

STATE OF NEVADA

BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS

Commission Policy Number 63

Number: P- 63

Title: Protecting Wildlife from Toxic Ponds

Reference: NRS 501.181

Effective Date: September 22, 1989

Reviewed Date: 2022

Amended Date: December 2, 1995 and
September 22, 2017

POLICY

Policy statement pertaining to programs necessary to ensure the protection of wildlife from industrial operations using or creating chemicals or other potentially lethal substances.

AUTHORITY

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 501.181 provides that the Board of Wildlife Commissioners (the Commission) shall adopt regulations governing the provisions for a permit which is required for any person who develops or maintains an artificial or man-made body of water, other than a body of water maintained for agricultural or recreational purposes, containing chemicals or substances in quantities which, with the normal use of the body of water, causes the death of any wildlife.

INTENT

The intent of the legislation was and will continue to be focused specifically on the development and implementation of protective measures to ensure that wildlife mortalities do not occur as a result of cyanide or other substance poisoning in industrial ponds. The legislation was not intended to address other equally important environmental matters or to replace or usurp the legislative authorities of other agencies.

BACKGROUND

During the 1980s, the advancement of mining technology coupled with favorable economic conditions for mining created significant problems related to direct wildlife loss caused by cyanide poisoning. As a result, the statute referenced above was developed by the Department of Wildlife in cooperation with the Nevada Mining Association and other permitting agencies to address problems associated with the development and maintenance of ponds containing cyanide or other chemicals that are potentially lethal or harmful to wildlife.

The creation of the Departments' Industrial Artificial Pond (IAP) program established agency direction and developed potential solutions for reducing or eliminating direct wildlife mortalities at mining projects. The program is based on a permitting process that requires permittees to either exclude wildlife from accessing potentially toxic solutions through fencing and pond covering or by neutralizing solutions to ensure they are non-lethal to wildlife. Monitoring is accomplished through periodic site inspections and mandatory quarterly reporting of wildlife mortalities. Cooperation and coordination with permittees to develop site-specific solutions is integral to the success of the program.

Since the development of the IAP program, the Department has increased its understanding of how to apply both proactive and reactive measures to preclude wildlife from accessing potentially toxic ponds and minimize wildlife mortality associated with those ponds. Additionally, the increased use of potentially toxic ponds in other industrial development projects has led to a modernized permitting program that also incorporates the energy (coal, natural gas, solar, and geothermal) and manufacturing industries where wildlife is at risk of contacting toxic solutions.

The Department continues to move forward under the legislatively authorized regulatory process to ensure that wildlife receive adequate protection from direct losses associated with industrial activity in Nevada.

POLICIES

In order to ensure that the Commission's role and direction in developing regulations pertaining to this issue are fully understood, the following policies are hereby established:

1. It shall be the policy of the Commission to maintain a zero mortality objective by implementing protective measures based on the latest technology; recognizing, however, that incidental mortality may occur notwithstanding this objective.
2. It shall be the policy of the Commission to implement necessary wildlife protective measures through the regulation process in a reasonable and prudent and yet prompt and effective manner.
3. It shall be the continuing policy of the Board of Wildlife Commissioners to work cooperatively with industry and environmental interest groups as a means of identifying and resolving problems relating to wildlife which are of mutual interest and concern.
4. It shall be the policy of the Commission to continue working in a cooperative fashion with other regulatory agencies as a means of avoiding duplication of efforts and to ensure that permit requirements are consistent among individual permits.
5. It shall be the policy of the Commission to support agency efforts in distributing information and acting as a clearinghouse for wildlife mortality data collected via mandatory reporting, as well as, a conduit of technology transfer, passing along successful protective measure techniques, materials and all other matters pertaining industrial artificial ponds.
6. An annual report will be provided to the Commission on wildlife mortality.

This policy shall remain in effect until amended, repealed, or superseded by the Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS IN REGULAR SESSION, MAY 06, 2022.

Chairwoman Tiffany East
Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners