

Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife –  
March 4, 2024 minutes

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** [Non-action item]
2. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL** [Non-action item]

*Members in Attendance*

1. Coby Rowe, Chairman
2. Ryan Browne, Vice Chairman
3. Matt Melarkey,
4. Steve Robinson
5. Jim Rhea

*Others in Attendance*

1. John Ewanyk, NDOW
2. Mike Scott, NDOW
3. Katie Andrie, NDOW
4. Julie Barger
5. Tina Nappe
6. Teddy Elwell
7. Mel Belding
8. Ash Casselli
9. Joel Blakeslee
10. John Zenze

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**-[Non-action item]

Julie Barger noted the support materials on the Department website appeared to have a broken link. Ash Casselli invited members of the CAB to attend the Coalition for Nevada Wildlife Banquet.

4. **Approval January 22, 2024 minutes**-[For possible action]

**Member Rhea motioned for approval of the January 22, 2024 CAB minutes.**  
**Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

5. **Approval of March 4th, 2024 AGENDA**-[ For possible action]

**Member Melarkey motioned to accept the March 4, 2024 CAB Meeting Agenda.**  
**Member Rhea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

6. **BOARD MEMBER MEETING ASSIGNMENT**-[Non-action item]

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Chair Rowe asked who would be able to attend the Commission meeting in Las Vegas. Board members noted they would be able to attend the upcoming Commission meeting.

**7. COMMITTEE, MEMBER AND LIAISON UPDATES-[Non-action items]**

Chair Rowe noted he had received correspondence for items that would be heard on the agenda. Correspondence can be found attached to the end of the minutes.

**8. WASHOE LANDS BILL PRESENTATION-[Informational]**

Katie Andrie, NDOW, provided a presentation regarding the Washoe Lands Bill and importance related to NCA/Wilderness designations, implications for wildlife and habitat. She provided insight on NDOW's coordinating of the work and she shared the draft of the bill to members of the CAB. The Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act would both create new conservation designations and permanently protect existing ones in Washoe County. This includes designating nearly 174,000 acres as withdrawal areas, meaning community members can still recreate there, but it would be blocked from development and mining.

Member Melarkey asked about details regarding the land transfer. Ms. Andrie said details were still being worked through as a process of the development creation of the bill. Mike Scott, NDOW, added that the Department provides information to the bill's sponsor as part of their duty as a state government entity and said that NDOW takes a neutral stance.

**9. Consent Agenda– [For Possible Action]**

**A. Draft Fiscal Year 2025 Predation Management Plan**

**B. Commission General Regulation 500, Subdivision Map Review**

**C. Commission General Regulation 511, Wildlife Management Area Designations The Commission will hold an adoption hearing to consider amending Chapter 504 of the Nevada Administrative Code. This Regulation would update Wildlife Management Area (WMA) designations and restrictions. Wildlife Heritage Grants Manual**

**D. Presentation for Interim Natural Resources Committee Meeting**

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There was no board comment or public comment for items on the consent agenda.

**Member Rhea moved to approve the consent agenda items. Member Melarkey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**10. Consent Calendar items pulled for further discussion [For Possible Action]**

No items were pulled for further discussion.

**11. Wild Horse and Burro Letter [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to discuss Wild Horse Burro letter addressed to Tracy Stone-Manning the Director of the Bureau of Land Management from the Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife and Free-Roaming Horses.

During public comment, Chair Rowe shared three emails which can be found attached to the minutes. Tina Nappe said that there was a need for the Federal Government to increase efforts to manage the wild horse population due to the negative impacts they are having on Nevada wilderness and wildlife populations. Joel Blakeslee added that he agreed with Ms. Nappe's comments and said he too had concern regarding the wild horse impacts on the lands. Mel Belding encouraged the CAB to sign onto the letter and agreed with previous public comments.

Member Robinson said he was happy to see an increase in funding and he also added that the State of Nevada needed to increase efforts as well in managing the state lands.

**Member Browne moved to recommend the CAB and the Commission sign onto the Wild Horse and Burro Letter. Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**12. Petition – Ms. Rebecca Goff- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to discuss a petition to add a new section to Chapter 503 of the Nevada Administrative Code (Hunting, Fishing and Trapping; Miscellaneous Protective Measures) regarding Wildlife Killing Contests. Member Robinson said he fully supported rejecting the petition since the Commission had discussed this issues ad nauseum. Member Melarkey agreed.

During public comment, Mr. Blakeslee said he was not in support of the petition and said he had not seen support at the Nevada Legislature either. Mr. Belding added that he too was supportive in rejecting the petition.

**Member Melarkey moved to recommend to the Commission dismiss the**

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**petition in whole. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**13. Commission General Regulation 520 – Tag Deferral Extenuating Circumstances Revision- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider amending Chapter 502 of the Nevada Administrative Code to amend the circumstances surrounding tag deferrals. Member Browne said the TAACH committee had discussed this item and was trying to find solutions to aide in sportsman not gaming the system. Member Robinson asked NDOW how much of a problem this had been regarding the deferrals. Mr. Scott said they had seen around 100 such instances since the change and provided insight on the deferred tags and how that would be coordinated with the quota process.

There was no public comment. Member Melarkey said he was in support of the regulation.

**Member Melarkey moved to recommend Commission General Regulation 520 be accepted as written. Member Browne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**14. Commission General Regulation 521 – Junior Tag Transfer- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider amending Chapter 502 of the Nevada Administrative Code to provide for the circumstances surrounding the transfer of a tag to a junior hunter. Member Robinson said he was very concerned with how the proposed regulation had been written and said he felt the proposal went against the spirit of what had been tried to be accomplished by the late Rex Flowers. Member Browne said the TAACH committee had issues with items #3, #7, #9, and #13 during the meeting and that the transfer would only be allowable for mule deer. Member Browne said the inclusion of only mule deer was to allow for a narrower implementation as a trial run to work out issues that may arise. Member Browne proceeded to provide information regarding the discussion and reasoning of the TAACH committee earlier in the day. Discussion was had regarding the amount of times a tag may be transferred and ways to ensure that individuals were not drawing and selling tags for profit.

Chair Rowe added that he had his concerns as well, but overall what he wants to see is juniors being to have the opportunity to hunt. Members of the CAB did note they had significant concern about the 10-yard requirement which they felt was not reasonable. Additionally, they also said they had concern about the tag holder who dies the transfer being required to attend the hunt, especially if that person was unable to hunt based on age or physical reasons. Member Robinson said he would be in favor of completely striking items 9 and 13 in the proposal. He added that he felt that someone must be a

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prior tag holder in order to transfer a tag which he felt would limit the individuals who would try to profit from transfers.

During public comment, Chair Rowe first noted that he had received correspondence which is included as an attachment to the minutes. John Zenz said he thought adding a waiting period may help in minimizing people from gaming the transfer. Mr. Belding said he was in agreement with Member Robinson's opinion that the proposed regulation was not in the spirit of what was originally intended. Ash Casselli added that he agreed with Member Robinson as well.

Members of the CAB continued discussion on the agenda item. Member Melarkey said that he agreed that items 3, 7, 9, and 13 were not acceptable and noted that someone who transferred their tag should lose their bonus points, but not the recipient. Additionally, he noted that a one-time transfer limit was not workable and that he hoped there could be a limit and suggested five times. Chair Rowe said he agreed with the points made by Member Melarkey and asked the CAB what they thought would be the best way forward regarding a motion that would speak to the concerns of the board. Mr. Scott added that this proposal had a low likelihood of being implemented any earlier than 2025, and most likely would be implemented after that based on capacity to implement.

**Member Melarkey moved to recommend Commission General Regulation 521 not be accepted and recommend the Commission send back to the TAACH committee and that items 3, 7, 9 and 13 be rewritten. Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**15. Commission Regulation 24-10, Migratory Game Bird Seasons, Bag Limits, and Special Regulations for Waterfowl and Webless Migratory Game Birds Public Hunting Limited on Wildlife Management Areas and Designated State Lands for the 2024-2025 Seasons- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to consider recommendations for seasons, bag limits and special regulations for migratory game birds for the 2024-2025 season and adopt regulations consistent with the proposed regulations framework for the 2024-2025 hunting seasons on certain migratory game birds established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and to also consider rules regulating public hunting on Wildlife Management Areas and designated state lands. Member Melarkey asked about amendments listed in the supporting materials. Mr. Ewanyk said the biggest change would be with regard to the swan permits. Member Robinson asked why there was a split season for American Crow. Mr. Scott noted he believed there was a split season due to the Migratory Bird Act and Mr. Ewanyk noted the season is 124 days which is why there is a split season.

