

**Testimony of Bradley Crowell, Director
Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

**Assembly Bill 486
Assembly Committee on Government Affairs
April 4, 2019**

Good afternoon Chair Flores and members of the Committee. My name is Brad Crowell, and I am Director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR).

I am here today to present neutral testimony on Assembly Bill 486, which would create a new Division of Outdoor Recreation within the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The intent of AB 486 aligns well with NDCNR's mission to protect, manage, and enhance Nevada's cultural, natural, and recreational resources. NDCNR is currently composed of ten (10) unique Divisions and Programs, all of which intersect on one or more levels with outdoor recreation.

The most obvious intersection, of course, is with the Nevada Division of State Parks, which manages 27 outstanding state parks, recreation areas, and historic sites across Nevada. In 2018, the Division set a new record with 3.69 million visitors while undertaking the creation of two new state parks. In addition to managing our state park system, the Division also plays an important role in helping create outdoor recreational opportunities beyond our park boundaries to encourage people to get outside. Two important areas through which this is accomplished is providing grants to numerous state and local agencies via the Federal Recreational Trails Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Another outdoor recreation oriented program housed in NDCNR is the Off-Highway Vehicles Program, which promotes the safe and responsible use of Nevada's off-highway recreational opportunities. The program is overseen by the OHV Commission to ensure that OHV

registration fees are used on the ground to create tomorrow's off-highway adventures. Each year, the OHV Commission awards approximately \$1 million in grants to fund planning, mapping, signage, land acquisition, education, construction, restoration, and maintenance of OHV trails and trailhead facilities.

To help assess recreational needs and opportunities in Nevada, the Department facilitates regular, state-wide visitor surveys. In 2016, a Survey of Outdoor Recreation in Nevada found that 68% of respondents travelled 100 miles or more to recreate within the State. Additionally, Nevada hosts a large numbers of year-round visitors, many of whom come for hiking, history, hunting, fishing, boating, and more, regardless of the season. Studies consistently demonstrate that there are significant economic, social, and health benefits to outdoor recreation. Accordingly, it is critical that we provide a coordinated and diverse set of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Nevadans and visitors to our great State.

The goals of the proposed Division of Outdoor Recreation correspond with the priorities identified in Nevada's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan assembled under NDCNR. The priorities of the Plan are to: (1) Maintain and rehabilitate existing facilities; (2) Increase connectivity between trails, facilities, and other recreation locations; (3) Ensure safety; (4) Develop new facilities; (5) Conserve water and habitat; (6) Engage youth; (7) Integrate with economic security and growth; and (8) Meet the needs of underserved regions and populations. A new Division of Outdoor Recreation will help further enhance and implement this Plan throughout Nevada.

As we all know, outdoor recreation is an integral part of life in Nevada. Our State's natural attractions are abundant and unique. From the diverse natural landscapes to the culture and history within those environments, Nevada's residents and visitors have much to explore. Unfettered access to adventure is one of Nevada's greatest assets. Therefore, providing the amenities and infrastructure necessary for our residents and visitors to explore the State's remote and rugged landscape is one of Nevada's greatest opportunities.

As demand for outdoor recreation in Nevada continues to grow, the NDCNR strives to develop, maintain, and improve Nevada's outdoor recreation opportunities. Our challenge is to improve the quantity and quality of recreation, while keeping in mind that such recreation relies upon natural resources that must be protected. NDCNR strongly believes that blending the conservation of Nevada's spectacular natural resources with sustainable recreation is the key to providing one-of-a-kind outdoor recreation experiences that will increase tourism and economic development, while improving the health and enhancing the quality of life of all Nevadans.

Again, while NDCNR is neutral on AB 486, we strongly support the intent and spirit of creating a new Division of Outdoor Recreation.