

STATE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NEEDS

FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

FEDERAL EFFORTS TO SUPPORT THE STATES IN CONSERVING THE
NATION'S WILDLIFE

APRIL 10, 2001—RENO, NV

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C O N T E N T S

	Page
APRIL 10, 2001—RENO, NV	
OPENING STATEMENT	
Reid, Hon. Harry, U.S. Senator from the State of Nevada	1
WITNESSES	
Abbey, Bob, director, Nevada Bureau of Land Management	24
Prepared statement	73
Collard, Leta, Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group, Elko, NV	10
Prepared statement	51
Crawforth, Terry, administrator, Nevada Division of Wildlife	20
Prepared statement	68
Denio, Karen, acting state executive director, Farm Service Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture	41
Prepared statement	81
Dupree, Elsie, president, Nevada Wildlife Federation, Reno, NV	16
Article, NWF Works on Sage Grouse Booklet	66
Letter, Nevada Wildlife Federation	64
Memorandum, Elsie Dupree	67
Graham, Gary, division director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Service	22
Prepared statement	69
Henley, Don, Caddo Lake Institute, Karmack, TX	6
Prepared statement	49
Johnson, Larry, president, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Reno, Nevada	13
Prepared statement	55
Murphy, Dennis D., Ph.D., Biodiversity Initiative, University of Nevada, Reno, NV	37
Prepared statement	79
Pearson, Nick, State conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture	44
Prepared statement	83
Sandlin, Hon. Max, U.S. Representative from the State of Texas	3
Prepared statement	5
Wallace, A. Brian, chairman, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California	27
Prepared statement	74
Williams, Robert D., field supervisor, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office	32
Prepared statement	77

STATE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NEEDS

TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 2001

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS,
RENO, NV.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 1 p.m. at the Bartley Ranch, Reno, NV, Hon. Harry Reid (acting chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senator Reid.

Also present: Representative Sandlin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. HARRY REID, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEVADA

Senator REID. The U.S. Senate committee is called to order. I'm very happy to convene this hearing. I'm fortunate that during my entire time in the U.S. Senate that I've been able to serve on this committee. I'm fortunate for 17 days this year that I was the chairman of the committee. Now I have a great working relationship with the chairman of the committee, Bob Smith, from New Hampshire.

The wildlife conservation successes that we have had in Nevada are, in a great deal, owed to a number of people in this room. I have worked with many of you on the Truckee, Walker Lake, Lake Tahoe, and Lake Mead. We have also worked together to restore several Lahontan Trout, desert Tortoise, and Nevada's other sensitive wildlife.

I'm very grateful today to have with us a Member of Congress, Congressman Sandlin, from eastern Texas. He is a fourth-term Member of Congress. He is a friend of Don Henley. Don Henley graces us with his presence today. I've told him personally, and I'll say to him publicly, it's very good for our country and it speaks well of him that he would lend his prestige, his notoriety and his fame to something like the environment. I'm very grateful to him for being here.

This hearing in Nevada is being held here rather than in Washington, DC, not just because it would be more convenient for the people that I want to hear from today, but it's being held here because I think it's symbolic of how we need to work on our wildlife conservation efforts. We need to come to the people doing the work on the ground to find out what works for them. Without the support of our sportsmen and women, local conservationists and university scientists, State agency people, and the local officials of our Federal agencies, conservation efforts would never get off the ground.

So your input is critical because this year Congress will consider at least two conservation initiatives that could benefit State of Nevada if we work together.

The first Act is what we refer to as CARA, Conservation and Reinvestment Act. Most of you worked hard last year to see that CARA was enacted. We're going to take another try at it this year. The House recently reintroduced CARA, and soon I will introduce the parts of that bill that are in this committee's jurisdiction.

The bill will provide funding for State wildlife conservation, education and recreation initiatives. It will also provide funding for endangered species conservation, and also conservation efforts that are designed to remove the need to list species. I know that many of you are involved in the effort to protect the sage grouse so that we don't need to list the sage grouse. I think we should be supporting proactive conservation efforts like that. It's my hope that between the efforts in the House and in the Senate, we will be able to pass a CARA bill this year.

Another conservation initiative Congress will take up this year is the Farm bill. While some people overlook it, the Farm bill brings about \$2 billion in annual conservation spending into play. Nevada doesn't see much of that money, and I'd like that to change. This is spending that must take place. This isn't discretionary. This is mandatory spending. Nevada doesn't see much of that money, but that's going to change. I'm happy to see that Karen Denio and Nick Pearson are here today, and they will talk with us about those programs.

It's my hope that I will have all of your help as we move forward in those two conservation initiatives to craft programs and policies that work for us.

Again, I thank each of you for being here today. We have staff from my Washington, DC committee that are here with me and local staff. We will prepare a report. We will circulate it to the other members of the committee. There are other hearings taking place around the country. We will assimilate, coordinate, and correlate all this information, hopefully in the process of bringing more legislation to Washington that is better than what we have done in the past.

We have, as I have indicated, a number of good witnesses. We chose this very scenic place to do this hearing rather than some building in downtown Reno for the obvious reasons. It's nice to be here and see what can be at a State park, to show off a little bit of what we have is outside.

We're going to first hear from Congressman Max Sandlin from Texas. We're happy to hear from him. He resides in Marshal, TX. We will hear next from Don Henley who, as we know, is a noted singer. His initial fame came with the historic Eagles group, and he has gone out on his own and has done well. He is representing the Caddo Lake Institute of Karnack, TX.

We will then hear from Leta Collord from Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group in Elko. We will hear from Larry Johnson who has a great story to tell, and then we will hear from Nevada Wildlife Federation through its representative, Elsie Dupree.

Congressman Sandlin.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MAX SANDLIN,
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS**

Mr. SANDLIN. Thank you, Senator, for your invitation to be here today and for the hospitality of your office and staff. You have been very kind to us while we have been here. It's a pleasure to be here in beautiful Nevada—"Nevada" as you say. Excuse me.

Senator REID. Let me interrupt and tell you that people are very conscious about how we pronounce "Nevada." But I'm always reminded of a lawyer in Nevada that has made more money than any other lawyer probably is a lawyer by the name of Neil Gallats. Neil Gallats is from New York, and he still pronounces Nevada as "Nevada," but it hasn't bothered the jury since then.

Mr. SANDLIN. You say "tomato" and I say "tomato."

It's a pleasure being in Nevada. Both Nevada and Texas share an interest in the environment and the outdoors and wildlife. I am proud to be speaking to the men and women who are working to introduce Federal legislation in order to sustain our State and local wildlife conservation efforts across the Nation. We appreciate your help, Senator, in that area and other areas in that Senate.

Last October, I had the pleasure of participating in the dedication of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Karnack, TX. This was just one step in an ongoing effort to create an educational and environmental legacy out of a former army ammunition plant. The Caddo Lake Institute is a most unusual success story formed from a public-private partnership and the tireless labor of the local community.

The Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant formerly employed over 3,000 people. This plant manufactured explosives and was a self-contained city. For over 50 years, LAAP supplied explosives to our Nation's armed forces across the globe. First opened in World War II, LAAP shipped flares, rockets and shells to armed conflicts in Vietnam, Korea and Operation Desert Storm. At the end of the cold war, the plant became responsible for the destruction of the nuclear missile engines it once built. Soviet inspectors watched on as over 700 Pershing missile engines were fastened into concrete cages and fired as their hulls were crushed.

When the U.S. Army and Monsanto Chemical officials first made their way to Caddo Lake in the early 1940's, they undoubtedly noticed it's beauty. It's virtually impossible to overlook the pristine natural habitat complete with tall pines and exotic cypress trees draped in Spanish moss. We have a picture over here for people to see. Those are the cypress trees and Spanish moss that looks much like you think of Florida and Louisiana. It's just a beautiful pristine part of Texas.

What those officials did not realize is that this place, soon to be known as Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant, sat on a wetland of international importance with a national treasure of native plant and wildlife species.

While the ammunition plant successfully met its manufacturing demands, it left behind a legacy of pollution and contamination. Longhorns' doors have been closed for many years, but its byproducts continue to pollute the soil and water of Caddo Lake. Further, asbestos is prominent in the standing buildings of the now defunct ammunition plant. I grew up hunting and fishing on that lake.

There are many, many sorts of species of fish, animals and plants, white bass, black bass, perch, crappie. Many mornings as you're cruising you will see the alligators and snapping turtles sunning in the breaks there in the cypress, and Bald Eagles are prevalent there. Every sort of water fowl that you ever seen and some you may not have seen are there.

Early in the morning it's much like the beginning of time when you're there, just a very pristine national treasure. When the Army ammunition plant made its manufacturing demands it left behind a legacy of pollution as you might imagine. Doors have been closed there for several years but they have a byproduct of pollution as a result of manufacturing explosives.

Further, the asbestos is an important product of the buildings that are there. Less than 15 percent of the total land appears to be affected, and now it's undergoing management clean-up by the U.S. Army. We look forward to working with them in a positive way.

Things in that area would probably have continued to deteriorate if it weren't for local citizens, pleas from several colleges and universities and the presence of the Caddo Lake Institute. The Caddo Lake Institute was established by Mr. Don Henley and we are honored to have him with us today.

As early as 1993 we had several local schools, such as Wiley College, which is the oldest historically black college west of the Mississippi in that county. Wiley College, Stephen F. Austin State University and East Baptist University actively lobbied for Federal and international recognition for the refuge as well as funding for an educational institute.

By 1996 Caddo Lake was designated a "Ramsar Wetland of International Importance" and was officially recognized as an ecosystem essential for maintaining biodiversity. Caddo Lake was also given Resource Category 1 status by the Fish and Wildlife Service, it's highest classification of wetlands.

Dwight Shellman, president of the Caddo Lake Institute, conceived and implemented the plan for local involvement. Robin and Betty Holder who live in Karnack, TX, and own the local grocery store, went with Mr. Shellman, who is also here today, to look at other wildlife refuges and examine plans for environmentally sound reuse of abandoned war industry land. Both Robin and Betty agree that any other use of the plant would be a waste and are excited about its future. Dwight Shellman wanted to be here but he had a family emergency. He has been the organizer and the person who has done the leg work to implement Mr. Henley's vision in this area. Mr. Holder and others in the community I have spoken with feel it would be a waste if we didn't do something to preserve this site.

Currently, land has been privately leased for the Caddo Lake Institute campus. We envision a collaborative atmosphere created by our community leaders for visiting research scientists, graduate students and eco-tourists. This atmosphere will contribute to the creation and evolution of the first U.S. Regional Ramsar Wetland Science Center, which will honor international wetland standards. The higher education facility will conduct research on better forestry and wetland practices. This research will not only advance

agricultural practices but also improve wetland preservation and conservation throughout the Nation. It is important that we facilitate the implementation of this plan with Federal funding to help build the research center.

The creation of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge provides a rare opportunity to coordinate eco-tourism, scientific research and economic growth. Our conservation initiatives are in place and our local interest is sustained. The Wildlife Conservation bill would support our conservation plan and strategy at Caddo Lake. I am pleased to be a part of this effort and will continue to work to make this plan a reality. So after almost a decade of an exceptional effort represented here today and by Mr. Henley's vision, we seek your help and guidance, Senator, in completing the third part of the original local vision, which is the appropriation of the Department of Interior funding for our Ramsar Science and Education Center in Longhorn, TX.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here and to be with you, Senator, and Mr. Henley. If there's nothing further, then I'll turn it over to our local favorite, Mr. Don Henley.

[The prepared statement of Representative Max Sandlin follows:]

STATEMENT OF HON. MAX SANDLIN, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE
STATE OF TEXAS

It is a pleasure to testify before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee at this Wildlife Conservation Hearing. I am proud to be speaking to the men and women who are working to introduce Federal legislation in order to sustain our State and local wildlife conservation efforts across the Nation.

Last October, I had the pleasure of participating in the dedication of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Uncertain, Texas. This was just one step in an ongoing effort to create an educational and environmental legacy out of a former army ammunition plant. The Caddo Lake Institute is a most unusual success story formed from a public-private partnership and the tireless labor of the local community.

The Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant (LAAP) formerly employed over 3,000 people. This plant manufactured explosives and was a self-contained city. For over 50 years, LAAP supplied explosives to our Nation's armed forces across the globe. First opened in World War II, LAAP shipped flares, rockets and shells to armed conflicts in Vietnam, Korea and Operation Desert Storm. At the end of the cold war, the plant became responsible for the destruction of the nuclear missile engines it once built. Soviet inspectors watched on as over 700 Pershing missile engines were fastened into concrete cages and fired as their hulls were crushed.

When the U.S. Army and Monsanto Chemical officials first made their way to the banks of Caddo Lake in the early 1940's, they undoubtedly noticed its beauty. It is virtually impossible to overlook the pristine natural habitat complete with tall pines and exotic cypress trees draped in Spanish moss (picture). What these officials did not realize is that this place, soon to be known as Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant, sat on a wetland of international importance with a national treasure of native plant and wildlife species.

While the ammunition plant successfully met its manufacturing demands, it left behind a legacy of pollution and contamination. Longhorns' doors have been closed for many years, but its by-products continue to pollute the soil and water of Caddo Lake. Further, asbestos is prominent in the standing buildings of the now defunct ammunition plant.

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diversity. Caddo Lake was also given Resource Category 1 status by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)—its highest classification of wetlands.

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Senator REID. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF DON HENLEY, CADDO LAKE INSTITUTE,
KARMACK, TX**

Mr. HENLEY. Thank you for allowing me to address the committee today. First, I want to thank Congressman Sandlin for his positive efforts on behalf of this local initiative. His introduction and his photograph provide an excellent overview of our vision. I also thank the committee members for hearing our concerns about a possible need for oversight and support for community-based initiatives that fulfill important Federal conservation commitments.

My remarks will address, not just the local, but also the national and global conservation benefits that could result from congressional support for The Caddo Lake Ramsar Wetlands Science Center Program.

However, my comments about our Caddo Lake program may apply equally well to other community initiatives that are also fulfilling important Federal conservation commitments. One example is the Elko habitat restoration program in your State of Nevada, Senator Reid. My conclusion will note some features and needs which both programs seem to share.

We have provided the committee with a pamphlet about our Caddo Lake initiative. The front cover contains the Caddo Lake scene Congressman Sandlin showed you, prefaced by the phrase, "A Woods Hole for Wetlands." That phrase was coined in a local editorial several years ago, referring to the famous Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts. This editorial is in the pamphlet. Together the picture and the phrase show the reason for, and the essence of, this local vision. This booklet also contains schematic plans for the Center's campus, the office building for our Research Coordination Network, interpretive and accessory support buildings. A possible hemispheric mission is noted in the letter from John Rogers, Fish and Wildlife Service. Finally, the pamphlet contains the 1999 Costa Rica Conference Resolution of the Ramsar

Nations, which endorses powerful guidance to maximize the involvement of local communities in management of Ramsar wetland sites. The resolution notes that the approved guidance was co-authored by the Caddo Lake Institute, among others. Thus, this rural Texas initiative has already influenced both the local and international practice wetland conservation.

The Caddo Lake Ramsar Science Center is a proposed public/private partnership between the institute as the local facility manager and the program coordinator, and two Department of Interior agencies which have special expertise.

These Federal agencies are: The U.S. Geological Survey's National Wetlands Research Center of Lafayette, LA, and the International Affairs Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC. Both agencies have been our informal partners at Caddo Lake since 1993.

The purpose of this Ramsar Center is to institutionalize a brilliant community achievement that could light the way for other communities. The center is charged with demonstrating nothing less than the "exemplary fulfillment" of an important U.S. treaty commitment, specifically the Ramsar Convention on "Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat." Our national credibility in keeping this commitment underpins our ability to ask other nations to manager wisely the wetlands in their parts of our common flyways. In addition, the Caddo Lake Ramsar Center fulfills an official pledge by the U.S. Government and the Caddo Lake Institute to Brisbane, Australia.

At Brisbane we jointly pledged to establish at Longhorn the first U.S. Regional Ramsar Center. To assure the availability of the facility and fulfill the pledge, the Caddo Lake Institute leased a 1,400-acre old growth forest at Longhorn for conservation research purposes, as well as a 14-acre campus and buildings for eventual renovation. We originally pledged \$100,000 to this purpose. We have incurred expenses greatly in excess of that amount to fill our share of the Brisbane pledge.

The purpose of this requested appropriation is to augment the Department of Interior's budget for our partner agencies to underwrite the costs of the center and its programs for community members and scientists. Together we will create, operate, and demonstrate the Caddo Lake Wetland Management Plan, as an exemplar of the best Ramsar guidance. The renovation plan contemplates that the facility will be a earning venue. It will include powerful modeling tools for this wetland and its watershed. Interpretative and outreach programs will showcase the practical realities of a community-based wetland management program, and its watershed science foundation.

Because of its wetland science expertise and proximity to Lafayette, LA, we think the National Wetlands Research Center or NWRC, is the logical agency to receive a budget augmentation to fund and provide oversight for the Caddo Lake Ramsar Center program. Although we know it to be an excellent science agency, we believe NWRC is "fiscally underappreciated" within the Federal budget. It deserves both the funding and the credit it will earn by congressional augmentation to provide its expertise to local Ramsar communities, a task we know that NWRC does well. FWS Inter-

national Affairs, which executes our government's Ramsar obligations, would be reimbursed for its cost of providing Ramsar oversight and U.S. policy coordination. We understand that FWS may also wish to use some Center resources to assist other Ramsar sites whose requests for help are currently underfunded. This new assistance capacity might include training at Caddo Lake and support for their delegations of our citizens and scientists who visit other wetland communities in response to their requests for advice or assistance.

We use the term "budget augmentation" purposefully. It would be counterproductive to compromise the historic missions of NWRC or FWS International Affairs by reallocating to our program any of their shrinking resources. NWRC would reimburse itself and other Federal agencies from this budget augmentation for direct Federal agency costs as at Caddo Lake. The Caddo Lake communities have made a solid beginning in showing that rural communities have the potential to manage an internationally significant wetland conservation program. Last summer we facilitated a "Lake Residents Working Group" to master and make local presentations of lake management science information. Many Working Group participants, like our grocer and guide, Robin Holder, are also members of key local businesses, community groups, and the local navigation district. Our initiative formalized the practice of regular consultation with our colleagues of Texas Parks and Wildlife Fisheries and Waterfowl Divisions, as well as their personnel managing their Caddo Lake wildlife management area, the original 1993 Ramsar site. Together they represent the nucleus of the Ramsar-like structure that joins community groups with science experts, a structure which this appropriation would enable us to formalize to manage the Caddo Lake Camero Ramsar wetlands.

To assure that there will always be a sound science foundation for this ambitious program, we have expanded our historic academic monitoring program. It has become a much broader research coordination network, RCN. The RCN's mission is to provide scientific information to our communities for exemplary implementation of Ramsar guidance, not just for Caddo Lake, but also as a model and encouragement to other wetland communities. Today RCN is composed of scientists from Texas A&M, Stephen F. Austin State University, East Texas Baptist University, Wiley College, Panola College, and Louisiana State University, Shreveport. Anticipating that some committee members may be alumni of other Texas universities, I hasten to note that both University of Texas and Texas Tech University, among others, have been invited to participate. This network includes agency scientists from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Wetlands Research Center. Next week the RCN meets in Jefferson, TX, to review Ramsar guidance and to create interpretative materials about "what we know" and to define research projects about "what we need to find out to manage better." These conference products will become part of the annual research action agenda for the Center. The Center's interpretative program will routinely showcase the findings of this applied research and how such research informs the management of "critical issues" in the Caddo Lake Basin. These critical issues include, by way of exam-

ple, how to maximize and measure the effectiveness of community management itself, how to deal with invasive species, how to maintain hydrological integrity, and how to assess and monitor risks to ecological character. Examples of risks already calling for sound science are: Measurement of the effects of acids and nutrients and trace metals from airborne and point sources, including levels of mercury and other pollutants found in the fish and wildlife throughout the basin.

Community members of the Lake Management Working Group will attend the annual RCN conferences as full participants as a part of their ongoing wetland science orientation. Therefore, much of the funding will be passed through to implement or showcase the research action agenda that the RCN will produce annually with the community management entity. As a result, we expect that the Center will become a model of an advanced research and educational facility for our participants as well as natural science visitors.

Congressman Sandlin perceptively stated a belief we all share at Caddo Lake: Like politics, all conservation is “local” conservation—at least the best kind is. That has been true in our case. Contrary to popular characterizations of rural southeasterners as being alarmed by local Federal conservation activities, our communities are proud of the Ramsar designation, understand its value, and use the designation as a tool for stewardship.

During our preparation for this hearing we noticed that similar local initiatives were happening with the sage grouse habitat initiative by rural people in Elko, NV. Both programs even share the feature of local people recruiting two willing Federal agencies. We suspect that these may be two examples, perhaps of many similar situations, where extremely important Federal conservation commitments are actually being fulfilled by local initiatives—just because local people decided it was the right thing to do.

But the community-based initiatives, especially those pursuing Federal conservation commitments, are very vulnerable. The local effort required to create them is potentially exhausting. If they are not institutionalized and incorporated into local cultural pride, they can rapidly deteriorate. They may be undermined by the death, illness, aging, and the personal and family needs of key participants. Local efforts can also be demoralized by indifference or by “turf wars” or manipulation by the agencies whose missions they are furthering. They may die simply for want of an appropriate institutional vessel to carry them on. Often these local efforts achieve a critical mass—and their greatest promise and vulnerability—just when their need for costly institutionalization is also critical.

Survival of model community conservation initiatives like survival of model conservation bureaucracies, requires funding to pay for the expertise and institutional structures which foster continuity of programs and personnel, as well as the means to retrieve essential information to plan, to manage, train, and recruit successors. We believe that helping to institutionalize model community programs, which fulfill Federal commitment, is justified, especially where they are funded to support other local efforts.

So we suggest that, as we examine how we accomplish the conservation in this country, we should make a note of and accommo-

date the flashes of community brilliance that occur to illuminate and fulfill a Federal conservation commitment. I believe one such situation is occurring in our Caddo Lake Ramsar communities. This significant conservation effort can be continued as a model for our Nation and the world, especially if the vessel for institutionalization is the local vision, like our vision, of "A Woods Hole for Wetlands," the Caddo Lake Wetlands Science Center.

Thank you.

Senator REID. Thank you, very much. If you and the Congressman would be patient, we will have a number of other witnesses. And I have a couple questions that I'd like to ask.

Leta, we are very happy to have you here. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF LETA COLLORD, NORTHEASTERN NEVADA
STEWARDSHIP GROUP, ELKO, NV**

Ms. COLLORD. Thank you so much for your efforts and thank you to the Lake folks for supporting and upholding the principles that we feel are certainly part and parcel of improving conservation across the Nation starting at the local level.

My name is Leta Collord and I have lived in northern Nevada since 1974 and no contest owe county for the past 15 years. Jim, my husband, and I have certainly been aided by many, many other people that took a train that was offered by the Bureau of Land Management called the "Partnership Series" specifically community-based efforts for helping the various communities, and that was held in 1998. So I have to share that opportunity starting with many, many other people in our community.

But I'm pleased to be here on behalf of the members of the Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group, and thank you for the interest that you have in finding improved and workable ways to restore functioning habitats for species diversification.

The plight of sage grouse is symptomatic. It is an indication that the ecosystems on which sage grouse depend are not functioning properly. Therefore, on the grand scale the task is to return functionality to the ecosystems. The overall objective of our plan is to create a mosaic of a herb community. The various age classes and vegetation cover condition represent the various seasonal habitats required by sage grouse for a different phases of their life cycle.

That's a statement from the introduction to the draft form of the Elko County Sage Brush Ecosystem Conservation Plan that is being developed by our stewardship group out in the Elko area. As I discussed the organizational principles of the stewardship group and the scientific aspects of the conservation plan, I hope to demonstrate the fit between our efforts and your proposed funding sources. Our stewardship group offers two distinct and effective components for improving the success of conservation planning that we feel are very important to consider.

First, we are working to mend human relations within our communities. By building working relationships that nurture trust and mutual respect, the scene is set to walk the land and identify and solve problems.

Second, our stewardship group stresses the importance of pursuing dynamic science-based information that is objective and

thoughtful. We see man stewarding nature through thoughtful pursuits. To serious students, a public land conflict, the fact has become clear that in order to enhance the wholeness of our ecosystems, we must address the political side of public land conflict as we actively educate people through sound natural resource science. These components are expressed in our mission statement and remain unique to community-based planning. We acknowledge that man is an essential component of the ecosystem and the natural landscape will be healed as relationship building goes forward.

These are the principles that are expressed in the Bureau of Land Management's training that they shared with us in October 1998. They are contained in the partnership series entitled "Community-based Partnerships and Ecosystems for a Healthy Environment." The designers of that more structured program deserve a great deal of thanks for their wisdom. I think it has been a wonderful introduction into the Bureau's training.

Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group is a nonprofit organization. We have an active core membership of approximately 60 people, and the citizen membership reflects the general diversity of communities, and we include all of the judicial State and Federal agencies for participating there as well as the university and U.S. Geological Survey and some others that you don't normally think of being in a community situation.

One principle expressed in the partnership series approach that is important is the ability to recognize troubled areas or emerging issues in time to nip them in the bud. By doing this you keep them local and contained. Additionally as the skills and awareness develops, the credibility and general capacities increase. Respect for all voices is important. By using the knowledge available, most structured and cultural, that exists in the community membership a healthy exchange of information takes place. Enduring decisions are a byproduct of participating with a learning attitude and including all voices at that—the initial stage of planning.

Let's talk a little bit about our conservation plan. I'm amending my remarks dramatically, and I hope you will have the time to read my full paper.

After many meetings and discussions the group settled on the emerging issue of the sage grouse. One thing that is important to interject at this point is that our group was initiated through a need to find a better avenue of addressing public lands in general in Elko County. It was initiated by a great deal of angst over the amount of money that is being spent on litigation and conflict and having improved relations and improved sense of habitat and all those associated things in our area.

So it was out of a general sense of frustration that we decided to enter into a process, and it wasn't until after we had been in that process for a period of time that the emerging issue of sage grouse is actually what the membership decided they would get involved in.

We reasoned that if we could keep the sage grouse off the endangered species list, that our users of public land in our region would be benefited. Additionally we, at this time, were led to see that unless we did a multi-species approach plan on a watershed scale

level, that we would really not be very effective in furthering our concerns.

So as a group we identified 11 different areas that would have potential to affect the sage grouse, and for 6 months those different topics were addressed in biweekly discussions. Each one of those topics were flushed out fully with a full participation of representative membership involved in that.

In the fall of 2000 until February 2001, we gathered research data and put it together and started the writing of the draft plan. In March our draft plan was presented to the membership, and it's going to be circulated throughout our county. It'll start in the conservation districts and then to all interested groups and folks within the community.

As a citizen participant in this process, it has become just a strong, strong message to me that relationship building and closeness to the landscape is basic to solving natural resource problems. You have to retain a system that has transparency and openness to build the trust that has sorely been absent for so many years. Working efficiently throughout the time and process, by sharing information and building knowledge base together, our hopes are of alleviating the rush to litigation and confusion and conflict.

These combined will build a successful long-term regime of respect for land and conservation of the natural environment. The growing reality of the financial implication for landscape restoration led directly to the need for long-term funding. Ongoing funding concepts will be needed to accommodate the judicious implementation of the ecosystem restoration. There are already concerns within the participating agencies as to how the full implementation of monitoring of such plans will be paid for. It'll take full cooperation and creative thinking, as well as adequate funding on all of our parts to see these ambitious plans launched.

I believe that community-based planning efforts such as ours hold the hope for optimum investment of our Nation's conservation dollars and should qualify under the titles you are considering.

