



Jim Gibbons  
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

## DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

1100 Valley Road

Reno, Nevada 89512

(775) 688-1500 • Fax (775) 688-1207



Kenneth E. Mayer  
Director

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 7, 2008

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

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

**SUBJECT:** Department Activities Report – April 19 – April 30, 2008

#### Director's Office

Director Mayer reported on his trip to Washington, D.C. and said that trip was great and the timing was perfect to bring forth Nevada's issues. He said that first off he met with Director Ryan McGinness of Governor Gibbon's Washington, D.C. office, who facilitated meeting arrangements with Senator Reid and staff, Congressman Heller's staff, Department of the Interior's Deputy Lynn Scarlett, Director Matt Hogan of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and he also participated for one day with Utah's delegation. Director Mayer said he met with Senator Reid on his first day in D.C. for almost 30 minutes and presented him with a framed photograph of a Greater Nevada sage-grouse. Director Mayer asked the Senator for his assistance on sage-grouse and sagebrush conservation management. He told the Senator that he would be meeting with Department of the Interior Deputy Lynn Scarlett and asked that he telephone the Department of the Interior and lend his support for WAFWA's conservation initiatives. Director Mayer believes that Senator Reid made those contacts. During the conversation Senator Reid brought up the possibility of reintroducing wild salmon in Nevada. One of his major objectives is to give Nevada a seat at the table on watershed restoration so that funding can be available to restore Nevada watersheds.

Director Mayer said he had a very successful meeting with Deputy Lynn Scarlett and staff and they reviewed five items that Director Mayer said were of great importance to Nevada and the rest of the west. These were: Implement an aggressive wildfire initial attack program and Director Mayer provided them with background information on the successful Bureau of Land Management (BLM) pilot program in Humboldt County; establish that the conservation and restoration of western sagebrush ecosystems

May 2, 2008

and Greater sage-grouse management are a priority for the BLM; establish a policy and a procedure to “streamline” the NEPA process for BLM Districts in the Western U. S. to facilitate wildfire restoration of sagebrush ecosystems and critical Greater sage-grouse habitats; review all BLM policies for their potential negative effects on achieving conservation and restoration goals for western sagebrush ecosystems and critical Greater sage-grouse habitats; and implement a “Core Conservation Strategy” concept to protect Greater sage-grouse habitats in the Western U.S.

The following day he joined with the Utah State Delegation for “Partners for Conservation and Development.” They met with Senator Orin Hatch and Bob Bennett. Director Mayer said Assistant Secretary Allred told the group that the BLM will be developing plans to identify critical sage grouse habitat resources. The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) will work with BLM to see that they follow through with this idea. Overall the trip was very successful and is already showing results.

Director Mayer, Chief of Game Russ Mason, Shwan Espinosa, Chris Hampson, and Kim Toulouse, took Governor Gibbons to view strutting sage grouse at a lek east of Doyle. The Governor commented it as both an enjoyable and educational trip and he would like to participate in other field trips in the future.

Director Mayer and Chief of Operations Bob Haughian met with Naomi Duerr of the Truckee River Flood Project to discuss the Excel building and learn the status of the lease. Because of the length of the planning and construction horizon the building will not be available until at least 2011. There are many aspects to the flood control project that need to be completed before they build the levee to protect the building. Ms. Duerr informed the Director that they are due to receive the estimate for the remodel of the building and once they receive the cost estimate, they will make a final decision on whether it is financially feasible to rehab the Excel building. Director Mayer will follow-up with them in June. From a financial perspective Director Mayer was told that they would work with the Department on a rent we could afford.

Director Mayer along with Shawn Espinosa attended the Northeastern Nevada Stewardship meeting in Elko as they the keynote speakers. The meeting was attended by about 30 people. The group had a lot of energy, and is involved in a number of positive activities in the sagebrush conservation arena in northeastern Nevada.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Region 8 meeting is this week and Employee Recognition week is May 5 – 10.

On May 7 at 3 p.m. there will be cake and ice cream at the three regional offices as a thank you to Department employees.

Staff Conservation Educator from the Law Enforcement Division Ed Lyngar provided the Leadership Team with an update on the “Tahoe Water Trail” and their efforts to promote kayak and paddleboat safety. He said the kayak group was started in 2005, and the direction of the group slightly changed with Tahoe Conservancy getting involved. A concern was expressed to Director Mayer that NDOW’s logo was used on the Tahoe Water Trail map, and Director Mayer reminded everyone that NDOW logo is not allowed to be used without permission. People are concerned about the term “water trail.”

Deputy Director Hunt said the budget deadline is May 1 for FY 10 and 11.

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Director Allen Biaggi informed Ms. Jolly that the reason that the Governor asked NDOW, State Parks, and the DMV not to actively participate in the OHV registration legislation discussion at the most recent the Public Lands Committee is that he wants the OHV registration proponents Legislature to figure this out on their own first then have us react, rather than have executive agencies proposing something to the Legislature. The OHV registration proponents still have many things to work out amongst themselves before they will be successful at the legislature. We can still however, talk to organizations and others about the issue for information sharing.

The Credit Card Team, led by Ms. Jolly had a productive first meeting to discuss steps toward accepting credit cards at NDOW offices. There is much research left to be done to help predict how much it would cost to implement and to try to predict the annual merchant fees the department would need to pay. With the 2009 biennium budget requests so close to deadline, the credit card team is optimistic that the next biennium in 2011 would be realistic for submitting a proposal to move towards acceptance of credit and debit cards at NDOW offices.

The revised Equipment Policy and Procedure comment deadline was March 31<sup>st</sup>, and several regional and hatchery employees provided great suggestions which are being incorporated. Ms. Jolly asks that the Division Chiefs take one last look at the interdivision-borrowing section of the draft to make sure that they are comfortable with it, especially since that is a new section that they requested.

### **Conservation Education**

The Conservation Education Chief met with government communicators April 16 and discussed the “War on Cheatgrass,” wildfire rehabilitation efforts, off-highway vehicle use and regulatory updates, Forest Service’s roadless area designation process, wilderness area designations and interagency communication, sage-grouse litigation, and the newly completed Nevada native fishes poster.

The hunt unit map has been updated to reflect current Wilderness Areas and will be published in the Nevada Hunt book. Staff met to review Hunt Book and this year’s species is mule deer, and celebrates the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nevada Hunt Book.

Staff reports there were 325 new subscriptions to NDOW’s new email information service.

Conservation Education staff met with the agency engineer, contractor PBS&J, and the Overton Planning/Design Team at the building site for the Overton Interpretive Center at the Overton Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The Planning/Design Team members are Tracy Hammond, Tommy Ford, Doug Nielsen, Margie Klein and Keith Brose.

Kirsten Boyd from Minden’s Pinon Hills Elementary was Nevada’s Free Fishing Day poster winner. The poster will be mailed out to all license agents, schools, state parks and resource agencies in early May.

Upcoming press releases are planned to discuss the new guzzler hotline number to report repairs needed for guzzlers around that state, Carson Lake water rights, bears, seed donations, and Free Fishing Day poster winner named. Press releases have gone on out on Bear Aware hotline, restricting OHV use at WMAs in southern Nevada, and increased boating enforcement following two recent drownings.

The marketing coordinator created a call to action with postcard art, and website for fulfillment for lapsed angler direct mail outreach. New e-mail is [www.ndowresponse.org](http://www.ndowresponse.org). The call to action will be to purchase a fishing license online or at a licensed agent, plus a secondary offer to receive a “How to Fish in Nevada” guide which is time-sensitive. The goal is to provide additional incentive which is time-sensitive to get anglers to respond, to get the guide out of our warehouses and into the hands of anglers, and to capture their e-mail address. A special “satellite” website was created, which has a database attached, which will facilitate fulfillment. This site, which is password protected, can be used in the future for other offers, surveys, etc. The Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners was included on the “seed list” and will receive a copy of the postcard.

The volunteer coordinator (VC) had Project WILD and Aquatic WILD classes approved by UNR and syllabi for these classes are being finalized; met with the Governor’s Joint Information Center (JIC) regarding emergency management.

