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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 31, 2010

**TO:** Board of Wildlife Commissioners; Governor's Office; County Advisory Boards to Manage Wildlife Members; Department of Wildlife Employees

**FROM:** Kenneth E. Mayer, Director *Kenneth E. Mayer*

**RE:** Leadership Team Reports – Meetings held March 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, 2010

**Director's Office**

Deputy Director Haskins said staff is working on Overtime Policy revisions as directed by the Governor's Executive Order with the direction to curtail overtime as lists from each agency with overtime will be submitted to the Executive Office and Board of Examiners, and noted that the changes take effect immediately. Deputy Director Cates said it is close in Category 01 to complete payroll and the Department may not have a buffer to pay for accrued overtime and budget is very limited at this time.

Deputy Director Cates said partial budget split proposed and for Wildlife Account, Director's Office, and Operations, and leaving everything else as is until next biennium. Performance Indicator training is scheduled for May 4 and on April 20 the Leadership Team will work on Strategic Plan as obviously the Strategic Plan needs updating to have performance indicators for the new budgets.

Question 1 program was the agenda topic meeting for March 29, 2010, Leadership Team.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has scheduled an Aquatic Invasive Species meeting in April and Deputy Director Haskins and Fisheries Chief Mark Warren will attend.

Review of March 19 and 20, 2010, Commission meeting:

- Deputy Attorney General Newton to look into fee being charged Clark CABMW to have their public meetings at Clark County Shooting Park
- Send copy to CABMWs of wild horse education letter from WAFWA and Department
- Chairman Lent requested May action agenda item to obtain status on potential sale of UNR's Main Station due to possible closure of College of Agriculture
- May 7, 2010, at 2 p.m. Wildlife Damage Management Committee will meet
- Award template for Gifts, Donations and Bequests to NDOW to be developed
- Definition of water hole and use of trail camera as it affects wildlife and hunting
- Send copy of March 17, 2010, affidavit and attachments from Calico Gather to Commission

- Send synopsis of staff weekly meetings to Commission
- Commissioner Howell requested transfer funds from Heritage projects that have not been implemented to predator account – May agenda if doable
- June Commission meeting – update on bear season
- Send CABMWs Governor’s memorandum on travel and overtime
- Draft February minutes had changes from Commissioner Raine
- Email from a man on deer “scours” - information needs to be given to Dr. Wolff

The University of Nevada, Reno College of Agriculture is being recommended to be closed as a result of the budget cuts. The wildlife programs will be absorbed into the Department of Biology. Director Mayer attended College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources (CABNR) meeting to discuss College of Agriculture the possible closing with CABNR’s Advisory Board.

Director Mayer visited the Kietzke Lane, Elko and Winnemucca offices to discuss the state and Department budget situation. Department communication between the regions needs to be improved and he asked that articles or information be provided on nongame funding, new positions, and furlough savings. He asked the regional staff to send him cost-savings ideas and tasked Management Analyst III Jolly with compiling the ideas.

Director Mayer participated in a conference call with National Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) staff for the sage grouse listing and later met with NRCS State Director Bruce Petersen on the results of the conference call.

Deputy Director Haskins said Federal Aid training is planned for staff on April 27 and 28; date needed for Landowner Incentive Program presentation at Leadership Team meeting; and Air Operations still need to visit with chiefs and see what they need.

Director Mayer said on March 11 he met with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Director Ron Wenker to discuss sage-grouse. He said a suggestion was made to restart and revitalize the Governor’s Sage-Grouse Team and he asked that a news release be written. Director Mayer was appointed as the national chairman of the Sage-Grouse Environment Oversight Committee (EOC).

Director Mayer and staff reviewed the conclusion of the Special Legislative Session with the Department obtaining approval to use hunt application fees for broader use rather than just Application Hunt system. The new language allows the account to be used for the Nevada Wildlife Data System, and to pay for operating staff, this will potentially free up approximately \$1 million of license dollars this biennium; 10 percent reduction originally proposed was taken which eliminated three positions, one GIS position in Wildlife Diversity Division, and two from the Fisheries Division, one native aquatic position and one Lake Mead hatchery position; the travel components that each Division delineated were used. Senate Bill (SB) 3 dealt with furloughs and changing the operating hours of state business to four 10 hour work days; although that will not take effect until July 1, SB 3 specifies that offices are closed on Fridays, although there is an exemption process in place but only for circumstances related to health, public safety. NDOW will argue that we need to be open Friday and would help with holidays; all furlough exceptions revoke effective July 1 and agencies must reapply. For state employees the Legislature did not approve additional pay cuts; however, there was discussion on overtime and language passed to restrict overtime.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation National Conference is in Reno March 5 – 11.