In closing I'd like to reiterate that our group is working and talking together, incorporating the principles that we feel are principles that the Western Governors Association developed a few years, that you need to attack problems at the base closest to the ground with a broad base of input and emphasis on science is absolutely essential.

There is a history of flawed success across our Nation in general for furthering some of these conservation plans in the field that—considering this is a new community-based effort, it's essential to turning that into more successful history. Watershed planning is the scale that is appropriate and will be very specific to having our success.

I want to thank you again for this opportunity to speak with you and we have been honored to be included.

Senator REID. Your full statement will be made part of the record.

Ms. COLLORD. Thank you.

Senator REID. We will hear from Larry Johnson, president of Nevada Bighorns Unlimited. Twenty years ago it was founded and we will learn why. It's a great story in and of itself. It's an impressive

organization, and it introduced bighorn sheep to over 40 mountains in Nevada, and as per our conversation with Don Henley today, even into Texas.

The organization, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited engages in critical reseeding efforts to help prevent the spread of cheatgrass and guzzlers. We will learn more about guzzlers today. We will learn they have sponsored research projects and a multitude of education and scholarship programs. It's a great organization. I'm very impressed with it.

Larry, I have a statement from you that I have read in its entirety. I need you to condense that. If you would do that. I can't tell you how grateful I am that you're here. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF LARRY JOHNSON, PRESIDENT, NEVADA
BIGHORNS UNLIMITED, RENO, NV**

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you for inviting me this afternoon. Again, I want to, probably, summarize our goals, our accomplishments and our mission.

Nevada Bighorns Unlimited is a private sportsmen conservation group. We are approximately 20 years old. We were formed to raise money for our State division of wildlife for the reintroduction of bighorn sheep. That was our primary goal in the beginning. Since then it's become a separate business on the side almost. We have——

Senator REID. You're an engineer. Is that right?

Mr. JOHNSON. I'm an engineering geologist. I have a consulting geotechnical and construction management firm that we work around and across the State.

Senator REID. That's your part-time job.

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, as my wife says.

But Nevada Bighorns grew and has had such tremendous success over the years that our programs have enabled us and dictate to us, really, that we branch out merely from funding the Division of Wildlife's sheep transplant program to all wildlife and habitat and education and research programs around the State.

We have formed very successful partnerships with State and Federal agencies, primarily our State Division of Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM, to accomplish these goals. I probably should mention a couple of universities in there too.

We have successfully transplanted bighorn sheep to more than 50 mountain ranges in the State of Nevada. It's a super success story in that bighorn sheep were once the most numerous big game animal in Nevada, but almost completely were extinct in the State. By the turn of the century we had lost all of our Rocky Mountain bighorns and California Bighorns in the Northwest and the great majority throughout the remainder of the State. Only small herds remained in the very southern desert mountains.

Other States and provinces really have been so incredibly generous to us and allowed us to capture and release stock back into our mountain ranges. We have gotten California Bighorns primarily from British Columbia and Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep from Colorado, Wyoming, and Alberta and we have used our own seed populations of desert sheep in the south to spread sheep across the State.

Now we're in a position, as I was telling the gentleman from Texas, that our State Division of Wildlife has allowed export of desert and California sheep back into Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Texas, as well, again, a widely successful program.

We're also involved in a little bit of everything, wildlife from elk, antelope, deer, sage grouse, you name it. We're pretty much wildlife oriented. Our habitat programs that we have been intimately involved with over the years are in both funding and providing volunteer labor reseeding projects.

We have lost in excess of 2 million acres of wildlife habitat to range fires just in the last 2 years. In fact, the majority—our biggest budget expenditures in the last 2 years have been the BLM and Division of Wildlife, the purchase of seed for reseeding purposes. It is one of those areas that there's not enough money to go around. We are woefully short of the needs there.

Water developments. Oftentimes the viable habitat for wildlife is limited by water, and in Nevada we are, by far, the driest State in the Union. We, along with our sister groups such as the fraternity of the desert bighorn in conjunction with BLM and the Fish and Wildlife Service and Division of Wildlife have constructed and provided volunteer man hours for design, construction, and clearance of water developments across the State. Division of Wildlife has constructed over 1,000 small game, small wildlife water developments. We are probably in the neighborhood of a few hundred large game water developments across the State. It's very costly, very labor intensive, but extremely successful.

We take only the mountain ranges that will only carry a few dozen, for instance, Desert bighorn sheep. In the case of the Muddy Mountains, turn that mountain range into habitat that will support many hundreds of bighorn sheep.

Senator REID. Are those guzzlers?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes. They collect rainwater, snow melt, and collect those into underground tanks.

Senator REID. To our friends from Texas, you should explain what a guzzler is.

Mr. JOHNSON. There's a circle of forums of them. We actually, in some areas, collect water just from big rock surfaces. We use those as collection services, big bedrock slabs, and build a little dam and a ravine and run a pipeline down to those underground tanks that will sustain wildlife all year round. In areas where we don't have big—and those are called "slick rock collectors." In areas where we don't have large bedrock exposure, we build synthetic collection aprons. In some areas we build corrugated metal collection aprons, again, wildly successful.

I primarily address game animals, but, quite frankly, everything from bats to field mice to coyotes to eagles. Everything utilizes and benefits from this program.

We're heavily involved in the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project with the Bureau of Land Management and very similar to what is happening in Elko County. That program is just getting off the ground and, again, it has funding needs that will last for decades.

Our education projects, we recognize the need to train good scientists and wildlife managers. For that reason we offer four college

scholarships to Nevada high school graduates who are majoring in big game management. We are also involved in a partnership with the Division of Wildlife and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in publishing a magazine that targets fourth graders. It's call "Wild Outdoor World" magazine. Our goal is to hit every fourth grader with this publication five times a year. Again, we do have budget shortfalls there. We are currently reaching over two-thirds of the fourth graders statewide.

We have Nevada range camp that takes high school kids primarily from urban areas and exposes them to range management training in central Nevada. We fund their fees. In fact, we go over and give them a slide show and a talk when I barbecue a few steaks and show them the role of sportsmen in wildlife management.

We're involved in a number of research programs. One of the biggest problems with bighorn sheep populations is their susceptibility to a bacteria that's carried by healthy domestic sheep, and which does not make the sheep ranger a bad guy at all. We are firm believers in multiple use. The rangers belong there every bit as much as we do. But we're funding several university studies trying to find out the answer to the problem. Our animals are presently at risk, and we're trying to find scientific solutions to that.

We fund research programs with the Fish and Wildlife Service, sage grouse. In fact, a number of our directors were just up on the Sheldon Antelope Refuge capturing and reimplanting them within the past 2 weeks. We will be back up there after they hatch on the First of June doing the same thing with the newborn chicks. Again, it's an incredibly intriguing research program.

In summary, we receive funding requests for a wide variety of wildlife and habitat and education research projects from a variety of schools, universities, State and Federal agencies, and we're continually involved in the programs of big game fishery, game bird reintroduction, green stripping, which is protection of existing habitat around the margins of existing range fires, noxious weed controls, habitat restoration, wild horse management, water developments in desert habitats, education and research programs.

Many of the badly needed projects simply can't be implemented due to funding shortfalls. We put somewhere around \$200,000 of donated private money back into Nevada on the ground every year. We have, in our history, donated millions of dollars that have gone back into Nevada.

Couple that with tens of thousands of volunteer man hours that have gone into these programs. Our efforts are intense. But, quite frankly, our efforts are insufficient to meet the needs. Additional and continual sources of funding would greatly assist our goals, and that's enhancement of the wildlife resources across the State.

Senator REID. Congressman Sandlin talked about his obvious pleasure in hunting and fishing. I want to read a sentence in your statement which would be made part of the record, your entire statement. This is a quote from Larry Johnson: "Nevada Bighorns Unlimited's actions prove that true sportsmen are the consummate conservationists." That's a very powerful statement. Elsie, we would like to hear you from you now.

**STATEMENT OF ELSIE DUPREE, PRESIDENT, NEVADA
WILDLIFE FEDERATION, RENO, NV**

Ms. DUPREE. Thank you, and welcome home. I'm president of the Nevada Wildlife Federation. Nevada Wildlife Federation was founded over 50 years ago by dedicated sportsmen that wanted to work on wildlife and wildlife habitat. Our membership consists of affiliate clubs and members. We have nearly 10,000 members. The public domain lands in Nevada are habitat to many unique plants and animals. We are very concerned about this habitat. I asked for comments from affiliates and members for this testimony.

The general concern of all was the lack of funding to take care of the land. Nevada could use funding to help with long-term projects to include: Flood protection along our few rivers to protect habitat, water quality needs improvement as we remove mercury, arsenic, and other pollutants.

Water issues are a concern on the Stillwater Refuge, and Lahontan Valley wetlands here in the north. There is a severe shortage of water to maintain the wetlands. Invasions of noxious weeds in the riparian areas are stealing valuable water. In the southern part of the State the Multi-species Conservation Plan, MSCP, will need funding to continue the goals of recovery efforts for fish species such as the bonytail chub and the razorback sucker.

Walker Lake is a unique situation where the water coming to the lake is allocated at 130 percent for irrigation. There is a need for money for willing sellers to give water rights to the lake. Right now our Division of Wildlife owns a small amount of water rights that in dry years does not even reach the lake. This desert lake will die and the waters where migratory birds rest will not support them with food.

The Great Basin Initiative is a good start for noxious weed control. There needs to be many educational seminars to educate the public on the weeds and how to control them. Our State needs to be fully involved in this problem with funding.

Several affiliates commented on the lack of funding for control of the wild horses in our State. The herd populations are high and there is little to no money to bring the herds to set limits of control. We see damage to the habitat from overgrazing in wildlife areas. Now that we are in a dry year there is even more damage. We do not have the manpower to do the monitoring and repair work. Some of the range workers in our Federal agencies cover more land in a year than what is in some States in the East. It is impossible to do a good job with this much territory. Our Federal agencies need budgets increased to meet this problem. State agencies need funding for wildlife habitat improvements. There needs to be grants for conservation groups to help out on projects.

Other affiliates are concerned with the lack of funding to do the proper studies. We need best science to take the lead in wildlife issues. There needs to be monitoring, research, and studies to show that the program will work or has worked. Often funds dry up before this is done.

Education is vital. The NvWF is using time and money to work with our Northwest Sage Grouse Working Group for this purpose. We have members from all walks of life making a slide show and pamphlet to educate the public and the agriculture industry on just

what a sage grouse needs to survive and stop the declining trends. Our Governor has a statewide committee working on the conservation plans to help stop the decline of sage grouse in our State, and we fully support his efforts.

Other educational programs by NvWF include our annual Wildlife Poster Contest for school age children and Backyard Habitats for those wanting to help provide habitat for wildlife close to home. Our affiliate, the Truckee River Flyfishers, started a Trout in the Classroom program where grade school children raise trout fry in the classroom and then put them in the river. Ann Privrasky got this program established so well that our Division of Wildlife is going to try and get this program in every grade school in the State.

Education can be as simple as having our city, county, State, and Federal offices remember that we live in a desert State, and they should landscape their areas with desert landscaping instead of green lawns and other high water usage plants. This would educate the public also. In summary, our State needs guaranteed funding so we can do long-term planning and repair the damage to the land.

The Pittman-Robertson and Dingell Johnson Funds were so successful in funding State agencies to administrate wildlife programs that some States and other local governments have never developed other funding sources to manage wildlife programs. A guaranteed CARA-type fund would greatly enhance these programs.

I thank you for your time and the chance to share some information about Nevada. I will gladly try to answer any questions you may have.

Senator REID. Thank you, very much. Let me also say here to my friends and our guests from Texas, that that is an interesting statement. People don't realize that we are the most mountainous State in the Union except for Alaska. We have 314 mountain ranges, we have 32 mountains over 11,000 feet high. Because people come to see the bright lights of Reno and Las Vegas, they tend not to realize that we have this very, very unique State. We're the most urban State in America, more than Texas, Ohio, California, and New York, because 90 percent of our people live in Reno and Las Vegas. And so it's a great State with a lot of diversity.

I am struck by you, Don. It appears that this love affair that you have for this Caddo Lake—am I saying it right?

Mr. HENLEY. Yes.

Senator REID. It started when you were a boy. Is that true?

Mr. HENLEY. Yes. I grew up near the lake. My father took me there when I was a kid. I caught my first fish there. It was a bass. I remember the lure that I used. There's so much history in this lake. It's not only an ecological treasure but it has remained one because this is a non-industrial part of the country. There's a lot of history in this lake. This lake is where Howard Hughes went to experiment with underwater oil drilling. So there's still abandoned wells under the lake that have been capped and they need to be looked at. That would be a subject of study, how to deal with the abandoned oil wells under water.

There was steamboat traffic on the lake, the Caddo Indians were quite a civilized Native American tribe with a highly developed system of tools and tribal government.

It's a wonderful place. You have to see it. I can't really describe it. Pictures help, but it really requires a visit. I hope you will come there some day and visit.

Senator REID. I would love to do that.

It's my understanding that the education has gone so far that kids at high school there use a frequently flooded football field to study wetlands. Is that true?

Mr. HENLEY. That's right. We made a wetland in a football field, which is hard to do in Texas. But it was frequently flooded, and we did that.

Senator REID. If you left no other message to us here in Nevada than projects work best—in fact, the only way they work is if local people are involved. If we had come from Washington and said, "Caddo Lake, we are going to do this", it probably wouldn't have worked very well, would it?

Mr. HENLEY. No. The people have lived on that lake all their lives. A lot of elderly people know that lake backward and forwards. It's filled with swampy backwaters and there are some people who have gone out and have never come back.

We revere and value the knowledge of the local elders because they know how the lake works. They have seen it in many different conditions. We welcome their involvement to teach our younger people. We have instituted science programs in the public school system which had no environmental science programs before. There's a wonderful awakening going on in that part of the country. As they watch other parts of the country become developed and despoiled, they realize the treasure they have in their backyard. It's like the saying, "Brighten the corner where you live and you will light the world."

