Initially, it was kind of the recreational grounds and game refuges.

Fast forward to 1935. The Legislature finally formally established the first four state parks. The first four state parks, three of which are in Lincoln County, and then I will tie in the fourth one a little bit later in our presentation.

In about 1961-ish, state park rangers were given peace officer authority, which is why I am like a walking, talking visual aid for this presentation today. We have been doing law enforcement since the early '60s. 1963 is when State Parks, as a division, was established along with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. As an Agency, we have been around since the early 1960s.

Today we manage 27 state parks. We are divided up into four regions. You guys are all in the eastern region right now. Our eastern region actually extends all the way to the northern border with Idaho. A wild horse, although it is at the extreme north end of the state, is in our eastern region. Next slide, please.

This is a distribution of all of our 27 state parks. They are also divided up into different, I guess, categories. We have 15 state parks, 6 recreation areas, 4 historic parks, 1 historic

site, and then we have 1 of a very few in the country bi-state parks—Van Sickle State Park straddles the California-Nevada line. We have the best part of that park, by the way. Next slide.

We do some visitor outreach. We do surveys, that type of thing, to try to get an idea or get some feedback basically from the people that come and visit our parks. We ask a lot of different questions, but—and I am not going to go through all of this—there is a lot of statistical stuff here that I did not think you guys would care too much about, but I put it in your presentation to give you a little bit of an overview. This gives you our statewide, how the visitation, I guess, that comes into our parks. As one might suspect, the closer our parks are to another state border, we get more out-of-state visitation to those parks. The parks that are more local, you will get more local visitation. Not a whole lot of people are traveling from outside of the state to go to South Fork right outside Elko, for instance. That is a pretty local park. Next slide, please.

This is some of the economic impacts. People have talked about that already, so I am not going to hit on that a whole lot. Division of Outdoor Recreation just did a much more thorough economic survey throughout the state of what the impact is, specifically of outdoor recreation to the Nevada economy. That is available on their website if you guys have not seen that already. These are some numbers showing specifically state parks' specific economic impact within the state. Next slide.

I mentioned earlier the four original state parks Beaver Dam, Kershaw-Ryan, Cathedral Gorge, and then Valley of Fire. Three of those are in Lincoln County. Valley of Fire is the fourth one, being one of our oldest state parks. It is also our biggest state park and one of our most visited state parks. The visitor center that we have there was built a very long time ago, back when our visitation was about 400,000 visitors a year, was a lot for back then. We now tiptoe very close to a million visitors there every year. We were fortunate to come across an entity that was willing to donate a significant amount of money to the agency for a pretty spectacular project. They wanted to find something pretty visible and preferably in southern Nevada. We pitched the idea of a visitor center, took them on a tour of a visitor center that we were almost done with. Needed just a little bit more money to get that one across the finish line. As luck would have it, they were willing to donate the extra money that we needed to get that one done and then helped us to build this thing.

Kind of what I was asked to come down and talk to you guys about is what we have been up to lately, and so that is where we are going to transition into that part of the presentation.

Valley Fire Visitor Center, we got the funding for that during the last session. I went to our planning development crew, and I said, if I get you the money, can you build me a visitor center in two years, which is a crazy timeline for a state building to get built. We had not designed it; we kind of loosely planned it. We planned it, designed it, and constructed it in about two and one-half years, which is amazing. If you guys have not got a chance to look at that thing yet, make sure that you get down there and run through it. The next slide, please.

One of the things that we wanted to focus on was more interactive exhibits to engage kids and give them an inside space so that when you go visit that park when it is 100, 90 degrees outside, you can have something to do inside. Pretty amazing displays that are in there, a beautiful outdoor amphitheater. Next slide, please. Oh, go back up before we see that. I guess that is the last slide. I had those broken up into different pictures, so that is

clever they are all put together like that. The Valley Fire Visitor Center is our most recent major accomplishment. We are super excited about that.

We have some plans in the works for a new visitor center at Van Sickel. As I mentioned earlier, we are just finishing up the design phase of that, so we are hoping to move forward with building that with any luck during this next legislative session. All we got to do is secure the funding for that thing. In line with the history lesson that I gave you, very abbreviated history lesson in the beginning, I will go ahead and move to the next slide.

Everybody, I am sure, knows that America is turning 250 years old. We were successful in getting some grants for the America 250 projects. It is volunteer-based projects. We have 14 of them scheduled. Those have to be done from January 1 to July 3. You have to have them all completed by right before the nation's birthday. We have already completed a lot of them. We have done stuff from fencing off cattle and horses because nobody ever gets tired of talking about horses off of the airport that we own, and we did some petroglyph improvement. People see petroglyphs and then they decide it would be awesome if I could make my own petroglyph, which we strongly discourage people from doing. But occasionally we have to go in there and sandblast those things off so that we can restore the area back to what it is supposed to look like. A bunch of tree planting projects, a lot of litter pickup, some trail rehab projects. Those are all on our website. If anybody is looking for something to do on a weekend, we probably have a couple of projects coming up, and you are all welcome to come out and help us plant trees or— Next slide please. Or pick up trash, build some fences, take super cool pictures in front of super cool places. I am in there somewhere, but they might have cropped me out. Next slide, please.

All right. So that is kind of where we have been. Now where we are going to go. I was going to put up a picture of an alien, but I figured lighthouses are probably as alien to the people in this room as aliens are, maybe more so. I mentioned we have 27 state parks. We started with 4, got to 27. I was hoping to get us to 30. I might have us getting pretty close to there. We have been lucky over the last very short period of time. In fact, one of them has not closed; it should be closing soon. But we acquired, the state, I should say, acquired some property outside of Ely. The Monte Neva Hot Springs was acquired because there is an endangered plant there. The Monte Neva paintbrush is also located on that property. So, DCNR, through the Conserve Nevada Program, acquired that property to protect the plant species. But since we are really good at managing land, they asked if we would take it. I am like, hot springs, absolutely, we will take that. We already have the land, now we just have to figure out what to do with it. Well, when we were out looking at it, it is actually pretty cool, but it is a hot springs. It is super wicked hot, but it is very interesting. But the water coming out of there is about 180 degrees-ish, so we do not want a whole lot of people tiptoeing around that thing until we can build a boardwalk. So, it is not really open to the public yet, but we own the property.

On that land is also an old foundation for when, back in the '20s into the '30s, there was a resort of sorts built out there and they piped that hot water into to make little hot tubs in there or whatever. The foundation still exists, super cool, but until we can build a boardwalk and protect it, we are leaving it not open to the public necessarily.

While looking out there, we talked to the adjacent neighbor. There is a ranch just to the north of that property who has the surface water rights from that hot springs. They go onto his property. He has got three ponds built there. It is spectacular property. He decided he would like to sell that to us as long as we gave him the ability to continue to run cattle on it until he dies. I am like, sure, and do not bother dying anytime soon because we have some other pieces of the puzzle to put in place. We were able to purchase that land as well. So,

we have a ranch and this hot springs. There will be a couple of pictures of that later, but they are not that great, that is why I am still talking.

Our other piece of property that we are getting ready to close on is the historic Break a Heart Ranch, more recently known as the Chaves Ranch. It is between Dayton and Fort Churchill. We will be able to protect a pretty good stretch of the Carson River right outside of Dayton. Nice thing about it is that we have a property in Dayton, RA Dayton State Park, also cleverly named, is just upstream of this property, so we will have the Dayton State Park, that piece of the Chaves Ranch, which will protect more of the river. There is a break because of a of military vehicle testing facility that is out there, but the river runs through their property, then hits Lahontan State Park, or hits Fort Churchill State Park, which then hits Lahontan State Park, so we will have a pretty good stretch of the Carson River by the time it is all done. I will go ahead and go to the next slide. These next slides are pictures of those properties.

There is the Monte Neva Hot Springs. I thought I had a picture of the actual hot spring itself, but this presentation was due on Friday and so it is 6:30 Thursday night. I still had not found it, so I went ahead and used these two pictures, but this is the ponds that the rancher has put on his property. Next slide please.

And then this is the Chaves Ranch or Break a Heart Ranch. We are pretty sure that the Break a Heart we are not going to be able to use because there is a Break a Heart LLC Ranch company already out there, so we are going to see if we can— We do not know what we are going to name it, but we are going to own it. That is the first step.

Both of these properties, like I said, we are not really looking to do anything with them right away. The Monte Neva place, as what is appropriate for this Committee, is that what we are going to try to do there is to acquire some adjacent BLM land through the Recreation and Public Purpose (RPP) Act. As an RPP lease, that is where we want to actually do the construction. That way, we can keep the construction and the majority of the infrastructure, if you will, away from the protected plant species. As luck would have it, the plant was kind enough to grow on the east side and everything that people want to see is on the west side of the property. Super convenient for a change. Next slide.

As you might have noticed, I did not touch on it because I wanted to save the surprise till the end. I mentioned that State Parks was formally established in 1935, so 2035 will be our 100-year anniversary, so that will be here in what would that be three legislative sessions, give or take. We need to start making those improvements, if you will, because what we do not want is for our parks to actually look 100-years-old when people come out for our big party that we are going to have in 2035, which you all are invited to. I plan on attending. I just will not be in uniform by then.

With that, I will, next slide is probably just hopefully, thank you for allowing me to come down here and spend some time with you guys. Happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you for being down here and spending some time with us. I think we do have some questions. I will go to Assemblymember Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

I just had a comment. Thank you so much. You have always been very accessible and any time I have ever had an issue now to call you, you got information right away. And then, also, had a chance to go to that beautiful park that you were just talking about this morning and how much I appreciate as well the work you guys are trying to do on making it much more accessible to our handicapped citizens as well, because I know we have talked about that in the past. Just wanted to recommend you again for all that work you have done and making sure it is accessible for more than just the people that are able to walk to everything.

Administrator Mergell:

Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

Assemblymember DeLong.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the presentation. I had a question about the Van Sickel Park. Is the only visitor center on the Nevada side or are there facilities also on the California side?

Administrator Mergell:

Right now, there is really nothing on that property. There is a historic barn on the California side. There is not really any structures that are open to the public, with the exception of a restroom that is on the Nevada side. But all of the design work for the new visitor center, there is going to be a shop facility and some residences because we cannot hire people up in the Tahoe Basin without houses. Housing has been— The housing has been another topic of the day, and we have really struggled with that. So right now, there is nothing, but the visitor center is planned to be on the Nevada side of that.

Chair Scheible:

Other questions? I have maybe one or two quick questions. On the Monte Neva Hot Springs, you mentioned that the state took ownership of the land because of the paintbrush flower. But is it going to be possible to utilize this space for recreation while still preserving that flower?

Administrator Mergell:

Yes. The nice thing is the property is—do not hold me to the numbers—but I think it is 320 acres kind of separated into four sections. If you imagine the four quarters, the northeast quarter of that is where almost all of the paintbrush exists. It is kind of downstream of where the hot spring kind of naturally goes. Obviously, there is some connection between the plant and being like that close, but downstream of the hot springs. It also seems to grow where the cows go in there when they are not supposed to be in there, in the disturbance that the cows created, but we are still going to fence the cows out of there so they do not inadvertently stomp on one of the live plants. But you do not see those plants at all in the north. I think it is actually west and southwest by quarters. Everything is pretty much— The plants are pretty much all like downslope from there, so we will be able to use the west half of that property for recreational purposes because there is

really no benefit to the public to go east. It is pretty much just— If you have been around hot springs, there is not a lot of vegetation that grows by them, and it is not super aesthetic, so there will not be a whole lot of draw for people to go over there. And there is some barbed wire fences, so we will keep those in place. As luck would have it, it is already cross-fenced, so it should be pretty easy to keep people where we want the people to be.

Chair Schieble:

That is great. Okay, and this is not a quiz. I cannot come up with it. What is the one historic site?

Administrator Mergell:

One historic site that we have is Elgin Schoolhouse.

Chair Scheible:

Oh, okay, that makes sense.

Administrator Mergell:

It is pretty much just the schoolhouse.

Chair Scheible:

Okay. Well, not seeing any other questions, we certainly appreciate your time and look forward to our tour tomorrow for those who are able to stay and make it. That concludes [Agenda Item VII](#).

AGENDA ITEM VIII—PRESENTATION ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EASTERN NEVADA LANDSCAPE COALITION

Chair Scheible:

We will move on to [Agenda Item VIII](#), our presentation from the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition (ENLC). You need to turn the mic on; button on the right.

John Watt, Executive Director, ENLC:

Thank you. I apologize. I have spent most of my life in the outdoors and doing fieldwork, not presenting public speaking, so bear with me. I have been two years on the job coming this fall. Previously I worked for 15 years with Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition, which I will refer to as ENLC going forward. It is primarily fieldwork in various roles. I did chuckle when Senator Hansen asked about trail maintenance on the Forest Service. My first job in Nevada was wilderness trail crew. Saws and clearing trails; sad to see that is gone. In any case, do we have any slides for me? ([Agenda Item VIII](#)) But before we get to that, I will keep moving forward.

So, ENLC has been existing for— Perfect. We can hold up there, or go to the next one, please. So, 24 years, our 25th birthday is May 1 coming up next week. Betsy, our founder, Executive Director, I think, has presented to this Committee before. Part of why I came back as a Director was because her passion and her love for the public lands, and I said, okay, I will take this on.

Our mission statement is up there and in your pamphlets. I will not read it for you, but in our history, as I have touched on, it has been since 2001. We have served as a leader for the Great Basin conservation, working across over 10 million acres of public and private land. It says Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and Idaho, but it has primarily been Nevada. We have branched out through the borders. Great Basin obviously does not know state borders, so all our work has been done on the land, not trying to expand borders beyond state borders, sorry.

We have had a team of ecologists, botanists, wildlife biologists over the years, and I am proud to say that a lot of my ex-coworkers have gone on to the agencies—Maria Collatis with the Forest Service, Neil Frankes with the BLM, and taking on many roles. I ended up back at ENLC, not going forward, but that is all right. That is good.

The partnering with the federal agency, the private landowners, and local communities to restore the landscapes, work on restoration of the landscapes because you know it is hard to restore them completely. And so that has been ENLC's primary role is bringing these entities together, helping them with the research, with the on-the-ground work and promoting projects going forward.

The challenges we face, before I go on to the next slide and go into the numbers, is the scale of what we are addressing. Wildfires, which have gotten severe and larger over the last years, just ever increasing. The wide spread of invasive noxious weeds, which not only affects the public lands but the private agriculture and all the habitat that is affected by it, the AMs, the grazing rights, all that land taken away. Our goal is to help maintain and do as much restoration of that land as we can, partnering with all the agencies because no one can do it alone and it crosses the boundaries. So ENLC has been very good about collaborating with everybody and bringing folks together. We will focus on invasive species, noxious weeds, primarily, and cheatgrass that comes with the fires that has been our primary.

Now I will go on to this year. This last year, the acreages, those numbers are all reflective of the work we have done this last year, not overall. Every year, similar numbers or greater. The 3,500 acres were treated for invasive species. We have Ely weeds crews that work in agreements with the BLM, and out of the Ely District we have a crew there. Out of the Elko District we have two crews with a lead. Out of the Carson City District we have a crew there working directly with the BLM as supervisors, but they are our employees and so it is a collaborative effort. We also work with the BLM and the Forest Service with inventory of the invasive species throughout all the districts. We have an inventory crew with the Forest Service this year on the Ely District. It is a fourth year of a SNPLMA project monitoring the invasive species, seeing where we need the treatments, guiding the treatment teams for the Forest Service of where they need to address issues out on the land.

The 381,000 acres there of restoration work is a large number. That is our postfire reseedling program that we work directly with the BLM and NDOW. Lara Derasary, who is our primary natural resource specialist on that, has been there for 18 years. She puts the seed mixtures together for those projects, and she also does lead the research teams, which also include USGS [U.S. Geological Survey] and NDOW, in guiding what seed we are going to use for each fire. For instance, down here in Lincoln County, the Stewart and Miller fires, those are two down here that we dealt with and we are putting— It has been a challenge for the agencies, as we all know, over the last year or so of losing people. We recently hired an ex-USGS research scientist. We brought her back onto our staff to continue her research work because she was cut and that program was cut. We realized we cannot let that

research fall off by the wayside. We need to look. She was primarily looking at soil composition of how that affects our reseeding efforts, so we are not spending too much money getting the most bang for your buck, as it were. So ENLC was able to get her on staff and fund her through our collaboration with NDOW; NDOW did not want to lose her as well. I felt like that was a good example of how ENLC can bring partners together to keep the work going because it is not a one-year-at-a-time deal. This is a long, long process. We have had a lot of good successes.

We are doing exclosure fences on those 381,000 acres spots all over that reseeded areas to monitor and see how effective our seeding is. And of course, exclosure fences are to keep cattle off, but primarily, as we mentioned, the beloved wild horses. What effects are we having? To get those costs down and be the most effective on our treatment programs.

The riparian areas were mostly invasive species treatments and some reseeding of some of those areas, but mainly that was spraying weeds on those riparian areas and inventorying those areas.

The wildlife surveys conducted this year were primarily bat surveys with an agreement with the BLM for on the BRNM, the basin and range natural, it is over by Mount Irish—is where it is in Lincoln County. I think 14 species were identified there.

Then the seed mixture number, that is the amount of seeds we put together. The regional seed warehouse is out of Idaho, is actually in Ely. It is managed out of Idaho. We put together the workforce to mix the seed to assist the BLM in mixing the seed. I am very proud of that one, because I got five local people to work on that crew over the last two years. Keeping some work in with local employees is a big one, big priority for me. Those are our numbers for this year. I say just this year, just to be clear on that. Multiply that over 24 years, we have helped with a lot of acreages.

Some of the programs that make a difference. The CWMA [Cooperative Weed Management Areas] is sort of cooperative weed management areas. There is nine of them. There is: Steptoe Valley; Newark Long Valley; Spring Valley; Snake Valley; Upper Meadow Valley wash down here in Lincoln County; and Pahrangat Valley; and then also in the Clark County District—Las Vegas District. We have two meetings a year. CWMA members are landowners, primarily private citizens, and working in conjunction with us and the agencies to try to raise funds for them to help them treat their weeds on their lands. The funding for that in the past has been Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) grants, which we provide matches with along with Tri-County Weeds out of Ely, and they also provide a lot of the service as far as treating the weeds go.

That funding has gone by the wayside last year. We have a little bit for the CWMAs this year through the Nevada Department of Ag, which they are getting funded, my understanding, is from the federal, I think EPA and Farm Bureau. We have to talk to Jake Dick at NDA, to get exact, where that funding comes from. We did manage to get \$18,000 this year for the CWMAs, but it was only for three of them. So that has been a little bit hurting, but we will find money for them. That is the beauty of ENLC. We do not have funding with grants. We are reaching out to all the companies that profit, are working on our lands. All of them. It is Ely District. The mines have been very generous with donating money. ENLC is taking all of our donations from each CWMA area and reaching out to any corporate interests looking for donations to help with the CWMAs because we need to get money. These folks are working hard to keep weeds from spreading on their land, but also the adjacent lands. The BLM, the Forest Service, has been really good at identifying the weed problems on those private lands when they get brought to them and saying, okay, where is it coming down? The

drainages to their private land. We need to treat above there, so you are not just treating that and not addressing where the problem originates. I am very proud of the CWMAs and how Betsy got that going and it is maintained. We just got done with their meetings this week and gave the good news and the bad news, but the battle still continues with that. That is a big one for us. I would like to talk to the county here in Pioche and talk about another CWMA in Panaca area, this area. I would like to get that going.

As I said, the geographic reach, we think in terms of the Great Basin; we do not necessarily just think about state lines. If it is on the border, we will reach out to Utah if we can help there. We will reach out into Arizona, even California. We do not want to know any boundaries there that are— It is more important to address the issues, not just here.

Okay, so volunteer recognition—nine active, mentioned that weed management areas. Volunteers, so that is a big part of our outreach. We have volunteer days. For instance, some money we have for the White River Valley CWMA this year. There is \$6,000 there. We are going to spend an entire day on the community of Lund of cleaning up the weeds there with Tri-County helping and all the agriculture producers there helping. We are working on a similar deal in Alamo for the Pahrnagat Valley and then in Spring Valley, the ranchers down there helping them. Unfortunately, those were the only three that got funding, but that was it. We do what we can.

The agreements we have, I will just go— They are not in these slides, but I will go over them. We have, I mentioned, Elko, Ely, Carson City, and what did I forget? Well, Ely Forest Service as well. BLM and Forest Service have been crucial to ENLC's existence over all these years. The agreements we have with them is what has kept us rolling, and also, we have helped them tremendously over the years. One of my main jobs at ENLC for years was mine reclamation specialist. I would go out, survey the land before the exploration went in, and then go back after that. For instance, we also— Pinyon-juniper treatments, identifying where to bring those in. Have our ecologists, our natural resource specialists work with the rangeland people, private people, and the BLM and Forest Service and get those treatments in place. When you drive through White Pine County, you see plenty of those treatments on the benches and stuff, and you will see it is an active role in that the entire time. It has been a very important part of who we are.

Our team consists of specialist exec me, our Ecologist Kelsey Daniels, a botanist, our Natural Resource Specialist Lara Derasary, who I mentioned, is crucial to the fires. Oh, that is one project I forgot. John Haddock, the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout in the Elko District Stream Restoration. It is working with USGS, BLM, IWJV [Intermountain West Joint Venture], Pheasants Forever, and ENLC. I do not know how I— That is a lot of people on that, but it is essentially the streams north of I-80 that were affected by fire, and they have been diverted because of the erosion, and they are working on restoring those streams on private and public together. John Haddock, our Aquatics Natural Resource Specialist there, has got everybody to buy in to bring these streams back to their original channels using BDAs—which was mentioned earlier by somebody—beaver dam analogs. They are artificial beaver dams to get the streams diverted in the way and to be followed with bringing beavers back into those streams where they historically had been that are gone. The ranchers have signed off on this. This was a big step forward because everyone understood that that is a crucial part of keeping those streams back to where they were, which provides habitat for the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout. That has been a great project. It got put on pause with the federal funding a little bit, but we kept it going. We got creative and kept John on the job this whole time, and now I am happy to say that funding is back in place. It was unfrozen.

That kind of is our team and not to— Ties Thompson up in Elko is our Field Coordinator up there. And this gets back into the federal agencies of what they are going through with BLM. I cannot stress enough how important and how great they have been to work with, but they are coming up. They are losing staff left and right. Ties is our weeds coordinator up there, so she manages our crews and gets them all that, but now she is also filling in the roles. Both people she worked under, supervisor, are gone in the last year; first one, then the other. So not only is she filling the role that we ask her to, the BLM, she is supporting them, doing, getting creative, and helping them with their roles at the BLM office. It is the BLM, managing to get by, that is, but we have always done somewhat like that. I remember being down here in Lincoln County when there was no geologist and I was the only person—talk about a deer in the headlights. That was almost worse than coming here today, but I managed to get her done for a few years.

The programs of partnerships. We talked about those specific ones. I think ENLC has done a really good job over the years of developing these partnerships and these collaborations with everybody, knowing so many people. Betsy was super good, came from the cattlemen side of things, and brought the ranchers to the beyond and was the in-between person, and I would like to continue that. She was my role model for sure on all that. I am a hunter, fisherman, outdoors person, so I know a lot of locals. I like to think that I can bring that back to ENLC and keep that going strong as we go forward.

I do not like to read off of all these, so I will try to skim it. Greater Sage Grouse protection. As we all know what Sage Grouse has meant and dealing with getting projects done with the Sage Grouse in mind has always been a challenge, and we worked heavily with NDOW on doing that, on getting those surveys done, those permissions done, to push forward the projects. Pan Mine in Ely, Nevada—this is going back; it is all finished now, but that one, ENLC had a crucial role in getting that mine through the EEA [Environmental Effects Assessment] process, the NEPA process. We did not write the NEPA, but we did the wildlife surveys, the botanical surveys on the ground. It was a two-year lesson in patience, but it was good. It was worthwhile. We brought that mine in and we helped do it.

This last year was very successful as far as having the work we did. I foresee—probably getting to the end of my time—but going forward for this next year, our crews are all set in place, got those all ready. The work is starting to get going. The inventory last year for the bats—all that data has been gathered. Now it is going to the lab to be analyzed and then projects will be moving forward from that.

The CWMAs, while it was a challenge with the money this year, I am confident that we are going to work together and get more money to the CWMAs to help everybody. Partnering the noxious weeds, what they cost in terms of financial and habitat loss is huge. And if we do not work at keeping them at bay—I know we are not going to get rid of them all—but we have to keep that battle up, ongoing, and working with the private landowners, with the public agencies is definitely essential. I am hoping to keep that rolling well forward.

The community outreach, which has always been a part of ENLC, as we celebrated our 20, was it our 21st, 20th annual Ely Weeds Invasive Species Conference, and we had to change the name of that, by the way. Used to be the Weeds Conference, but yeah, there is a lot of unwanted calls just like landscape restoration. You cannot believe the calls I get on that, and no, we cannot come to your yard. But it is like, okay, we gotta think about these names a little more. We have that conference every year and this year was a great success. We had, I think, over 100 people show up, and I was very happy to see a bunch of our speakers were past employees of ENLC who have gone on to great things. We focused on

bringing a bunch of them back to talk about what work they are doing now, and that was really nice to see; so that was a good success.

The community outreach. This year, our staff attended six local events. We reached out to approximately 700 community members, identifying them about noxious weed identification, invasive plant management, and preservation of native plants and natural landscapes. The outreach is important to bring that to light. People do not understand the cost of that. If it is on your yard but you do not know what it is, you are affecting your neighbor, and that goes on to a landscape level that the agricultural producers, if they have a stream running down into them full of white top Canadian thistle, that is going to affect their cropland. We have to address that and then on a micro level and a macro level.

We really try to focus on the outreach. I think it might have slipped off slightly for some years when I was not there, not that I had any part of that. I was just gone for— I had another life, but now I would like to see ENLC get more of that outreach going and not be— We are known in Ely, but I would like to be known statewide. I would like to be known regionally wide. I do not want people asking who we are and whether we can do their yard or not anymore. I want us to be known. I thank you for the opportunity today to present because that is part of the mission here. I will go to the next slide.

The major funding sources. As I said, the federal agreements, the BLM, the Forest Service, they have been our primary federal backers. NDOW has been very essential to projects getting done. When all else fails, we go to NDOW to get creative, to get the work done, and they help us find a way as well. I am very, very happy with that collaboration. We have a new project with State Parks. Hopefully at Cave Lake State Park this year that we ran through us, they just redid the Lake, so we are going to do an improvement on the bank this summer. I think that was an NDOW collaboration as well.

I mentioned the SNMPLA round, or it was mentioned by Forest Service. We just got, I just got awarded that money like two days ago, and that one is for education outreach in Snake Valley and Spring Valley and also treating private land. Our role on that one is the education outreach part of it but also reaching out to the landowners and actually getting Tri-County on their lands to treat them. Sometimes they do not like the federal agencies to come in and treat their private land, so we will work in between there and help them with that.

We had \$426,000 for federal agreements this year. Corporate sponsorship was \$10,700. I would like— With all these companies, you heard all the mining exploration stuff with the Forest Service coming in. That was a list that kind of blew me away there. I did not realize that much. All the energy companies, we are reaching out to them for donations. If they are going to work on our land, we want some mitigation, we want some help. You cannot come in here and do this without helping on a landscape level is how I feel about it, so we are going to reach out to them more and up that number.

Individual donations and memberships this year was \$22,785, so last year I should say. This coming year, all donations and memberships, I have our Board of Directors agreed to put the bulk of all that money towards our CWMAs that were not funded. I am hoping to get that money up, closer to \$50,000, I think, and then get it to the CWMAs to help with noxious invasive weeds.

Our event revenue is from our conference and that was \$16,000. I would like to see that increase as well and get that number up as well.

The goals and visions. I mentioned I want to expand our individual donor base, our corporate donor base, diversify the revenue streams so we are not just working on federal grants and agreements. We need to get creative here as we go forward. I do not know what the future will bring, but I know I want ENLC to remain viable and active. Our 25th year anniversary celebration will be at all events in White Pine County. I want to reach down here to Lincoln County and be at all events and maybe even— We did an event in Elko this year already, and so we are going to try to hit more for our outreach programs. Strengthen the CWMA partnerships and expand their reach, and I want to talk to some folks in Lincoln County about that.

And our funding goals. As I mentioned, I want to increase all of those. I put some numbers to it for this report, but they are certainly not limits. If we can reach those and beyond, I would be happy. And the same with the community outreach goals, increase those numbers and get more volunteers going.

I do not know what my timeline is, but thank you so much. Sorry if I went too fast, and I will be better next time around. Any questions?

Chair Schieble:

No, you did great. Thank you. We appreciate the opportunity to get to hear from you and to get to learn about the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition. I will stop calling and asking you to do my front yard, not pass it, but let us see if there are questions from our members. All right, Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen:

Thanks. Thanks for the presentation. I had no idea you were as involved as you guys are. Your seed mixes, do you guys go strictly native or do you use like foraged kochia, more exotic plant?

Executive Director Watt:

So, BLM has a large say in what we mix, and so there has definitely been a push over all the years to use exclusively native. I think there was kickback from years ago of like straight up crested wheat, straight up kochia, and from my personal experience, I saw foraged kochia work super effectively on some mine sites that would grow nothing else. After they were established for five years or so, Bureau of Army Corps of Engineers on this particular mine site came back in, leveled it, took all that forged kochia out, added some topsoil and native seed mix that worked super effectively. That is kind of, I digress. I think I understand the beauty of that, having those other nonnatives in there to get established, and that is part of what our studies are about is what can we get established to keep the soil viable and then the native seed mixes come in later. So, BLM was strictly native for a long time.

Senator Hansen:

Well, the reason I ask, I noticed along Interstate 80, Eureka County, Lander County, they planted extensive stands of foraged kochia to prevent fires, but then you get into Humboldt County, and it is all cheatgrass and fires repeatedly. I am wondering if people reached out to you guys, and if you had anything to do with the kochia stands that exist now in Lander, Eureka, and I think a little bit in Elko County.

Executive Director Watt:

The stuff up by Elko, we were not involved in as much and all that. I know that, we definitely, on the stuff we treated that Lara put together, and I worked on those seed mixes years ago, there was nonnatives in that, and part of it is to get that soil stabilization in place and get something growing those first years and then hopefully the natives come back on it. There was a push away from that for a while, but I think it is going back to that.

Senator Hansen:

No, I am for it.

Executive Director Watt:

Yes, 100 percent.

Senator Hansen:

I do not believe in just using native. It does not work as effectively.

Executive Director Watt:

I think that what they are learning is that they do need to get that stuff that grows well and gets that soil stabilization back in, the nitrogen, and that is part of what the research projects have shown. I think that has helped sway it back the other way because— There is one right there by Ely. It was just straight up crusted wheat for years, and that was before I got there. They had planted; it grew well. I did a lot of work out on that, and I saw there was pretty heavily grazed by sheep, but that crested wheat stayed there. If you go in there now, you see the native grasses all over, and if it was not for that crested there, or the foraged kochia, I meant, so there is movement back toward that. We do not get to control it completely. We have to go by their standards, but I know our scientists are promoting it.

Senator Hansen:

Good. My last question you may have answered actually. There is a thistle, like when you go on Interstate 80. You mentioned the streams north of Interstate 80, Suzy Creek, Maggie Creek. Where those cross Interstate 80, there is this thistle that is growing, big, tall thistle, and you mentioned Canadian thistle. Is that Canadian thistle?

Executive Director Watt:

It could very well be, but I am definitely a long ways from a day where I could identify a thistle driving down the highway, but it could well be. It is almost for sure an invasive, noxious thistle, that much I know, not something native.

Senator Hansen:

It is definitely not native. I have seen it expanding in the last five, six years. I started to notice extensive stands there along Interstate 80; now it is all the way up to Elko. I saw it on the Mountain City Highway, saw it by Charleston. Stands of it. It is tall. It is very thin. It is some kind of thistle, and it is tall. I would guess it is at least four to five feet tall when it is mature. I am wondering if that is one of the ones you guys have been trying to address.

Executive Director Watt:

Yeah, I am sure the Elko crew is trying to address that. I could even reach out and get back to you with the exact one and what they have treated. One thing I do know is it is not a one-year deal. That is the one thing about noxious invasive weeds. You just do not go in once, treat it, and then you are done. It is an ongoing battle year after year, and it takes time, and then you need to restore behind it because if you do not, it is coming back even stronger.

Senator Hansen:

Yeah, I have been watching it expand just in the past few years. It is definitely going up and down the Humboldt River.

Executive Director Watt:

Huge problem, and that is part of what we are working on. If it is on the Humboldt, it is definitely being treated.

Senator Hansen:

North Fork of the Humboldt, Devil's Gate Ranch, all the way up. That is heavily eroded. Have you guys had any riparian habitat?

Executive Director Watt:

That is in that area, that project I mentioned with John Haddock is up there. It is mostly, I think, north of there more, but they are working their way down.

Senator Hansen:

Good, because that one needs it bad.

Executive Director Watt:

It needs it bad. No, it needs it bad.

Senator Hansen:

Thank you for your work, and thanks, Madam Chair.

Executive Director Watt:

Is that it, then?

Chair Scheible:

I have one question. It seems like you guys, I think especially, you rely on federal grants, and we have seen grants being slashed across the board throughout the government in the last Administration. Have you guys been facing that, too? And if you could just state your name for the record before you answer.

Executive Director Watt:

I should have touched on that more. I mentioned that funding on the streams getting frozen. That was IRA money, Infrastructure Reduction Act money. It was frozen for almost nine months, and it would get released and it would be back, and we had one of our other agreements with the bill on the same situation. The lucky thing for us is our agreements were five-year agreements, so we are in the middle cycle of those. We were able to do modifications to them to get more funding put in to keep us rolling forward, and the BLM was very creative with that. Our Carson City project is the only one that is ending this year, and they are going to put in for another new agreement for another five-year one, but he said it might be a three-year one because of their funding. Why these agreements are able to be put in place still is, it is fire fuels reduction. That is the key component. All this invasive weed is a fuel, fire fuel, so that funding is not being hit as hard. Now with the DOI splitting up the fire, it is getting a little bit weird. No one could give me an answer of how we are going to go forward. We have no false notice of funding opportunities for the BLM, so we will put forward for next year and beyond for any agreements that end and also a new one in Ely District. Everything needs to be tied to fire and fuels, all these other things.

I have a feeling with the mineral exploration stuff, if we can tie the fire into that, that might help us attain. I will be talking to Forest Service more about that. You have to say the right words to get that funding, and you know, I am hopeful. I am hopeful that fire fuel, also agriculture of fighting the invasive species, the noxious weeds that affects our producers. That is huge, and there has been promises made that should be kept to help the farmers, to help the agriculture industry. I think on a federal level, there is avenues that we are going to be able to pursue. I want to brainstorm on that and use those key terms. The one key term I do not want to hear anymore is, "We do not have the bandwidth."

Chair Scheible:

All right, not seeing any other questions, we certainly appreciate your presentation and answering all of our questions. That will bring us to the conclusion of Agenda Item IX—VIII, my apologies.

AGENDA ITEM IX—OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF FRIENDS OF NEVADA WILDERNESS

Chair Scheible:

Now we will do Agenda Item IX and welcome up our presenters from the Friends of Nevada Wilderness.

Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director, Friends of Nevada Wilderness:

I should have a slide deck up there, too. ([Agenda Item IX A-1](#)) Great. Here is our motto: Friends of Nevada Wilderness protecting, defending, and caring for the places you love. Next.

We have been around unofficially since 1974 and were officially made a 501(c)(3) in 1985, so we have been working across Nevada for very many years. Next.

I wanted to give a little bit of legislative updates on some of the things that we have been working on because we do work very closely with our Congressional Delegation and stakeholders on a whole host of things. Next slide please.

One of the callers this morning talked a little bit about the defense authorization bill and the impact on the grazing allotments. We, too, were working as part of the Churchill County bill, and we worked very closely with the Native Americans there as well as the ranchers, landowners, the county officials. Next.

As you are probably aware, the NDAA did a number of things, obviously expanding the base, it expanded the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Reservation; provided some restitution funding for the Walker River Reservation; some road realignments and so on; helped resolve checkerboard patterns; funding for Churchill County, and then, the part that we were most involved with obviously were a few wilderness areas and national conservation areas. Next.

When we work on these areas, the wilderness study areas have been around for a very long time. Sometimes those boundaries do not make sense. We like to make sure that if we are going to have a wilderness area, it is going to work for the ranchers, that their water developments will have access to them and so on. We very carefully worked with all of the folks to make boundaries that were much better and more useful and will stand the test of time.

There was Clan Alpine Mountain Wilderness. Next. Cain Mountain Wilderness; that was the old Augusta WSA [wilderness study area]. Next. The Desatoya Mountains Wilderness that spans Churchill and Lander. Next. And then the Numunaa Nobe National Conservation Area. This was a couple wilderness study areas, the Stillwaters and Job's Peak. This was sort of the home, the origin story of the home for the native people there. We worked very closely with them as well on creating this national conservation area to preserve some of their very special places. Next.

Over the past 42 years we have worked with our delegation, stakeholders, and so on to resolve a lot of those old wilderness study areas. We have created, well Congress created, 73 wilderness areas, 5 national conservation areas. There is four national monuments and the Great Basin National Park. We actually worked on that back in the 1980s, so that is what we have done over the 42 years. Next.

On to what is going on right now with federal legislation. Maybe you guys are all up on this, but Senator Rosen did reintroduce the Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act, the Washoe County bill, and it includes five wilderness areas and five national conservation areas. There were about 800,000 acres of wilderness study areas up there. I mentioned this only, and we spent a lot of time working with ranchers, looking at maybe some areas wilderness, the wilderness requirements were a little too strict, so we decided we would go more with the national conservation area to give a little bit more management flexibility. Next.

Granite Banjo is one of the areas up there right outside of Gerlach, where Burning Man is held. Next. The Fox Range. Next. The Massacre Rim Dark Sky Sanctuary. I will talk a teensy bit about in a few more minutes, but instead of a wilderness study area, we were looking at making that a national conservation area, and in particular, really to talk about the dark skies and the amazing places up in northern Washoe and across the state. I will have a little bit more of that in just a minute. Next. Kiba Canyon Range National Conservation Area was another area that we were working on up there in Washoe as well. Next.

We have been working with Pershing County for, oh gosh, a couple decades, I think now, on a public lands bill; Senator Rosen just reintroduced a Pershing bill. And Congressman Amodei, we have been working with him for a very long time on several

northern Nevada bills. I do want to appreciate his perseverance. You know he is not going to run again, but he is still working to get a floor vote on this bill, his northern Nevada bill, so I appreciate that. That area would have a couple, seven more wilderness areas. And it, almost more importantly, in many ways, would help try to resolve the checkerboard issue there in Pershing County, which takes up like a third of the county. It is horrible. So maybe we will see a vote on that this year. Next. Here is a couple of the areas in the Pershing County area the Tobin Crest, Fencemaker. Next. North Sahwave, Cain Mountain. Next.

We also have been working with Nye County over the last number of years on a public lands bill. They have some things that they need around Pahrump, around Tonopah, certainly lands for community expansion. There was quite a bit of talk earlier today about the need for housing in some of these rural communities. This would also resolve a number of the wilderness study areas that are in Nye County, and we worked again very closely with the county and some of the ranchers there. Next.

One of the areas we were looking at, again, to help astro tourism, but is the proposed Lunar Starlight National Conservation Area. You are familiar with where Lunar Crater and Lunar Lake is out there. Beautiful dark sky area; absolutely gorgeous. Next. Toiyabe Crest proposed wilderness just for a portion of it. Next. Park Range WSA. Next.

Just recently, Senator Cortez Masto reintroduced the Douglas County bill, so that also has a whole host of things that the county needs for public lands, and it has one little wilderness study area there, Burbank Canyons, which is very pretty. That would be a wilderness area as well. Next.

One of the things that we have been doing is speaking up for our public lands. Next. I wanted to make clear here where I am talking about the public land selloff. To differentiate, Nevada has long had a process of working through public lands bills with local stakeholders, local governments to determine where land is needed for community expansion or for community projects, and we are 100 percent supportive of that. The part that we were opposed to and had concerns here was selling big chunks of land for balancing the budget back in Washington. The public lands bills that we have here in Nevada, the money stays in Nevada. It is used in part for education for the counties, and so that is the way we have a model in Nevada that has worked for a long time, and we would like to see that continue. When we talk about no selling of public lands we are not talking about the work that we do through this public lands legislation and for legitimate community needs. I want to make that really clear. Next.

Earlier, Jose was talking about the plethora of solar projects coming. We have been working with Esmeralda County, the tribes, the sportsmen, and others on a proposal for 72,000 acres of solar. That is the Esmeralda Seven Project that would blanket a huge section of Esmeralda County that is totally surrounded by pretty wild places that have very important bighorn sheep habitat. We have been, like I said, working very closely with the sportsmen on this; and yeah, it is problematic. The counties are really struggling because these projects are coming one after another. Next.

Another thing that we have been working on is the roadless rule. That is about to be rescinded. A number of other rules that have protected and kept intact a lot of our wildlife habitat are being dismantled. Next.

The state Legislature was very, and a number of you on this Committee— Just excuse me for a second while I take a quick sip of water. The Air Force did an EIS a number of years

ago about taking over another chunk of the desert refuge, closing down the Alamo Road, and while they have not yet done that, it is still on the books. We are keeping an eye on it. We are trying to work cooperatively with the Air Force Fish and Wildlife Service on doing a variety of projects there, but I want the Legislative Committee to be aware that this could come up at some point in the future. Next.

We also formally review projects that could affect wild places across Nevada. Next.

And then I wanted to talk about something a little happier. A number of years ago, we kind of got involved in a dark sky program. Next. Here is a map of the lights at night, and you can see Nevada. You can see why we are positioned so amazingly for dark sky tourism. We have a lot of dark skies, because we have a lot of public lands that has kept development down and kept our skies dark. Next.

In 2019, the Massacre Rim, the Bureau of Land Management asked us to work with them to see if we could get a certification for the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area as a dark sky sanctuary, and we did all the paperwork and the monitoring. Next slide. It became the world's seventh dark sky sanctuary. You can see the star is not quite in the right spot, but up in that corner of Washoe County. This has been really popular. So much great tourism up in the northern part here, but there is more. Next.

We also started looking at the map of Nevada, and Great Basin obviously has a tremendous dark sky program, as does Death Valley. If you drive from Death Valley to Great Basin National Park, you go through all these wonderful towns Beatty, Goldfield, Tonopah, Ely, Baker, and so on. We started working with Travel Nevada and others like what could we do to help promote dark sky tourism along the route. We kind of came up with the "Park to Park in the Dark." Next slide. It became Nevada's first astronomy route, and this was a great poster that was made—"The Starry-est Route in America"—drawing attention to the beautiful dark skies, and how it can help expand the astro tourism in rural counties. Next.

Then we got thinking about a license plate, and in 2023, it was finally approved. It was available for the public to purchase in May of 2024, and we have over 5,000 of those plates on the road right now. Next. The money from the funds from that plate come to Friends of Nevada Wilderness for us to continue doing dark sky monitoring, but we also have been supporting the Division of Outdoor Recreation and putting toolkits together, buying monitors for them to loan out to other communities who might want to monitor their dark skies. We produced some brochures for the Spring Valley State Park and a whole variety of other things. We are excited about the opportunity, and the more funds that we have, the more that we can help others, whether it is schools with telescopes or other projects.

We are working with Gerlach. They want to get a certification, a state certification, for dark skies, but it is an exciting way to be able to give back. Next. Again, it is a great thing that Lincoln County is doing to get the dark sky certification for Spring Valley State Park. Next. Last week was International Dark Sky Week, and Lincoln County, Washoe County, City of Ely, Boulder City, Carson City, and the town of Genoa all issued proclamations on Dark Sky Week. Each year more people get excited and involved in it. Next.

So what else do we do? We steward and we restore. We have a large volunteer program. Next. As we say, wilderness cannot care for itself, but our volunteers are really good at doing that. Next. Couple of the things that we have been doing. We partner with all four of the federal agencies: the BLM; Forest Service; Fish and Wildlife Service; Park Service. Get our volunteers out taking care of our wild public land. Pulling fence to keep wildlife from

getting entangled. Next. We are putting little tags on fences so sage grouse do not run into them. Apparently, that is a real problem. Next.

Some work that our volunteers did up on the Griffith Peak Trail in the Spring Mountains after the Carpenter One Fire. There is restoration of the land, but there is also restoration of the public trails and access afterwards, too. Next.

Graffiti, wherever there is people you have a tendency to have graffiti, so we try to remove that. Next.

We do planting of native seedlings. Here is one out in the Mormon Mountains; we work in partnership with NDOW. Next. And speaking of weeds, we have our Mount Rose wilderness weed warriors where we have been working for the last six years or so removing the invasive musk thistle is the one that is there, and we are making a difference. Those populations are getting smaller and smaller, and we do follow-up in the fall with reseeding of natives. Next.

We also, in partnership with the BLM, just had a cool project collecting white bark pine seeds because the white bark pines are starting to die off in places. Over the last few years, we have been getting seeds from really remote places up in the Black Rock area for research. Next.

Then we had a four- or five-year program of monitoring springs in Clark County. Our crews monitored over 520 springs during that time. Next. We are still doing monitoring work out on the Desert National Wildlife Refuge working with Fish and Wildlife Service to monitor springs that are pretty hard to get to. Next.

We also started a program for—we call it the Gateway to the Outdoors Program—trying to bring in people who are not really familiar with the outdoors, getting them doing some cool projects here. This is out at Lake Mead, but learning a bit about the outdoors, why it is important to take care of it, and how to camp. Next.

Senator Hansen, you were asking about trail crews and the Forest Service not having them any longer. We have been doing an awful lot of the trail maintenance in the wilderness areas, and there is a handout, ([Agenda Item IX A-2](#)) probably in your package, but also there that shows in the last five years all the by county the miles of trails that we have been working on maintaining. Next.

Since 2012, we have maintained over almost 800 miles of trail, cleared almost 4,000 trees off of the trails. We have employed 22 crews, and these are good-paying jobs. These are not volunteers. Our trail crews are full-on employees. We worked and we have gotten a bunch of pack support. We work really closely with Back Country Horsemen, and bless their heart, they helped pack us in. In fact, one of our volunteers you may have heard of, Senator Dean Heller. He and his wife are part of the Back Country Horsemen, and they have been awesome at getting help, helping pack in the stuff that our crews need for long hikes out in the middle of nowhere. And you will see that they are using a crosscut saw. All of our crews are certified in crosscut saws and very good with them. Next.

There is a before and after. If any of you do much hiking up in some of these places, the rose bushes and other riparian vegetation can make them pretty hard to get through. Next.

Jose had mentioned this and Lance as well. We have an agreement to do some real major trail rebuilding after fire and some horrible flooding. Here is some before and after work on

Hampton Creek. We are working really closely with, again, the horse packers to make sure that these steps and everything are all, you know, that will work for the horse packing and mules and whoever else is up there. There was a before and after. Next.

Again, the pack support is so important for us to be able to get food and water up for our crews as they are working in these higher and more remote areas. Next.

This one is just fun cause you do not see pack goats all that often, but Molly with the Backcountry Hunters & Anglers have pack goats, so they provide some support. Next.

Benefits of the trail, pretty much self-evident, but cuts down the erosion, keeps it safer. Sometimes we are the only presence since the Forest Service really does not have the staff that it used to. We might be the only people that people out there see, and if there are issues, we can report back to our partnering agencies. Next.

We also produce and sell trail maps, if you want any. We have quite a few of them that we have made and they are all pretty up-to-date. Of course we do that in partnership with the agencies. Next.

We did a lot of work up in the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge. Pulled out over 135 tons of metal, over 400 miles of unneeded barbed wire. There is a pile of stuff we have pulled off the refuge over the years. Next. It is a beautiful area up there. Next.

In 2025, we did 34 stewardship projects. We maintained 43 miles of trail; 404 volunteers donated 4,500 plus hours of service, almost a quarter of a million dollars of in-kind volunteer work. We could not do it without our volunteers. Next.

Going back to some of the funding issues we were talking about because we do not have the tie-in with fire as much. While the money is there and the local offices want us to do some of the work, our agreements have not been approved back in Washington, so we have not gotten any of our federal assistance agreements that typically fund our stewardship program. So, we have been relying on our members and supporters. They have been upping their donations. We have been trying to find alternate funding to get this done because the work still needs to be done. We need to keep finding new sources of funding until maybe those federal agreements shake loose. Next.

We also list all of our upcoming projects on our website, so if you want to come out on any one of them, please check out Nevadawilderness.org and join us. We would love to have you out, and that is it. Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. That was a great presentation, and I am guessing our members have some questions. I will start with Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen:

Thanks, Madam Chair. Looks like you guys do lots of good stuff, but I got one issue. Traditionally, for community expansion to get federal lands, it did not take an act of Congress. And what has happened is, like for me, Washoe County already has the Black Rock area. We have some significant areas that are kind of already wilderness or quasi-wilderness. Because of these bills, which have these massive hundreds of thousands of wilderness acres tied up in them, it creates a huge conflict. Instead of being able to get the 5 to 15,000 acres that the Reno-Sparks area needs to expand, in order to get that 5 or

15, we essentially have to give up hundreds of thousands of acres that will be eliminated for everything from exploration for mining or whatever potential growth areas those are for rural areas. In those areas, they are denied once they become wilderness or quasi-wilderness. I am kind of wondering, why do we now have to have this almost like—I would consider it, frankly, almost like a blackmail—before we will give Reno and Sparks or Clark County 5,000, 10,000 acres, those counties have to agree to give up hundreds of thousands of acres in their more rural pockets. Why is it we cannot just do what we did traditionally, and that is, get the land in a reasonable area around municipalities to allow for their expansion. This is a problem in virtually every city in rural Nevada, is trying to expand and landlocked, and I think this insistence on having a wilderness component to these bills creates an unnecessary roadblock and political opposition that otherwise would not be there.

Executive Director Netherton:

A couple things that I would say to that. The BLM has the authority, without going through Congress, to sell lands through their land use planning process. I think because they have been so defunded and do not have staff, that has made that harder. If it goes through an act of Congress, it puts it up on a little bit higher priority level. But even that, I think, with the staff disappearing from the agencies, it is going to be challenging.

On the other, like up in Washoe, there is already those 800,000 acres of wilderness study area. Those have been there since the late 1970s. What we are trying to do is resolve them, working with the landowners to make the boundaries more usable for them. I do not see it as like a hostage situation. I see it as a way to—because it does take an act of Congress—to resolve those WSAs. This is an opportunity to resolve them, maybe change the management working with the sportsmen and others to come up with something that works for everybody. I see it as a process that allows for dealing with those WSAs that have been there for a long time in a way that is working for a lot of other people.

I would also say that there is two sides of a coin there. There is a lot of people who are, “I do not want to lose one acre of public lands.” And those folks are having a pretty strong voice right now as kind of a backlash to what was going on in Congress to sell public lands for the Budget Reconciliation Bill. I think that you see that. I think there was an article about the Douglas County bill that may have come out. About, oh my God, you know, Congress is trying to sell or give thousands of acres to the state. It is really nuanced in Nevada. It is not an easy thing; it is a wonky thing. And it is harder to explain to people, but people are kind of entrenched in not a single acre of public lands should be sold, ever, for any reason. But if you do combine selling and conservation, for some people that makes it a little bit more palatable.

Senator Hansen:

Okay, next question. You touched on wilderness study areas that go back to the 1970s. Fifty years they have been locked up. They have been studied and they are not being designated as wilderness. Would you favor the elimination of calling them wilderness study areas and allow them to go back into traditional public domain uses?

Executive Director Netherton:

No, and I say that because these areas have been protected for a long time, and I think people are pretty used to them being protected now. I know a lot of ranchers that we have talked to are pretty happy with them, not all of them, but some of them really are. And as we look to resolve them, because it does take an act of Congress to get rid of a wilderness

study area, to make it wilderness or release it for uses other than wilderness. I mean, a lot of these areas are still very multiple use. They are not open to new mineral extraction or oil and gas leasing. They are not open to those kinds of commodities, but they are still there for grazing, for wildlife, for hunting, for hiking, so many other things for the tourism. I think the tourism potential in Nevada and the outdoor industry, as the Division of Outdoor Recreations, these lands have a lot of economic value for things other than just extractive interests, which will, you know, destroy those values. So—.

Senator Hansen:

Well, I assume that there is actual mineralization, because one of the things that they would study in the wilderness study area concept was whether or not there is mineralization zones within them.

Anyway, a last question along those lines. The green energy issue that White Pine and Lincoln County brought up, the amount of land that is going to be essentially dramatically altered. Are you guys aggressively opposing those? Because I have got to tell you, after hearing what I heard today and the number of acres we are talking about, that is the biggest threat that I have heard to the public lands in Nevada in decades. I mean this is like the MX missile all over again or something.

Executive Director Netherton:

It is. It is. It puts us in kind of a weird place because obviously, there is a lot of support for green energy. We are not opposed to solar, or wind, or other projects; it is all about where it is sited. Somebody was mentioning, well, like the mining tailings, why do you not put them on disturbed lands? I think so many people have been saying, rooftop solar, more distributive energy, different places that you could put solar where there are already disturbed areas, but it is so much easier to just go get a big chunk of BLM. And that one in Esmeralda County that I briefly mentioned, like the combined with those 7-7 proposals was about the size of Las Vegas. I mean, they are huge, and I do not think that is— I mean, that is a single use. That blocks out everything else. I am very concerned with the siting and so little with the NEPA process being streamlined, as you heard Robbie was talking about, it gives less and less time for anybody to be engaged, for the local communities to be engaged. And you know, it is like done. I think it is a real concern. It worries me. It is one of the scariest things that I have seen.

Senator Hansen:

Yeah, I say it is a dilemma because the environmental movement that pushed the whole green energy thing is now faced with the reality that— Like Northern Spring Valley, I do not know about you, but when I see those ugly windmill things out there, I think it is a desecration of Nevada. And when I see that concept being applied in valley after valley after valley now, all across not only eastern Nevada but northern Nevada, central Nevada, it just— It is like it defeats the original purpose of— At least green energy was to try to reduce some of man's input on the land, yet it is disproportionately being pushed down on the State of Nevada because we, in fact, have public lands that can be used for that.

Executive Director Netherton:

Right?

Senator Hansen:

So, I would hope that a group calling itself the Wilderness Protectors of Nevada would certainly get heavily involved in, if nothing else, making sure that the county commissions have some say in the approval of these projects and their locations.

Executive Director Netherton:

Absolutely, yeah. No, and Esmeralda County, I think now has a county process, but you know, it is almost coming too late. I think Jose was talking about it. You know they are behind. Those projects started coming so fast and furious, like nobody could keep up with them. It is a real problem. If you could put it along like Interstate 80, which is what we have always thought would be a great place for like GreenLink North to be through there, and then in that checkerboard area, you could block that up. That was part of what the Pershing bill was all about. Lock that up and you could put solar or geothermal facilities along there where you already have the infrastructure and it is right along the interstate and people are not going to complain too much about that, but you start filling these valleys that are big for sage grouse. It is a real problem, Senator. I agree.

Senator Hansen:

And last thought along those lines. The abatement of taxation for the counties. The elimination of the requirements to protect sage grouse in these projects. That kind of stuff is like— If we are really serious about the ability of a market-driven energy source, you should not need abatements, first of all. Secondly, it is wrong for these small rural counties to be forced to basically subsidize federally sponsored projects. And last, if we are really serious about protecting things like potentially endangered species, it is odd to me that we would accept some like an exemption from the rules for green energy projects, whose very theory behind them is to try to protect the environment and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. I would think that you guys, and the whole green energy movement, and the environmental movement, and the save the wilderness folks would all be aggressive opponents of these kind of exemptions for rules, but also the incredible changes that we are going to witness on the public lands that we are all here to try to hopefully preserve and make sure that they are used wisely.

Executive Director Netherton:

I could not have said it better. I agree. I think that the tax abatements are a horrible thing, and I see it across the rural counties that they are getting more and more burden of having to do the emergency services, find housing and all of that, and it is totally unfair and wrong.

Senator Hansen:

Shaaron, we are on the same page on that one. Thank you for your presentation today.

Chair Scheible:

Other questions? Commissioner Jones.

Commissioner Jones:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I saw in your presentation that you had mentioned several of the northern bills, but I did not hear any mention of Clark. Clark bill, which I was in D.C. lobbying on last week, includes 1.2 million acres of wilderness designation and 2 million

acres of conservation. Is Friends of Nevada Wilderness taking a position today on the Clark bill?

Executive Director Netherton:

No, we have always been supportive of the Clark bill. Yeah. These were newer ones and that some of them might be moving, so those are the ones that I highlighted. But no, we have been supportive of Senator Cortez Masto and her work down there and very grateful that the wilderness proposal in there for the desert refuge, because we were hopeful that that might help keep back an Air Force expansion that would block people out of that publicly accessible part of the refuge.

Commissioner Jones:

Okay, thanks.

Chair Scheible:

Vice Chair Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you so much, and thank you for the presentation. I have two questions. The first is actually something that was not mentioned on here, but I believe I have had conversations with you guys in the past and that has to do with all the animal crossings and where you are with that because that is something that I know we have talked in the past about and although you guys might not always be out there talking about it. What is your take on the wild animal crossings?

Executive Director Netherton:

I think they are terrific, and I am excited. We have been very supportive of the bills. Our populations of deer, people have talked about, are really going down. Anything that we can do to eliminate impacts of vehicles for both the safety of the people and the animals are great. We are huge supporters of wildlife crossings.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you so much. And then my other question actually has to do with the great numbers of 404 volunteers donating 4,509 hours. Are all of these volunteers coming from the counties that they are actually volunteering in? Are these sometimes people that will travel from the other counties that might help out?

Executive Director Netherton:

They are people who travel from other counties. We have people from Las Vegas that come up on some of the projects. We have had folks from Las Vegas come up and work on the Mount Moriah trail project. We have had people from Reno cross over. People, I mean, you have to travel across Nevada to get to these places. There is not very many right outside of the population centers, but we also have people that come from Oregon and California that just love to get over here and help out on variety of projects and trail projects.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you for that information, because I think that is something that sometimes we just forget about is that we are one state, and many times we concentrate on one or two counties, unfortunately, based upon where the population is. That is one of the reasons why I think all of us like being on Public Lands as well is getting a chance to visit the rest of the state. But I also think sometimes there is people that volunteer from those more populous counties that come into the other counties to also help out. If there is a way to possibly get a list of the volunteers that have gone or like numbers of some way so that way we can really celebrate that although sometimes attention might feel like it is only in those two counties, people do care about the entire state. Any sort of information we can show to illustrate that would be greatly appreciated. Thank you, Chair.

Executive Director Netherton:

Absolutely. A lot of our volunteers may not be familiar with a lot of the places. Maybe they have never been to White Pine County or one of these other counties. They can go out with us as a group and we help feed them; we have French press coffee in the morning. They are there with a little safety net and then they get to learn about it, and then they go out and take their family and friends and learn more about all the beautiful places Nevada has to offer.

Chair Scheible:

Other questions? All right. Thank you so much for joining us and for answering all of our questions. That concludes this agenda item and brings us to Agenda Item X.

AGENDA ITEM X—REVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES OF PUBLIC WATER AUTHORITIES, DISTRICTS, AND SYSTEMS

Chair Scheible:

As Mr. McDonald mentioned earlier today during his review of the Committee Brief, it is not only our responsibility but our obligation to hear from every water agency or water authority in the State of Nevada over the course of this interim on the Public Lands Committee. I think it is one of the most important roles that we play in the legislative process is to get these updates, to have a chance to ask questions, to get to know the water authorities better, because it comes up every session. We are going to be talking about it again in '27 and '29, and, until the end of time, I am sure. So, without further ado, we have three of the water authorities with us here today. We will have additional water authorities on our agendas in the next three meetings. We will start with the Las Vegas Valley Water District and the Southern Nevada Water Authority. Please introduce yourself and go ahead when you are ready.

Chaunsey Chau-Duong, Public Affairs Manager, Las Vegas Valley Water District and SNWA:

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the Committee. I had orders from Mr. McDonald to keep my presentation ([Agenda Item X A](#)) 15 minutes or less, and I will try to do that because I know I am on the last agenda. If someone could boot up the presentation. Next slide. Next slide.

These are the five pillars of what the SNWA is responsible for conservation, water supply planning, water quality, infrastructure, and stewardship. I will go into a little bit more in the subsequent slides. Next slide.

These are the SNWA Board of Directors. They are made up of member agencies within the local governments in southern Nevada. As you can see, Commissioner Jones, who is on this Committee, is also one of them. Next slide.

This is our SNWA Executive Team led by our General Manager John Entsminger, who is also the Chief Negotiator for the Colorado River for the State of Nevada. Next slide.

I really like to show this slide, because it shows kind of an aerial view of our regional water system. So SNWA is a wholesale water purveyor, meaning that we essentially take water from Lake Mead, we treat it at our water treatment facilities—Alfred Merritt Smith and River Mountains Water Treatment Facility—and then we send it to what we call retail member purveyors who actually deliver those water to customers. If you live in unincorporated Clark County or Las Vegas, you are a Las Vegas Valley Water District customer. If you live in the City of Henderson, you are a City of Henderson customer. North Las Vegas, et cetera. We serve 2.3 million residents and over 40 million visitors a year. Next slide.

These are the Southern Nevada Water Authority member agencies. We serve Laughlin; Boulder City is a member of Clark County Water Reclamation, which provides sewer service; City of Henderson; Las Vegas; Las Vegas Valley Water District; and North Las Vegas. Next slide.

