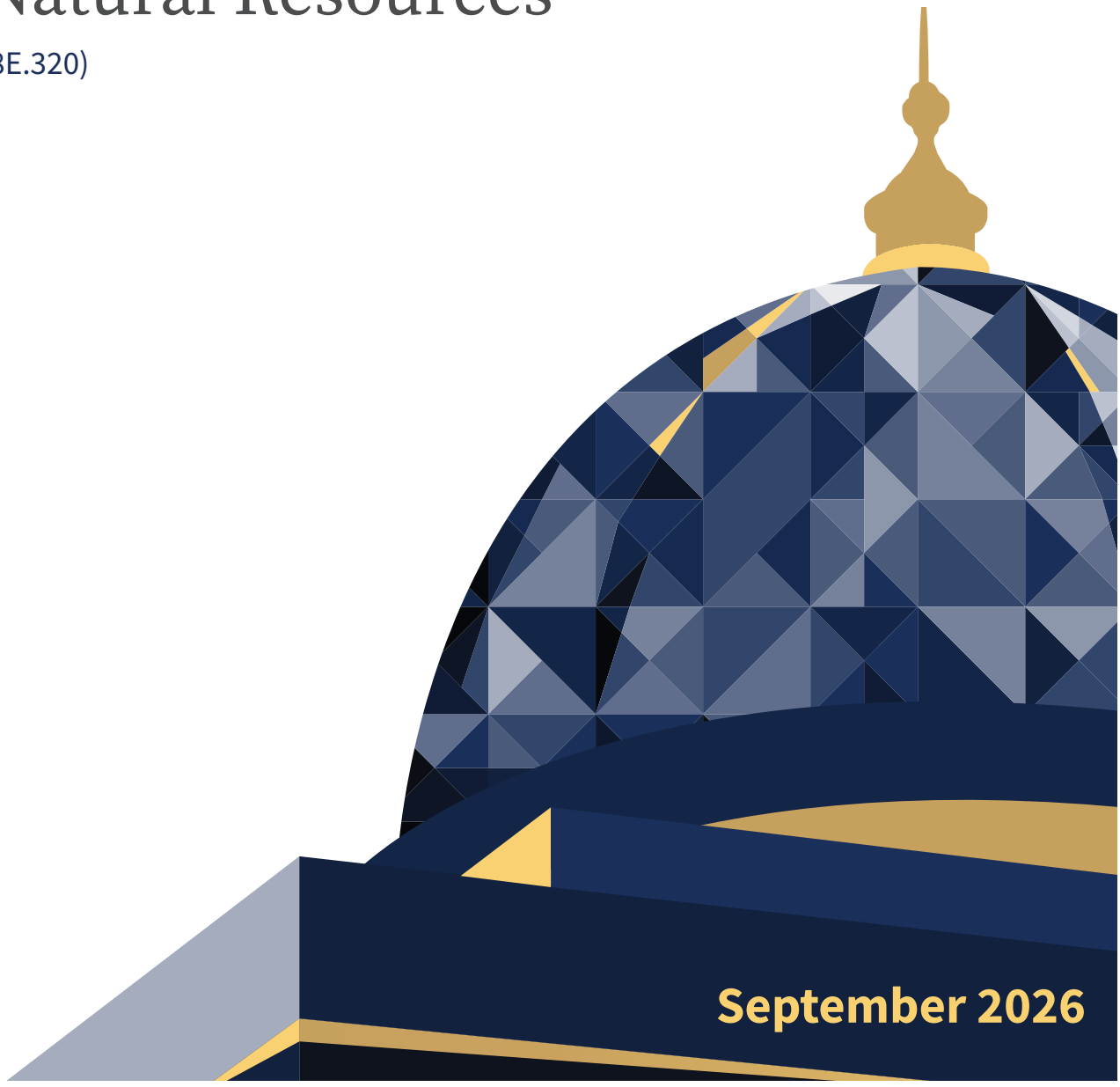
Nevada Legislature
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU

BULLETIN 27-10

Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources

(NRS 218E.320)



September 2026

JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 218E.320

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Senator Michelee Cruz-Crawford, Vice Chair
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* Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro, Senate Majority Leader, designated Senator Edgar Flores to serve as an alternate member for the meeting held on August 12, 2026.