During public comment, Teddy Elwell said he would like to recommend the dates be moved back to start the season due to the hunting conditions at that time of year. Ash

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Casselli added that he agreed with Mr. Elwell's recommendation. Members of the CAB discussed reasons for and against moving the season back, but ultimately made the decision not to move the start back.

**Member Browne moved to recommend Commission Regulation 24-10 be accepted as written. Chair Rowe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**16. Commission Regulation 23-04 – Amendment 3, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 Big Game Seasons- [For Possible Action]**

Chair Rowe opened the item to take action to approve an amendment to the 2024-2025 hunting seasons and dates. Mr. Scott noted the non-resident season was listed as a different date, and the amendment was to fix that. There was no public comment.

**Member Melarkey moved to recommend Commission Regulation 23-04 – Amendment 3 be accepted as written. Member Robinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.**

**17. Future Meeting Agenda Items – Informational only- Public Comment Allowed**

Chair Rowe noted that a drone presentation would be given at the next CAB meeting.

**18. Public Comment [Non-action item]**

Tina Nappe said she appreciated the hard work and discussion during the evening's board meeting.

**19. Adjournment [Non-action item]**

Chair Rowe adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.



## Coalition For Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife and Free-Roaming Horses

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December 8, 2023

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning  
Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Additional BLM Funding and Actions for Nevada Wild Horse and Burro Gathers in 2024

Dear Director Stone-Manning:

The undersigned members of Nevada's wildlife and natural resource conservation communities urge BLM to expand efforts to effectively address the wild horse and burro over-population (WHB) crisis on our public lands. **We request that you take all actions necessary to meet the obligations of the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WHB Act) and that Nevada (NV) be prioritized for those actions.**

**Prioritizing gathering and removing horses is the only feasible way to achieve Appropriate Management Level (AML) and save our arid public lands.** Inadequate gathers explode populations and future budgets. Until at or below AML, fertility control is not effective in management nor cost. **Once at AML, fertility control will allow limited gathers and adoptions to sustain cost effective management, while over time retiring costly long term holding pastures. We must spend what it takes now to follow the law and reduce costs in the long term.**

To address this West-wide crisis **we support BLM efforts to obtain additional resources and full management authorities from Congress** in the FY2024 and FY2025 appropriations toward fulfilling BLM's obligation under the WHB Act. Yet recognizing that annual appropriations are not sufficient to bring success, **we support a long term step by step funding plan to achieve AML in 5 years.**

Nowhere is this crisis more manifest than in our state of Nevada (NV). In March, NV had 60% of the horses and burros and 65% of the 56,000 excess. Due to insufficient gathering, WHB will likely increase another 10,000 by end of this year – erasing most progress since the 2019 Path Forward — increasing negative impacts on our native wildlife and fragile arid rangeland ecosystems. **We respectfully request that you prioritize Nevada for additional gathers.**

We are unwilling to lose wildlife - from squirrels to mule deer, native plants, pollinators - and resiliency of our ecosystems. Current WHB management actions are inadequate to restore health to our native wildlife, our rangelands, and the horses and burros themselves. Our public lands and wildlife need BLM to **take all actions necessary to meet the obligations of the '71 WHB Act, prioritizing NV in those actions.**

Yours in Conservation,

Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife and Free-Roaming Horses and signatories

The Nevada Association of Conservation Districts (NvACD)  
Nevada Association of Counties  
Elko County Board of Commissioners  
White Pine County Board of County Commissioners  
Board of Eureka County Commissioners  
Lander County Board of Commissioners  
Lincoln County Wildlife Advisory Board  
Meadow Valley Wildlife Unlimited  
The Wildlife Society, Nevada Chapter  
Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife  
Southern Nevada Coalition for Wildlife  
Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands, Wildlife and Free-Roaming Horses  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Nevada Chapter  
Nevada Wildlife Federation  
Fraternity of the Desert Bighorn (FDB)  
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Reno Chapter  
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Fallon Chapter  
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Elko Chapter  
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Midas Chapter  
Safari Club International, Northern Nevada Chapter  
Safari Club International, Las Vegas Chapter  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
Wild Turkey Federation, Nevada State Chapter  
Mule Deer Foundation  
Muley Fanatic Foundation Sierra Front Chapter  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Ducks Unlimited  
Nevada Waterfowl Association  
Nevada Chukar Foundation  
Nevada Sporting Dog Alliance  
Nevada Bow Hunters Association  
Truckee River Flyfishers