Deputy Director Cates said he and Fiscal Services Section staff are looking at changing budgeting process for splitting the budget account. Working on obtaining new facilities for the Reno office and met with Public Works Board staff and they told us that Land Agent should start looking to procure land for purchase and submit a Capitol Improvement Project and Public Works said they would discourage staff from looking at existing buildings as the retrofit expenses outweigh new construction.

Legislative discussion led to discussion of a list of potential revenue from special use permits such as scientific collection permits, mining assessments, GIS data requests. For non-fee related legislation the Department will be limited to two to three Bill Draft Requests (BDR) and the leadership team agreed to grouping Law Enforcement clean-up bills together, and that invasive species legislation should be its own BDR, and shed antler bill with other fee bills. The Wildlife Human Conflict BDR should be added to fiscal bills.

After several months of development by the Management Analyst 3 (MA 3) and Personnel Analyst, the Department's Prohibitions and Penalties were unanimously approved by the State Personnel Commission in March 2010. With their approval, this guide has the same force and effect as other rules and regulations covering classified employees. This is a guide for employees of the Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to help identify those activities that will be considered inconsistent, incompatible or in conflict with their duties as employees and that will be cause for disciplinary action. The handbook will also assist supervisors in taking appropriate corrective disciplinary action.

MA 3 has been working on the update to the NDOW Overtime Policy and Procedure to meet the requirements of the recent Executive Order by the Governor on Innovative Work Schedules (signed March 15, 2010). According to the Executive Order, all overtime must be pre-approved in writing by the Director, or his delegate. Per instruction by the Personnel Department at a meeting last week, the furthest down the chain of command a director can delegate overtime approval is the Division Chief. The overtime approval process and implementation, and documentation in NEATS timesheets will all be audited by Executive Branch Auditors and reported, as it is now, to the BOE. To comply with the new protocols, employees will see slight updates to the policy and the overtime authorization form, which must be completed and present prior to any timesheet approval where overtime is claimed. Approval signatures on overtime forms must be in writing per this executive order, but can be facilitated through electronic signatures. As always, flex time is encouraged rather than overtime. This updated overtime policy will be approved and distributed shortly.

The MA 3 continues to work on the Department's bill draft requests (BDR), with particular time and attention required for the invasive species BDR idea, as a comprehensive aquatic invasive species (AIS) program and coordinator are needed to prevent the quagga invasion in the south from infesting the rest of the state. In researching other states that have AIS laws considered "Best Management Practices", legislation for Nevada should provide the following points: to declare that aquatic invasive species have potential to cause massive environmental and economic harm to the state and human health, to establish through regulation a list of aquatic invasive

species; establish through regulation which waters are infested; and protocols for preventing the spread of the species from one water to another.

Additionally, MA 3 is researching fees and collecting input from all employees on innovative ideas for producing revenue, reviewed Apprentice License regulations, and recently assisted the Mule Deer Restoration Committee in facilitating public participation at the Reno office through teleconference.

### **Conservation Education**

The Wings and Wildlife Festival of Southern Nevada was held with over 100 people attending. Southern Region Wildlife Educator arranged for 12 guest speakers on a variety of topics involving wildlife; also had an NDOW information booth. Field trips took people to local birding and wildlife watching sites. There is a need to find a new venue and new sponsors for the festival in the future.

In addition to Eastern Region staff's usual radio, TV and newspaper production, Director Mayer appeared on the weekly NDOW TV segment on KENV TV in Elko.

Western Region Wildlife Educator (WRWE) began releasing the fish for the Trout in the Classroom program. The releases are going to be at the Oxbow Nature Study Area everyday for the next four weeks.

Eastern Region staff has been extremely busy with Trout in the Classroom releases over the past week and a half and are trying to get to as many releases as possible. Staff has also been planning and preparing for Wild Week, a student program taking place over Elko County School District's spring break.

The Big Game Seasons and Application Brochure was delivered to offices and agents statewide and is also available online as an "electronic magazine" or downloadable as a PDF.

The publications coordinator has sent draft versions of the predator brochure and the coyote brochure to Game Division staff. He reports that he will give the draft to members of the State Predatory Animal and Rodent Committee for their edits and review.

The Southern Region received a report today that a coyote scaled a seven-foot wall and killed someone's dog. The incident was apparently caught on tape by the owner's security camera.