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NEVADA REVISED STATUTES (NRS) 218E.320

NRS 218E.320 Creation; membership; officers; vacancies.

1. There are hereby created the following Joint Interim Standing Committees of the Legislature:

(a) Commerce and Labor;

(b) Education;

(c) Government Affairs;

(d) Growth and Infrastructure;

(e) Health and Human Services;

(f) Judiciary;

(g) Legislative Operations and Elections;

(h) Natural Resources; and

(i) Revenue.

2. Each Joint Interim Standing Committee consists of eight regular members and five alternate members. As soon as is practicable after the adjournment of each regular session and not later than October 31 immediately following such adjournment:

(a) The Speaker of the Assembly shall appoint three members of the Assembly as regular members of each Committee and two members of the Assembly as alternate members of each Committee.

(b) The Minority Leader of the Assembly shall appoint two members of the Assembly as regular members of each Committee and one member of the Assembly as an alternate member of each Committee.

(c) The Majority Leader of the Senate shall appoint two Senators as regular members of each Committee and one Senator as an alternate member of each Committee.

(d) The Minority Leader of the Senate shall appoint one Senator as a regular member of each Committee and one Senator as an alternate member of each Committee.

3. Before making their respective appointments, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Majority Leader of the Senate and the Minority Leaders of the Senate and Assembly shall consult so that, to the extent practicable:

(a) At least five of the regular members appointed to each Joint Interim Standing Committee served on the corresponding standing committee or committees during the preceding regular session.

(b) Not more than five of the regular members appointed to each Joint Interim Standing Committee are members of the same political party.

4. The Legislative Commission shall appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of each Joint Interim Standing Committee from among the members of the Committee and shall make such appointments as soon as is practicable after the adjournment of each regular session and not later than October 31 immediately following such adjournment. The Chair must be appointed from one House of the Legislature and the Vice Chair from the other House. The position of Chair must alternate each biennium between the Houses of the Legislature.

5. Except as otherwise provided in this section, each Chair and Vice Chair holds the position, while qualified, until a successor is appointed after the next regular session. If a vacancy occurs in the position of Chair or Vice Chair, the vacancy must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment for the remainder of the unexpired term.

6. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, a member of a Joint Interim Standing Committee holds his or her membership on the Committee, while qualified, until a successor is appointed after the next regular session. The membership of any member of a Joint Interim Standing Committee who does not become a candidate for reelection or who is defeated for reelection terminates on the day next after the general election. The Speaker designate of the Assembly or the Majority Leader designate of the Senate, as the case may be, may appoint a member to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term.

7. Vacancies on a Joint Interim Standing Committee must be filled in the same manner as original appointments.

(Added to NRS by 2021, 2505; A 2025, 2918)

INTRODUCTION

The Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources (JISC NR) is a permanent committee of the Nevada Legislature whose authority and duties are set forth in NRS 218E.320 through 218E.330. Meeting between the biennial sessions of the Legislature, the Committee has jurisdiction over a wide range of issues concerning natural resources, such as agriculture, environmental policies, food safety, forestry, historic preservation, mining, outdoor recreation and state parks, water, wildlife, and wildfire.

Below is a list of the meetings of the JISC NR and an overview of topics discussed during each meeting:

1. January 28, 2026—At the first Committee meeting, members heard presentations related to cloud seeding and geothermal resources. Specifically, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) provided a presentation on policy trends across the states related to cloud seeding and geoengineering, and the Desert Research Institute (DRI), Nevada System of Higher Education, discussed the science of cloud seeding and provided an update on Nevada's Cloud Seeding Program. The discussion on geothermal included: (1) a presentation from the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), on the science of geothermal; (2) an update from the Division of Minerals on mineral production and geothermal leases as well as the regulatory framework on geothermal exploration and production; (3) a presentation from Nevada's Division of Water Resources (DWR), State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), on the core tenants of Nevada water law and the intersection of water law with geothermal and dissolved mineral resources; (4) a discussion of Assembly Bill 109 from the 2025 Legislative Session, which sought to eliminate the existing geothermal exception from statutory water appropriation requirements; and (5) industry perspectives on the geothermal industry and on potential changes in geothermal permitting.