Nevada Trappers Association

Nevada Outfitters and Guide Association

Willie Molini, Retired Director, Nevada Department of Wildlife

Kenneth Mayer, Retired Director, Nevada Department of Wildlife

Jeremy Drew, Past Chair, Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners and Past Vice-Chair, Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Council

Jim French, National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board, Co-chair and Wildlife Representative; Retired, Nevada Department of Wildlife

Dr. James Sedinger, Foundation Professor of Wildlife Emeritus

Dr. Sherm Swanson, University of Nevada, Reno, Emeritus Professor of Rangeland and Riparian Ecology and Management

Jake Tibbitts, Sagebrush Ecosystem Council, Local Government Representative

Eddie Booth, Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners, Sportsman Representative

Rex Steninger, Chair, Elko County Board of Commissioners

Rob Jacobson, Board member, Lyon County Board of Commissioners

Don Klebenow, Retired Captain, Nevada Department of Wildlife

Rebecca Mills, Retired, Superintendent of Great Basin National Park

Mark Butler, Washoe Valley, Retired, Superintendent of Joshua Tree National Monument

Henry Krenka, Hidden Lakes Outfitter, LLC

Susan Juetten, Carson City, Retired, Professional Advocate for Public Land Health



March 4, 2024

Dear Board,

My name is Nicole Hayes, and I am the Conservation Scientist at American Wild Horse Conservation (AWHC). AWHC is the nation's leading wild horse conservation organization and operates humane wild horse management and habitat conservation programs in Nevada.

These comments are submitted on Agenda item 11, in opposition to the sign on of the Coalition for Healthy Nevada Lands (CHNL) letter to Tracy Stone-Manning requesting the removal of 43,000 horses over the next 5 years. CHNL's request is inhumane, wasteful and creates an undue financial burden on the American taxpayer.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), among others, often reference that the wild horse population was near the national Appropriate Management Level (AML) in 2007 but has increased since then. Why? The increase began during the great recession of 2008, during which the BLM halted almost all range management, and this lack of management allowed populations to be where they are today. This is not just a concern of the past; models released this month by Business Insider show an 85% chance of a recession in 2024.

(<https://www.businessinsider.com/recession-outlook-financial-crisis-economy-federal-reserve-yield-curve-rosenberg-2024-2>).

Supporting mass gathers where tens of thousands of animals would need to be placed in long term holding could create a financial disaster for the agency in the event of a recession. Additionally, utilizing roundups as the only form of 'management' could be halted due to lack of funding, further perpetuating the continuous cycle of ineffective management. Instead, requesting that the BLM implement robust fertility control NOW not only prevents population growth, but ensures infrastructure to manage these herds in the long term. Fertility control treatment is 96.8% less expensive than removing that same animal from its habitat and caring for it in long-term holding. Taxpayers would potentially be spared hundreds of millions of dollars over the next five years if the agency focused on fertility control over removals of wild horses.

Concern has been raised over environmental degradation due to high horse density. Of the 69.3 million acres that were originally designated for wild horses in the early 1970s, which was intended by law for these horses, more than 61% of that land has been taken away from them. Of that original 69 million, 42 million acres are managed as Herd Areas (HAs), which are '*managed for zero horses*', leaving only 26 million acres 'available' for horses today. All the while, cattle grazing is currently being allowed on 155 million acres of public lands.

In terms of land health, only 108 million acres of this land available to livestock has ever been assessed for current Land Health Standards. Of the acres that have been assessed, 50% have



failed to meet Land Health Standards, with 72% of failures attributed to livestock grazing. If this was truly about taking the biggest steps towards healthy rangelands, why are we singling out wild horses with such fervor, when there is clearly a larger systematic problem affecting millions more acres?

Finally, if the density of wild horses in a given area is a concern, then why are wild horses not being put back on HAs while robust fertility programs could be implemented to prevent unsustainable population growth? This would allow a lower density use of sensitive riparian areas, while saving the taxpayer millions of dollars. Remember, the BLM itself has estimated that a single animal in long-term holding, over the course of their lives, will cost just under \$50,000 - and that was before inflation.

Although we all want healthy wild horses on healthy lands, solutions should be aimed at addressing the root cause of environmental degradation. Until we stop ignoring the BLM's own disclosures about failing Land Health Standards, millions of taxpayer dollars will continue to be wasted on programs aimed at scapegoating wild horses.

Sincerely,

Nicole Hayes  
Conservation Scientist  
American Wild Horse Conservation  
[nhayes@americanwildhorse.org](mailto:nhayes@americanwildhorse.org)