

Committee Members: Commissioner Kiel (Chair),
Commissioner Barnes, Commissioner Rogers, Commissioner
Almberg, Jim Rackley, Jeremy Drew, Charlie Clements,
Josh Vittori, Cory Lytle, Alan Shepherd, Kris Boatner

Staff to the Committee: Mike Scott
Alan Jenne
Cody Schroeder

**Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners
Mule Deer Enhancement Program Oversight Committee**

Wednesday, December 15, 2021 / 6:00 p.m.
Meeting held via www.Zoom.us

DRAFT Minutes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call of Committee Members – Chairman Kiel

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

In attendance:

Commissioner Kiel, Chair
Commissioner Barnes
Commissioner Almberg
Jim Rackley, Nevada Muleys Association
Jeremy Drew, Resource Specialist
Charlie Clements, Rangeland Scientist
Josh Vittori, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited
Cory Lytle, Meadow Valley Wildlife Unlimited
Alan Shepherd, Bureau of Land Management
Kristie Boatner, US Forest Service
Alan Jenne, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Mark Freese, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Mike Scott, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Cody Schroder, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Pat Jackson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Tom Donham, Nevada Department of Wildlife

2. Approval of Agenda – For Possible Action

Committee Member Rackley motioned to approve the agenda.

Committee Member Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed. Commissioners Rogers and absent.

3. *Approval of Minutes (October 27, 2021) – Chairman Kiel – For Possible Action

Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel motioned to approve the October 27,
2021, Minutes.

Committee Member Commissioner Almberg seconded the motion.

The motion passed. Commissioner Rogers and Committee Member
Shepherd absent.

4. *Member Announcements and Correspondence – Chairman Kiel – Informational

No correspondence was received.

5. *Mule Deer Enhancement Program Project Proposal Scoring – Chairman Kiel – For Possible Action

Game Administrator Mike Scott presented a spreadsheet displaying the proposed projects in a ranked format. The spreadsheet had been collaborated on by Mr. Scott, Habitat Administrator Alan Jenne, Wildlife Staff Specialist Cody Schroeder, and Wildlife Staff Specialist Mark Freese. The Committee discussed the scoring criteria and measures used by Staff. The Committee discussed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its role in the ranking process, conversing on if projects were "NEPA-ready" or had "NEPA in place" prior to full consideration and funding.

Committee Member Drew asked what the Wildlife Commission's expectation was in terms of the Committee's recommendations and project implementation. Mr. Drew asked if the Wildlife Commission was looking for endorsements and if there was a limit to the number of projects that could go forward. Mr. Drew stated that the projects that were not NEPA-ready were still worthy projects, and he did not want to discourage the implementation or pursuit of them. Mr. Drew wanted to know how the Committee could maximize its effectiveness within the Mule Deer Enhancement Program.

Game Administrator Scott commented that there were at least \$3 million worth of projects being considered during this meeting. Mr. Scott asked the Committee to go through the proposed projects and decide which projects should go forward and endorsing the approved projects. Mr. Scott continued that the Committee could give the highest support for the projects it wanted to see go forward. Mr. Scott stated that this was merely Year 1 of the Program and the projects not implemented or endorsed by the Committee will likely be submitted again next year. Next year, Mr. Scott continued, these projects may have a higher ranking, or other ways to implement them will be sought out, not necessarily through the Oversight process.

Habitat Administrator Jenne agreed, stating that the projects had been ranked by Staff and were now ready to bring to other Committees that may be able to assist in funding and implementation, for example the Heritage Committee or the Predator Committee (Wildlife Damage Management Committee). Mr. Jenne continued that this meeting was to develop the Committee's criteria for moving projects forward.

Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel commented that the prioritization sheet should be managed as a living document and that the 40 or so projects were indeed numerous. Chair Kiel continued that the Committee would watch to see which projects rise to the top year after year depending on priority or utility and actively compare those projects against ones that do not have to go through a NEPA process. Chair Kiel finished stating there were many elements to consider when prioritizing projects.

Committee Member Lytle stated his view of the Committee's role was to see what funding was available per each type of project, for example, when considering a predator removal plan, the Committee should look at the status of the Predator Plan and see how the project might mesh with the current Predator Plan. Mr. Lytle continued that certain projects might be able to bring instant results, and predator proposals might make a quicker impact than other proposals; projects focused on habitat would be guided to the Heritage Fund and its Committee. Mr. Lytle suggested taking the top tier of projects and breaking them down from there, focusing on where the Committee can find available funding, knowing that the Committee cannot fund every project this year. Mr. Lytle warned the Committee to be wary of projects that have the potential to drag on past the first year or two of funding and implementation.

Committee Member Rackley agreed with Committee Member Lytle, putting forward that the Committee should focus on projects ranked above 60 percent, once the non-habitat and predator projects had been filtered out. Mr. Rackley also advised the Committee that not all projects have to be funded immediately and that it was not his personal expectation that a project would be funded all in one year. Mr. Rackley stated how much he appreciated the ranking spreadsheet. Committee Member Clements agreed that the ranking spreadsheet was very helpful. Mr. Clements wondered about the scoring process and how it meshed with the critical habitat needs for an area.

Game Administrator Scott answered that the ranking process was solely based on the information the Subcommittees had supplied via the proposal forms. If the Subcommittee listed the answer to a ranked question as a 'yes,' it was given the highest ranking.

Committee Member Clements asked if, once the Subcommittees figured out the scoring method, would they start to fix their answers in an effort to get a higher score?

Game Administrator Scott answered that the responsibility of the Committee was to workshop the submitted documents so that it would have input into the questions, and how those questions were asked and answered by the Subcommittees. Mr. Scott continued that criterion in the documents received from the Subcommittees was the criteria that was used.

The Committee reviewed the project rankings separately as they pertained to 3 different ranking categories: Non-Habitat Project Proposals, or Investigations, Predator Project Proposals, and Habitat Project Proposals.

Committee Member Commissioner Barnes asked the Department if the endorsed projects would stretch staffing.

Wildlife Staff Specialist Schroeder answered, yes, it would stretch staffing, however some of the projects were not staff-labor intensive. Mr. Schroeder stated the collaring projects would take more of the Department's time, with regard to acquiring funding, procuring the collars, and then actually putting the collars on the mule deer.

The Committee further discussed the presented project proposals and their ranking.

Public comment given by Larry Johnson, Washoe County Subcommittee member, regarding potential funding agreements with Nevada Bighorns Unlimited. Member of the public, Marcial Everston, suggested combining or overlapping projects across Management Areas.

Committee Member Drew shared concerns about denying a good project that may not rank as high as others. Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel agreed and mentioned he had noted to himself to look at percent success when ranking future proposals. Committee Member Lytle asked who would sponsor the projects recommended here tonight; would they be Department or maybe Subcommittee sponsored?

Game Administrator Scott reiterated that this Committee was a new Committee and that Staff and the Subcommittees were still finding the way forward. Mr. Scott continued that support from the Oversight Committee would be important for a project going to the Heritage Committee or Predator Committee or coming back to NDOW. Mr. Scott stated that without having funding allocated specifically for this Committee and these projects, the Department will be asking to include these projects in other funding sources, and currently the Committee's approval would be important in moving forward. Habitat Administrator Jenne stated moving a project to the Heritage Committee that has an Oversight Committee endorsement would indeed help that project move forward.

Game Administrator Scott suggest looking at the 3 categories and moving forward separately on each category.

The Committee discussed individual non-habitat investigations project proposals and their ranking.

Committee Member Vittori put forward that he was aware there was a potential pot of money in the Heritage Account to fund these projects but did not have information about the Predator Fund with regard to available money.

Game Administrator Scott stated he did not have information about the Predator Plan at hand, but he knew of only 2 categories: Project 37 and Project 38, coyote and lion projects, at the statewide level.

Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel stated that the initial 8 investigations proposals were all worthwhile, and the Committee should propose all 8 projects and see what funding the Commission will secure.

Committee Member Drew motioned that the Committee endorse the 8 ranked non-habitat investigations proposals: GPS Collaring of Mule Deer in MA 1 & 2, Management Area 6 Remote Sensing Modeling, Continuation of 2021 Pinon Range Mule Deer Collaring, Public Messaging for Wintering Mule Deer, Area 8 Mule Deer Habitat Use Assessment, Teeth Collection and Age Analysis, Morey Bench Mule Deer Collaring, Unit 041-042 Mule Deer Collaring Project

Committee Member Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed. Commissioner Rogers absent.

No public comment was received.

The Committee discussed individual predator project proposals and their ranking.

Wildlife Staff Specialist Jackson stated that he had looked at the proposals with the view to 2022-23 and he was unsure about where current costs were for predator projects for the 2021-22 year.

Committee Member Commissioner Barnes offered that the Committee recommend all projects and let the Predator Committee decide the best projects to move forward with funding. Committee Member Drew agreed. Committee Member Lytle agreed, as well, stating the timeline of projects should be 3-4 years. Mr. Lytle surmised that the Subcommittees would be satisfied being awarded a lesser amount than their cost estimate in order to get the project going.

Wildlife Staff Specialist Jackson requested that if the Committee moved forward with recommending all the projects, that the Committee first rank the projects before moving them to the Wildlife Damage Management Committee.

Committee Member Clements discussed his methods for his ranking of the predator proposals. The Oversight Committee agreed with Mr. Clements ranking.

Committee Member Rackley commented regarding the Predator Removal in Priority Fawning Grounds.

Committee Member Clements motioned that the Committee endorse the following 5 ranked predator project proposals to forward to the Predator Management Committee: 014 Predator Management Project, Antelope Range Predator Removal, Predator Removal in Priority Fawning Grounds, Bothwick-Gleason Creek Predator Removal, and Units 043-046 Coyote Removal.

Committee Member Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed. Committee Member Lytle opposed. Commissioner Rogers absent.

No public comment was received.

The Committee discussed individual habitat project proposals and their ranking.

Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel asked to remove 3 projects from the list because the NEPA process was incomplete. Chair Kiel stated he was inclined to move the remaining project proposals to the Heritage Committee to consider. Committee Member Commissioner Barnes suggested the Committee endorse the projects and let the Department figure out how to fund them.

Habitat Administrator Jenne suggested the first cut of the habitat projects be the ones that go to the Heritage Committee, keeping the remaining projects on the spreadsheet. Mr. Jenne continued that if the proposed Recover America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) bill and its funding comes through, the Department will have those remaining projects ready to be evaluated and possibly funded. Mr. Jenne reiterated the Committee moving some projects forward did not mean the ones left on the list would be lost, and they may even be augmented or improved upon when they received their NEPA approval and come up again in the following year.

Committee Member Lytle suggested the projects where NEPA is not complete be put on the back burner and kept in the queue. Mr. Lytle asked that there be a tracking mechanism that allows the Committee to move the lower ranked projects forward.

Committee Member Lytle motioned that the Committee renumber the ranked habitat investigations proposals so that proposals 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14:

1)Strawberry Summit Spring Enclosure (Unit 154), 2)Washoe Spring Protections, 3)Morey Bench Mule Deer Crucial Winter Habitat Enhancement, 4)Bullwack Hand Thinning Project 5)Gregg Fire Seeding Improving Winter Habitat, 6)Cooper Canyon PJ Treatment, 7)Lincoln County Spring Enhancement, 8)Draw Fire Reseed, 9)South Ruby Mountain Enhancement Projects, 10)2018 Goose Creek Fire Bitterbrush Planting, 11)Water Canyon Reseed, 12)2006 Charleston Fire Shrub Rehabilitation,

are recommend for possible funding and moving forward to the Heritage Committee and that proposals 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 11, 15, 21:

1)Murdock Mountain Mule Deer Habitat Enhancement, 2)Palmetto and Montezuma Mountains Water Development, 3)Steptoe Bench PJ Treatment, 4)Meadow Creek Restoration, 5)Corta Fire Shrub Planting, 6)Carson City-Douglas-Storey Spring Enhancement

be ranked below the 60 percent threshold to be reconsidered at a later date, with #4 removed from the list all together, as it was redundant.

Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel seconded the motion.

The motion passed. Commissioner Rogers absent.

No public comment was received.

6. Mule Deer Enhancement Program Improvements – Chairman Kiel, Game Administrator Scott – Informational

Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel stated that with regard to improvements to the Mule Deer Enhancement Program, 3 items should happen going forward: 1) the Committee should workshop projects as they are submitted in hopes there will be more time for a more in depth discussion to occur; 2) the Committee and the Subcommittees will work towards better clarifying the funding sources and what is secured and what is not; 3) the ranking system needs to take into consideration the prospective percent of success of a project.

Committee Member Clements stated he would like the field biologists to foster cross-cooperation on projects that can benefit from shared boundaries of management areas and a combining of resources. Mr. Clements stated he was surprised there were not more habitat projects rehabbing fire damaged areas. Mr. Clements continued that he was also surprised that even though wild horses were a number 5 in all the Subcommittee meetings he attended, he did not see many projects looking at the problem of wild horses. Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel agreed that wild horses constituted a contributing factor and appreciated Committee Member Clements highlighting that.

Committee Member Rackley asked what the direction was to the Subcommittees with regard to securing funding and if Subcommittees could secure their own funding?

Game Administrator Scott answered he had instructed the field biologists that if they can secure funding with sportsman's groups, to please do so. Mr. Scott reiterated that securing outside funding was important for the Department's matching grant and it was an important part of the ranking process in pushing these projects forward. Mr. Scott stated he would continue to ask the field biologists to seek funding, because it was crucial the Department build partnerships and secure funding outside the agency and outside of federal funding.

Habitat Administrator Jenne stated that going forward, Staff assigned to the Committee would work to be respectful of the Committee's time, making sure the Committee had a single stream of communication versus numerous individual singular conversations, which may lead to confusion.

Committee Member Drew wanted to encourage Subcommittees to resubmit the projects that ranked lower than the 60 percent cut-off point; it was important to Mr. Drew that folks not walk away discouraged. Mr. Drew stated the summary table presented by Staff was helpful and he would like to use the table going forward. Mr. Drew concluded that going forward, he would like to see the groups that did not get any projects submitted more engaged. Committee Member Lytle agreed, also commending the Subcommittees' efforts. Mr. Lytle stated he would like to see these projects tracked, showing how they ranked originally, yet somehow keep the proposals rolling forward and not let them drop all together off the list.

Habitat Administrator Jenne remarked to Chair Kiel that the Committee did not take public comment before the motions under agenda item 5 were voted on. Committee Chair Commissioner Kiel stated he would close agenda item 6, reopen agenda item 5, then take public comment for the 3 motions. Game Administrator Scott and Habitat Administrator Jenne agreed that was an appropriate action to resolve the Open Meeting Law oversight.

7. Public Comment Period

No public comment was received.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.