Senator REID. Congressman Sandlin, I want to publicly express my appreciation for you coming. It's through efforts like yours that we're going to be able to accomplish something in Washington, because it's gonna take Senators and House Members to get some of this done.

By your being here I think you send a very strong message to me as a Senator, who helps run one of these major meetings and does a lot of stuff on the Senate floor. We need to work together. There's no reason Texas and Nevada—we have so many similarities in what you're trying to do and what we're trying to do. We even share Howard Hughes with you.

So I want you to know I appreciate your being here, and I look forward to this continued relationship in Washington. We will work together. We hope, for your constituents and mine, a year from now we can come back and tell them what we have done, not what we want to do. Thank you very much.

Mr. SANDLIN. Thank you.

Senator REID. Leta, you exemplify what Don Henley has said. You may not be the notorious person that he is—and I say that as a compliment—but you—

Ms. COLLORD. Well, we have a history that I was raised in Santa Monica and Mr. Henley is—are you residing in the Santa Monica area now?

Mr. HENLEY. Occasionally.

Ms. COLLORD. It's occasional. But I—it's interesting each time I participate in an event that is trying to share information like this, we hear of new examples of this effort. It has evolved to the fact that when communities and historic culture get together good things perpetuate.

Senator REID. What you're doing in Elko County is the same thing that he is doing in Texas. They are a little ahead of us. You have heard him describe with awe how beautiful this place that he was raised in Texas is. We can tell him how beautiful Elko County is.

I can remember—and we have an opportunity—it's the only place in Nevada where we have mountain goats, and I can remember as if it were yesterday. I was a young lieutenant Governor and driving with my entourage—which included me—and there was no one else in the car. I was driving from Elko to Wells. It was one of those winter days when those clouds were over the Ruby Mountains. It was just about as beautiful as nature could be. So we look forward to working with you. I congratulate you on your projects.

Mr. HENLEY. I think it's important to remember—and I know you know this—that Mother Nature doesn't recognize State or national boundaries. I wish some of our leaders would remember that and that we are all in this together.

Senator REID. Louisiana, Texas, Lake Tahoe, California, and Nevada is a great example. The only time we have been able to make progress at Lake Tahoe is when we set aside our partisan and regional differences and say we have to do something to help the lake. You're right. Mother Nature never had in its mind a division between California and Nevada when it was formed.

Larry, you're certainly a great example. You have been leading this organization for 15 years. I said with some jest that it was your part-time job, that is your engineering work. But I say that in sincerity. It takes people like you to accomplish what has been accomplished here.

I grew up in southern Nevada, and I'm sorry to say I never saw a bighorn sheep. They were out there someplace, but they were so sparse. It was a rare, rare occasion for anyone to see a bighorn sheep.

Now you can go to Boulder City and they are in the park. They are grazing in the park. They are literally all over, this beautiful animal. It's because of you and your organization that these beauties of nature have now—are now where they should be. So I appreciate your being here and, I repeat, especially the great example that you have set for all of us.

Elsie, you and I have worked together on different things over these years. We have not always agreed on things, but you have always expressed your feelings so well and so adequately. You're another example of how our State is a better place because of your involvement. I want to thank all of you very much for being here today.

**STATEMENT OF TERRY CRAWFORTH, ADMINISTRATOR,
NEVADA DIVISION OF WILDLIFE**

Mr. CRAWFORTH. Good afternoon. I am Terry Crawford, administrator of the Nevada Division of Wildlife. I would like to thank the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works for conducting these investigations into wildlife conservation needs and inviting me to share our perspectives on wildlife conservation and management in Nevada.

As the seventh largest State in land mass, Nevada's extensive wild lands support a broad and diverse assemblage of plant and animal communities. This diversity of wildlife and habitats is amplified by the geographic and climatic character of the Great Basin in the north and Mohave Desert in the south. Also, because Nevada is the driest State, water is even more critical to wildlife distribution and abundance. A wide variety of topographic features from low river valleys to 13,000-foot alpine peaks offers a habitat to Nevada's wildlife, resulting in an astounding ecological diversity.

Managing this broadly diverse assemblage of animals and plants presents many unique and formidable challenges. While some species such as mule deer and rainbow trout have broad distributions across Nevada, other species such as the Palmers chipmunk and the Amargosa toad exist only in very localized landscapes. All are worthy of attention, though, and therein lies the management challenge to the Division. As the smallest wildlife agency in the Nation, the Nevada Division of Wildlife is constantly faced with the difficult task of allocating limited resources to the preservation, protection, management, and restoration of all elements in this vast and diverse wildlife resource.

The prioritization of management activities by the Division has historically been largely a function of economics. The wildlife receiving primary emphasis in division management programs are those species for which there is a consistent and adequate funding resource. For years hunters and fishermen support the Pitman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Act by paying excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment have paid for the majority of wildlife management programs in Nevada. In addition, the matching funds required to capture these trust funds are provided by the same sportsmen in the form of license and tag fees, hence, the wildlife species that have for years received priority funding are those that are hunted and fished.

These extensive management programs funded by Nevada's sportsmen can boost significant success in the conservation of wildlife in the State. The Big Game Management Program in Nevada is second to none. Trapping and transplant projects for species such as bighorn sheep antelope and elk have resulted in record animal numbers and distributions throughout the State. The variety and abundance of fish species available to anglers is impressive. Upland game species including exotics such as the chucker partridge are pervasive. Nevada is renowned in the West as a high quality hunting and fishing destination. It is obvious that consistently funded collaborative programs can represent Nevada wildlife well.

It is important to note, however, that though management efforts have been concentrated on sport wildlife, these species typically not

hunted or fished have not been summarily ignored. Good habitat management fostered by successful game and sport fish programs ultimately benefit all wildlife species. In addition, consistent, albeit small, non-sportsmen funded annual appropriations are dedicated to non-hunted or fished species.

But we have been aware for some time that those species which do not receive program emphasis because they lack dedicated funding deserve more than they are getting from project “spin-off” or residual funding. While our history of successful management of game wildlife and protection of habitat provides a good model for the conservation of Nevada’s other wildlife, these species that are not sought for sport or recreational purposes deserve more. Reliance on recreation areas are often last-ditch tools as the Endangered Species Act is not productive. We see a profound need to be proactive in the management of all Nevada wildlife.

What is essential for Nevada’s wildlife diversity is sustained funding to apply to already proven management techniques. Some recent congressional appropriations will help when they eventually reach us, but we need long-term legislation that provides an uninterrupted flow of funds for Nevada’s other wildlife. We came close to this goal with the near passage of title 3 of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of the 106th Congress, which would have provided consistent and sustained funding for non-game wildlife conservation. Nevada’s other wildlife deserve this degree of attention.

Senator REID, I have always appreciated your dedication to the wildlife resources of our beautiful State. I applaud your present efforts to make a consistent and adequate funding source for Nevada’s other wildlife a reality. I pledge my agency’s support in this endeavor. Securing a reliable funding source for Nevada’s other wildlife when combined with the Pitman-Robertson and Wallop-Breaux funds that exist for game wildlife and sport fish would put a third leg on the conservation stool and would better balance Nevada’s wildlife conservation effort.

Thank you.

Senator REID. Terry, while it’s on my mind—and this is democratic and republican Governors who are responsible for this—why is it that we have such an underfunded, understaffed entity to take care of this huge State?

Mr. CRAWFORTH. I think, probably, as in many States, the sportsmen stepped up to the plate and volunteered to tax themselves, if you will, for wildlife conservation for hunting and fishing recognizing that those would benefit other wildlife species.

But we have always had struggles with people to recognize the need to fund the total picture, if you will. I think we all learned a lesson in Nevada concerning the desert tortoise. We spoke for a number of years about the tortoise, but until it impacted people at home, then funding was an emphasis.

Senator REID. You know, Terry, we have to have a better communication system. I was a lieutenant Governor, served in various capacities. I was stunned when I got a call from the Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the desert tortoise. I never knew there was a problem with the desert tortoise. There had been a problem for years, and we didn’t know about it.

Somehow we have to do a better job here in Nevada and I think we are doing better. But I can't put my finger on it right now. We are just—maybe it's because the Federal Government has such a predominant role because they control so much of the land. I don't know the reason. But that's something I will meet with Governor Guinn on this trip home, and we will have a serious talk about it.

Mr. CRAWFORTH. I would concur with you. I think we're doing better. Some of the cries concerning the desert tortoise was a voice in the wilderness, if you will, and it was a wake-up call and has given us the opportunity to collaboratively focus on projects for the betterment of the Amargosa toad, sage grouse, but there needs to be a better and more consistent message.

Senator REID. Gary, I need you to shorten your statement a little bit. So if you would do that, and I want to tell you how much I appreciate you being here. As I indicated to Congressman Sandlin, it's through efforts of you and your State that the whole country will be made a better place. We need to exchange ideas and find out where you haven't done so well and vice versa. Your being here and developing a relationship with your counterparts is letting me know that it's important that you traveled all this way. It's a big help. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF GARY GRAHAM, DIVISION DIRECTOR, TEXAS
PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

Mr. GRAHAM. I'm pleased to and privileged to be here today to speak with you on behalf of the State in support of Federal legislation supporting wildlife conservation efforts. There are five things that I hope you remember from my presentation. Texas is a very diverse and big State. Our unmet wildlife conservation needs are also big to the tune of \$30 million a year. Recreation generated about 6.7 billion dollars for the Texas economy during 1996. Keeping common species common keeps them off the Federal endangered species list. Finally, the solution to meeting our unmet needs is predictable and adequate funding, such as what would be provided to the State when the Conservation Reinvestment Act is passed.

Texas is so big that 15 Eastern States could fit within our borders, and one of our borders is shared with Mexico which is very subtropical in nature.

We have 91 peaks that are a mile high or higher and about 80,000 miles of rivers and streams. Our population reached 20 million last April, and we have more species of wildlife, about 1,200, which is more than any other State, except perhaps California.

Unlike California and Nevada, 97 percent of Texas is privately owned. Conservation in a private land State like ours provides unique opportunities and challenges. The key to our successes lie in—

Senator REID. Excuse me, Gary. You mean 3 percent of the State is owned by either the Federal or State government?

Mr. GRAHAM. That's it.

Senator REID. Wow.

Mr. GRAHAM. It creates new challenges. In fact, opportunities, as hopefully you will gather from my presentation.

The key to our success lies in offering technical assistance and useful information to landowners. We have 20 full-time technical staff who are principally responsible for the fact that last year 12.6 million acres of habitat land were managed under our wildlife management plans.

In addition, Texas has had a great deal of success in developing cooperative agreements with private landowners precluding the need to list a number of species under the Endangered Species Act. One of our greatest current challenges in conservation concerns black-tailed prairie dog that, if not handled well, could lead to the biggest train wreck conservation has seen. We aim to preclude that by working with other States in the West in implementing conservation agreements between States to conserve this controversial species.

We have one of the largest wildlife diversity programs in the United States and have led the country with several conservation initiatives. We aggressively use nature tourism projects as incentives for conservation through economic development. We established and marketed the Great Texas Coastal Burning Trail in cooperation with over 100 communities. We are taking the nature tourism a step further by developing a new complex of visitor and conservation facilities called the World Birding Center in the lower Rio Grande Valley among those subtropical habitats. This is one of the most biologically rich areas of the Nation, but it's also one of the most economically challenged parts of the country.

This project is expected to generate an additional \$12 to \$15 million a year in new revenue for the region. One of our greatest success stories is our Landowner Incentive Program, LIP, one of the first efforts in the country to offer financial assistance to landowners who wish to manage rare and endangered species. Over the past 4 years using over \$1 million, this voluntary incentive program has addressed the conservation needs of 26 species over 46,000 acres.

Equally important is the fact that the program has changed the attitude of many rural landowners from almost antagonistic to cautiously cooperative. Overall Texas Parks & Wildlife spends about \$10 million a year on the conservation of our wildlife diversity, those species not listed as game species. But with a State as big and diverse as ours, even this is not enough. We estimate that 30 million new dollars a year is needed to conserve a lot of the resources that Texans treasure and that would sustain the nature-based economy throughout the State. Just as important as the amount is the fact that funds need to be available predictably from year to year, just like the Federal aid funds would be currently used for game species.

It took 20 years of predictable funding to successfully reestablish eastern wild turkey back into its native Texas range. It would not have happened if we were not able to invest in the recovery year after year. The same could be said about bighorn sheep. We have had success because we have had funds available year after year.

Federal funds such as those that would be provided through title 3 of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act would address these needs. The funds will allow us an ability to invest in people and natural resources predictably and adequately.

We will use Conservation and Reinvestment Act funds to grow our already existing technical assistance, financial assistance, and nature tourism efforts. Each year we would spend up to an additional \$6 million for landowner incentives, \$4 million for technical assistance, \$3 million to increase recreational opportunity, \$4 million for habitat conservation and restoration, and \$5 million for education and outreach like the community-based efforts at Caddo Lake, \$3 million for research and monitoring, and \$5 million for the purchase of development rights, land leases, conservation uses, and acquisitions.

In Texas the public owns about 3 percent of the land and we are ranked 27th in the State park acres per capita. We firmly believe that access to affordable recreation is important to grow the future customers for our private land recreation partners. Thus, we are in complete support of the President's proposal which is title 2 of CARA.

Finally, the economic development that has led to a high quality of life for Texans also has severely damaged the entire coastal ecosystem. The damage to the hydrology along the coast is causing the loss and erosion of a great deal of shallow gulf waters habitat and adjacent marshes that are essential as nursery grounds for salt-water fishes and much of our wildlife.

The good news is that much of this is reversible, but it's also very expensive. Consequently, we are very supportive of fully funding title 9 of CARA.

And with that, thank you for this opportunity. I've very much enjoyed hearing the testimony.

Senator REID. The last point that you made, we have trouble understanding that. But with two Senators from Louisiana, this was the No. 1 issue as far as they were concerned with CARA, that there were huge pieces of land each year being washed into the ocean in Louisiana. They believe we have to do something quick or it'll become irreversible. Would you agree?