North Las Vegas police responded to a report of illegal fishing activity at City View Park over the weekend. As it turns out, the perpetrators were members of the Junior Fly-Fishing Club led by none other than the Southern Region Aquatic Education Coordinator. Once she explained the park fishing regulations the police were satisfied and the fishing, and even some catching, continued.

The Outdoor Education Coordinator (OEC), along with two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Federal Assistance staff, participated in a review of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Hunter Education program. The review team interviewed over 30 WDFW employees, Wildlife Commissioners and volunteer

instructors, observed two hunter education classes and reviewed countless documents, policies and procedures and curriculum materials. A preliminary report was delivered to the WDFW director and law enforcement chief. The draft written report will be developed by the USFWS Region I federal aid coordinator for review and finalization by other team members before it's sent on to WDFW.

Hunter Education is in overdrive statewide - classes are filling up quickly with the tag deadline of April 19 looming. Southern Region staff is working through scheduling issues associated with two-night classes held on Monday and Tuesday evenings at the Clark County Shooting Park. Park management wants the security gate closed at all times after 5 p.m. Since classes don't start until 6:30 p.m. someone has to be present to raise the gate as students arrive. This must be repeated when the students leave or are picked up following the class at about 9:30 p.m. Park volunteers are not permitted to do this, so at the moment NDOW is responsible for manning during evening classes. The current facility schedule prohibits us from offering two-night classes, with the evenings back-to-back, on any other weekday evenings.

Kids were the name of the game this week in the Southern Region. Between fishing clinics, Trout in the Classroom releases and Wildlife Education presentations, activities involved more than 800 kids. Fishing clinics are an almost daily occurrence.

The Oxbow Nature Study Area restoration is in full swing. Over 200 trees will be planted by the end of the week under the three nursery contracts that were established a few months ago. Meetings continue with NDOW, City of Reno and JVR in regards to the bank stabilization project at the Oxbow NSA.

Jennifer Cassaday, the Connecting Children with Wildlife staff (CCwW), held her first evening family hike at the Oxbow NSA. Habitats were discussed with the seven people who showed up; the kids had a great time and learned a few things as well. Another family hike at Verdi was scheduled.

CCwW staff spent reading week at Verdi Elementary with fourth, fifth, and sixth graders teaching them how to use field guides and putting it to use on the trail, with the younger kids having a habitat scavenger hunt. Altogether over 200 kids were taken through the trail.

Southern Region Wildlife education staff reviewed and provided comment on the interpretation plan for the Spring Mountains Recreation Area and also attended a meeting with Moapa Valley community leaders to discuss the Overton WMA Nature Center, its progress and its possibilities.

Since the National Archery Schools Program (NASP) tournament was held in Las Vegas with 10 schools enrolled in the NASP program and school participation has grown to 17 schools. EW Fritsch elementary school in Carson City is hoping to add its name to the list in the near future.

Designs for the Overton Nature Center are 95 percent complete, and final comments will be provided to contractor PBS&J by mid-March.

The Outdoor Education Coordinator (OEC) met with representatives of the International Sportsmen's Expo Shows (ISES). They are offering to provide 10,000 – 20,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space to NDOW for a youth section at next year's RMEF convention/show; children 15 and under would be admitted free. In return NDOW will provide educational programming and other wildlife and agency information. ISES has similar arrangements with AZ, CA, CO and UT for shows held in those states and has offered to provide references and sponsor travel to see one of the shows first hand. They have also offered to make a presentation to the Leadership Team explaining their offer in detail. Arrangements have not been finalized, but it appears ISES is planning to hold an Expo in Reno and possibly Las Vegas in 2012.

The Nevada Wildlife Record Book Foundation granted Conservation Education \$3,085 to reprint the Color Nevada Wild coloring book and send the coloring book out to every third grade classroom in the state. In addition, the Nevada Wildlife Record Book Foundation approved \$2,500 in funding for the Overton Nature Center interpretive exhibits. A work program has been requested to receive expenditure authority for the coloring book and interpretive exhibits.

### **Fisheries Division**

In the Western Region, the permanent barrier on the McDermitt Creek Drainage is currently under construction. The purpose of the barrier is to protect the LCT metapopulation in McDermitt Creek from invasion of non-native salmonids, which could move up from the Quinn River during high flow events. If the weather holds, the barrier should be completed within three weeks (50ft X 20ft).