2. February 25, 2026—The agenda for the second meeting of the Committee included presentations on agriculture and outdoor recreation. Nevada's State Department of Agriculture (NDA) highlighted agriculture's contribution to Nevada's economy and briefed the Committee on 2025 legislative changes impacting the Department, including newly established oversight for food safety, hemp, the cottage foods industry, and the Nevada State Fairgrounds. The Nevada Farm Bureau Federation (NFBF) further discussed the agricultural sector, focusing on the impact of mounting expenses, labor difficulties, and negative profit margins. Nevada outdoor recreation agencies and stakeholders—including Nevada's Division of State Parks and Division of Outdoor Recreation (NDOR), DCNR; the Division of Tourism (also referred to as Travel Nevada), Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs; and the Great Basin National Park Foundation—highlighted the state's growing outdoor recreation economy in rural and urban parts of the state and discussed current initiatives and challenges. Additionally, representatives from the Lincoln County Regional Development Authority and Resource Concepts, Inc., discussed pinyon-juniper woodlands management and the conversion of pinyon-juniper biomass into biofuel.

3. March 25, 2026—The Committee's third meeting was combined with the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Growth and Infrastructure, focusing on energy needs and water use driven by data centers. Presentations covered policy trends; power and water needs; infrastructure, rates, and regulatory frameworks; resource planning; sustainability and design; and environmental and cultural considerations.

4. May 27, 2026—Presentations for the fourth meeting focused on wildfire and wildlife. Representatives from Nevada's Division of Forestry (NDF), DCNR; the United States Forest Service (USFS or Forest Service), U.S. Department of Agriculture; and the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, discussed Nevada's outlook for the upcoming fire season and proactive wildfire prevention and management efforts. The Forest Service and NDF further discussed wildfire mitigation accomplishments achieved under the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement. Nevada's Department of Wildlife (NDOW) presented on: (1) wildlife habitat challenges due to post-wildfire invasive species and the importance of healthy sagebrush ecosystems; (2) the State Wildlife Action Plan; and (3) managing human-bear conflicts. Additionally, NCSL provided a presentation on trends in western wildlife management, including trends in wildlife diseases, wildlife crossings, hunting policy and license fees, and predator management. Representatives from the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and The Pew Charitable Trusts further discussed safety data on wildlife crossings, priority projects identified by Nevada's Department of Transportation (NDOT) and NDOW, and potential funding mechanisms for additional crossings. Representatives from the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife, the Great Basin Wildlife Conservancy, and Nevada Bighorns Unlimited shared information in support of increasing hunting license fees to provide increased funding for NDOW. Finally, the Committee heard a presentation on the Nevada Agreement for Recreation Shared Stewardship, deferred from the February meeting.

5. June 24, 2026—Presentations for the fifth meeting focused on conservation districts and water. The Committee heard from the Nevada Association of Conservation Districts (NvACD) on locally led conservation efforts, conservation district funding, and current challenges. The Nevada Water Law Stakeholder Group—comprised of a variety of stakeholders representing agricultural, environmental, mining, municipal, and rural interests—presented concepts for a proposed omnibus water bill. Additionally, The Nature Conservancy presented on groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs), stressors and threats to GDEs, and policy strategies adopted by the Legislature to protect them. Further, NCSL provided information on *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, 598 U.S. 651,143 S. Ct. 1322 (2023), which narrowed the Clean Water Act's definition of "waters of the United States" and its application to certain wetlands. Finally, the Committee heard from the newly appointed State Engineer and Administrator of DWR, and the newly appointed Director of DCNR, on their vision for the Division and the Department, respectively, focusing on customer service, efficiency, and transparency.

6. August 12, 2026—At the sixth and final meeting, the Committee heard presentations from: (1) Nevada's Division of Environmental Protection and Division of Natural Heritage, DCNR, pertaining to Nevada's wetlands and the regulatory environment within the context of *Sackett v. EPA*; (2) the Walker Basin Conservancy regarding ongoing restoration efforts in the Walker Basin and state matching funds required to secure additional federal

allocations; (3) the Nevada Forum on the creation of a long-term water planning forum; and (4) the Environmental Working Group (EWG) and American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA) on the connection between paraquat use and Parkinson's disease. The Committee also conducted its work session.

Pursuant to NRS 218D.160, the JISC NR is limited to requesting the drafting of no more than ten legislative measures. During its final meeting on August 12, 2026, the JISC NR approved six recommendations for legislation and seven additional recommendations for Committee action, such as drafting position statements in its final report and sending letters to different entities. The recommendations addressed a variety of topics relating to soil health, hemp enforcement responsibilities, pesticides, funding for wildfire prevention and management, funding mechanisms for wildlife crossings, long-term water planning, and a variety of other water related issues.

More information about the Committee's activities—including minutes, recordings of meetings, and copies of presentations and other exhibits—may be accessed on the Legislature's website for the 2025–2026 Interim.

DISCUSSION OF TESTIMONY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the JISC NR considered a total of 13 proposed actions for legislation, letters, or statements to include in its final report. Additional information regarding all recommendations[1] considered is available in the Committee's "Work Session Document" at: https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/InterimCommittee/REL/Document/33820.

A. Agriculture

Recommendation 1

At the June 24, 2026, meeting, the Committee heard a presentation from the NvACD, a 501(c)(3) organization representing Nevada's 28 local conservation districts. Operating as political subdivisions of the state under Chapter 548 of NRS, conservation districts function under the oversight of the State Conservation Commission to manage local challenges and protect natural resources. During its presentation, NvACD discussed examples of conservation district projects, ranging from post-wildfire reseeding and irrigation efficiency improvements, to invasive weed control and soil health. However, despite increasing demand for conservation district assistance, state funding has remained flat and is currently among the lowest of all the 50 states.

Additionally, NvACD discussed Assembly Bill 80 (2025), which would have established the Healthy Soils Initiative. Presenters noted that seven western states—Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Washington—have signed healthy soils legislation into law. Such initiatives provide financial and technical support to farmers and ranchers to adopt land

[1] Two recommendations included in this bulletin were evaluated by the Committee following agendized presentations and were not included in the work session document. See the meeting agenda for August 12, 2026.

management practices and aim to capture atmospheric carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve water retention, and increase long-term agricultural productivity.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the drafting of legislation to:

> Establish a Healthy Soils Initiative based on AB 80 (2025) Reprint 1; and appropriate $100,000 from the State General Fund for the Renewable Natural Resource Competitive Grant Program pursuant to NRS 548.178 and codified in *Nevada Administrative Code* 548.300 through 548.340, inclusive, to be available to conservation districts on a competitive basis for purposes of implementing healthy soils programming. **(BDR 49–419)**

Recommendation 2

Nevada's State Department of Agriculture provided a Department update to the Committee at the meeting on February 25, 2026. During their presentation, representatives discussed the expansion of the Department's food safety responsibilities with the passage of Senate Bill 466 (2025), which transferred the authority to regulate and permit food establishments from the Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Department of Human Services (DHS), to NDA and revised provisions relating to the distribution and sale of certain hemp products. As representatives noted, NDA's previous jurisdiction over hemp was confined to agricultural production, but the enactment of this legislation expanded its authority beyond farming operations.

However, NDA stated that according to their deputy attorney generals, enforcement responsibilities related to the distribution and sale of hemp were not transferred and this authority remains with DHS. Concurrently, NDA reports a rising incidence of minors accessing high-potency hemp products, which are often more potent than legal cannabis. Such items are flavored as bubble gum or candy, presenting commercial appeal to youth. Despite shared concerns and active interest from both NDA and the Cannabis Compliance Board (CCB) to execute product removals, neither agency has the statutory authority to initiate enforcement actions.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the drafting of legislation to:

> Revise NRS to clarify which enforcement responsibilities related to the distribution and sale of certain hemp and synthetic products belong with NDA and the CCB. **(BDR 51–417)**

Recommendation 3

At the meeting on August 12, 2026, representatives from the APDA and EWG provided testimony on the link between paraquat use and Parkinson's disease. Paraquat is a chemical herbicide utilized for weed control and as a crop desiccant prior to harvest. Presenters discussed a 2024 study that found ambient exposure to paraquat applications near homes and workplaces was associated with increased odds of Parkinson's disease, as well as animal studies demonstrating how paraquat enters the brain and subsequent neurological impact. Additionally, presenters discussed a review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency which estimated that paraquat, at certain concentrations, could travel at least 2.7 miles from the site of application, even hours or days after application. Presenters stated that over 70 countries have banned the use of paraquat—including China,

although it continues to manufacture the product. Finally, presenters noted that although paraquat is applied to only 1.4 percent of alfalfa acreage in Nevada, and existing statutory provisions classify the substance as restricted use—thereby prohibiting access to the general public—current regulatory frameworks inadequately account for pesticide drift. This potentially exposes any neighborhood where paraquat is used to a chemical agent associated with Parkinson's disease.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted to approve the drafting of legislation to:

> Address the agricultural use of paraquat in Nevada. **(BDR 49–415)**

Recommendation 4

Nevada's high desert topography and arid climate facilitate the production of exceptionally high-protein alfalfa, which represents the state's leading cash crop, as detailed in testimony delivered by the Nevada Farm Bureau Federation on February 25, 2026. According to presenters, in 2022, 285,000 acres were dedicated to alfalfa production in the state, valued at $392,502,000. While alfalfa production in the state continues to exceed over 200,000 acres per year, presenters noted that growers face operational challenges due to declining market prices, escalating input costs, and market disruption. An analysis conducted by the American Farm Bureau Federation indicates that in 2025, alfalfa growers lost an average of $203 per acre. However, as a forage crop, alfalfa is not eligible for federal assistance programs such as the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program, Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Program, and Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs. Presenters emphasized the need for federal legislation or administrative regulations to establish a mechanism for forage producers to secure relief during periods of market volatility and economic distress.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to:

> Send a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and federal delegation that draws attention to the exclusion of alfalfa growers in federal regulations and relief packages such as the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program and the Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers Program.

Recommendation 5

The Home Feeds Nevada Agriculture Food Purchase Program, administered by NDA, strengthens state food security by connecting local agricultural producers with regional food banks to supply nutritious meals to residents in need. Since its inception in 2021, the Program has enrolled more than 20 local farmers, distributed millions of pounds of food statewide, and infused millions of dollars into Nevada's agricultural economy. The statutory framework of the program mandates that food banks, as defined in NRS 561.515, distribute all nutritious food received at no cost to individuals, emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, or homeless shelters. As such, this work is done in partnership with Nevada's two regional food banks—Three Square Food Bank (serving Clark, Esmeralda, Lincoln, and Nye counties) and the Food Bank of Northern Nevada (serving Washoe County, Carson City, and rural counties in northern and central Nevada)—in addition to food pantries, mobile distribution sites, and tribal agencies.

During the Committee meeting on February 25, 2026, representatives from NDA indicated this framework can create logistical inefficiencies, as it requires rural agricultural producers to transport food items to a food bank for packing before redistribution to their original region or other rural areas. In the context of rising transportation costs, redundant transit reduces operational efficiency.

Consequently, the Committee supports efforts and initiatives aimed at streamlining processes and delivery, including the expansion of eligible entities authorized to distribute nutritious food under this program.[2]

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to:

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

B. Water

Recommendation 1

During the 2025–2026 Interim, the Nevada Water Law Stakeholder Group—a coalition of diverse stakeholders representing agricultural, environmental, mining, municipal, and rural interests—regularly met to identify and advance consensus-based water policy solutions. Representatives for the group proposed concepts for inclusion in an omnibus water bill at the Committee's meeting on June 24, 2026.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the drafting of legislation to:

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

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

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

[2] According to the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, the Elko Rural Food Hub is designed to strengthen food distribution and help local partners access food more efficiently and reliably by providing expanded warehouse, refrigeration, and freezer capacity and storing food closer to rural areas.

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

3. Authorize the State Engineer to extend the deadline for filing proofs of claims of vested rights, for cause shown, on or before the current deadline; and exempt the federal government from the deadline to file such claims;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recommendation 2

During the August 12, 2026, Committee meeting, members heard from representatives of the Nevada Forum, a bipartisan statewide initiative aimed at empowering Nevadans to collaboratively identify priorities for legislative and community action. Presenters stated that water-related concerns emerged as one of four primary focus areas, including water scarcity and long-term supply. Presenters outlined the historical timeline of state water planning, noting the first state water plan was published in 1974, followed by a second and most recent plan in 1999. Nevada's Division of Water Resources is currently spearheading a comprehensive update, with a target publication date in late 2028 ahead of the 2029 Legislative Session. Presenters raised questions related to the utility and longevity of the state water plan—specifically, criteria for determining whether an existing plan remains current, the timeline for subsequent plan iterations, and the framework for ensuring the utility of water planning over time.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted to approve the drafting of legislation to:

Create a forum for long-term water planning. **(BDR 48–414)**

Recommendation 3

Nevada is the most arid state in the nation, with many groundwater basins that are over-appropriated, over-pumped, or both. Winter storms provide critical water resources for the state, but periodic drought and competing water demands pose ongoing challenges to water availability. As DRI presented at the Committee meeting on January 28, 2026, cloud seeding serves as an augmentation strategy to enhance precipitation and bolster regional water supply by improving a cloud's ability to produce precipitation. The Nevada State Cloud Seeding Program has been in operation since 1976, and currently has projects operating in the Ruby Mountains, Santa Rosa Mountains, Spring Mountains, and Tahoe-Truckee area.[3] According to DRI, a fully operational program produces approximately 40,000 acre-feet of additional water, ultimately satisfying the water needs of 120,000 Nevada households. Most recently, in the 2023–2025 and

[3] Representatives for DRI stated they would like to expand the program into the Diamond Mountains, as well.

the 2025–2027 Biennia, this work was supported with a State General Fund appropriation of $1.2 million.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to:

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

Recommendation 4

In 2025, the Nevada Legislature passed Assembly Bill 104 and Senate Bill 36 establishing the Nevada Voluntary Water Rights Retirement Program and the Account for Retiring Water Rights. However, the program was established without dedicated funding and, by law, sunsets in 2035. As noted by The Nature Conservancy in its recommendation, this imposes a deadline for the state to utilize the program as a regulatory mechanism to address declining groundwater levels, mitigate conflicts involving senior water rights or domestic wells, and protect its natural resources.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to:

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

C. Wildfire

Recommendation 1

The State Forester Firewarden, along with representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Wildland Fire Service, provided an update to the Committee on wildfire management efforts during the meeting on May 27, 2026. According to the State Forester Firewarden, in 2025, wildfire activity reached its highest level since 2018, with over 452,000 acres burned. However, initial attack efforts successfully contained over 95 percent of incidents within the first 24 hours. Given drought and snowpack conditions in 2026, the State Forester Firewarden predicted above normal fire potential and less water resources for fire suppression.

Early response is critical in fighting wildfires, and one tool utilized by wildland fire agencies in the state is the ALERTWest Early Detection Camera System, maintained and operated by the Nevada Seismological Laboratory at UNR. This surveillance network pinpoints new incident locations, provides real-time information on conditions, and employs artificial intelligence to differentiate between early wildfire starts and environmental phenomena such as dust plumes, optimizing resource allocation and reducing operational expenditures associated with false dispatches. The network currently consists of 95 cameras, with plans to install additional cameras to further enhance Nevada's wildfire detection and response capabilities. However, expansion, maintenance, and operation of the system require establishing a financial support mechanism.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to:

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

Recommendation 2

Originally signed in 2019 and renewed in 2024, the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement establishes a collaborative framework between federal, state, and local agencies to safeguard communities and enhance ecosystem resilience by mitigating wildfire risk. In 2020, Shared Stewardship partners identified 13 priority landscapes for targeted intervention. To date, projects have commenced across ten of these landscapes; for the remaining three landscapes, projects have been identified, and dedicated planning groups are currently active for two of these areas.[4]

At the May 27, 2026, meeting, representatives from NDF and the Forest Service provided an update on Shared Stewardship. The presentation highlighted accomplishments in 2025, which included over 700 treatments across 170,000 plus acres. Treatments included herbicide application, fuel break creation, riparian restoration, prescribed burns, seeding and planting, targeted grazing, invasive species eradication, and more.

Assembly Bill 578 (2025) appropriated $6 million to NDF for purposes of Shared Stewardship. According to presenters, this funding unlocked over $100 million in federal investments for projects in priority landscapes across the state. However, 142 unfunded projects totaling over $31 million have been identified. Addressing this need will require continuing to leverage state, federal, and nongovernmental funding and further operational efficiencies through partnerships with industry and private landowners.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to:

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

D. Wildlife

Recommendation 1

Representatives from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership presented on the topic of wildlife crossings at the Committee meeting on May 27, 2026. Presenters noted that wildlife vehicle collisions in Nevada exceed 500 crashes annually, at an estimated cost of $20 million to the public due to infrastructure damage, personal injury, emergency response operations, loss of life, and related economic impacts. Investing a fraction of that expense toward mitigation strategies such as wildlife crossings can effectively reduce such collisions, while restoring vital ecological connectivity across fragmented habitats. With 79 crossings in place, including more than 30 large underpasses or overpasses, Nevada has

[4] Confirmed post meeting by the USFS, current as of August 2026.

long been a leader in wildlife crossing development. Recently, NDOT identified 30 additional priority locations for wildlife crossings across the state based on collision hotspots and important wildlife connectivity corridors, but despite the demonstrated need, lack of a dedicated, recurring funding stream remains the primary barrier to further expansion.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted to approve the drafting of legislation to:

Authorize additional funding for wildlife crossings by:

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

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

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

E. Outdoor Recreation

Recommendation 1

With public lands comprising approximately 86 percent of its total land area, Nevada boasts exceptional and nationally recognized opportunities for outdoor recreation. During the February 25, 2026, Committee meeting, members heard from state and nonprofit entities involved in managing and supporting this vital natural resource sector, including NDOR and Nevada's Division of State Parks; Travel Nevada; and the Great Basin National Park Foundation.[5] These presentations demonstrated that outdoor recreation is a key component of Nevada's economy, generating $13.7 billion in total economic output, supporting more than 75,000 jobs, and contributing $8.8 billion to the state's gross domestic product. Moreover, visitor expenditures in this sector have exhibited consistent year-over-year growth post-COVID, from $500 million in 2020 to $1.8 billion in 2024. This data underscores the sector's economic significance to the state, and as noted by representatives from Travel Nevada, public opinion surveys indicate state residents view outdoor recreation tourism positively and as an asset to communities. However, skepticism persists regarding tourists' willingness to respect natural and cultural resources and practice responsible recreation.

Multi-sector investment and coordinated policy frameworks can help ensure stewardship practices are integrated into the visitor experience for residents and tourists alike. For example, recent infrastructure enhancements at Valley of Fire State Park, including the construction of a new visitor center, advance responsible resource stewardship through educational programming opportunities and expanded trail networks designed to mitigate off-trail traffic and soil erosion. Similarly, Travel Nevada's Adventure Centers—scheduled to open late fall 2026—will provide

[5] Additionally, the USFS and NDOR presented on the Nevada Agreement for Recreation Shared Stewardship at the Committee meeting on May 27, 2026.

conservation education, promote responsible outdoor ethics, and help guide crowds toward diverse and lesser-known public lands.

Nevada's Division of Outdoor Recreation administers various outdoor recreation related grant programs, including the Community Outdoor Recreation and Revitalization Grant and the Cosmos Across Nevada Grant, designed to bolster outdoor infrastructure, education, and dark sky preservation. As presenters stated, infrastructure enhancements in high-use recreation areas can mitigate vulnerability to environmental stressors, while design improvements can optimize durability, user safety, and trail resilience. However, both grants face funding deficits.

Finally, programs at UNR, developed in consultation with NDOR, such as the specialization in Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Management and minor in Outdoor Adventure and Leadership, as well as the Trail Skills Project certification program at Truckee Meadows Community College, provide the dual advantage of expanding regional employment opportunities while building expertise in outdoor practices, helping to ensure access to public lands and recreational opportunities for generations to come.

The Committee supports these initiatives and other related measures designed to balance public enjoyment of Nevada's vast recreational resources with preservation and stewardship of public lands.

At its final meeting and work session on August 12, 2026, the Committee voted unanimously to:

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

SUGGESTED LEGISLATION

The following bill draft requests will be available during the 2027 Legislative Session at the following website: https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/84th2027/Bdrs/List.

BDR 48–414	Revises provisions relating to water.
BDR 49–415	Revises provisions relating to agriculture.
BDR 48–416	Revises provisions relating to water.
BDR 51–417	Revises provisions relating to hemp.
BDR –418	Revises provisions relating to wildlife crossings.
BDR 49–419	Makes an appropriation to the State Conservation Commission for a grant program implementing healthy soils programming.

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