I get questions a lot of what is the difference between the Las Vegas Valley Water District and why they actually manage the Southern Nevada Water Authority. So back in 1991, a cooperative agreement was formed between the member agencies to speak with one voice on the Colorado River. Prior then you had the City of Henderson, which had water rights, City of North Las Vegas, which had water rights, et cetera. It was kind of a difference of opinion how to manage the Colorado River resources. And so again, in 1991, those local governments came together, formed the Southern Nevada Water Authority so we can speak with one voice on the River. The advantages of that, of choosing the Las Vegas Valley Water to provide administrative services, is that we are the largest member agency with the most employees, so even though we have separate funding sources, separate budgets the advantage is it allows us to share technical skills, resources, and not duplicate efforts. Next slide.

You have heard of Nevada being the driest state in the union many times. Las Vegas is actually the driest metropolitan area in the United States. The only other place that is really drier is Death Valley, and as you may be aware, there is not many establishments in that. Next slide.

No surprise—Las Vegas is getting hotter. I have lived in Las Vegas, born and raised all my life, and last December I felt like there was not even a winter. As you can see from the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] report, it is getting hot. It is continuing to get hot in Las Vegas. Next slide.

The Colorado River is shared among the seven basin states and the country of Mexico. The upper basin consists of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico, and the lower basin is Arizona, Nevada, and California. Serves about 40 million people. Next slide.

As you probably are aware, 90 percent of our water in southern Nevada comes from Lake Mead via the Colorado River, with 10 percent being groundwater. Next slide.

If you have seen the recent news, you know that it is not looking good for the Colorado River. Inflows to the river are really, really bad. As you kind of see on the right graphic, Nevada has a smaller share of the Colorado River with 300,000 acre-feet. To put that in context, one acre-foot is 326,000 gallons. It is one acre-foot serves two households in southern Nevada. Next slide.

The Colorado River is in crisis. There are ongoing negotiations between the upper basin states and the lower basin states. The states have until June, and if not, the federal government will step in and provide a resolution. I think, based on our view, no state wants the federal government to get involved. They would like to solve the issue on their own. The only thing is how do we get there. Next slide.

I want to take a moment to talk about this slide. As I mentioned, Nevada has 300,000 acre-feet allotted to it from the Colorado River. Because of the Tier 1 shortage that is going on, we actually are allowed to use 279,000 acre-feet. In southern Nevada, actually we are at 198,000 acre-feet, so we are using much less than our allocation. The red bar on the furthest right is a scenario that the federal government has stated that they can execute if the states do not come to an agreement, cutting our allocation to 140,000 acre-feet. The delta between what we are using consumptively in 2025 and what is a scenario proposed by the federal government is pretty dire. If we get that scenario, we would certainly have to look at what types of water use is most appropriate, but as our General Manager John Entsminger would say, if it came to that, we would fight like hell to make sure Nevada's water resources is protected. Next slide.

The good thing is that southern Nevada has spent decades preparing for what is to come through infrastructure, resource planning, water banking, and conservation. Next slide.

Our water banking portfolio. As you see on the left bar graph, we have used 198,000 acre-feet consumptively in 2025. We have bank resources in Arizona, Nevada, and California. I want to caveat that even though we have ten times the consumptive water use stored as what was used in 2025, it is not something that we can pull out immediately. These are agreements with other states that allow us to pull water out in phased scenarios. So, just because we have 614,000 acre-feet stored in Arizona does not mean we can take it all out at once. Next slide.

For Southern Nevada Water Authority conservation is a key component. We have the smallest share, so we have had to be aggressive in our conservation measures. I am glad to say that all sectors of our community have stepped up businesses, hotel resorts, single family residentials, golf courses, developers. We have a moratorium on evaporative cooling. We do not have any new golf courses. All golf courses are on budgets; we are taking out nonfunctional turf. New septic systems are prohibited in southern Nevada, and we have tons of rebates for folks to take out their turf and plant trees. Next slide.

You can see the conservation measures have worked. In 2020, we were starting to see a really alarming trend of increased water use and so we established a new conservation goal of trying to get to 86 gallons per capita by 2035. We started rolling out those new conservation initiatives, and as you can see, the consumptive water use has steadily declined. 2023 was kind of an anomaly. It was a really wet year and so we do not really factor that in, but as you can see, there is still a decline going on in terms of water use. Next slide.

I want to stop on this slide because when I do this presentation in front of audiences, I ask how many people have come to Nevada, came to Nevada after 2002. About half or quarter of the folks raise their hand and I say, you were allowed to move to southern Nevada because of these conservation measures, because in 2002, we were using actually more water than was allocated to us. And so, through these conservation measures, as you can see, our population has increased 55 percent. Water use has declined, and our consumptive water use has declined as well. I think southern Nevada is a model for the explanation that you can continue to grow and develop while still conserving water. Next slide.

We are able to do a lot of these things because of our return flow credit system. Any water that hits the drain in southern Nevada is recycled, treated, sent up to Lake Mead, and used again. We recycle nearly all our indoor water use. And so, when we are focusing on water use, we are really focusing on outdoor irrigation, evaporative cooling, those types of water use that cannot be recaptured, treated, and reused again. Next slide.

We have our water resource portfolio that, excuse me, water resource plan that is a 50-year resource plan that is conducted and printed every year. For 2025 we have demand projections up until 2075 as long as we continue to try to meet our 86 gallons per capita per day threshold. As you can see, things look good. It is only if we start wavering and increase our gallons per capita per day, then we have to talk about future water resources. Next slide.

A future augmentation project that we are looking at is a project with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. They are a wholesale purveyor in California, similar to how we are in Nevada. We are partnering for them to build a wastewater reuse treatment facility. So currently right now, California, when the water is used, treated, and sent out to the ocean, their project, the Pure Water project, what we would do is in return for a financial contribution, we would get a portion of California's Colorado River allocation. Next slide.

These are our current initiatives. Again, continuing to negotiate among the seven basin states as the June deadline progresses, continued conservation goals and enhancements, comply with AB [Assembly Bill] 356. That was a bill back in 2021 that the Legislature passed eliminating nonfunctional turf and then continue to enhance existing SNWA programs. Next slide.

I am going to talk a little bit about the Las Vegas Valley Water District as well. Again, the Las Vegas Valley Water District is the largest member agency of the Southern Nevada Water Authority. Next slide. The Clark County Commission Board of County Commission sits as the Las Vegas Valley Water District Board of Directors. Next slide. And as well as the Executive Team for SNWA also serves as the Executive Team for the Las Vegas Valley Water District. Next slide.

Our system profile. We have over 447,000 accounts. Very large systems—over 7,000 miles of transmission and distribution lines; 42 reservoirs, which store up to 1 billion gallons of water; 55 pump stations; 62 production wells. Next slide.

The Las Vegas Valley Water District also maintains small systems—Laughlin; Blue Diamond; Kyle Canyon, which is Mount Charleston; Searchlight; Jean; Coyote Springs. Those are all small systems that we operate and maintain. Next slide.

For conservation measures, as you can see, for Las Vegas Valley Water District customers, you can see that when prior to our conservation initiatives, folks were using about

17,000 gallons per month. Now it has dropped to 8,000 gallons per month. Again, with the conservation initiatives and enhancements, we have seen a drastic decline in water use. Next slide.

For those Legislators in southern Nevada, you might be interested to know that we have a variety of customer assistance programs. We have a waterline protection program that essentially if there is anything from the meter to the street we cover, but sometimes if there is something from the meter to the house, that is the property owner's responsibility. We have an insurance program where folks can pay \$3.99 a month and if something happens, we have a contractor that comes out and can fix that. We also have a leak adjustment program. We are really focused on leaks because nobody likes them. People sometimes do not know they have leaks, and so, we have an adjustment program where if you go and you find a leak and you fix it, we will adjust your bill so you will not get that high water bill. We also have a reimbursement program. We will reimburse homeowners up to 50 percent of the cost to repair a leak, because we know leaks are costly to repair. And then, we have a low-income leak repair assistance program. If you fall below an income threshold, we work with a variety of partners you see here: City of Las Vegas pipe fitters, plumbers and pipefitters; and ULAN [United Labor Agency of Nevada] to provide assistance up to \$7,500 for folks to fix their leak free of cost. Next slide.

This slide I really like because it shows what a world-class water system Las Vegas Valley Water District is. The nonrevenue water is essentially leakage and so that is water that kind of leaks before it gets to the customer and so we are well within the single digit mark. Most utilities, water utilities are between 19 and 20 percent while we are only 5 percent. Our infrastructure leak index, anything one to two is excellent. We typically fall below two in terms of the leak index. Then our main break frequency. We average about two main breaks per 100 miles per year. That is well below the 20 to 30 main breaks typically experienced by U.S. other utilities. Next slide.

That is the conclusion of my presentation. I have 13:28.

Chair Scheible:

But you managed to pack a lot of great information into that brief presentation, and we appreciate both the information and the brevity. I think we will have some questions though. I will start this way with Assemblymember DeLong.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the presentation. I am referring to the slide that says new development, those two graphs with permanent resources, et cetera, et cetera. Can you give a brief explanation on what the permanent future supply is, what the temporary resources are, what the future resources are?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

I am guessing you are talking about this slide with the two?

Assemblymember DeLong:

Correct.

Mr. Chau-Duong:

The temporary resources are stuff—are things that we are doing. For example, like in lieu recharge or artificial recharge. That is kind of groundwater that we are kind of banking underneath and then those are kind of temporary uses. The future resources is the one I talked about in the next page in terms of the project with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. That is a future resource that currently, obviously there is no water now, but hopefully when that facility is constructed, we will be able to get that new water.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Quick follow-up, Chair? That banking slide with the ICS [intentionally created surplus] resource in there, too, where does that fall in this graph?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Oh, that is, let us see. That is a mix. Typically, with the southern Nevada bank we would probably say that is a future resource, but some of the other banks may be temporary in nature depending on our agreements with some of these states.

Chair Scheible:

Other questions? Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen:

Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, first of all, it is the first hearing I have ever been to where I almost looked back wistfully at your southern Nevada pipeline project. Seems so minor all of a sudden to me. Gross income of the Southern Nevada Water Authority. Roughly, how many dollars you guys bring in? The reason I am asking is you guys do a tremendous job. I mean, seriously, I got to compliment you as I look at the graphs, the planning, the infrastructure, all the thinking that goes into all of your projects are exceptionally impressive. But also, you may have the resources to do all those things. When we compare it to some of the smaller water municipalities or even Truckee Meadows Water Authority, what resources do you bring to the table that you are able to accomplish some of the frankly incredible things that you demonstrated today?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Senator, I think I may know what your question is. On the graph where we talk about the regional water system, we support about \$110 billion in gross domestic product. Is that what you are talking about?

Senator Hansen:

No, no. I mean, what is the income— If I am a ratepayer in Clark County, residential house, and I am on a meter or whatever, when you multiply everybody using the water, how much income goes to Southern Nevada Water in a normal year?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

That is something I do not have off the top of my head, Senator, but I can get you that information.

Senator Hansen:

I am just curious because all the projects that you showed on those cost lots and lots of money. They have been exceptionally, wisely invested from what I can tell. The amount of planning you guys have done way into the future, the amount of water that you have in underground reservoirs, and all that is exceptionally impressive. But also, I was curious, what did it take to get there? And what, right now, do you know what the average residential user pays in Clark County for water?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

For the Southern Nevada Water Authority, we do not deliver water directly to customers. With the Las Vegas Valley Water District, the amount of one's bill will differ if you live in the City of Henderson, versus if you live in the City of North Las Vegas, versus if you are a Las Vegas Valley Water District customer. It will differ. For Las Vegas Valley Water District, last time I checked it was around like \$50 to \$60. That is the average bill.

Senator Hansen:

Per month?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Per month. Yeah.

Senator Hansen:

Okay. Well, thank you. You guys doing a great job. Enjoyed your presentation. Got it under 15, and I have taken 3 or 4 minutes of your time already, so I am in trouble with the Chair, so we will go on to the next ones. Thank you.

Chair Scheible:

Yes, Commissioner Jones.

Commissioner Jones:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chau-Duong, for your extremely efficient presentation. I want to note that Mr. Entsminger joined the Board of the Economic Development Authority a few years ago to make sure that water was up front. We have talked a lot today with local governments about how do you evaluate projects and the impacts. Can you speak a little bit to the program that was developed, the scoring program that was developed between the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance and SNWA to evaluate projects that are being sought at through GOED [Governor's Office of Economic Development] or other agencies?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Yes. A while back we started working with the economic development agencies, the state, GOED, and then the county has one in Clark County, and then the cities have one, to understand what type of companies were coming into southern Nevada. Because they are a finite resource, there may be companies that probably would not be acceptable to be established in Clark County. An example is a water bottling company who wanted to come in and essentially use Lake Mead and export that product. We said, "Thanks, but no thanks." But as a result, we started developing a scorecard that we worked with the local

municipalities, and the county, and the state Governor's Office of Economic Development on to determine where those companies fall. And so, a company could get a score depending on what water usage they use, how many people they employ, the number of wages, and so that is something we have been developing to ensure that the companies moving into southern Nevada are appropriate.

Commissioner Jones:

And because data centers have been part of previous discussions, do you want to talk about how data centers were evaluated in that scoring criteria?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Sure. For data centers, the concern that we have on data centers is the use of water for their cooling. Evaporative cooling is— There is a moratorium in southern Nevada for evaporative cooling, and so any data center that is coming in, we are concerned about that. You have some legacy data centers who have been there before the evaporative cooling moratorium that continue to use it. However, there are new data centers that actually were built in the last couple of years who do not use evaporative cooling and use a closed system. For those, we are fine with those because they are not using that consumptive water.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. Any other questions? I do have one question. When you were talking about the Colorado River Compact and our possible reduction in allocation, I think I am saying that right, and I think that we have done a tremendous job reducing our consumption. It is now below our allocation, and I am concerned. I wonder if Southern Nevada Water Authority and the Las Vegas Valley Water District share this concern that we as a state are going to be essentially punished for having done that and get a smaller allocation because our use is less.

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Thank you for the question. For us having the smallest share of the Colorado River, we have had no choice but to have enhanced conservation measures. I think for folks at the other basin states, when they are looking at what we have done, the thought is—and this is what we have communicated to folks—is that you may have certain allocations on paper, but that does not change Mother Nature. If you know you are allocated a certain amount but there is no water, it still does not matter. And so, for us, we have had to do those enhanced conservation measures because we just do not know what the ultimate decision will be by the federal government and by Mother Nature. I think for us, we have tried to be proactive because we do not know what is there to come. Certainly, I would say that our conservation measures help us at the negotiating table when talking with other basin states.

Chair Scheible:

Can I ask a couple of follow-ups on that?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Sure.

Chair Scheible:

You had a kind of projected possible reduction. I am trying to find the slide as well.

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Is it slide 15?

Chair Scheible:

I am sure you are correct. Let us see. Indeed, it is.

Mr. Chau-Duong:

The one that says uncertain future?

Chair Scheible:

That is the SEIS [Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement] shortage scenario. Do you know what policy that reflects? Is it written down anywhere? Is this somebody's proposed solution or where does this number come from?

Mr. Chau-Duong:

Thank you for the question, Senator. That is a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement that was produced by the Bureau of Reclamation. The Bureau of Reclamation has proposed a variety of scenarios to address the shortage on the Colorado River. This is one of many scenarios, but I put this on the slide because it is an option being considered by the federal government. They proposed this option. The states have until June to figure out what to do. These proposals, one of many others, they have been tens of thousands of comments from municipalities, stakeholders, tribes to talk about what the federal government has proposed. So again, this is just one of many, but it is something that has been proposed.

Chair Scheible:

Okay, thank you. That does help clarify and now I have a better understanding. I appreciate that. Seeing no further questions or comments, we really appreciate you making the journey out here today to join us and for providing all this helpful information.

We will move on now to the next presentation from another agency, the Moapa Valley Water District.

Lon Dalley, Assistant General Manager, Moapa Valley Water District (MVWD):

Good afternoon. My slide presentation ([Agenda Item X B](#)) is not as thorough as our fellow water district over there. It will be pretty short and sweet. We do not want to take up too much time. It has been a long day, I think, for most people. So anyways, a little bit of a history. You can go to the next slide, please.

The Moapa Valley Water District, we were formed by state legislation in May of 1983, combining the Overton Water District and the Moapa Valley Water Company, which, really, I will get to that later, which were established in the mid-1900s, just two sister towns that operated separate combined to as one. We were created as a political subdivision. We are self-governed by five elected board members.

We are a rural water district located about 45 miles northeast of Las Vegas, about 30 miles southwest of Mesquite. We usually say that because everybody knows where Las Vegas and Mesquite is and do not know where Moapa Valley is very often. I do not know if any of you have been there, been through it, or there. They are on the State Park Valley Fire-Overton arm portion of Lake Mead.

Our surface territory is about 79 square miles and do cover both sides of the I-15 right there in Glendale, Moapa, Overton, Logandale. These are the towns that we service. Already stated that we service Overton, Logandale, Moapa, Warm Springs. That is where the majority of our water comes from, and also the Moapa, we service the Indian reservation of Paiutes.

Our service area population is about 9,500 people, a little less than Southern Nevada Water Authority. We have about 3,265 service connections. Our present-day demand is about 2,900 acre-feet per year, and as was mentioned by Southern Nevada Water Authority, an acre foot is 326,000 gallons a year ish. A typical lot size within our service territory is an acre. There is also many two-acre parcels, so we are very rural, compared to Vegas, if you will. We are also the only existing community within the lower White River flow system. I do not know if any of you are very familiar with the lower White River flow system, and it has made headlines before. Lincoln County is well-versed in that as well. They are tied into that lower White River flow system.

All of the Moapa Valley water resources are located in close proximity to environmentally sensitive areas such as endangered Moapa Dace. Again, that is located what I refer to as the Warm Springs area, which is in the upper end of Moapa. At present, the available water resource exceeds our demand, so we are able to meet the customers' needs at this point. Moapa Valley Water source water protection plan is a key component in these environmental sensitive areas. That builds on some of the questions that you guys asked with Southern Nevada Water Authority such as like data centers and growth and development. We want to make sure that our water resource is protected, and that falls under the water resource protection plan.

We engage in public education programs to promote water conservation with existing customers. Just recently we sent some of our crews to teach them, the high school—we only have the one high school there in the Valley—but we interact with the kids and teach them about the water resource and conservation and where the water comes from and what have you. A lot of people think that our water comes from Lake Mead, which it does not.

We are working with new developments to require low water use landscape themes. You also know Southern Nevada Water Authority is, I think, the premier example to look to with what they do and low water use and conservation.

We are engaged in leak detection, we are not quite in the realm of a single digit, nonuse water, non— Having a brain lapse. What is that? Nonrevenue. Thank you, Aaron. We are about 20 percent right now, and we are aggressively trying to narrow that down. We just, through the SRF [State Revolving Fund], we are doing a satellite leak detection where they fly over your service territory. I believe Virgin Valley Water District has already performed this, but we are in the process of doing it right now where they do use satellite imagery to fly over your service territory, try to determine where leaks are, then they put boots on the ground, and we try to investigate that. We are also actively engaged with the Bureau of Reclamation with grants in trying to change out some of our residential meters to try to eliminate that as a possibility of inaccurate reading to make sure that our nonrevenue actually is in leaks or not inaccurate meter readings.

We do recognize the new reality of conjunctive water use and water right management in the lower White River flow system and its effects on existing communities. We do recognize that there is over appropriation of water basins in the State of Nevada, not just the lower White River flow system, but I believe it pertains to a lot of other basins within the State of Nevada. And we also are aware of the demand of water resources from developments such as proposed, excuse me, data centers and the water use that they need.

We got the export of purchased MVIC stock, which is the Muddy Valley Irrigation Company, which pretty much owns what is called the Muddy River. I do not know if you all are familiar again with this area, but you have the Muddy River, which is a decreed river from 1920. Muddy Valley Irrigation Company is the owner or the manager of those water rights. Southern Nevada Water Authority owns quite a few of those; kudos to them for shoring up their water rights.

The export of purchased MVIC stock. This exporting of water rights effectively follows the land to which the water has been appurtenant. As the fallowed land is within the MVWD service area, it leaves MVWD with the responsibility to find resources to serve the fallowed land. That is pointing out that we got to cover that. Those dried up fields, you know, when, things are developed.

Other key issues. Right-of-way acquisition from the Bureau of Land Management, who has the regulatory authority for activities on public lands throughout the MVWD service territory. I heard the BLM state earlier that there was a policy that they are supposed to have their environmental studies done within two years. I do not know where that policy sits, but we had an easement in to the BLM for over ten years and it never was acted upon. And it is kind of ironic because the easement was for drilling a well out of Meadow Valley Wash, which was a monitoring well, which would have gave federal agencies information on what the water system was doing in that area, but BLM never acted on that easement. We actually end up losing funding due to that inaccuracy or in act— I am a little nervous if you cannot tell. Anyways, we have had many other applications in to the BLM for easements and what have you that are still sitting and has been well over two years. I will say it is getting a little better, but I do not know where that two-year time frame comes from to get things done.

Moapa Valley Water District has roughly 43,000 acres of rural open land inside our service territory, and I use the phrase that we have 79 acres within our service territory. If you convert our 43,000 acres, that is about 15 percent; 85 percent of our service territory is still open land. It is still undeveloped, and so that could be an issue for us with supplying the remainder of that with the limited water resources in southern Nevada.

Another concern or key issue for us is public land disposal within adjacent and existing service areas. It can have a significant impact on not just us but any water purveyor. That was addressed a little bit by Senator Hansen. He had a few questions on that, and that curtails the impacts on both the infrastructure and the water resources for those entities. We do have several thousand acres in the eastern part of our service area that are being considered for disposal and that is great concern for us to be able to service that disposal land.

We do ask that during the decision-making process of the public land use changes, impacts on water purveyors need to be considered. We also ask the impacts on water sources need to be considered and that funding mechanisms need to be developed to mitigate those impacts.

That is the end of my presentation. With that, I will take any questions.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. We appreciate you being here and that helpful information. I think we do have a few questions. I will start with Vice Chair Anderson.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Chair, and you did great. Thank you so much and thank you for going a little bit quicker than the last presenter. I feel comfortable making fun of, so it is okay, but you did really well.

My quick question, and you kind of touched upon it here at the end, but just to make sure I have got this right, that when development comes into this area, they do not have to double check the water usage. Instead, it becomes your responsibility to try to figure out how to make sure that that water is in fact available for a new development? Is that what I am understanding what you are saying?

Mr. Dalley:

No, that is not how it goes. We have a water dedication ordinance policy that any developer has to bring his own water to the table, if you will. We have enough resources to supply existing and a little bit of growth in addition to, but we require a developer to bring their own water, which makes it difficult. We understand that, but it is what it is. We cannot supply those developments with— And this ordinance happened in like 2006 before the recession hit where developers were really starting to look at Moapa Valley area and then things halted, but that is when this ordinance was created.

Vice Chair Anderson:

Thank you so much for that clarification because what a good ordinance it is to have. Thank you also for your other presentation. Thank you, Chair.

Chair Scheible:

Other questions? I have a couple questions. Just out of curiosity, do you guys serve the Valley Fire State Park?

Mr. Dalley:

We do not. We are just shy of that. Overton is just— Valley Fire State Park is probably a few miles outside of our service territory. They have their own wells that they drill, and the park service maintains and operates those.

Chair Scheible:

Okay, that makes sense, too. Can you give us an idea of— I am sorry, I think this was in your presentation, but what percentage of the water that you guys provide is used residentially versus commercially or in agriculture?

Mr. Dalley:

On that, I do not have the specific percentage or number for that, but we are majority residential. We have a few businesses down along the main street, then a few spread out

here and there. We used to have Nevada Energy's Reid Gardner Station, which was a coal-fired plant there in the Moapa area, but that shut down—was decommissioned in 2017. That was actually like 20 percent of our demand. That actually put a strain on us financially, but we have recouped since then a little bit, obviously through rate increases and what have you. But majority of our use, I do not have the percentage exactly, but would be residential.

Chair Scheible:

And we heard a lot from Southern Nevada Water Authority about reduction in water usage. Are you able to— I mean, you are so much smaller. I am guessing that— Are you one of those five lucky people who serves on the Board?

Mr. Dalley:

No.

Chair Scheible:

Okay. I am guessing you guys are a very small operation with just a handful of staff. I do not know if you even have the resources to keep track of your decreased usage over time and whether you have been implementing similar programs to try to reduce the household usage of water.

Mr. Dalley:

We are small. We have about 19, not about, we have 19 full-time employees. Ten of those are out in the field; the rest of us are in the office. I am the Assistant General Manager, so I am not a board member, no. What was your question again?

Chair Scheible:

What kind of water conservation mechanisms you have implemented in your District.

Mr. Dalley:

We have not hit conservation super heavy. We do have— We have implemented a— Our water rates. We have a base rate and then we have tiered usage. And then we have our fourth tier, which is a higher bill—a higher fee. That is essentially right now what we have as far as conservation goes. We are not as— Because we are not part of the Colorado River—we are part of the Colorado River basin, but not the Colorado River itself—we have not implemented our conservation measures as strictly as they have. And that will come when/if we do grow because we allocate right now an acre-foot of water per household, if you will, per meter, and we can definitely minimize that as you grow to try to conserve and to make that happen.

Chair Schieble:

That does make sense. I have one more question. I am sorry. I do not mean to quiz you.

Mr. Dalley:

No, you are good.

Chair Scheible:

I know what it is like to be in that seat. We have all done it a whole bunch, but when it is the first time you are ever doing it, it is nerve-wracking. But I am curious if you know how much of the water that you use is recycled.

Mr. Dalley:

We do not have the infrastructure to recycle household use right now. We do not manage that. Clark County Sanitation District does, which is part of the southern Nevada SNWA Coalition. They are one of their members. They manage that, and they have a treatment facility out there. But our usage is minimal, our reclaimed usage, so it would not be cost effective at this point to try to reclaim that and recycle. Right now, it just goes down and back into the ground. In the future, there is in place agreements to eventually put it back into the River, and then for SNWA to take half, we get half—if you will. There is agreements in place for that for future use, but as it sits now, it is not recouped.

Chair Scheible:

Okay. I appreciate that information. That is helpful to know. I think I have inspired Assemblymember, or you have inspired Assemblymember DeLong to ask a question as well. Go ahead.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the presentation. I toured your facilities earlier this year and you guys did a great job. With regard to your water sources at Warm Springs, do you remember what the date of your water rights are?

Mr. Dalley:

We have some that are late 1990s. We just purchased— The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has water rights in that area. We just purchased 2,300 acre-feet of those. The church owns groundwater rights and service rights. These water rights are surface water rights, so we are in the process of going through the steps to change applications to change the pointed version and the manner of use because they were before for Nevada Energy. We are still in the process with that with the State Engineer's Office, so—

Assemblymember DeLong:

Those are relatively—

Mr. Dalley:

Those dates are 1940s and those are some of the more senior rights within the lower White River flow system, but our existing rights are more junior than—

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you very much.

Chair Scheible:

All right, not seeing any further questions, thank you so much for being here, for answering all of our questions for your presentation. We really do appreciate it, and I am going to get you out of the hot seat just in time for Senator Hansen to join us.

I think we have one more presentation from the Virgin Valley Water District Authority. You will tell us and please go ahead whenever you are ready.

Aaron Bunker, Assistant General Manager, Virgin Valley Water District:

To give a brief background on the Water District and myself, I have been with the Water District for 18 years next month. I am a fifth generation of the Virgin Valley, so that has been— I enjoy that and glad I can be a part of that Valley and raise my family there.

The Virgin Valley Water District, we have about 12,000 connections. We were created, and I will get into that a little more here in my presentation. ([Agenda Item X C](#)) I have some slides as well. But yeah, we have about 12,000 connections. Our population, we consist of the town of Bunkerville and the City of Mesquite. The town of Bunkerville has about 1,000 people in it and the City of Mesquite has about 24,000. So altogether, we supply water to 25,000 residents. Next slide.

I will give a little brief history on the Valley as well as our distribution system and our water resources. I want to highlight; we recently done a perennial yield study. And if I may take a second, I am going to get a quick analogy—baseball. I know I am batting ninth right now and nobody wants to go extra innings, and so, I will try to efficiently get us around the bases and home.

Chair Scheible:

We are not late until 5 p.m. You have plenty of time.

Mr. Bunker:

I will give you a little future demands and challenges that we are working on. Next slide.

Again, the Valley. We have a unique situation that the lower Virgin River Valley, which is where we get our water from the groundwater basin, has three states: Utah; Nevada; and Arizona and four counties. You got Lincoln and Clark County in Nevada; Mojave County in Arizona; and Washington County in Utah. A lot of geopolitical lines that played a role in what we do there. Again, these communities have coexisted from the late 1800s, and again, the Virgin River is what links everyone together. As we will see, it has provided the opportunity but also a lot of challenges. Next slide.

I know this is kind of hard to see, but it is highlighting floods that the Virgin River has had over the years. There has been a lot of 100-year floods, even 500-year flood when a large reservoir upstream in Utah, Quil Creek Dam, broke in 1989, and that was quite the event. I think if you hit the next, it has a little video of, no, that is great.

So again, Virgin River is the lifeblood of us, but, when the residents first— There is a rich history in the Valley. The Paiutes have been there for generations. Modern history, the towns of Bunkerville and Mesquite were settled in the late 1800s, and they drink water out of the Virgin River. The Virgin River has really high dissolved solids. It is not very palatable, a lot of suspended solids. It was not very tasty. They went and looked and found springs up

on the surrounding mountains and were able to pipe them to the Valley, and that went over generations as they tried to improve that—1930s when they started. Even the Civilian Conservation Corps assisted in that program and in making spring boxes and pipelines down.

One thing I want to highlight in that lower-left corner is a cement tank, water tank. It is called three-mile tank. It is exactly three miles up gradient from the Virgin River on the foothills. There is a divider in that tank. On the left side is 40 percent and on the right side is 60 percent, and that is how the water was divvied up between the two communities—the Bunkerville and Mesquite. They have been sister communities for forever, and again, originally, the people had to come up in their wagons and there is a little spigot, and they could fill up their barrels and go back to town again, so they do not have to drink the ridge river water, and then that was expanded into town until there is a spigot in town and each home. As the springs could not keep up, wells were drilled. Next slide, please.

That is kind of where we are currently at. We show an underground water system, and I will highlight that later. But again, as needs continue, they built community organizations and ultimately, there was a private water company in the town of Bunkerville and a private water company in the town of Mesquite. It was funded by the residents, and when they needed infrastructure, usually one of the residents would take a mortgage, a second mortgage out of their home to pay for that infrastructure, which is not viable as you grow. And so, in 1993, thanks to state legislation—Warren Hardy played a role in that—the Virgin Valley Waters was created, and it combined the resources of the Bunkerville Water Use Association and the Mesquite Farmstead, the water rights and wells that those two communities had. Bunkerville had really apprehension of becoming part of the Water District at the time. Mesquite was much larger and they did not want to be swallowed up in that process. And so, for them to come on, they wanted that same split, the 40-60 split that that original water tank had. There are two board members from the town of Bunkerville and three from the City of Mesquite. There is some history there. Yep. Next slide, please.

Again, this is our present-day water system, and I will get a little more detail, but we do, we are groundwater driven. All of our resources come from groundwater wells. We have nine currently in use and two of them will be outfitted right now. I just ordered a bid on Tuesday for a new well to be outfitted, and we are under construction for a new arsenic treatment plant. We do have naturally occurring arsenic in the soil. In 2006, the standard for arsenic was lowered from 50 parts per billion down to 10 and that required us to create treatment plants. That was a big lift for our Valley. Ultimately, it cost us about \$38 million for our community and we had about three years to get that done. In 2009, we did get it done, and they work great and they are very high-tech and providing very clean and reliable water for us. Again, I will get a little more detail. Actually, next slide, please.

I will highlight the middle column, or I am sorry, middle row. We have to go fairly deep for our wells. On average, they are about 13 to 1,400 feet deep, but they are good producing water wells. The water quality is— It is hard water, but we deal with it. Next slide, please.

The topography in Mesquite. It is very varied. It is beautiful. A lot of people have some nice view lots of the surrounding mountain mesa, but for a water system, it creates some challenges having that varied height and elevation. We have to have quite a few booster stations to either bring water up from our lower elevations or pressure-reducing valves to lower it. Again, those are arsenic treatment plants and there is an additional one being built right now just to keep up with demand as Mesquite is growing quite rapidly. Next slide, please.

Again, this is a picture of the surrounding [inaudible] the Flat Top Mesa. Again, we have a gravity feed system. We boost the water up or pump it up to a water tank and then the gravity feeds down. It is very stable pressure. We have eight different pressure zones, and you can be at the high point of that pressure zone, you can have 40 PSI [pounds per square inch], which a lot of people complain at that—the showers are not very strong or that nature. But down at the bottom of the— You can be on the same street and at the bottom of the street, it can be at 140 PSI and that is actually, kind of hurt if you are in the shower having that pressure on you. So, it does create a lot of challenges, but we work around that. Next slide, please.

Again, I think it was mentioned. We have over 200 miles of pipes throughout our system and those 8 pressure zones, as I talked about. We have really prided ourselves in having an efficient system. As a gentleman from Southern Nevada Water Authority highlighted with his 5.1 of nonrevenue water, we are down to single digits. We are down to 7.1, which we are trying to work towards their goal. It is pretty impressive. We do, as Lon from Moapa Valley highlighted, some of the imagery with satellite as well. We started a program with a drone where we go and fly a drone that has infrared camera on it. It only works in the winter months when it is really cold, but as the water leaks happen, they actually create a heat signature, and we can fly around on the city streets, and we see those heat signatures and then we note them and send out our crew. And nine times out of ten, there is a water leak right there and we fix it. Just to highlight that this picture is actually my son. We had Bring Your Kid to Work Day. It was yesterday. This is a few years ago, but it is fun to be part of this community in that Valley. Next slide, please.

Again, with that infrastructure there is a lot of maintenance, a lot of things that wear out. We are constantly staying on top of that and that takes revenue, obviously. We try to stay on top of our rates. We have tiered rate structures that also encourage water conservation. I will highlight that a little more. We have not had to be as aggressive in our water conservation as, say, Las Vegas Valley, but being in the shadow of Las Vegas Valley, we have got to ride their coat tails with water commercials. Again, it is on everyone's mind, and all the new growth that is coming in is desertscape, zero scape. We mirror the Southern Nevada Water Authority in usage per resident. It is per connection, I should say. It is 8,000 gallons per connection per month, so that has been good for us. Next slide, please.

This is our water portfolio. Again, we do rely on groundwater and that is, you can see, it is 50 percent of our portfolio, but we do have surface water rights in the Virgin River, which is a tributary to the Colorado River. We are currently not using that for drinking water. We will lease it out to— Some agriculture users use it as well as golf courses in the Valley use it. I will highlight the City of Mesquite. They are in charge of the treatment of the wastewater in the City of Mesquite, and 100 percent of our wastewater is reused, and gray water is used at local golf courses and municipal parks and things of that nature. Next slide, please.

Every three years we update our master plan. And again, we are projecting growth and the needs of the Valley, and we are in the middle of updating our master plan right now. We will probably have it completed in about the next month or two. This is a little dated, this information. We do show where, if the projected growth, where we will maximize our groundwater allotment that we have been given by the State Engineer's Office, and we have a little over 12,000 acre-feet of groundwater rights. And it was at 2040 is when we are going to hit that allotment, and through conservation measures, we are pushing out to about 2055 right now. That is what our preliminary or draft is looking like in our master plan.

I know it is kind of small to read, but we highlight the next steps where we are going to have to go once we hit our allotted groundwater, and that is again, if we have to treat surface water. We recently did a feasibility study on treating the Virgin River water. Again, it has high sediment load and high dissolved solids, and we would have to do a reverse osmosis treatment process, which has its challenges. It is costly, energy intensive, and you have a waste solution that is—we do not have an ocean to dilute it with. And so, that study was showing it was going to be about three quarters of a billion dollars to use that water. Currently, it is not economically feasible for us to use our water in that regard. So again, that is why we lease it. The Southern Nevada Water Authority, we do lease some to them as well, and it is part of their [inaudible] surplus. Their banking system in Lake Mead, some of that water is leased to them. Next slide, please.

This is our water pumpage over the last 30 years. You can see in 2006, kind of onward, there is a trend right there where it flatlines. Again, we had extreme growth, and we were still growing at about 5 percent per year. There is about 400 new connections each year. And so, in that, what is it, 20-year period from 2006 to current, we have probably grown by about 30 percent, but our water usage has more or less flatlined. It is starting to harden a little bit, and you are seeing a little pick up there at the end right now. But again, that is all from conservation measures. We do have a conservation program. It is young in its process. But again, thanks again to the Southern Nevada Water Authority, we really have got to ride their coat tails a bit on those measures. The one program that we do have is rebates on sprinkler timers. We know that most of the water that is wasted is outdoors. About 60 percent is used outdoors to 40 percent indoors, and so that is something we have been working towards. Next slide, please.

With Nevada, there is about 256 basins throughout the state, and each basin has had a water—I cannot think of the word I want right now—but a perennial yield study, or something of that nature, a water study done on it. And some of those studies that the state did, they are getting—they were done in the '40s, '50s, and '60s—so they are getting up in years. There is more additional data since then and better technology; that is something we have been working on. The picture in the middle is our reconnaissance report. It was done in 1969, and it gave the allocations of how much water could be used in the lower Virgin River basin. It was 3,600 acre-feet of groundwater with a system yield of 100,000 acre-feet. Again, that is the water that you can use beneficially without depleting the groundwater. Next slide, please.

Knowing that we would like to continue to use groundwater, and we have also talked to the State Engineer's Office, knowing that our basin is not one that has been in a lot of conflict, and at some point, they will, from our understanding, update their perennial yield studies, but that might be a long time down the road for us that they do that. And so, we are trying to get out ahead of it—next slide, please—and perform our own study. With our basin straddling three states, there is a lot of water law that Nevada does not have control over, what happens in those other states and so that is a concern for us. You can see some highlights with the stars in there. We actually have precipitation gauges at some of the high elevation mountains surrounding our basin that we go and track as well and that is what that is highlighted. Next slide, please.

There has been a lot of groundwater studies that has been done over the years. Again, I am highlighting some of the quotes from different State Engineers and staff at the Nevada Water Resource. They are saying that our basin is in good standing, but they have also said they would not allocate any more water rights until a new study was done. Next slide, please.

That brings us to us doing our own perennial yield study. We started that five years ago and we completed it last October. I want to put the preface; I am not a groundwater modeler. There is a lot of software that has gone into that, and I want to highlight some of the things, but that is not my expertise per se, but the groundwater model that we had done, it is a two-part process. It has a basin characterization model and a groundwater model, and there is a lot of layers to that. Next slide, please.

The basic characterization model, it takes climate data, soil properties, and that is again for vegetation, where it is growing, and then deeper down to the geology and compiles all the best available data. And that can be from the U.S. Geological Survey or any of the federal government that provide that data. It layers that information in the model, and then use that to calibrate it and match it to the real-world data that is available. Next slide, please.

That is the calibration process that highlights that you want to again match the real-world data. Next slide, please.

Once we were done with the basin characterization model, it showed there was about 38,000 acre-feet of recharge and there is water losses still on that with evaporation and transpiration of plants and things of that nature. You take that information and go to the next model, which is a groundwater model. Next slide, please.

All that data is overlaid and additional inputs, again. Next slide, please.

In the software packages that they have, there is many different packages added that give more clarification and refinement to that data and how you can use it in your model. Next slide, please.

But ultimately, all that you need it calibrated towards that data. Next slide please.

Our model was able to be well calibrated. It is within—they say a good, calibrated model is within 10 percent of the air—and ours was below 3. This is showing non-pumping conditions like the static water table, what the water level is in the basin. Next slide, please.

And this is pumping conditions. Again, it is less than 4 percent in error, compared to what the actual readings are. This is showing that it is a well calibrated model and that is something that is important, especially when at some point, we are going to present this to the State Engineer's Office, and we want to be able to have it well defensible and something that they can run and see that they are good data points. Next slide, please.

This is showing, again, it is well calibrated. I will hurry along. Next slide please.

Hopefully, the conclusion is that the perennial yield that we are finding with this study is about a little over 20,000 acre-feet of water. We have been granted a little over 12,000 acre-feet of water and so that is something for us that is important that we feel confident that the amount of water that we have been allocated by the State Engineer really is there. Hopefully we can, we do have applications in for additional water in the future and hope that can be granted and we can continue to grow and rely on that groundwater.

Another thing that we found out again in this study is there is additional perennial yield in each state; a neighboring state with Utah and Arizona. They have their own amount of water, and that is something that, again, when they start to grow and start using their own

resources, hopefully we do not have a conflict there, because hopefully there is enough water to go around. Next slide please.

We have an intensive monitoring program with monitoring wells throughout the basin to ensure that we are not mining the aquifer. You can see this is a hydrograph and this is going back from 2008. You can see most of those lines are flat, meaning that the aquifer is not being depleted. It is stable. Our pumping is not completing the aquifer; that is what you want to see. Next slide, please.

These are those rain gauges I talked about. Again, we have been in a drought in the last few decades—two decades for sure. We are still seeing rain on these high elevations, and that is where our recharge is happening for our aquifer in the lower Virgin River Valley. Next slide, please.

I am going to tie this back, again, to the beginning where it is a love-hate relationship with the Virgin River. We have had a lot of flooding in the past in the City of Mesquite. This is in 2005. The River came up and there is a lot of invasive tamarisk on the River and they actually created a barrier as other trees were uprooted. They would catch on these tamarisk and build more or less a natural vegetation dam across the River and to push the water further out into the flood plain until it flooded the City. In that lower right-hand corner is actually that little boat and some of my coworkers were going out and rescuing some people that were stranded in their homes and bringing them out of the water. Next slide, please.

That upper-left picture is in 2010. We had another massive flood and the community—I know it is kind of hard to see—but they did an impromptu levee. The City of Mesquite and some construction contractors in town got bulldozers and pushed water up to keep the River at bay. They succeeded for a time and then the levees were over. The water overran them and it ended up flooding again in that same neighborhood. Because of that, you can see in the right picture, again, in the 2023 water year when we had a lot of runoff, there was a flood that came down and it got right up to that cul-de-sac that flooded in 2005 and 2010, and then the water receded, and so there was a lot of happy people that day. But the City of Mesquite has been trying to get an official levee put in along that corridor and it has been challenging for them because it is right at the state line. That picture is on the state line. You see Arizona in the background where the water is, and where the towns or the homes are, it is Nevada. You have that, again, two jurisdictions of states, and you have FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], you have Army Corps of Engineers, BLM, state land; just a lot of bureaucracies to work through to get that levee put in. They have been trying for about the last decade, but that is something that would be a good thing to occur. Next slide, please.

Some of the challenges that we have seen. We were a rural community not too long ago. When I started school, it was K through 12 still, and I do not feel like I am all that old, but since then, we have grown a lot and feel like we have went through the junior high years and the awkwardness of the transition and we are in a really good place right now. Again, with the three states, that is something we hope is not a challenge for us in the future. But again, we are growing at a rapid pace and that is something we have. It is a challenge to stay ahead of that growth and provide the infrastructure that is needed for it. Next slide please.

I highlighted some of those challenges that we already had with the highs and lows of pressure in the infrastructure, with arsenic and things of that nature. Again, with the arsenic, that was a new regulation that we had to respond to, and so that is always a worry. You hear PFAS [Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances] a lot in the news right now. We have

done PFAS sampling and lucky for us, we do not have it. The groundwater has, I guess, protected us from that. I am sure it is probably in our surface water, but since we are not using that at this time, we have not had to worry about it. But there is always new regulations coming down the pike, and so we are always conscious of that. Next slide, please.

I will just read this. I like this quote. It says, "Perhaps it is a small town bias I hold, but the history of our home is very important. Not only to those of us who grew up in these small communities, but also to those who are now coming to this Valley and making it their home. One cannot appreciate the present without following the trail of history from past, through the present and into the future." I think the Virgin Valley has a bright future, and a lot of people like to call it home. That is where we have all the growth happening and have a good outlook for that to continue. Next slide.

Again, this is a picture on the left of that water reconnaissance report that is for the Virgin Valley. I was given this my first day on the job 18 years ago and said to learn it like the back of my hand. I looked at that picture, and I grew up on a farm in that Valley, and that is a picture of the family farm. It has been in the family for over 100 years. The state— I cannot remember which department actually did the Centennial Farms and Ranches program in the past and it was highlighted in that. But it kind of surprised me seeing the picture. I had never seen it, and the picture on the right is present day sitting on my parents' porch from that same location. My parents' house was not built yet in '69 when that report was done; it was built two years later, and that is still looking at the family farm today.

With that, I will take any questions you may have.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you so much, you did great. You were 20 minutes on the dot. We appreciate that, and I am guessing we are going to have some questions. I will start with Assemblymember DeLong.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for the presentation. Good to see you again.

Mr. Bunker:

Same.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Just a question about the growth in Mesquite. How close is the growth to the north up to the county line? Are you there yet or do you have room there?

Mr. Bunker:

The growth is right at the county line, so yeah, we are there. A lot of our infrastructure actually for Mesquite is actually across the county in Lincoln County. We have three wells and two arsenic treatment plants and three water tanks that all are actually situated in Lincoln County to get the height to bring the pressure down to across the county line. You are welcome.

Chair Schieble:

Other questions? Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen:

Thanks, Madam Chair. What is the population of Bunkerville?

Mr. Bunker:

It is hovering right around 1,000 people.

Senator Hansen:

1,000 and Mesquite?

Mr. Bunker:

Mesquite is about 24,000.

Senator Hansen:

Twenty-four thousand versus 1,000? And you guys get 40 percent and they get 60? You are doing all right. You have one of your slides where you kind of flatline consumption. Was it metered during that entire window or is that after metering?

Mr. Bunker:

No, it was metered throughout on that.

Senator Hansen:

Okay, so it has always been metered?

Mr. Bunker:

Correct.

Senator Hansen:

Okay, and then your name is Edward Bunker?

Mr. Bunker:

Sorry. It is Aaron Bunker.

