

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

**Senate Bill 155**  
**Senate Committee on Natural Resources**  
**March 18, 2021**

Chair Donate and members of the committee, for the record my name is Bradley Crowell, Director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

I thank the committee for bringing forward SB 155, a bipartisan measure sponsored by the Interim Public Lands Committee. Specifically, I'd like to express my appreciation to Senators Hansen and Brooks who served on the Interim Committee and supported advancing this measure as a BDR.

I appreciate being joined today to introduce SB 155 by Ms. Heidi Swank; the former chair of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee and a member of the Interim Public Lands Committee this past interim when the BDR concept was approved by the Committee. I'd like to note that Ms. Swank's successor as Chair of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, Assemblyman Howard Watts, also supported this BDR concept as a member of the Interim Committee.

With that, I will briefly describe the content of SB 155 for the Committee and share some quick context and background for why this legislation is necessary:

As many of us are already aware, the State Engineer serves as the Administrator of the Division of Water Resources, one of the longest standing Divisions within the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Indeed, when the Legislature created the Department in 1957, the State Engineer at that time, Hugh Shamberger, became the first Director of the newly established Department. Since this time, the Division of Water Resources has been a key agency within the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, while the role and responsibilities of the State Engineer has become increasingly broad and more complex.

SB 155 is a recognition of how the Division of Water Resources has evolved over time. As Nevada's population has grown and our economy expanded, the responsible management of our State's water resources has become increasingly important; and therefore the importance of having the most qualified candidate serve as Administrator of the Division of Water Resources is paramount.

SB 155 will help achieve this critical goal while preserving the integrity of the Division as a balanced, neutral authority for managing Nevada's water resources.

Section 5 of SB 155 contains the key changes to existing statute by enacting the following:

Revises the qualifications for the executive head of the Division of Water Resources to require that the Administrator:

1. Be experienced and competent in water resource management and conservation; Have the demonstrated ability to administer a major public agency; and with limited exception, be a licensed professional engineer with skill and experience in water-related engineering.
2. Further, SB 155 provides that the person appointed as Administrator is not required to be a licensed professional engineer if;
  - a. A deputy administrator of the Division is a licensed professional engineer with skills and experience in water-related engineering; and
  - b. The person has the theoretical knowledge, practical experience and technical skills necessary for the position.

These proposed changes will help expand the pool of qualified applicants to serve as Administrator of the Division of Water Resources; and also align Nevada's statutes more closely with many of our western neighbors, including such states as Utah and Arizona, which face similar water resource challenges to Nevada.

Nevada is fortunate to have had former State Engineers like Jason King, and our current State Engineer and Division Administrator, Adam Sullivan, who possess the unique combination of skills, in addition to being licensed professional engineers, necessary to run this critical state agency. But as we look ahead, finding individuals with such unique skill sets will become ever more challenging.

The Division of Water Resources has grown from a staff of 11 engineers in 1957 to a staff of 91 today, comprised of engineers, hydrologists, water planners, hearing officers, water right specialists, GIS experts, and more. And even this level of staffing and breadth of professional expertise is insufficient to keep up with today's challenges and demands related to managing water resources in the driest state in the nation.

I'm certain the Committee will hear lots of opposition to SB 155 today from many accomplished individuals who have worked in the field of water resources for decades. However, I strongly encourage the Committee to adopt a contemporary and forward-looking perspective when considering this legislation. For the benefit of our great state and our precocious water resources, which belong to all Nevadans, it is imperative to have a Division of Water resources comprised of, and led by, the best possible professionals that can aptly navigate the complex water resources challenges Nevada faces today and will continue to face long into the future.

Again, I commend the Interim Public Lands Committee for its bipartisan sponsorship of SB 155 and would be happy to answer any question the Committee may have. Thank you.