Mr. GRAHAM. Yes.

Senator REID. Bob, would you proceed. Again, I'm going to have to ask you to condense your statement. Your whole statement, I will make that part of the record.

**STATEMENT OF BOB ABBEY, DIRECTOR, NEVADA BUREAU OF
LAND MANAGEMENT**

Mr. ABBEY. It's a pleasure to see you home in Nevada and your staff.

It's certainly an honor to share the podium with some distinguished panel members, and I'll keep my remarks brief. No one knows more than me that the management of public lands is not always an easy task. It requires coordination and partnerships with a variety of interest groups and individuals.

The BLM in Nevada is fortunate to have many fine partners in this work, including the State of Nevada and its Division of Wildlife as well as a number of tribal governments and private organizations, such as the Nevada Bighorns Unlimited and Nevada Wildlife Federation, which you heard from in the first panel.

In recent years we initiated efforts to deal with some very highly visible issues relative to critical wildlife concerns. These include ef-

forts to recover the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, management guidelines for sage grouse and the sagebrush ecosystems that are their habitat, and the desert tortoise.

These species serve as a red flag for the overall health of our environment. The sage grouse is suffering from a decline in habitat, a concern to the BLM and many of the organizations and entities here today. Under the leadership of Terry Crawford, administrator for the Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, in cooperation with the BLM, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and others, have initiated a major effort to develop conservation plans for sage grouse in eight Western States. In Nevada, Governor Guinn has taken a personal role in establishing a State sage grouse committee to develop strategies to conserve this game species. The BLM, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, as well as State, local, and tribal representatives, have formed an interagency sage brush habitat steering committee to coordinate habitat assessment, mapping, evaluation, and restoration for species at risk within sage brush ecosystems in 10 States, and to coordinate ecosystem and species conservation planning in order to provide consistency across agencies in addressing sage brush ecosystem-related issues.

Through the Great Basin Restoration Initiative, the BLM in Nevada is cooperating with State and local agencies to stop the spread of invasive weeds and other vegetation and to restore the appropriate plant communities on the range lands.

After major wildfires in 1999 and 2000, the demand for sage brush seeds and the seeds of other native plant species has increased considerably in the Great Basin. Through issuance of permits for harvesting of sagebrush and other native species seeds, the BLM is tracking harvest activities to ensure that sufficient seed is available for rehabilitation efforts that are currently underway in the areas hardest hit by the wildfires. The BLM is working with the Plant Conservation Alliance, private seed growers, State and Federal nurseries and seed storage facilities to increase significantly the supply of native seeds available for rehabilitation and restoration work while reducing the cost of producing native seed in large quantities.

The BLM's Ely field office has taken a leadership role under the auspices of the Great Basin Restoration Initiative to restore and maintain the biological conditions of the Great Basin landscape in eastern Nevada through partnerships with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Nevada Division of Wildlife, and dozens of other groups. Approximately \$10 million acres of public land are in the project area, including 4 million acres of pinion-juniper woodlands, 2 million acres of pinion-juniper/sagebrush, 2.5 million acres of sagebrush, \$1.5 million acres of valley bottoms and mixed forest conifer, 158 miles of stream riparian habitat, and 7,800 acres of meadows, springs, seeps and wetlands.

The BLM field offices in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah have continued reintroduction and habitat improvement programs for bighorn sheep populations. Nevada contains some of the premier bighorn sheep habitats in the United States. Approximately 2.5 million acres of BLM-managed lands in Nevada provide habitat for three subspecies of bighorn sheep: The California, Rocky Mountain, and

Desert Bighorns. Cooperative efforts with the Nevada Division of Wildlife and partners such as Nevada Bighorns Unlimited have successfully restored bighorns on many historic habitats throughout the State. We estimate that there are an additional 1 million acres of suitable but unoccupied bighorn sheep habitat on BLM-managed land in the State.

Federal, State, and private partnerships have substantially enhanced successful wildlife habitat management on BLM-managed land. The BLM works closely with a variety of groups to restore habitats for native wildlife species on BLM-managed lands. Over the past 10 years, the BLM, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nevada Division of Wildlife, Trout Unlimited, and local ranchers and sportsmen have made substantial investments to restore Lahontan cutthroat trout to 128 miles of the Mary's River system, a premier trout stream in northeastern Nevada. The BLM's Challenge Cost Share Program, established by Congress in 1985, has matched millions of dollars of private contributions with Federal appropriations through successful partnership efforts that have delivered conservation and restoration projects throughout the West.

The Outside Las Vegas Foundation, a new Federal/private partnership in Clark County, is restoring native plant communities in the Mohave Desert, including removal of the invasive tamarisk from riparian areas and replanting native willows and grasses to benefit the desert tortoises, desert fish species, and a wide range of native birds, mammals, and amphibians.

Following the disastrous, widespread wildland fires of 1999, the BLM extensively examined the effects of fire on habitat and ecosystem processes. We found that a fire cycle had developed, referred to in recent science reports as the "Cheatgrass-Wildfire Cycle." This problem is acute in Nevada, where the cycle of fire disturbance has spurred the invasive cheatgrass to alter range and wildlife habitats. Cheatgrass has been on our landscape for many years quietly spreading its water-stealing roots to ever increasing areas.

Cheatgrass sprouts quickly as winter moisture arrives on burned or disturbed lands. Its root mass quickly draws up all available moisture, denying it to sagebrush seed. Left unmanaged, sagebrush benchlands instead become fields of cheatgrass. These fields dry out in the summer sun, and lay in wait for the summer lightning.

There was a time when people thought that getting rid of sagebrush was a good thing. However, we now know that sagebrush is vital to the health of Great Basin wildlands. Sagebrush provides cover for sage grouse, mice, and other rodents, smaller song birds, ground squirrels—over 170 species which are inhabitants of the open land. It provides shelter from the summer sun and from raptors overhead. In winter, dry cheatgrass is buried under snow. Sagebrush rises above the snow providing forage for deer, antelope, and sage grouse.

We look forward to working with our partners here in Nevada to address the cheatgrass problem, along with other efforts at wildlife habitat and species restoration in a manner that balances the interests of stakeholders and addresses wildlife habitat needs. This effort is massive, across the millions of acres of the Great Basin. Change will require labor intensive effort and significant amounts

of native seed. Each landscape will call for its own prescription. In some areas we may need to plant sagebrush seedlings and sow native seed by hand. The entire spectrum of plant and landscape management must be brought into play if we are to begin a true Great Basin restoration program.

This concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that members of the committee may have.

Senator REID. Thank you very much. I'll say that the work that has been done in recent years with you and the U.S. attorney in developing better relations with the county governments throughout the State has been remarkable. It's been a good job, and you're to be congratulated.

Mr. ABBEY. I met with the U.S. Attorney this morning, and complimented the leadership that Katherine has shown to all of us relative to setting the standards, and we will continue to carry on that manner of doing business even after Katherine departs from her job.

Senator REID. Chairman Wallace.

**STATEMENT OF A. BRIAN WALLACE, CHAIRMAN, WASHOE
TRIBE OF NEVADA AND CALIFORNIA**

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you, Senator.

(Washoe greeting.)

Why I introduced myself in Washoe is to make a point that our language is directly a component of the environment and it's this perspective that we bring to this opportunity that I want to share with you. I use English as a tool to survive today, but my children speak Washoe so the they can survive forever.

Senator REID. That's something relatively new, the language. I know with the Paiutes, that language out in Pyramid was almost lost until some of the elders were able to teach the children.

Mr. WALLACE. It's critical to maintain our native languages. It's the only medium we have to translate our understanding of the underlying order of the natural world to our children.

Senator REID. Isn't it true that they have been in distress over the last 40, 50 years?

Mr. WALLACE. Very much in decline and, in large part, because of efforts with your colleagues there is Federal effort helping to recover that now.

Senator REID. Sorry to interrupt.

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you. First, I want to take the time on behalf of the members of the Washoe Tribe, and more particularly, on behalf of people that only exist in my heart now, to thank you for your historic efforts and courage in supporting the tribe's unfinished dream to return to the Tahoe Basin. I just want to take the time to publicly recognize the courage that you have demonstrated in sharing that dream with us.

More than any other group in last year's discussion related to the Conservation Reinvestment Act, and despite our best efforts, tribes were the only ones that were significantly and completely omitted from the authorization of last year's discussion.

Senator REID. The reason we have you here is to try and change that.

Mr. WALLACE. I think I anticipated that. I would like to also request respectfully that our remarks and the testimony be entered into the record.

Senator REID. We will make sure that your prepared statement will be part of the record.

Mr. WALLACE. It'll help me be quick. We definitely appreciate your assistance to resuscitate some national and public benefit to CARA. We're here also to support all of the previous witnesses because we really believe in a stronger sense of hope because of what we have heard here today that friends are finally approaching these issues for us.

Senator Reid, like States, Indian tribes have governmental responsibility for the conservation of fish and wildlife resources, and the regulation of hunting and fishing and gathering on their lands. Native Americans who fish, hunt, and gather on Indian lands pay excise taxes on ammunition, fishing gear, guns, and boat fuel, just like other Americans. It is critical that any wildlife conservation title of CARA, or a stand-alone bill, include an equitable distribution of Federal funds to Indian tribes for conservation and regulations so that we can receive, and count on receiving, Federal monies for these woefully underfunded areas for which States have been receiving money for many years.

Indian tribes play a unique and crucial role in four purposes identified under this title: (1) wildlife and habitat conservation, (2) development of comprehensive wildlife conservation and restoration plans, (3) cooperative planning and implementation of wildlife conservation plans, and (4) wildlife education and public involvement. Having lived in our homelands for thousands of years, Indian tribes have developed a unique understanding of the ecosystem. Through our traditional and customary practices we have developed a traditional knowledge of science that enhances the scope of conventional science. Additionally, because tribal members have significantly more direct contact with the habitat and wildlife and because we rely upon the natural resources of our homelands, we are exposed to a greater degree of risk when the wildlife and habitat is impacted. An unhealthy ecosystem will directly impact the lives of Indian people.

Although there is little BIA funding and no EPA funding available for tribes to conserve and restore wildlife, the Washoe Tribe has pursued a commitment to habitat restoration and conservation, not just on tribal lands, but within our entire ancestral homelands. On tribal lands we have used clean water funding to restore stream banks and improve wildlife and aquatic habitat along the riparian corridor of the Carson River. In addition, our conservation and restoration efforts have maintained a reach of Clear Creek that university students and local school groups visit to study. As part of our cooperative agreement with the Forest Service at Lake Tahoe, the Washoe Tribe is preparing a Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Plan for the Meeks Creek Meadows and the Taylor/Baldwin wetlands. The tribe will implement the Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Plan in cooperation with the Forest Service. However, because of the lack of funding, these efforts are isolated and we are not able to achieve the full benefits of comprehensive habitat planning.

The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Title of the pending house legislation, H.R. 71, and last year's Senate bills S. 2123 and S. 2567, clearly identifies the need for a comprehensive Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Plan, but the Washoe Tribe has no funding available for development of such a plan. While we have been able to implement and develop plans for isolated wetland areas through the clean water funding, we have not been able to develop a comprehensive conservation and restoration plan or even collect data on wildlife populations. The need for such plans increases as commercial and residential development continues to creep in on tribal lands and the pressure on wildlife habitat increases. Furthermore, the tribal lands are often intermixed with lands under Federal and State jurisdiction, requiring a coordinated planning approach. In our case, the Washoe Tribe has jurisdiction over more than 60,000 acres of Indian allotment lands in the Pine Nut Mountains, which are located in a checkerboard pattern with BLM lands and private lands. Currently the BLM and State agencies are engaged in a planning process for their portions of the Pine Nut Mountains, and the tribe is a critical partner. However, the tribe's efforts are clearly hampered by our lack of funding for wildlife and habitat planning. Similarly, conservation planning funds would enhance our efforts to work with our State and Federal partners on the conservation and restoration of habitats in the Lake Tahoe Basin and along the Carson and Truckee Rivers.

The pending House legislation, H.R. 701, includes language that would provide Indian tribes with direct access to the Pitman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act funding. The allocation mechanism proposed in this year's House version of CARA allocates up to 2.25 percent of total dollars to be divided among all 550 Indian tribes based on relative land area and population. The 2.25 percent is based on the acres of Indian trust land relative to the total acreage in the United States. In fact, the 2.25 percent actually represents less than the full equitable share. For an example, the Washoe Tribe has done work on USFS lands with the Forest Service to conserve and restore wetlands on lands at Lake Tahoe. Indian tribes will continue to work on conserving wildlife and critical ecosystems within ceded treaty lands and other ancestral homelands, which are no longer held in trust. Finally, it's important to note that current proposals of this nature do not reduce existing allocations to States and territories under the Dingell-Johnson or Pitman-Robertson Acts, but rather involve only new allocations never before raised and distributed.

The Senate CARA bills from last year omitted critical allocation to Indian tribes and would have continued to exclude tribes from these funds. I strongly urge you to use the language from title 3 of this year's Senate legislation.

As to your proposals under the category of Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Species Incentives, we applaud your efforts to extend funding to conservation plans to preserve species that are not yet listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, but that are species of concern. Hopefully, by focusing efforts on these species prior to their being listed, we can avoid the need to list them. Additionally, we encourage you to move beyond the language as contained in CARA title 7, and recognize the im-

pacts of the conservation of these species on Indian tribes. Sensitive, threatened, and endangered species are a concern of Indian people everywhere, for they are a part of our cultural heritage and a consideration in our land management activities.

A classic example of this is the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout of the river basins of Nevada. Native and non-native peoples alike share a desire for the recovery of these amazing fish. Habitat recovery efforts are underway by all stakeholders, and help from the Federal Government would be most welcome. Indian lands are integral to these efforts, and the inclusion of Indian tribes as potential recipients of Federal funds for the development of conservation plans and recovery agreements would be appropriate. The State-Federal-tribal recovery LTC effort on the Truckee River is a specific example where the ability of tribes to engage the other partners is limited by our lack of funding. Again, in order for Indian tribes to play a proper role in these conservation efforts, it is necessary that tribes have the ability to access these funds directly.