### **Fisheries Division**

We have been receiving inquiries on the future of Onion Valley Reservoir. At this point the future is in the hands of the water user. An agency review of our options for the future will be initiated in consultation with legal counsel.

Staff continues to provide technical input to the environmental review process for the various eastern Nevada pipeline projects.

Fisheries program leads met to discuss upcoming grant submissions and to develop budget requests for FY10 and 11.

Fisheries Staff Specialist Dave Sanger, for our trout production program, has accepted a promotion to Nevada Division of Forestry. We wish Dave well and will miss his dedication to the hatchery refurbishment program.

The movement of quagga mussels to the western U.S. has resulted in many states developing multi-million dollar programs to prevent the infestation of their waters. Some states have developed programs which are causing concerns for recreational boaters wishing to transport and use their boats across state lines. A unified message and approach is needed in the west.

## **Game Division**

Game Division met to determine statewide big game quota recommendations on April 16-17. Overall, there was a sizeable reduction in the number of tags recommended for all species except bighorn sheep (recommended tag increase between 2-25 percent for different subspecies) and Rocky Mountain goat (tag recommendation same as last year). The reduction reflects on-going drought conditions, the poor condition of many animals going into last winter, and the poor recruitment observed this spring. Statewide examples of lower tag recommendations relative to last year are a 12 percent decline in mule deer buck (any legal weapon), a 6.5 percent decline in bull elk (any legal weapon), and a 7 percent decline in pronghorn buck (any legal weapon). The Division Chief traveled to Ely to hold a listening and information gathering session with sportsmen concerned with elk tag quota recommendations in White Pine County.

Division personnel took Governor Gibbons on a sage grouse lek count on April 22 at a recently discovered site north of Reno.

Division personnel met with California Department of Fish and Game personnel to discuss management of nuisance and depredation black bears. As a result of the discussion, a Memorandum of Agreement was prepared to: (a) share databases, including, but not limited to, those concerning black bear nuisance and depredation incidents, and locations, telemetry, and urban and wildland bear distribution and population characteristics; (b) share public service information, including but not limited to, press releases and other communications products; (c) cooperate with CDFG in discussions with county, local, and municipal governments to foster adoption and implementation of coordinated county, local, and municipal nuisance bear management policies; (d) direct NDOW field personnel to assist CDFG field personnel in the resolution of nuisance bear concerns and to share material resources under appropriate circumstances; (e) periodically meet with CDFG to assure that nuisance and depredation black bear concerns are addressed in as consistent a manner possible within the constraints of California and Nevada state laws and various state administrative codes and regulations.

On April 24, the Wildlife Health Specialist met with APHIS WS and the Washoe County Health Department (Vector Borne Disease Program) to discuss cooperative surveillance for West Nile Virus, plague, and tularemia. Washoe County expressed enthusiasm for greater partnership, and the County offered to provide county disease surveillance data for incorporation into the departmental wildlife health database. The County also asked to be included in the Great Basin Ecosystem Health Initiative being developed by NDOW and the Department of Agriculture.

Preliminary evaluation of Area 10 predation management data by the University of Nevada Large Mammal Ecologist suggests that the intensity of predator (coyote and/or lion) removal may be significantly associated with mule deer movements into (i.e., preference for) removal areas (i.e., there is

a measurable reduction in secondary predation risk). If true, then the finding would be the first statistically verifiable demonstration of ungulate response to secondary predation risk. The analysis does not bear on the topic of primary predation risk (i.e., predation, per se) which is extremely difficult to demonstrate from a statistical point of view.

### **Habitat Division**

Nevada State Lands identified questions on our Question 1 application submitted to fund the development of a multi-agency plan for implementing aggressive actions for restoring Nevada sagebrush habitats. Preparations for a workshop of federal and state resource management agencies heads is in preparation. This is a part of the Governor's "War on Cheatgrass". Work continues to perfect the application.

