



STATE OF NEVADA

STATE WATER PLAN STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP

MEETING MINUTES -- MEETING OF THE STATE WATER PLAN STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP

Date and Time: Tuesday, June 6, 2023, at 1:00 pm PT

* There was no physical location for this meeting. This meeting was held through Microsoft Teams. *

Video recording of the full meeting: <http://water.nv.gov/waterplans.aspx>

The Nevada Division of Water Resources (NDWR) held a meeting with members of the State Water Plan Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) to discuss climate and water resources topics to be included in the update of the State Water Plan. This meeting was conducted in accordance with Open Meeting Law (NRS 241.020).

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Bunny Bishop called the June 6 meeting of the State Water Plan Stakeholder Advisory Group to order at 1:00 PM. Roll call was performed by Nicole Goehring. Quorum was established for the meeting.

Name	Organization	Attendance
Bunny Bishop	Nevada Division of Water Resources	Present
Nicole Goehring	Nevada Division of Water Resources	Present
Kyle Davis	Nevada Mining Association	Present
Doug Busselman	Nevada Farm Bureau	Present
Kim Rigdon	Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission/Western Regional Water Commission	Present
Ed James	Carson Water Subconservancy District	Present
Jake Tibbitts	Eureka County	Present
Jeff Fontaine	Humboldt River Basin Water Authority/Central Nevada Regional Water Authority	Present
Mervin Wright Jr.	Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe	Present
Zane Marshall	Southern Nevada Water Authority	Absent
Kara Steeland	Truckee Meadows Water Authority	Present
Laurel Saito	The Nature Conservancy	Present
Kyle Roerink	Great Basin Water Network	Absent
James Eason	Great Basin Water Company	Present
Dave Baker	Nevada Cattlemen's Association	Present
Bert Bryan	Walker River Irrigation District	Present

Justin Huntington	Desert Research Institute, Reno	Absent
Mathew Johns	NV Energy	Present
Joseph Davis	Moapa Valley Water District	Absent
Daniel Weeks	Nye County Water District	Present

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Bunny Bishop requested public comment. There was no public comment.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Bunny Bishop called for approval of the January 18, 2023 meeting minutes. Ed James, Carson Water Subconservancy District, motioned to approve the minutes; Jake Tibbitts, Eureka County, seconded the motion. A vote from the SAG was not called; the January 18, 2023 meeting minutes will need to be on the agenda for the next SAG meeting to call a vote.

4. SUMMARY OF SAG QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Bunny Bishop thanked the SAG for submitting responses to the questionnaire, issued to the group on April 14, 2023, and presented a summary of the responses received. When asked to identify water-related concerns and challenges, many SAG members cited concerns over the over-appropriation and over-pumping of groundwater basins, as well as ensuring sustainable growth and development. Additional concerns included protecting existing water rights, water quality, obtaining accurate water-related data, and integrated resource management, among others. Laurel Saito, The Nature Conservancy, mentioned additional concerns related to impacts to groundwater-dependent ecosystems. Jeff Fontaine, Humboldt River Basin Water Authority/Central Nevada Regional Water Authority, mentioned that shifts in water use (e.g., from agricultural to mining) on a larger scale may also pose potential issues.

The questionnaire then asked SAG members to describe what they see as the goals of the updated State Water Plan, and how the State Water Plan could be most useful. Several themes emerged from the responses, including serving as a data resource and education tool; offering strategies, recommendations, and best practices; and coordinating with local entities and existing plans. Responses both reinforced NDWR goals for the State Water Plan update and provided new ideas. Multiple SAG members mentioned that leadership from the State is necessary to solve many of the water resource challenges, and the State Water Plan could show initiative. Ed James specifically commented that the State needs to address over-appropriated basins. Daniel Weeks echoed this statement. Kim Rigdon, Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission/Western Regional Water Commission, wanted the State Water Plan to discuss how water recycling will play a role in the State’s water portfolio.

5. PRESENTATION ON CLIMATE AND WATER RESOURCES

Dr. Dan McEvoy, Desert Research Institute, presented on climate trends and projections for Nevada, the relationship between climate and water resources, and available climate-related datasets and resources to inform the State Water Plan. Dr. McEvoy began by describing how observational data are critical to inform climate estimates and projections, but observations in Nevada are sparse. Dr. McEvoy explained some of the challenges associated with obtaining accurate climate data before discussing the infrastructure used to measure meteorological variables, as well as gridded climate data used for modeling. Some tools for accessing and

visualizing gridded climate data include Climate Engine, West Wide Drought Tracker, and OpenET. Dr. McEvoy ended by providing an overview of climate projections and how Climate Toolbox could be a useful tool for addressing future climate in the State Water Plan. Tables and figures from the Nevada Climate Strategy were shown to provide examples of how to effectively communicate the impacts to various sectors due to changes in climate. Dr. McEvoy offered to provide guidance as needed on datasets utilized in the State Water Plan.

James Eason, Great Basin Water Company, asked about the modeling of plant and phreatophyte growth in mountain regions, especially after large fires. Dr. McEvoy explained that plant growth was a challenging variable to measure, especially at a more granular scale. Satellite-based datasets in Climate Engine (e.g., NDVI), as well as the Rangeland Analysis Platform, could be useful for looking at this variable.

6. PRESENTATION ON INVENTORY OF WATER RESOURCES

Lauren Bartels, Nevada Division of Water Resources, presented on the data and information for estimating the amount of surface water and groundwater in Nevada. She began with an overview of the planned purpose and content of the climate and water resources section of the State Water Plan. She then described *Report No. 3: Nevada's Water Resources (1971)*, which is a foundational NDWR report that inventoried the surface and groundwater resources across the state. A summary of some of the data included in *Report No. 3* was presented, along with additional data sources NDWR may leverage for the State Water Plan. Some of the challenges and limitations of the data were mentioned. The Nevada Water Resource Initiative, which is a recent partnership between NDWR, the Desert Research Institute, and the U.S. Geological Survey to update the science and understanding of Nevada's water resources, should improve water availability data for future iterations of the State Water Plan.

SAG members had questions and concerns regarding the use of perennial yields to define groundwater availability in some basins, especially in places where surface water management influences groundwater levels. It was asked whether the State Water Plan would prioritize basins for perennial yield updates; priorities will be set by NDWR, in coordination with partner agencies, as the current Nevada Water Resources Initiative project progresses. There was also a question about how NDWR will use the water availability data included in the State Water Plan to manage basins going forward; it was clarified that the State Water Plan is for informational purposes and will not directly dictate water management decisions. Daniel Weeks, Nye County Water District, mentioned that Pahrump Valley (Basin 162) should be a priority basin if perennial yields were to be updated through the Nevada Water Resource Initiative. Laurel Saito, The Nature Conservancy, listed a few different datasets produced by The Nature Conservancy and Desert Research Institute that may be useful for the State Water Plan.

7. DISCUSSION ON CLIMATE AND WATER RESOURCE DATA

Nicole Goehring and Lauren Bartels, Nevada Division of Water Resources, led a facilitated discussion with SAG members focusing on the content of the climate and water resource section of the State Water Plan, the availability and quality of data, and challenges and limitations.

James Eason, Great Basin Water Company, recommended the State Water Plan look at historic uses across Nevada that were affected by deforestation, mining, and invasive species and cited reports published by the State on historic logging that could be referenced. Mr. Eason also

recommended looking into how airborne geophysics and electromagnetic surveys may be used when updating perennial yields.

Jake Tibbitts, Eureka County, brought up the issues of data durability. For example, some current measurement stations are funded through joint funding agreements that are in danger of losing funding. The State Water Plan needs to consider how to protect and expand current datasets and ensure the durability of datasets and measurements sites.

Ed James, Carson Water Subconservancy District, noted that while updating the science is a worthy effort, NDWR should develop datasets that work within the current water accounting systems (e.g., the Alpine Decree). NDWR should consider how to embed science rather than upending the current system.

Laurel Saito, The Nature Conservancy, referenced Desert Research Institute reports that compared historic phreatophyte coverage to current coverage in 20 basins across the state. Dr. Saito also mentioned that while the perennial yield is an administrative line, the number should not be relied upon too heavily, and other data (such as water level trends) should be included when assessing water sustainability. The Nature Conservancy has a machine learning tool to estimate water level trends where data is not available that may be useful for the State Water Plan. Nicole Goehring, Nevada Division of Water Resources, mentioned that NDWR could work in collaboration with DRI to incorporate this data.

Jeff Fontaine, Humboldt River Basin Water Authority/Central Nevada Regional Water Authority, asked for clarification on who manages the data sent to NDWR and where it is stored. Both Mr. Fontaine and Mr. Weeks want to ensure that data collected at the local level and shared with NDWR is accessible. Nicole Goehring, Nevada Division of Water Resources, offered to further discuss current water level data management and accessibility if there are any questions about current NDWR practices.

Lauren Bartels, Nevada Division of Water Resources, asked SAG members what they wanted to see in the climate and water resources section to ensure the State Water Plan is a useful document. Kara Steeland, Truckee Meadows Water Authority, said the State Water Plan should ensure that the data presented is consistent with the data presented in local and regional plans, as there is already a lot of work being done at the local level.

8. **PRESENTATION ON INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER OF STATE WATER PLAN**

Nicole Goehring, Nevada Division of Water Resources, provided a brief overview of the content of the introductory chapter of the State Water Plan, which includes sections on the history of water planning in Nevada, a summary of the 1999 State Water Plan, the relationship between the updated State Water Plan and existing plans, and the institutional and legal context of Nevada water law, among other topics. Nicole Goehring informed SAG members that they will be receiving a draft of the introductory chapters in July and will have the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions on the content.

Kim Rigdon, Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission/Western Regional Water Commission, asked if the introductory section will address the regulatory drivers behind the State

Water Plan update and provide an overview of the implementation plan. Nicole Goehring responded that these topics can be addressed in the introduction.

9. **FUTURE STATE WATER PLAN ACTIVITIES**

Bunny Bishop discussed potential additional activities related to State Water Plan efforts for consideration by the SAG. Potential activities included: review of introductory section of State Water Plan, another questionnaire that SAG members will respond to, site visits by NDWR staff to interact face-to-face with stakeholders to hear about specific concerns and needs, and an in-person SAG meeting in Spring 2024 to discuss the issues and recommendations section of the State Water Plan.

Nine SAG members indicated via a live survey that they had the resources to travel for a two-day workshop in Spring 2024. No SAG members indicated that they did not have the resources to travel. Daniel C. Weeks, Nye County Water District, offered meeting facilities in Nye County and offered to organize a meeting between NDWR and Nye County staff. Jake Tibbitts, Eureka County, also offered meeting space in Eureka. Laurel Saito, The Nature Conservancy, offered lodging and meeting space in Oasis Valley, which is currently facing issues of relevance to the State Water Plan.

Bunny Bishop informed SAG members that the next SAG meeting will be scheduled in the third quarter of 2023.

10. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bunny Bishop requested public comment. There was no public comment.

11. **ADJOURNMENT** – (Discussion/For Possible Action)

Bunny Bishop requested a motion to adjourn. Laurel Saito, The Nature Conservancy, moved to adjourn; Daniel C. Weeks, Nye County Water District, seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:51 pm PT.