Biologists conducted the second year of a habitat improvement project at Topaz Lake. The project used volunteers to bundle Christmas trees and drop at strategic locations in Topaz Lake in an effort to improve bass recruitment.

Western Region biologists are planning on conducting toad surveys in Dixie Valley during the week of April 5. This project is contingent on good weather as toads don't like cold, windy weather.

At the last meeting with the Soldier Meadows Working Group, BLM mentioned that Kudrna has expressed an interest in selling the ranch. Of course, he's thrown out a figure that is high - 12 million. The group discussed having a non-governmental entity (e.g., the Nature Conservancy) approach him with an offer and handle the deal for us.

The Habitat Division Chief mentioned the Navy has expressed an interest in trading some NDOW owned land adjacent to one of their properties for their lands (and water rights) out in Dixie Valley. The area has huge potential for fisheries and waterfowl. NDOW should ensure that whatever mineral rights that might exist are also transferred to NDOW since there is considerable geothermal activity in the valley

In the Eastern Region, the Upper Humboldt River DPS (GMU) Team met last week to discuss priorities for the coming field season (and to welcome back Carol Evans (BLM)). Personnel met with a landowner in the South Fork Humboldt River Sub-basin to discuss the potential for a Safe Harbor Agreement on their property.

In the Southern Region, the protests to the Southern Nevada Water Authority water rights are being compiled. A contract with Clark County is being negotiated to take over the relict leopard frog pond currently managed by the BLM. The US FWS has come up with an additional \$72,000 to extend the Devil's Hole pupfish position which presently ends this April. Contractors are being solicited for habitat rehabilitation work on Beaver Dam Wash.

NDOW met with the Duck Valley Indian Tribe in Owyhee to discuss concerns about the possible spread of quagga mussels to their waters. An Idaho Department of Agriculture Aquatic Nuisance Species employee was also present. Various options were reviewed and a possible plan of action was formulated including inspection of boats and a wash station if contamination was suspected.

A request for a new staff position to be in charge of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) has been requested. There was formerly a staff position for endemic fish and AIS, but it was eliminated March 1 before it could be filled. The new position will be challenged with producing a state AIS plan.

The Fisheries Division has requested a news release identifying the new three fish limit at the numerous Washoe County urban ponds. Apparently, wardens are encountering anglers that are unaware of the new law, which went into effect on March 1 of this year and lowered the limit from five to three fish. This was done in hopes of prolonging the amount of time stocked fish are available to anglers.

The Southern Region has requested \$8,000 to \$10,000 for the cleaning of the well at Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area which supplies water to ponds that support the Pahrangat roundtail chub.

Staff met with Lisa Heki from the USFWS here in Reno to discuss upcoming LCT issues in the Western Region. Their vision is to fund another facility, either an expanded Mason Valley Hatchery or some other private grower, to produce LCT for Lake Tahoe. The Walker Lake Indian Tribe is exploring funding for construction of an LCT hatchery on reservation land to stock Walker Lake. A funding package of 20 million for LCT work is currently being considered in congress.

The Reno Boat and RV Show was held with Fisheries, Law Enforcement and Conservation Education staffing the booth throughout the three days of the show. Hunting and Fishing licenses were available for purchase.

Lakes of Las Vegas near Lake Mead has identified golden algae in their impoundment. The Arizona Game and Fish Department writes, "Golden alga, (*Prymnesium parvum*), was first discovered in Arizona in 2005 and has since been identified in a number of urban lakes in the greater Phoenix area and three of the four reservoirs along the Salt River on the Tonto National Forest. Golden algae are suspected to be the cause of several fish kills that have occurred in these lakes and reservoirs. Under certain environmental stresses, golden algae produce a toxin that negatively affects gill-breathing species such as fish, mollusks, arthropods, and the gill-breathing stage of amphibians. When this occurs fish behave as if there is not enough oxygen in the water. They travel at the top of the water surface or rest on the bottom in edges and shallow areas. Although golden algae can be toxic for fish they are not a threat to humans." NDOW will keep a close watch on the situation.

## **Habitat**

Habitat staff continue involvement in the Ruby Pipeline Project. Ruby proponents have been asked by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to provide additional information on the alternative route that would follow highway 140 through the Sheldon Wildlife Refuge. This alternative has been identified as less impacting than the proposed route. Mitigation agreements are still being negotiated.

The Habitat Staff position to provide program leadership for the Nevada Partnership for Conservation and Development has been filled. Lee Turner has reported in that position and is working with partners to initiate the next steps for approving a Charter and implementation strategies.