Discussions have continued with regard to geothermal leases issued by BLM within the boundary of the Carson Lake and Pasture. Federal legislation passed in 1990 directed the area be transferred to the State to be managed for wildlife. The area was also designated as part of the "Western Hemispheric Shorebird Network". Meeting with the proponent, Vulcan Power, has resulted in correspondence from Vulcan indicating they have moved drill sites to the west out of the Carson Lake and Pasture area to be transferred to the state. Habitat chief and staff continue meetings with Bureau of Reclamation and BLM to assure geothermal leasing will be consistent with goals and objectives for our Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). There are proposed lease parcels both in the Fernley WMA and the Humboldt WMA.

Habitat staff continues cooperating with the Bureau of Reclamation in the development of an EIS required for the transfer of Carson Lake and Pasture to the State. Clearance requirements are to be completed by 2010 and at that point BLM will perfect the transfer.

Habitat staff are developing delegation of authority for FY09, budget development for FY10 and 11, and grants for FY09.

A revised proposal for Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) relative to water rights acquisition and projects for the Overton WMA are being finalized for submission back to SNWA after discussions with SNWA management.

### **Law Enforcement Division**

The boating education staff and two game wardens attended the International Boating and Water Safety Summit (IBWSS). The summit focused on the latest boating safety issues and mitigating serious environmental issues, such as quagga mussels. Our law enforcement staff, chair committees for the National Association of Boating Law Administrators and other organizations that are key to the success of this event. These officers and staff bring back cutting edge knowledge and information to Nevada. At

May 2, 2008

this year's conference, Game Warden Captain Fred Messmann and Lieutenant David Pfiffner, received awards for boating excellence from the National Water Safety Congress.

Game Wardens recovered the body of the boat accident victim at Rawhide Reservoir. A private citizen located the body of the boat accident victim at Rye Patch Reservoir after it surfaced. Responses to boat accidents are on the increase as summer approaches.

Several Game Wardens attended a wildlife crime forensics school in Montana.

A male turkey hunter in Mason Valley mistakenly killed a hen turkey. Upon killing the bird he immediately contacted NDOW and an investigation was conducted. It appears that on a very windy morning, a feather on the female bird was blown forward and looked similar to a beard on a male turkey. The hunter was given a warning and the turkey was delivered to charity.

A woman turkey hunter inadvertently killed a mule deer while turkey hunting in Mason Valley. An investigation concluded she should have been able to tell a mule deer from a turkey and a citation was issued for minimum bail and civil penalty.

### **Operations Division**

The deputy director and chiefs for Diversity, Habitat, Fisheries and Operations, and select staff met to continue the development of a roles and responsibilities flow chart for the Lands Committee. This flow chart addresses a macro-view of the department's real property acquisition process and will serve as our guide for designated staff.

Staff is evaluating the current status of the air operations budget authority and the courses of action regarding maintenance and repair issues.

With the assistance of the maintenance technician and engineer, the division chief is evaluating remaining maintenance projects for the next several months.

### **Wildlife Diversity**

A proposal was submitted to Elko District of the BLM for aspen fencing projects in Stud and Stag Creek in Management Area 074. These fencing projects are designed to protect burned aspen stands from use by livestock until regeneration of the stand is established. Liberty pipe fence will be used for these projects. Approval from the BLM for these projects is expected in early May 2008.

A proposal was submitted to the Elko District of the BLM to construct 17 wildlife friendly gates on abandoned mine sites in the Spruce Mountain Special Recreation Area. The gates will be constructed as a joint project between the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service, the Nevada Division of Minerals and NDOW.

Staff attended the American Society of Mammologists Meeting in Iowa.

Migratory shorebirds surveys for the spring of 2008 have been initiated in Elko County.

Regional staff continued to support the Game Division in completing sage grouse lek surveys. This project is in support of the west-wide effort to collect sage grouse data for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Abandoned mine surveys were conducted by the NDOW personnel and a contractor in Jefferson Canyon of the Toquima Range. These sites are being evaluated in preparation for developing a closure plan as mitigation for the development of the Gold Hill Project. This project is a joint effort between NDOW, the Nevada Division of Minerals, the Tonopah District of the BLM, the Tonopah District of the U.S. Forest Service, and Round Mountain Mining Company.

Budget proposals for Fiscal Year 2010 and 2011 have been prepared and presented to Reno Staff. Four Level B projects and one Question1 Restoration Project are proposed for funding in the Eastern Region in that biennium.