

Humboldt River Stakeholder Working Group – Meeting Summary

September 23, 2025

Location: Nevada Gold Mines Office, Elko

Attendees:

Adam Sullivan, Kip Allander, Kelly McGowan, Colton Brunson, Landon Harris, Javonni Brown, Mike Starr, Michael Taylor, Pam Harrington, Steve Skidmore, James Eason, Sabrina Tomera-Reed, Jay Dixon, Dawn Aragon, Kendle Bowler, Laurel Saito, Zach Woodbury, Jim Kerr, Jeff Fontaine, Doug Busselman, Chris Mahannah, Brigid McHale, Sev Carlson, Mickey McCarthy, Erica Gallegos, Dwight Smith, Ed James, Therese Stix, Bennie Hodges, Sam Routson, Howard Hales, and Eldon Crawford

Summary

Introductions & Logistics

- Agenda included opening remarks by Adam Sullivan, provided updates from the subgroups, a review of the outline of the draft curtailment order, facilitated breakout group discussions, and planning for the next meeting.

Subgroup Updates

- Economic & Conservancy subgroup: Kelly McGowan and Michael Taylor reported on the outcomes of the previous two subgroup meetings (please see presentations on NDWR website)
- Technical subgroup: Kip Allander reported on the issues under consideration and outcomes from the previous two technical subgroup meetings (please see presentation on NDWR website)

Key Points from Economic/Conservancy Subgroup Updates

- Kelly McGowan presented the issues being considered and outcomes from previous Economic/Conservancy Subgroup meetings.
- Key points:
 - NRCS and FSA have programs that could provide utility in both minimizing impacts to affected ranchers and help with conservation implementation that could produce offsets in the system.

- Digitization and updating ownership of decreed water right records held by NDWR will get underway this fall-winter. These efforts will significantly assist those seeking surface water rights for offsets.
- Seeking input from other western states on how they are addressing conjunctive management conflicts. Guest presenters will be invited to the next subgroup meeting.
- Importance of continuing efforts to conduct public awareness campaigns and public outreach through a communication framework.
- Mike Taylor presented key elements being developed to evaluate offset demand and supply and potential for water market success.
- Key points:
 - Introduction of the economic model to analyze the offset market, focusing on surface water rights as the most common source of offsets.
 - Importance of accurate data, wet water factors, and price setting.
 - Demand and supply functions for offsets, using groundwater rights and surface water right sales as examples.
 - Highlights the importance of understanding the economic value of offsets and the potential impact on the market.
 - Outlines the next steps for the economic analysis, including refining the model and incorporating feedback from the stakeholder group.
- Comments raised concerns about impacts on groundwater users and small farmers, and the need for possible legislative support.

Technical Subgroup update

- Provided overview of two technical subgroup meetings held since last HRSWG meeting as well as technical updates that were provided at June Public outreach meetings.
- The Middle Humboldt model and capture data were provisionally released. The report and the capture tool will be published around the end of this calendar year or early next calendar year.

- Middle model capture results currently being used by DWR to evaluate CMZ boundaries and water rights potentially included within CMZ. To be reported on with technical subgroup in a future meeting.
- Limitations in Paradise and Pine Valleys, and upper Humboldt models make the capture results not as reliable in these areas.
- Plan to refine conceptual models, recalibrate, and expand monitoring networks for the Upper Humboldt basin and model.
- Plan to develop a basin specific model for Paradise Valley as time and funding allows.
- Considering repurposing one of the existing mine models for updating Pine Valley analysis to the extent that it's possible.
- Plan for phased implementation as confidence in data and results for models allow.
- Some discussion on using unused decree rights and recharge basins for offsets.
- Brief mention of Offset strategy discussion that took place in preparation for future technical subgroup meeting agenda.

Outline of Draft Curtailment Order

- First page describes the necessity, the intent and the approach of a draft order.
- System-wide, priority-based approach using best available science.
- Defines Capture Management Zones (CMZs), 10% capture threshold over 50 years.
- Includes:
 - Capture liability and mitigation options for any wells within the CMZ
 - Framework for offsets, conservation, and recharge.
 - Public workshops and feedback channels.
 - Exemptions for minimal impacts (<5 AF capture).
 - Five-year period to mitigate capture liability upon release of order.
 - Definition of curtailment for any water right holder subject to the order.

- Metrics for validation over time. Emphasis on clear communication, accuracy, and public engagement.
- Tentative anticipated timeline: Draft curtailment order for public review released near the end of 2025, to coincide closely with final USGS publications; public workshops to be held in 2026 with a potential revised order and formal hearing by the end of 2026; no final order until mid-2027 after the 2027 legislative session.

Offset Management & Conservancy Districts

- Discussion on the extent to which offsets can or should be managed by a Conservancy District, NDWR, or another entity.
- Legislative timing and defensible models stressed.
- Public outreach and consistent messaging to stakeholders are critical.

Breakout Groups

Primary questions were related to:

- Concerns pertaining to the outline of the draft curtailment order.
- Locally driven processes and solutions to assist in the implementation and management of offsets within the Humboldt Region.

Summary of each group's discussions are included with meeting materials on website.

Takeaway:

The Humboldt River Stakeholder Working Group and subgroups continue to refine and discuss conjunctive management strategies. Conjunctive management to be introduced through draft curtailment order(s) prior to final implementation and final order. Moving forward, phased implementation approach is being considered along with offset management mechanisms, and the potential role a Conservancy or other type of District(s) would have—all underpinned by strong public communication and stakeholder engagement.

Action Items

Conservancy/Economics Subgroup

- Schedule an **Economic & Conservancy Subgroup meeting** for the week of November 17.

- Continue discussions on **economic evaluations** and Mike Taylor’s team’s work.
- Invite representatives from **other western states** to share approaches to offsets and conjunctive management.
- Additional consideration/discussion is needed to determine what would be the most desirable way to manage offsets in the region.
- Explore the potential for a **Conservancy District or similar entity** to take on basin-wide conservation and offset management.

Technical Subgroup

- Conduct a **deeper dive into offsets** at the next technical subgroup meeting.
- Path forward for recognized needs
 - Expand the **groundwater monitoring network** in the upper Humboldt Basin.
 - Refine and update the **upper Humboldt conceptual and groundwater models**, and the Paradise and Pine Valley models

NDWR/Humboldt River Stakeholder Working Group

- NDWR, with the assistance of the Working Group members, will facilitate a strategic outreach plan to encourage **public feedback** on the draft curtailment order (workshops, email input).
- NDWR will develop the **draft curtailment order** considering feedback and discussion on the outline.
- NDWR will develop and provide stakeholders with **talking points** to distribute and discuss with entities and individuals.
- NDWR will schedule the **next stakeholder meeting** for early–mid December.
- NDWR will inform the stakeholder working group when the materials from this meeting are available on the website.