Senator Hansen:

Well, the reason I ask is Edward Bunker is the founder of Bunkerville, is he not?

Mr. Bunker:

That is correct.

Senator Hansen:

That would be your great-great-grandfather?

Mr. Bunker:

That is correct.

Senator Hansen:

Very good. That is really cool actually. That is quite a history there.

Mr. Bunker:

It is. Thank you.

Senator Hansen:

And that is it. Thank you for your presentation. Sounds like you guys are handling things as best you can.

Chair Scheible:

I agree; that is really cool. Other questions? Okay. Sorry, hold on. I want to— You did say it and I missed, what percentage of the water is reclaimed and recycled?

Mr. Bunker:

100 percent is reclaimed and recycled.

Chair Scheible:

How long has that been going on? What did you have to do to get there?

Mr. Bunker:

It is not under our umbrella, so I am not as well-versed in how long that has been occurring. I do not dare say.

Chair Scheible:

That is okay, and then my last question was the arsenic treatment centers plants. You have four of them. It sounded like those were a little bit more recently installed. Can you give us kind of the timeline?

Mr. Bunker:

Yep. In 2006, the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] lowered the standard for arsenic, and we started doing pilot studies immediately because we knew our arsenic levels were going to be above that. And so, we had a couple of years of pilot study to find out the best treatment process that would work for us and the most economical. By 2009, we had already went out to bid in 2008 and 2009—June of 2009, the last of the five that were built then were completed. I was hired in May of 2008, and it was just getting started, so to build those, it took a little over a year for all five of them to be completed. Since then, in 2018,

we built a sixth arsenic treatment plant and now we are in the middle of building a seventh. It will be completed hopefully by this November. So—

Chair Scheible:

A year is not bad for five of them, I do not think. I have never built one, so I do not know. But do they treat the waters solely for arsenic? I see you nodding your head. In the future, could they be, I do not know if retrofitted is the right word, but modified to treat other issues that we later discover with water?

Mr. Bunker:

Sure. Currently they are solely for arsenic, but they also, through that process, remove iron. It is kind of interesting part of the process. We actually inject iron into the water. I am not a chemist either, but one of either arsenic or iron, I cannot remember which one, is a negative three ion, and the other one is positive. They bond together, and so actually have naturally iron in the water. When you chlorinate, it oxidizes it, and it actually is part of the treatment process. We do remove all iron and arsenic, part of that process, and depending on what the future contaminant is, there is a high possibility to be able to retrofit these plants to be able to treat additional contaminants.

Chair Scheible:

Okay, one last question. Does, and this might be silly, but does every drop of water go through an arsenic treatment plant, or is the idea that you treat enough of the water to dilute the untreated water?

Mr. Bunker:

A good question, and I should put a caveat, we have 1 out of our 11 wells is below the standard. It is our smallest producing well. It is only 350 gallons a minute, but it is at five parts per billion, which ten parts per billion is the maximum contamination level for arsenic. So that one well we get to disinfect chlorine and put it in the system. And then the arsenic treatment plant that we built in 2018, the source water of that well is at a 10 or 11, so it is right at or barely over, and so we have a different style of treatment there. Instead of having an injection of chemicals, we actually use an engineered media. It is an iron-based media, and then it actually bonds and absorbs the arsenic. To create longevity in that media, we actually bypass about 50 percent of the water and so it takes the one stream down to zero and then we bring the other and mixed in and then we keep it at about five parts per billion and so that has worked well for us and so a good question. Everything else though, yes, 100 percent of it goes through the treatment plants on the other wells. We have a range of the 5 parts per billion all the way up to about 86 parts per billion of arsenic, just depending on the well.

Chair Scheible:

Thank you. You clearly know your stuff, and we appreciate you sharing your knowledge with us. I think those are all of our questions. We invite you to take a step back. I think that concludes our presentations for today. We do still have two more things on the agenda, public comment and adjournment, so we will go into public comment at this time.

AGENDA ITEM XI—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Scheible:

Anybody wishing to give public comment in person is invited forward to the front table. You can give a second public comment; please go ahead when you are ready.

Bevan Lister, Resident, Lincoln County, Nevada:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not speaking for Farm Bureau now. I am speaking for Bevan Lister, Lincoln County resident, if you can separate the two. I got a couple of things. An AUM. Generally accepted as about 800 pounds of dry forage. So, what a cow and calf would eat in a normal month. If that helps you understand; there were some questions earlier about an AUM, about 800 pounds of dry forage.

Wild horse and burros. The Wild Horse and Burro Act as it is written and it was adopted is not a bad law, and it is very workable and would be very effective at managing and maintaining our wild horse and burro populations across the West. The challenge is congressional funding riders that then limit what tools can be used in the toolbox. Right now—and Robbie is not here to beat on me, so I can say what I want—my understanding is about 80 percent of wild horse and burro program funding is spent on horses and burros that are kept in long-term holding on pasture in the Midwest. That statement, the earlier public comment that said that they are in the slaughter channel is false. Those horses are kept on long-term holding, paid for pasture by the American public until they die, at an average cost of \$26,000 per horse through their lifetime. There are currently over 60,000 head of horses in long-term holding. If you want to do the numbers, it is a big number.

There has been several mentions of BLM ownership of land, Forest Service ownership of land. The equal footing doctrine of the *United States Constitution* demands that the land is held in trust and managed in trust for the benefit of the people of the state. I have argued—and Ira probably has heard me many times—I have argued for decades, our Legislature always has a decision to make. Are they going to be the Legislature for the State of Nevada, or are they going to be the Legislature for 12 percent of the State of Nevada? And that is really the challenge that you have before you as a Public Lands Committee of the Legislature. Do you want to be the Legislature for the state, or a Committee for the State of Nevada or for that 12 percent that is private land? That question has huge impacts for all of us, especially in the rural parts of the state.

Solar. Many of you, if you live in the Las Vegas Valley, if you have been either south, east, north, or west; you have seen extensive solar developments on land that was once grazed by cattle and sheep. Those cattle and sheep were removed for the benefit of the desert tortoise. Now I am going to ask you if you think that those solar panels are more suitable for the desert tortoise than the cattle and sheep that were there and the water that was provided by those livestock operators. And then the other question, and this is just purely the country boy speaking, in my mind, they are ugly. Senator Hansen, you talked about that ugly windmill thing up in Spring Valley. I go through that beautiful desert country, and I see that thousands and tens of thousands of acres of mirrors and it just disgusts me. I would rather not be there. Personal, sorry.

You did talk some about NEPA changes, and they are significant. One of the things that has been repeated to me at very high levels that the current administration is heavily reliant on locally- and state-adopted policies and plans. If those policies and plans are not in place, then they are kind of at their liberty to do what they want, but they will rely definitively on

those things that we have written down and adopted. So, policies that affect grazing, and solar, and location, and water, and all of those things at the state and local level are absolutely crucial as we go forward.

Wilderness. Wilderness equals non-managed lands. I appreciate the Friends of Nevada Wilderness and that the current model of lands bills works for them. Let me tell you why it does not work for me. As a Lincoln County resident, I spent hundreds of hours working through the maps, and the ideas, and the thoughts, and the wilderness designations for the 2002 Lincoln County Land Act. We put that all packaged together as a group, as a Coalition. And I went back to Washington, D.C. and what we got back was something completely different. Now, we did get, at the date that it was signed, just right at 12 percent of Lincoln County being excluded from use. Secured and locked away in wilderness, grazing gone, any chance of mineral development gone, and no access. We were promised 90,000 acres to dispose of for community development and growth. To my knowledge and understanding, we are still working on the first 10,000 acres. So, there is a huge disparity in what has actually occurred. We would love to have that full 90,000 acres. Yeah, I know I am past my two minutes.

The only one other thing I will say. I am going to jump over to water—conjunctive management. Personal opinion. Please, please erase any mention of conjunctive management from Nevada water law. We have seen the huge boondoggle in the Humboldt Basin. Millions of dollars expended in trying to model how those things function conjunctively. We live in a basin-arranged state. The water is going to act differently here than it does 200 yards down the Valley or a half a mile down the Valley. It is going to be completely different in how it interacts with surface and groundwater; over every 100 yards is going to be different. Conjunctive management, as it is envisioned, cannot and does not work. Thank you very much.

Chair Scheible:

All right, thank you. I think we have some public comment on the phone as well. We will go there next, please.

AVH:

Thank you, Chair Scheible. To provide public comment, please press *9 now to take your place in the queue. Caller with the last three digits 736, please press *6 on your phone to unmute. Once again, go ahead caller. Caller, you are live. Please proceed.

Catherine Ryals, Resident, Sparks, Nevada:

Hello. I am calling in today in regards to our public lands and our wild horses. There are currently more than 50 BLM mustangs and burros sitting in kill pens processed and tagged directly to ship to slaughter in Mexico. These mustangs were rounded up and removed from their designated herd management areas. Many of them were sold as sale authority. Wild horses and burros are being offloaded like they do not matter. People are showing up in mass numbers to take possession, and then they turn around and flip them in the slaughter pipeline to make big profits off of it.

Let us think about this. A wild horse and burro can be obtained for as little as \$25 each. Do you realize it costs more to purchase a large adult size bag of dog food? That is right. Example one: a large bag of dog food of Iams is \$46.99, tax not included. Example two: Science Diet is \$129.99, tax not included.

We all know how much of a failure the adoption incentive program was, and the amount of wild horses and burros being flipped and dumped in the slaughter pipeline after the BLM issued their title. The sales authority is even worse of a failure, and that is just an understatement. Wild horses and burros are being offered for pennies on the dollar. This has created a firestorm of wild horses and burros continually being flipped in the slaughter pipeline by many adopters with bad intentions.

What is the BLM doing to protect and preserve America's wild horses and burros? The false claims of wild horses and burros being overpopulated is being pushed by individuals with their own agenda. BLM's own data confirms livestock outnumber wild horses and burros more than 30 to 1 on public lands. That does not include any of the unauthorized, illegal, and trespassed livestock on our public lands today. Wild horses and burros are and have been used continually as a scapegoat. Based on BLM's own data, it clearly indicates livestock is the primary cause for failing rangelands.

When is this going to stop? Completely sick of this. I do not want America's wild horses and burros gathered, removed, and rounded up from their designated herd management areas and sent to slaughter. I do not want my tax dollars used to round up wild horses and burros and pups from public land. Wild horses and burros are ecosystem engineers and are quite beneficial to the land. They dig water wells in drought conditions, crack ice during harsh winters, disperse seeds in their dung, and they coexist with all wildlife on the range. Stop the roundup. Stop the eradication. Stop the slaughter. Stop stealing their designated herd management areas.

Wild horses and burros have a legal right to be on public land. *Code of Federal Regulations* 43 CFR subpart 4700.0-6 states that wild horses and burros should be considered comparably with other resource values in the formulation of land use plans. This regulation means that in its development of land use plans, the BLM will consider wild horses and burros in a manner similar to the way it treats other resource values, such as wildlife, livestock, and other commercial land uses such as grazing and timber harvesting.

I can prove everything I said here today. There are more than 50 wild horses and burros in the slaughter pipeline right now in kill pens all across the United States. Our wild horses are being sold as sale authority for \$25, adopted and flipped, some in the same day in the slaughter pipeline. This is ridiculous. These wild horses and public lands belong to all of us, not just the select few that want wild horses removed and slaughtered for their own personal agendas. ([Agenda Item XI A](#))

Chair Scheible:

Thank you so much. Do we have anybody else on the line for public comment?

AVH:

Thank you, Chair Scheible. We have no additional callers at this time.

Chair Scheible:

All right, then that concludes our public comment for today. Takes us to the last item on our agenda.

As we adjourn, I do have a few housekeeping items. Housekeeping is not the right word. I have a few comments that I would like to make. I want to profusely thank our staff here. They are truly incredible. They do an incredible job at the legislative buildings to take this

show on the road. We have at least three members of AVH here plus all of our— I mean, who are part of LCB, but plus all of our Policy Analysts, and our Legal Counsel, and our Fiscal staff who are either present or online, so I want to express on behalf of the whole Committee our deepest appreciation for all of you. We also have Legislative Police who travel from Carson City down here. Not only are they joining us today, they are going to escort us tomorrow on a tour of Cathedral Gorge, and we are so appreciative of all of the work that you put in. You are here overnight to make sure that we could have this meeting here, which is also only made possible because Lincoln County so graciously invited us to present here, invited us into this amazing space. I will admit at one point I Googled the Thompson Opera House and I had to close the window because somebody was speaking. It has a fascinating history, as does the whole town of Pioche. We are so grateful to be here. Thank you, Commissioner Reese. I know Commissioner Path has other business to attend to, but thank you so much for welcoming us to your community, and thank you all. Thank you to those who traveled to be here as well.

As we close out this meeting, I also want to give my members of the Committee an opportunity to make any closing comments, particularly if there are other topics that you want us to discuss at the last three Public Lands meetings. This would be a great time to put those out on the table. Of course, you are always welcome to call me, email me, text me, and that goes for all of you as well. You cannot make comments right now, but you can always contact me if you have things that you want us to add to the agenda. Does anybody have any closing remarks? All right, in that case, we are finished, and we are adjourned.

The following written comments were submitted for the record:

- Christine Zammitt-Snow, Oakland Township, Michigan, Member of the Public ([Agenda Item XI B](#)).
- Aja Birch, Member of the Public ([Agenda Item XI C](#)).
- Sophia Tuckman, Resident, Las Vegas, Nevada ([Agenda Item XI D](#)).
- Norma VanZant, Resident, Pahrump, Nevada ([Agenda Item XI E](#)).

AGENDA ITEM XII—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Velazquez
Research Policy Assistant

Jered McDonald
Deputy Research Director

APPROVED BY:

Senator Melanie Scheible, Chair

Date: _____

MEETING MATERIALS

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item II	Adrienne and Justin Snow, Owners, Snow Livestock, LLC	Written Public Comment
Agenda Item III	Jered McDonald, Deputy Research Director, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau	Committee Brief
Agenda Item IV A	Diane Path, Commissioner, Lincoln County Board of Commissioners Mike Reese, Commissioner, Lincoln County Board of Commissioners	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item IV B	Jose Noriega, Commissioner, White Pine County Board of Commissioners Cody Odgers, Chair, Natural Resources Advisory Committee, White Pine County	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item V	Robbie McAboy Purdie-Williams, District Manager, Ely District Office, Bureau of Land Management, United States Department of the Interior	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VII	Robert Mergell, Administrator, Division of State Parks, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VIII	John Watt, Executive Director, Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition	Annual Report
Agenda Item IX A-1	Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director, Friends of Nevada Wilderness	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
<u>Agenda Item IX A-2</u>	Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director, Friends of Nevada Wilderness	Handout
<u>Agenda Item X A</u>	Chaunsey Chau-Duong, Public Affairs Manager, Las Vegas Valley Water District and Southern Nevada Water Authority	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
<u>Agenda Item X B</u>	Lon Dalley, Assistant General Manager, Moapa Valley Water District	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
<u>Agenda Item X C</u>	Aaron Bunker, Assistant General Manager, Virgin Valley Water District	Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation
<u>Agenda Item XI A</u>	Catherine Ryals, Resident, Sparks, Nevada	Written Public Comment
<u>Agenda Item XI B</u>	Christine Zammitt-Snow, Oakland Township, Michigan, Member of the Public	Written Public Comment
<u>Agenda Item XI C</u>	Aja Birch, Member of the Public	Written Public Comment
<u>Agenda Item XI D</u>	Sophia Tuckman, Resident, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written Public Comment
<u>Agenda Item XI E</u>	Norma VanZant, Resident, Pahrump, Nevada	Written Public Comment

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