Habitat staff, along with staff from other Divisions will be assessing Level B project proposals for development of next year's work plan for BA 4458 categories.

Habitat and Wildlife Diversity staff are working together on inputs into the development of a Decision Support System for incorporation of wildlife information into project planning. The process involves a four state (Nevada, California, Arizona and Utah) cooperative pilot project funded through the Western Governors' Association with a Department of Energy grant.

The Habitat Division Chief is representing Nevada on the Western Governors' Association Wildlife Council. Meetings have been held in Billings, Montana and Phoenix, Arizona where guidance for development of Decision Support Systems and for the western states pilot projects has been developed. The wildlife council also developed inputs into the WAFWA proposed North American Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation Act.

The supervising habitat biologist for the Western Region has retired and the vacant position has been announced. In the meantime Habitat staff are filling in on some Western Region projects.

Habitat staff are providing support for several large projects including the North and South Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP) power lines, wind energy projects in the Spring Valley area, China Mountain wind energy project and Jungo Landfill.

Habitat chief and staff have met with the Pattern Energy proponents to discuss the project and issues to be worked out. Concerns include the Rose Cave Mexican free-tailed bat population that exceeds 1,000,000 bats and their flight patterns over the proposed site.

## **Law Enforcement**

Chief Game Warden Buonamici said uniform committee met and decisions have to be submitted by this Friday.

## **Operations Division**

NDOW's Lands Working Group revitalized - With the recent arrival of Bill Bennett, our new State Land Agent, we've recently convened our internal NDOW Lands Working Group. Our recent meeting addressed current issues related to the Stowell and Lockes properties. Also, this group has initiated efforts to relook at land and/or existing buildings for a new headquarters facility. Divisions were requested to review and update a previous-used planning document (personnel needs, office and storage space) which will be used to compliment a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) planning submission which the Director intends to submit for CIP consideration. Once reviewed by the director's office, our submission must be received by State Public Works Board no later than April 2, 2010.

Changes coming to NDOW's Air Operations program with Chief Pilot Mike King retiring this March. Recruitment efforts are underway to find a highly-qualified replacement. Mike has been with the agency for over 12 years and has delivered exceptional flight services to the agency—with safety being job-one.

Silver State Tag (SST) working group continues to keep this proposed new prestigious tag on track for implementation. Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) has concluded their review of the proposed regulation which is now on the Commission's March agenda for work shop and action. Assuming the SST CGR will be approved by the Commission, programming will commence, followed by extensive testing and associated updates made to our publications. The SST application process should then be available for sportsmen by the big game application period in spring 2011.

Other pending CGRs coming soon for the new Apprentice License, the Duck Stamp program and Junior Hunt eligibility – We are anticipating any day now LCB's conclusion of their review of the new language for the Apprentice License, as well as their review of regulation changes related to Duck Stamps changes and the Junior Hunt eligibility. Because of the recent Special Session, LCB's efforts were diverted from their regulation review process. With the session now completed, LCB promises to complete their review of these regulations soon. Once completed, we will include these three regulations on the next Commission agenda (est. May 2010) for workshop and action. Regarding the new Apprentice License, we remain confident it will be implemented for the fall season.

New Engineering Section is up and running with the addition of Ross Baker the newly hired second engineer. This newly formed work center is now composed of two engineers, our Maintenance Specialist, our new Land Agent (Bill Bennett) and Teresa Jarrett. Ron Cothran will continue to cover the maintenance needs of the Valley Road office, at the same time focusing much attention to the many neglected or dormant state-wide maintenance needs. Although Teresa Jarrett is assigned to Law Enforcement, her Boating Access projects have a direct relationship with Engineering, hence her relocation into the new Engineering Section. With this new team now in place, our next step is to re-evaluate and prioritize our statewide maintenance and engineering projects to ensure priority issues get more timely attention.

Video Teleconferencing planning efforts continue using the existing Department of Information Technology (DoIT) infrastructure, our IT staff, in coordination with Con Ed, continues establishing such capabilities. At present the capability exists at the Kietzke

Lane complex conference room and the Las Vegas office conference room. The next step is to set up the conference room at Valley Road, and with some pending improvements for the communication environment at the Elko office, this Eastern Region location will soon be compatible with the DoIT process as well. We will also be looking at bringing this capability to the Fallon and Ely offices in the future. Once established, this process will improve communications support for agency meetings, and is expected to satisfactorily support the Wildlife Commission's various committee meetings. However, it is anticipated at this time that the existing DoIT teleconferencing capability will not be adequate to support Commission meetings.

### **Wildlife Diversity**

Staff participated in discussions regarding interstate movement and adoption of desert tortoises, the transition of the desert tortoise hotline and pick up service, frequently asked questions about captive desert tortoises in Nevada, and potential solutions to the current over abundance of captive desert tortoises.

Staff assisted with the development of the GIS data sharing agreement, sensitive species data list, and the HerpNet GIS data base. Staff also worked on data dissemination of NDOW datasets to the Clark County Desert Conservation Program staff.

A renewable energy meeting with NDOW, BLM and USFWS Division was attended. Focus of the meeting was solar energy and how to deal with displaced wildlife, in particular, desert tortoises given that many of these projects will remove most or the entire available wildlife habitat.

Staff also attended the Biological Resource Team (BRT) meetings to continue to work on the Biological Monitoring Plan and Chapter development for Delamar, Dry Lake and Cave Valley (DDC) and Eastern Nevada water project. Staff provided comments to Chapters 4 and 5 of the Biological Monitoring Plan.

Wildlife Diversity Division staff conducted a raven count at the landfills in southern Nevada. Numbers are up from 2009 but lower than 2008. We will continue monitoring to track trends.

Staff participated in a western states coordination conference call on the status of the yellow-billed cuckoo. Several action items ensued from that call including an updated progress report of recent surveys and status of the cuckoo in Nevada.

Staff assisted with the development of the Fallon Naval Air Station herpetofauna project and has continued finalizing the report, 'State of the Union: Legal Authority over the Use of Native Amphibians and Reptiles in the United States'.

Tonopah staff coordinated winter raptor surveys with BLM, traveled to Las Vegas for the GIS meeting at UNLV and attended the Wildlife Society conference in Visalia, CA. Staff reviewed habitat documents and worked on spotted frog data for the 2009 Job Progress Report and the range wide spotted frog meeting.

Staff attended the Lower Colorado River Riparian and Terrestrial Wildlife Conference and also staff attended the Ash Meadows Science Symposium.

Staff continue survey efforts for peregrine falcons at several sites in southern Nevada.

Wildlife Diversity Division staff assisted the Game Division with bighorn sheep trapping effort in the River Mountains and also reviewed numerous scientific collection permit applications.

Western Region Wildlife Diversity staff participated in the annual Eagles and Agriculture tour and banquet in February. Staff provided field support by locating eagle activity zones along bus tour routes, gave a presentation, and monitored a booth at the banquet held in Gardnerville. Throughout the weekend, over 400 members of the public attended the event, traveling from as far afield as Florida. A press release in the Nevada Rancher highlighted the events, and in the month of March, NPR radio will be devoting a segment of their program to the event.

Development of two new Environmental Improvement Program (EIP) work plans continues. The invasive species program (category 36) will focus on Marlette Lake aquatic health and its status for potential aquatic invasive species control or prevention. The special status species program (Category 37) is focused on species that are of conservation priority within the eastern side of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Target species for the program are Northern flying squirrel, Mountain beaver, American marten and the Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare.

Wildlife Diversity personnel began working with the USFWS Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on wildlife habitat improvement and habitat enhancement projects aimed at reseeding retired farmland parcels recently acquired by the USFWS. Other conservation efforts in the planning stage are the development of moist soil units for wildlife on abandoned farmland.

Planning meetings were attended to organize events for the Walker Lake Education Day and Spring Wings Festival. Last year's Walker Lake Festival attracted a crowd of about 500-700 people. NDOW has been a co-sponsor with the Walker Lake Working Group since 1992.

Input related to the Ruby Pipeline project continues. Meetings were attended to address construction of the pipeline during limited operating periods as defined in the final EIS. Some limited operating periods might be violated by the construction company which would negatively impact sage grouse, raptors, migratory and nesting birds, and mule deer. A tentative agreement for increased mitigation was discussed during this meeting, but nothing was agreed upon.

Wildlife Diversity staff worked on a draft project proposal, developed in coordination with UNR, to assess the impacts to active pygmy rabbit burrows and colonies along the Ruby Pipeline Route. Pygmy rabbits would be fitted with collars before construction and monitoring would continue pre and post construction.

Work continued on the maintenance of the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) bat gate list including biological data on mines already surveyed, closure priority, and nomination and timing of sites for construction. Staff also discussed White Nose Syndrome protocols

and how they would be adopted for the different agencies in the western states on a Western Bat Working Group conference call.