I would like to briefly deviate from the two primary topics of your proposed legislation to talk about a couple of other aspects of the big CARA package that are important to tribes and that we were stripped of from last year's bill at the 11th hour.

The first is title 2, Land and Water Conservation Fund Revitalization, which would allocate Federal moneys from oil and gas revenues to various Federal agencies and State and tribal governments for the acquisition of land for conservation purposes. Tribes would be entitled to one State's worth of funding under current house bill language. This too was stripped from last year's "CARA-Lite," and I encourage you to support the effort to include tribes in any land and water conservation fund distribution in 2002 and beyond. Although the tribe has no funding for conservation land acquisition, the Washoe Tribe has been successfully partnered with Federal agencies and private parties to acquire sensitive environmental and cultural lands for conservation purposes. Indian tribes bring a unique element to the conservation effort, and with funding we will be able to achieve more win-win situations. Again, looking at the Pine Nut Mountains, to improve land management, Federal and State agencies and governments support Washoe tribal acquisition of private land holdings which are surrounded by Indian allotment lands, and the private landowner is interested in selling the land to the tribe, but there are no land acquisition funds available.

The final provision of note is the National Park and Indian Lands Restoration, currently title 6 of last year's Senate bill. The title would provide up to \$25 million annually for a coordinated program on Indian lands to restore degraded lands, protect resources that are threatened with degradation, and protect public health and safety.

The \$25 million allocated to tribes under this title is modest when you consider that it must be spread among more than 550 tribal governments and 56 million acres of Indian trust land. However, it does represent a critically important source of funds, and I strongly urge you to ensure that the Senate version of CARA title 6 or its equivalent is kept intact in any CARA legislation that emerges from the 107th Congress.

Senator Reid, once again I thank you for your leadership on this and so many other issues important to the Washoe Tribe and Indian people across the United States.

I sit here representing our tribe in its unfinished dreams and concentrate our efforts and my life, before God and all these witnesses, to the biological and cultural repatriation of where we call home and love so much.

We sit here on behalf of the children that speak Washoe that want to live forever and to join your efforts to help lift this great Nation to a higher and better place, and to also give us the ability to possibly make a responsible contribution in raising a generation to match these mountains. On behalf of the members of the Tribe, thank you for your public service and being our voice in the Senate.

Senator REID. Terry, we provided \$50 million to fund the Wildlife Conservation Project in last year's appropriation process. The State can access that money if it submits a conservation plan to the Interior Department.

Are you in the process of doing that? What type of projects would you like to see funded with some of this money? Would you reiterate that?

Mr. CRAWFORTH. We will be submitting our signed eligibility documents later this week. The official agency of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife has formed a team to review those to make sure those eligibilities are there.

Nevada would be eligible for about three-quarters of \$1 million of that. Our efforts will be to implement our migratory bird plan. We definitely need to work on a very important group of species, reptiles.

Senator REID. On what?

Mr. CRAWFORTH. Reptiles. It's very important that we gain some more knowledge about reptiles of Nevada, and we also need to do work on several of the amphibian species. Once we get a plan for sage grouse, we will be able to get the money on the ground through the local groups that we're establishing. Those would be the general areas.

It has been, and I know we're working through those rules, but the process of getting eligibility for those moneys has become a little cumbersome. I think that's improving. I see Gary nodding his head, and I think we're making some progress there.

But I would certainly encourage, and we certainly understand the need to, as you mentioned, make people aware of wildlife and the needs that we have for wildlife conservation. But to get that money to the ground, the process can't be too cumbersome.

Senator REID. Gary, has the State of Texas provided funding for the effort at Caddo Lake?

Mr. GRAHAM. Not directly for the Institute. Over the past 10 years we have bought a 7,000-acre wildlife management area that's part of the 20,000 acres that Mr. Henley referred to. We assisted Dwight Shellman in developing some of his conservation efforts, but we have not actually contributed financially to it.

Senator REID. Bob, one of the things that concerns me about the existing conservation program is that they are targeted toward private lands. It doesn't work well here in Nevada.

Would you comment on ways we might structure incentives to benefit public lands?

Mr. ABBEY. Again, I think the biggest incentive we have is for people to take ownership of the issue and to participate in the decision process.

Senator REID. That's what Don Henley and the Congressman said.

Mr. ABBEY. That's right. Again, the biggest obstacle and challenge is the people's lack of trust in their government agencies, and that's at the Federal, State or local governments.

We need to overcome that challenge, and the best way to do that is to make sure the people have an opportunity to participate in their government. We are spending a lot of effort to offer that to the public, to give them that opportunity.

Senator REID. I thought it was very enlightening what we heard here in one of the blocks of testimony from Leta. It was as a result of a public program by BLM.

Mr. ABBEY. We realize the significant challenges we have throughout the western United States in managing these public lands for multiple uses. We will have to bring people into that effort, and we're seeing a great deal of success. I think as we achieve successes, we need to communicate those successes to others so that they can see the opportunities that are really there for them to participate and help out.

Senator REID. Bob, one of the things I have heard on a couple of occasions today before the hearing started, and even yesterday evening, is that there's a program being anticipated to allow ranchers to reduce the number of cattle in exchange for a hunting tag or tags that they can sell to sportsmen.

Have you heard about that, Bob?

Mr. ABBEY. No.

Senator REID. Would you take a look into that.

Mr. ABBEY. I'd be happy too.

Senator REID. Terry, do you know anything about that?

Mr. CRAWFORTH. We have a couple of programs in Nevada, but they are largely for compensation for damage to private lands where landowners can get tags. We also have a program for elk and deer, which we call an incentive-type program where private landowners and people who are grazing on public lands can get their share, if you will, of expanding elk or deer populations.

Senator REID. I'd like to know more about it.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for your testimony today.

Senator REID. We're going to hear first from Robert Williams, Field Manager. Bob has been an integral part of what has happened here in Nevada. He has received a lot of accolades in the process. I appreciate very much the good work you have done.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT D. WILLIAMS, FIELD SUPERVISOR,
NEVADA FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE**

Mr. WILLIAMS. I appreciate the opportunity to provide some information on what actions the Fish and Wildlife Service is participating in here in Nevada. The service understands the importance of working cooperatively with the State tribes and the private sec-

tors on species conservation. That's why the Service has developed and continued to explore conservation efforts at a local level.

You requested that I comment on current conservation initiatives, what conservation plans have been successful, what initiatives have been planned but not implemented, what are the obstacles to engaging people in conservation efforts, and what can we do to encourage more participation in conservation planning.

It is crucial that the Service work cooperatively with our State, tribal, and private partners on species conservation. Recognizing this, the Service has developed and is implementing many approaches which enable cooperative conservation efforts. These approaches are flexible so as to encourage locally-based solutions to complex and sometimes contentious conservation challenges. The initiatives and agreements I will discuss here are a result of these approaches. We need to continue seeking and indeed expand opportunities for local and private landowners to share in the development of conservation solutions.

Let me start by providing you with a review of current activities in Nevada. Last year we and several partners signed two major conservation efforts, the Clark County Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan, MSHCP, and the Amargosa Toad Conservation Agreement.

The Clark County MSHCP covers 78 species, only two of which are listed under the Endangered Species Act. This plan will allow for a permit to be issued under section 10 of the ESA for an incidental take of the listed species due to development in southern Nevada. The MSHCP covers over 145,000 acres that are subject to development over the next 30 years.

The goal of the MSHCP is to conserve healthy ecosystems and the species that are supported by them while allowing for development. A \$550-per acre fee is paid to the county with the issuance of development permits. The proceeds from the fees fund desert tortoise conservation and recovery activities, as well as other actions needed to protect the 78 species covered under the plan. The plan provides certainty for Clark County developers while ensuring a conservation measure that will help recover the listed species and prevent the other species from being listed.

The establishment of the MSHCP was successful because of the cooperation between Clark County, State and Federal agencies, the University of Nevada, Reno, environmental groups, recreational interest, and resource users.

The second major conservation action that was solidified last year was a conservation agreement for Amargosa toad that resides in the Oasis Valley. This agreement brought together Nye County, the city of Beatty, private landowners, the State of Nevada, several Federal agencies, environmental groups, and the Nature Conservancy. The premise of the agreement provides the Nature Conservancy with the ability to purchase valuable habitat for the toad from a priority landowner. On October 14, 2000, the agreement was signed with the parties, and they are currently working together to manage the land and other resources for the protection of the toad and the other species that depend on the riparian wetland habitat.

Both of these plans depend upon private and public dollars for their success. Private funding supports mitigation efforts and conservation actions to protect the species listed in the agreements.

We are currently working on several other conservation actions. I will list them here and then discuss some of them in greater detail. Current initiatives include the following: Tahoe yellow cress conservation agreement, Coyote Springs Valley Habitat Conservation Plan, Lahontan cutthroat trout restoration, to the Truckee River, Sage grouse conservation agreement, Spotted frog conservation agreement, Lincoln County Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan, and Nye County Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan.

A planning team has been formed to develop a conservation agreement for the Tahoe yellow cress, a plant that is found on the shores of Lake Tahoe. Some of the habitat occurs on private lands, so involving associations like the Lake Tahoe Lakefront Homeowners Association will be a key element to the success of finalizing such an agreement. One important measure to protect the Tahoe yellow cress is simply to build fences around the plant. Should a private landowner agree to fence an area to protect habitat, funds may be available through Candidate Conservation Agreement grants for the costs of the fencing or other conservation activities the landowner may desire to make.

We are also working closely with a developer in southern Nevada on the Coyote Springs Valley Habitat Conservation Plan. Coyote Springs Valley is a critical habitat for the desert tortoise. Coyote Springs Limited Liability Corporation has indicated a willingness to work by signing a memorandum of agreement with the Service and the BLM to create a plan encompassing more than 40,000 acres of private and leased lands within the valley that would conserve desert tortoise habitat while providing opportunities for residential and commercial development. This plan is envisioned to also address the long-term water needs of the developers, as well as the listed fishes in the nearby Muddy River, which could be affected by long-term groundwater use. This type of proactive, early involvement with landowners is acknowledged by the Service as one of the most important objectives in our efforts to reduce conflicts and foster general acceptance of species conservation.

In our efforts to recover Nevada's State fish, the Lahontan cutthroat trout, we have received funding to conduct habitat restoration work on non-Federal lands along the Truckee and Walker Rivers. We are working with the Nature Conservancy to conduct habitat restoration work on the Truckee River that will benefit the river, the riparian corridor, and all the fishes that live in the river. Our next step will be to develop Safe Harbor Agreements with private landowners to compliment our LCT recovery efforts.

We're working with the State on the conservation of the sage grouse. We appreciate the State of Nevada's leadership by heading up this coordination effort, with the establishment of the Governor's Sage Grouse working group. The working group is bringing together private landowners, counties, environmental groups, and Federal agencies to develop a conservation agreement.

For private landowners with suitable sage grouse habitat, and who are willing to protect it, there are a variety of funding options and incentives from the Service. Congress authorized funding be-

ginning in the fiscal year 1999 for the ESA Landowner Incentive Program to provide financial assistance and incentives to private property owners to conserve listed, proposed, and candidate species. I will discuss these and other funding sources below.

As you are aware under section 6 of the ESA, funds are provided to the States for the species and habitat recovery actions on non-Federal lands.

In fiscal year 2001, Congress appropriated \$105 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund. The service will use these dollars for Safe Harbor grants, Habitat Conservation Planning grants, Species Recovery Land Acquisition grants, and Candidate Conservation Agreement grants. Each of these grant programs requires States to provide at least 25 percent of the project costs in order to receive funds from these grants. Additionally, some of the funds will be used for habitat conservation land acquisition by States.

The Nevada office of the Service recently worked with a number of non-Federal partners on proposals for grants under the Service's Partners in Fish and Wildlife program. Of the six proposals submitted, five grants were awarded through the partners program. Last fiscal year, we worked with the Nevada Division of Wildlife to develop and submit applications for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants, which led the Service to award \$176,000 to the State. Those funds will benefit 11 projects in Nevada.

In addition to the section 6 moneys, Congress provided \$50 million in the fiscal year 2001. Commerce-Justice-State appropriations to be allocated among the States for wildlife conservation, with the objective of fulfilling unmet needs of wildlife within the States. One of the primary means of accomplishing this goal is to encourage cooperative planning by State governments, the Federal Government, and the other interested parties. Another \$50 million for competitive wildlife grants to the States was provided in the Interior appropriations.

You asked for examples of successful conservation agreements in Nevada. The Amargosa Toad Conservation Agreement is such an example. It came together after 6 years of meeting with local officials and private landowners to ensure they were comfortable with the direction of the program.

This agreement gave Nye County an opportunity to play a leading role in species conservation and is a good example to demonstrate that local communities are willing, and able, to be leaders on species conservation.

The Amargosa toad's total range is limited to a 12-mile stretch of the Amargosa River in Nye County's Oasis Valley. The alarm over the toad's status was triggered by a 1994 survey that found only thirty adult toads, resulting in a petition to list the toad as an endangered species. Recent surveys conducted in cooperation with private landowners, however, lead scientists to estimate that as many as 16,000 adult Amargosa toads may live in the Oasis valley.

The nature conservancy purchased the Torrance Ranch, an area that provides habitat for the Amargosa toad, the Oasis Valley speckled dace, the Oasis Valley Spring snail, and 150 species of

birds, including yellow warbler, blue grosbeak, yellow-billed cuckoo, and Bullock's oriole. The Nature Conservancy's purchase of the Torrance Ranch was made possible with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and private donations.

The partners will undertake the restoration and monitoring of the ranch with financial support by the Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Nature Conservancy, and the University of Nevada, Reno's Biological Resources Research Center. The land acquisition, combined with other actions specified in the agreement, will secure the toad's future.

One of the obstacles that has impeded local people from getting involved in conservation planning in Nevada in the past has been a lack of personal communication between employees of government agencies and landowners. Landowners may not know what incentives and options are available to them for funding conservation measures. We, in the Fish and Wildlife Service's Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, are committed to doing a better job of reaching out and communicating with landowners and informing them on how they can play a bigger role in species conservation.

One way we are working to support local conservation efforts is by dedicating a staff person in our office to identify what grants and incentives are available for conservation and to reach out to State and county agencies and private landowners to inform them of how they can take advantage of these opportunities.

There may be other obstacles, but the Service is working to identify and resolve them so that States, counties, and private property owners can and will take more active roles in species conservation.

There are numerous threats in Nevada that impact ecosystems and cause species to decline including: Urban growth; invasion of non-native grasses, such as cheatgrass and white top; fire damage, conversion of habitat to agricultural lands; and over-grazing. Involving more people in conservation and protection of public and non-Federal lands is crucial to preserving the health of the land and maintaining the biological diversity of Nevada.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and welcome any questions you may have.

Senator REID. We will have questions for you in a minute. We will hear now from Dennis Murphy. We are very fortunate to have him living in Nevada now. I first met him when he was a professor at Stanford and he was working on a project at University of Nevada, Reno and came to me trying to get me to give him some money to do biodiversity studies.

How many years ago was that?

Mr. MURPHY. Six and a half.

Senator REID. How much money?

Mr. MURPHY. Approximately \$8 million.

Senator REID. So it's one of the really outstanding and, some say, the best true science project, going on in the country today as it relates to biodiversity. I'm confident that it is true.

Not only is Dennis responsible for selling this program to Congress, but he comes with a great resume. Two years ago he was chosen by his peers to be the, I say the No. 1 scientist. What was the organization called?

Mr. MURPHY. The Society for Conservation Biology.

Senator REID. He was the person chosen to lead that organization. There may be somebody in the world—I don't know who that would be—but Dennis Murphy is probably the world's leading expert on butterflies. The reason that's so important, I've learned, is that by simply understanding butterfly population you understand what the ecology is, the environment, and what the biodiversity is in that particular area. I'm happy to have him with us. I'm glad you're now a Nevadan.

Having said that, and the hour is getting late—and knowing you very well, you will have to cut your testimony down a little bit.

**STATEMENT OF DENNIS D. MURPHY, BIODIVERSITY
INITIATIVE, UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO, NV**

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you initiatives to bring better conservation wildlife, fish, and non-game species to Nevada and the West.

Many of those concerned with Nevada's natural heritage have come to recognize that the critical environmental legislation of the 1970's, including the Clean Water Act, the National Forest Management Act, and the Endangered Species Act, among others, has the potential of becoming unfunded mandates unless the Federal Government can deliver support for much needed management efforts. Funding for endangered species in particular has been woefully inadequate. As more species have been listed and the need for conservation responses grow in turn, appropriations have limped along. In the middle of the 1990's, the United States spent more money on military bands than on species at risk. During the same period more money was spent on Domino's Pizza deliveries inside the beltway than on imperiled species programs nationwide. The message is straightforward. The Federal Government must support programs that are necessary to conserve listed species and must aggressively pursue prelisting agreements and efforts to conserve species before they become listed.

Despite a starvation budget for species protection, conservation successes in Nevada have been many. The threatened desert tortoise survives across much of the southern State despite explosive land development and severe drought. Ash Meadows, described by Harvard University's E.O. Wilson as a sacred American landmark, "the equivalent of Independence Hall or Gettysburg," now has protection and work moves forward in earnest to conserve the many imperiled species that reside there and to control invasive, weedy species that threaten their habitat. The Spring Mountains Natural Recreation area harbors more endemic species than any comparable location in the country, and nearly all seem to be doing well despite rapidly increasing recreational visits.

But many challenges still face our land and resource managers. The sage grouse and its habitats have precipitously declined across much of the north of the State. No fewer than 15 imperiled butterfly subspecies are known from just a few dozen wetland acres across the dry middle of Nevada, each one at more risk of disappearance than any of the currently listed butterfly species found elsewhere in the Western States. Once the most abundant amphibian in the State, the relict leopard frog now exists in just 3 of the

more than 100 sites from which it was historically recorded on museum specimens. Our most widespread frog may just be a few years away from disappearing from Nevada.

What these species have in common beyond their imperilment is that they live on a shared landscape—on both lands public and private. They live on public lands with a very long history of resource use and private stewardship. One conservation reality is apparent; that is, that saving species and the habitats that support them is a shared responsibility and will demand in coming years unprecedented cooperation. That cooperation must include Federal land and resource managers, State fish & wildlife staff, private stakeholders, and scientists. Recognizing our long history of landscape mismanagement and the twin threats from wildfire and invasive plant species, we have a great opportunity to fail the sage grouse. Certainly money alone can't save the grouse. Federal and State managers must coordinate to find a common ground between the prohibitive policy that comes with listings under the Federal Endangered Species Act, and the State's management of fish and wildlife for consumption. Although we all agree that we must save sage grouse, we ask whether we want to save them as part of our State's rich natural heritage or so that we can have a season on them.

Any new funding must look to recipients beyond the Federal and State families. The shared landscape of the Intermountain West is not equally shared. Private interests have long controlled the most limiting resource, water. Although Desert tortoise and sage grouse conservation challenges in this State are not solely driven by water allocation conflicts, most other species challenges are. It is not a coincidence that pupfish, frogs and toads, spring snails, and butterflies present land managers with the most immediate species challenges. The springs, seeps, and riparian areas that support those organisms have long been exploited and often over used. Where dollars can buy water for fish and wildlife, and where private interests have the desire to contribute to saving species, our efforts will be rewarded. A Federal listing of the 15 butterflies I mentioned can be obviated with just a small redirection of waters and some three-strand fencing. It is that simple to save uniquely Nevada butterflies in Carson Valley, Big Smoky Valley, Railroad Valley, Steptoe Valley and points in between.

Finally, cooperation must extend to information gathering and sharing. We have to recognize we know woefully little about how our wildlands serve both common species and rare ones. Our best intended land management agencies have often failed to achieve the desired results and frequently have had adverse effects on species of concern.

In Nevada we have come a long way toward a remedy. For 7 years the State has benefited from the Nevada Biodiversity Initiative, a cooperative effort joining Federal and State land and resource managers with university scientists to meet the goal of saving biodiversity in the face of human population growth and diverse land uses. In continuous communication, managers and scientists direct funds to species and habitats at greatest risk, work together to study biological systems that are poorly understood, and prioritize future conservation actions. The Biodiversity Initia-

tive cannot take all the credit, but it is certainly no coincidence that, although Nevada was fourth in the Nation in candidate species for Federal protection in 1993, not one new species was listed in the State until forces in Elko County caused the recent listing of the bull trout. Very unfortunately, the Nevada Biodiversity Initiative's funding has been removed by this administration from the Federal budget.

In Nevada we have a unique level of communication, cooperation, and collegiality on resource issues. That foundation has fostered the largest habitat conservation plan in the country, 5½ million acres in Clark County, covering nearly 90 species of plants and animals, most not yet listed. In cooperation with California, Nevada is involved in one of the Nation's most visible and ambitious restoration efforts to save the fabled clarity of Lake Tahoe's waters. Now we are embarking on perhaps the biggest conservation challenge yet, to sustain and restore the most Nevadan of all habitats, the sagebrush ecosystem. Neglected, abused, and under incalculable threats, we frankly have no available technology to reverse the decline of our sagebrush. But Federal funding of a cooperative effort involving agencies and stakeholders founded on reliable experimental science offers our best hope.

Senator REID, I encourage you and the Committee on Environment and Public Works to fund cooperative efforts to bring more effective species conservation to our State and our neighbors.

Senator REID. Dennis, how many articles have you published?

Mr. MURPHY. Approximately 160.

Senator REID. So I don't want to boast on your behalf, but you're really a scientist. Tell me what we would have lost had we not had the Biodiversity Program for the last 7 years.

Mr. MURPHY. The listing process for endangered and threatened species works in mysterious ways, sort of a compromise between risk of extinction and economic considerations and other pressures. But I think it's quite possible that we would have seen a listing of one or more species each of the years since the initiative started and certainly over the last several years.

Senator REID. You don't mean a listing—you said a listing in each of the last 7 years?

Mr. MURPHY. Yes.

Senator REID. We have—because I'm responsible for getting the money, I don't want to sound too assertive, but is there a program any place in the United States like this program?

Mr. MURPHY. There isn't. In many ways it fills the gap that the National Biological Survey hoped to fill. Secretary Babbitt at the time wanted to consolidate the research, monitoring, and modeling capacities within the agencies into a capacity that could be directed to resolve technical matters related to species persistence, habitat health and so on.

Senator REID. He was not able to get that—

Mr. MURPHY. Well, he got his survey, but it was slowly starved through the appropriations process.

Senator REID. Nothing ever came of it? Is that a fair statement?

Mr. MURPHY. That would be unfair to many people who are—

Senator REID. Not much became of it. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. MURPHY. Certainly not much came of it. I think the Biodiversity Initiative has played a wonderful role in filling that gap in this State. It's a forum for us to solve specific challenges. It's extremely important in getting folks to sit down together.

Senator REID. Also, Dennis, I cringe to think what we would have done without the expertise that was developed over the years with our problems at Lake Tahoe. We have been intimately involved with this. The Walker River system, you have been involved in that regard.

Of course, even though you came in late, you have been involved in the problems we had in the Carson/Truckee River systems. That doesn't take into consideration the vast areas that you have personally been in and studied dealing with the butterflies. Tell us, why is it important in the State of Nevada, the country's leading expert on butterflies? Why are they important.

Mr. MURPHY. The real reason is because I love Nevada. I think it's one of the great untrammelled landscapes in the world and has, not only wonderful people with an intimate relationship with the landscape, but a spectacular biological diversity that has been shaped over the years by the dramatic topography that you mentioned. Our 314 mountain ranges and the increasingly arid environment has isolated organisms in some small portions of many of the mountain ranges and really gives us a bit of a—

Senator REID. Why are butterflies important?

Mr. MURPHY. Well, butterflies can give an early warning of ecosystems in decline. When your butterflies start to go, it tells you substantial things about the plants that support them, the species that co-exist with them, and the fate of the ecosystems in which they survive.

Senator REID. Bob, you have been involved heavily in all the many problems we have had in the State of Nevada dealing with the environment.

How long have you been in Nevada now?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Three and a half years.

Senator REID. During that period of time you have been involved very publicly, and even when you were not here, you were aware of the problems going on in Nevada as part of your job. Is that right?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Yes. I was in Utah. I heard about them—about the Nevada Biodiversity Initiative from my predecessor.

Senator REID. Even though this is a State program, you and the Federal Government have relied on the information they gathered. Is that true?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Very much so for the efforts on our conservation plan for the spotted frog. As Dennis said, there's several species that, if we were not in a conservation planning effort right now, they would be considered for listing if not listed already.

Senator REID. I'm disappointed that it's not in the budget. This program became so successful. As you know, we have a unique form of government. It's not a dictatorship. The legislative branch of government has equal say. So we will see what we can do to re-establish those dollars.

We promised everybody that we would be out of this building by 4 o'clock. Speed on.

STATEMENT OF KAREN DENIO, ACTING STATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FARM SERVICES AGENCY, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Ms. DENIO. Actually, in an effort to conserve time and my voice, I'm respectfully requesting that my written testimony be entered into the permanent record.

Senator REID. Yes.

Ms. DENIO. Good afternoon. My name is Karen R. Denio, and I'm the acting Nevada State executive director for the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency. I appreciate the opportunity to present information on the conservation programs administered by the Farm Service Agency, FSA, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS, in Nevada, the current levels of participation, and the rationale for producer participation.

FSA and NRCS have several conservation programs available to farmers and ranchers that provide incentives to encourage wildlife habitat. Among these programs is the Conservation Reserve Program, CRP, a voluntary program for agricultural landowners, offering wildlife and environmental benefits. Generally, offers for CRP contracts are competitively ranked according to the environmental benefits index, EBI. Environmental and cost data are collected for each of the EBI factors, including: Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage, water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching, on-farm benefits of reduced erosion, likely long-term benefits of reduced erosion, air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion, benefits of enrollment in conservation priority areas where enrollment would contribute to the improvement of identified adverse water quality, wildlife habitat or air quality, and cost.

Under the CRP, producers receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible crop land and marginal pasture land that improves soil, water, and wildlife resources. To be eligible to be enrolled in the CRP, cropland must also have been planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 2 of the 5 most recent crop years.

Conservation Reserve Program continuous sign-ups provide management flexibility to farmers and ranchers to implement certain high-priority conservation practices on eligible land. To encourage these high-priority practices, continuous sign-up participants do not go through the normal bidding process and can enroll non-competitively. One practice that offers significant wildlife benefits for farmers and ranchers is the riparian buffer practice. The land can be marginal pasture which is devoted to trees either planted or naturally regenerated. This provides cover for waterfowl and fish along with other wildlife species.

A second wildlife enhancement practice is to develop or restore shallow water areas that provide a source of water for wildlife for the majority of the year. Other eligible acreage devoted to certain special conservation practices, such as filter strips, grassed waterways, shelter belts, living snow fences, contour grass strips, and salt tolerant vegetation, may be enrolled at any time under the CRP continuous sign-up and is not subject to competitive bidding.

To be eligible under continuous sign-up, land must first meet the basic CRP eligibility requirements. In addition to the applicable CRP rental rates, payments up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent cover are provided to producers as cost-shares.

Up to \$350 million is available for additional incentives through fiscal year 2002 to encourage producers to participate in the CRP continuous sign-up including: An up-front CRP Signing Incentive Payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre, a Practice Incentive Payment paid as a one-time rental payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs to eligible participants enrolling in certain practices in addition to the standard 50 percent CRP cost-share rate, new rental rates that have been established for certain marginal pasture land to better reflect the value of such lands to farmers and ranchers.

Through mid-January 2001, over 1.4 million acres nationally have been enrolled under continuous sign-up practices. With these incentives, enrollment of filter strips has increased over 600 percent compared to the historic program (sign-ups 1–13).

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, CREP, is used in many States as a vehicle for conservation cooperation. The two primary objectives of CREP are to coordinate Federal and non-Federal resources to address specific conservation objectives of a State and the Nation in a cost-effective manner and to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, and erosion control related to agricultural use in specific geographic areas.

These unique State and Federal partnerships allow producers to receive incentive payments for installing specific conservation practices. Through the CREP, farmers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible land. Like continuous sign-up, CREP participants can enroll non-competitively and receive the signing and practice incentive payments.

Under CREP, non-Federal partners provide a significant commitment, such as 20 percent, toward the overall cost of the program.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, is carried out by NRCS. EQIP provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmental beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with Federal, State, and tribal environmental laws and encourages environmental enhancement.

The purposes of EQIP are intended to be achieved through the implementation of a conservation plan which include structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible land. Five-to ten-year contracts are made with eligible producers. Cost-share payments may be made to implement one or more of the eligible structural or vegetative practices, such as animal waste management facilitates, terraces, filter strips, tree planting, and permanent wildlife habitat. Incentive payments can be made to implement one or more land management practices, such as nutrient management, pest management, and grazing land management. By law, nationally, 50 percent of the funding available for the program

is targeted at natural resource concerns relating to livestock production.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, WHIP, is another Federal wildlife conservation program administered by NRCS. WHIP is a voluntary program that provides cost-sharing of up to 75 percent for landowners to apply a variety of wildlife practices to develop habitat that will support upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fisheries, and other types of wildlife. The purpose of the program is to create a high quality wildlife habitat that support wildlife populations of local, State, and national significance.

Although these conservation programs are available, it is often a difficult decision for the producer on whether to participate. As energy, fertilizer and transportation costs continue to escalate. It often puts the farmers and ranchers in the position of choosing between production-based practices to pay the bills and the conservation practices they wish to carry out.

Nevada's producer participation in CRP and the CRP continuous sign-up is limited due to a variety of factors. One factor is the rental rate assigned to Nevada. Rental rates are based on the dry land agricultural value because ongoing irrigation is not required as a condition of enrollment. The dry land rate for enrolled land in Nevada is about \$17 per acre. Consistent with the statutory obligation prohibiting haying or grazing, a producer is required to keep cattle off the CRP land. Therefore, if a producer or a neighbor has cattle it would be necessary to fence the CRP acreage.

Along with wildlife enhancement benefits, one of the purposes of CRP is to retire cropland in order to control erosion and improve water quality. Because much of Nevada's land base does not have a cropping history due to its permanent grass cover or recently being put into production, it is basically ineligible to be enrolled in the CRP.

In Nevada there are more EQIP requests for participation than available for funding. For example, in 2000 there were 57 applications for a total of \$1,207,197, and with the \$992,478 allocation, 43 projects were funded. The 2001 cycle is similar in that 85 applications totaling \$1,769,873 have been received, but with \$1,151,300 allocated, a minimum of 44 projects will be funded.

Ultimately, participation in conservation programs benefits all of us. For even as we recognize our farmers and ranchers as the original conservationists, we each have a responsibility in preserving our land and natural resources for the following generations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you or the committee may have.

Senator REID. Thank you. We will hear now from Nick Pearson from the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. PEARSON. I'll try to be brief.

Senator REID. Thank you for your patience in waiting around this afternoon. I appreciate it.

**STATEMENT OF NICK PEARSON, STATE CONSERVATIONIST,
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE, DEPART-
MENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Mr. PEARSON. Mr. Chairman, as you know, farmers across America are faced with ever increasing pressures to maintain a productive and profitable business. Prices for many farm commodities have been the lowest in years, and poor weather and growing conditions have been issues in many areas. Production costs have increased due to many factors, including rising prices of nitrogen fertilizer and natural gas. In addition to these concerns, farmers face increasing pressures associated with natural resources. In recent years concern regarding the health of our soils, water supply, and air have made farming and ranching increasingly difficult.

We know that farmers want to be good stewards of the land. They know that stewardship is in the best interest of long-term productivity of farming operations. By and large, it is also important to farmers and ranchers who want to leave improved natural resources and a better environment for future generations. Our mission is to help farmers and ranchers meet the challenge of sustaining their natural resources while maintaining a productive and profitable business.

Today I would like to highlight the many ways our conservation programs are making a difference around the countryside. Since the enactment of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, NRCS has experienced an increased national demand for participation in conservation programs. Farmers are utilizing these programs for a variety of benefits, including managing nutrients to save on input costs and protect water quality, restoring and protecting wetlands to create wildlife habitat, installing grassed waterways to control erosion, and designing grazing systems to increase forage production and manage invasive species.

Land users are using conservation to improve the productivity and sustainability of their operation, while also improving the asset value of their farm even during times of such dire economic strain. Our programs are voluntary. In response to new environmental regulations at many levels, we are helping farmers and ranchers meet some of the regulatory pressures they may face. In turn, the public benefits from conservation programs go well beyond the edge of the farm field.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the conservation programs Congress included in the 1996 Act, when coupled with our historic conservation programs and the State and local delivery system, are proving winners for the farmer, and the country as a whole.

The cornerstone of our conservation activities is the NRCS work force. Everything we accomplish is contingent upon the talents and technical skills of our field staff around the country. They are trained professionals with the technical tools, standards, and specifications who get the job done. NRCS has operated since its creation through voluntary cooperative partnerships with individuals, State and local governments, and other Federal agencies and officials. That partnership may even be more important today if we are to meet the challenging conservation problems facing our nation's farmers and ranchers.

While we are accomplishing much through the 1996 Act programs, it is important not to lose sight of the importance of our ongoing Conservation Technical Assistance Program. For more than 60 years the NRCS has used conservation technical assistance to build a foundation of trust with people who voluntarily conserve their natural resources. On average, the agency's conservation assistance leverages more than \$1 in contributions for every Federal dollar invested. In States like Nevada, NRCS has placed special emphasis on the conservation of private grazing lands. As part of our efforts in this area, farmers and ranchers are benefiting from the planned grazing systems, resulting in better productivity and improved natural resources. Through the National Cooperative Soil Survey, approximately 22 million acres have been mapped each year so that natural resource decisions are based upon sound science and complete information about the natural resources.

NRCS accomplishes its goals by working with 3,000 local conservation districts that have been established by State law and with American Indian tribes and Alaska Native Governments. We also leverage our resources with the help of more than 348 resource conservation and development RC&D councils. State and local governments contribute substantially with both people and funding to complement NRCS technical and financial assistance. Approximately 7,750 full-time equivalent staff years are provided annually by NRCS partners and volunteers.

Next I would like to highlight the accomplishments of the Wetlands Reserve Program. WRP preserves, protects, and restores valuable wetlands mainly on marginal agricultural lands where historic wetland functions and values have been either depleted or substantially diminished. Program delivery is designed to maximize wetland wildlife benefits to provide for water quality and flood storage benefits and to provide for general aesthetic and open space needs. Approximately 70 percent of the WRP project sites are within areas that are frequently subjected to flooding, reducing the severity of future flood events. The WRP is also making a substantial contribution to the restoration of the Nation's migratory bird habitats, especially for waterfowl.

As directed in the 1996 Act, WRP enrollment is separated into three components: Permanent easements, 30-year easements, and cost-share agreements. Pursuant to appropriations act directives, enrollment is being balanced to respond to the level of landowner interest in each of these three components.

The 1996 Act authorized a total cumulative enrollment of 975,000 acres in the program. At the conclusion of fiscal year 2000, the program had almost reached maximum enrollment. The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and related agency appropriations bill for fiscal year 2001 provided an additional 100,000 acres raising the cumulative enrollment cap up to 1,075,000 acres and allowing 140,000 acres to enroll in fiscal year 2001.

From inception of the program in 1992 through 2000, interest in WRP has been exceptional. Historically, there have been more than five times as many acres offered than the program could enroll. One benefit of WRP is the amount of resources we have been able to leverage with other Federal programs as well as nongovern-

mental organizations. It is clear from our experience to date, Mr. Chairman, that the WRP continues to be very popular with farmers and ranchers and is a program that clearly has strong support around the countryside.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program provides up to 75 percent cost-share for implementing wildlife habitat practices to develop upland wildlife habitat, wetland wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species habitat as well as aquatic habitat. The WHIP also helps landowners best meet their own needs while supporting wildlife habitat development, and to develop new partnerships with the State wildlife agencies, nongovernmental agencies and others.

The program was initially funded at a total of \$50 million in the 1996 Act to be spent over a number of years. As a result of strong interest, those funds were exhausted at the end of fiscal year 1999, at which time 1.4 million acres were enrolled in 8,600 long-term wildlife habitat development agreements. For fiscal year 2001, \$12.5 million will be provided for WHIP from funding in section 211(b) of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000, as authorized in the fiscal year 2001 Consolidated Appropriations Act. NRCS has made an enormous effort to develop partnerships with government and private organizations to develop a practice that targets specific State concerns.

The FPP protects prime or unique farm land, land of State or local importance and other productive soils from conversion to non-agricultural uses. It provides matching funds to leverage funds from States, tribes, or local government entities that have farmland protection programs. The FPP establishes partnerships with State, tribes, and local government entities to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land. It ensures that valuable farmland is preserved for future generations and also helps maintain a healthy environment and sustainable rural economy. The program was initially funded in the 1996 Act at a level of \$35 million to be spent over a number of years. To date, those funds have been exhausted and local interest in the program continues to be strong. For fiscal year 2001, additional funding provided in the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 will fund the FPP at \$17.5 million. On January 22, 2001, a request for proposals was published in the Federal Register. Eligible entities had until March 8, 2001, to submit their proposals. After the evaluation process is concluded, successful applicants will be notified in June 2001.

EQIP provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to farmers and ranchers who face serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources on agricultural and other land. The 1996 Act authorized \$200 million annually for EQIP, utilizing funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation, CCC. For fiscal year 2001, the final appropriation was \$200 million. In the previous 2 fiscal years Congress appropriated \$17.4 million annually. Consistent with the authorizing legislation, the program is primarily available in priority conservation areas in order to maximize the benefits of each Federal conservation dollar. The priority areas consist of watersheds, regions, or areas of special environmental sensitivity or having significant soil, water, or related natural resource concerns that have been recommended through a locally-led conservation process.

For fiscal year 2000, nearly 85 percent of the EQIP financial assistance funding was provided within priority areas.

The program has been extremely successful. We received nearly 76,168 applications in fiscal year 2000. After NRCS ranked the applications based on criteria developed at the local and State level, 16,443 long-term contracts with farmers and ranchers were approved. Since inception of the program, EQIP has averaged about six times the number of applications than could be approved with available funding. Certainly the demand for the program remains high around the country.

Mr. Chairman, in closing I would note that good conservation doesn't just happen. It takes all of us, including the Congress, the conservation partners and, most importantly, the people living on the land working together to make it happen. As exemplified through the many programs and activities that we have underway, there is a great deal happening on the ground. The work is not only helping farmers and ranchers build more productive economically-viable operations, but also it's building a better natural resource base for the future. We are proud of your accomplishments and look forward to working with you to build on all that we have done thus far.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman, and thank you again for the opportunity to appear. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

Senator REID. Thank you, Mr. Pearson.

Karen, I understand Nevada received only one conservation reserve program contract last year.

Can you describe to me the reasons why the program doesn't work well for Nevada and some things we can do in the Farm bill to change that.

Ms. DENIO. Like I mentioned in my testimony, it has everything to do with the rental rate as one of the factors. They get \$17 an acre to take the crop out of production. In other States they get much more than that. We get the dry land rental rate even though we have to irrigate to grow most crops.

Another factor is that they don't have the cropping history. Because of the fact that we have now the irrigation techniques that are available, we are just getting cropland into production, and so they don't have the many years of producing it, and thus they don't meet that requirement of the environmental benefits index.

Senator REID. One idea that my staff is thinking of is whether we can write a program that would give farmers and ranchers financial assistance to voluntarily switch from a relatively water-intensive crop like hay, which is 40-acre feet of water per acre per year, of course, to growing native seed, for example, or something else.

Do you think that farmers might be interested in making the switch if we did some pilot projects that showed that their soil was good for growing seed?

Ms. DENIO. I think there would be. In order to do that, obviously, incentives work really well. They would need different equipment in order to produce the crops. If that were a part of the incentive, to recover the costs, I think that would be possible.

Senator REID. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. PEARSON. She's right on, couldn't have said it better.

Senator REID. Dr. Murphy, tell me roughly how the Biodiversity Initiative both benefits from and supports students at the university.

Mr. MURPHY. The Biodiversity Initiative provides the funding that allows us in turn to provide infrastructure that allows a broader experience for the students. We have a geographic information system mapping capacity in our biodiversity office within the biology department. We can provide stipends to support graduate students who have worked projects ranging from the conservation of bats to looking at the State's biotic and physical resources on landscape.

One of the great advantages of the Biodiversity Initiative is that it has provided for cooperative staff sharing with the agencies. Several students have had experiences with Fish and Wildlife Service and have gone on to work for the agency.

Senator REID. This biodiversity program, has it provided a better graduate student? Has it made a better graduate student?

Mr. MURPHY. I certainly believe so. It has funded students to go to international meetings exchange experiences and see how conservation is carried out elsewhere. But it has also allowed for Dr. Richard Tracy, one of the top ecologists in the United States who, with the assistance of the biodiversity initiative was brought to UNR where he has continued to do path-breaking work on the desert tortoise, for instance, and served on its recovery team which has played such a substantial role in saving the species.

Senator REID. With you and Dr. Tracy, Dr. Broussard, and others, how has the UNR's conservation and biology department—what kind of stead does it have around the country?

Mr. MURPHY. We are certainly in the top three in terms of the performance of the faculty, the number of graduate students produced, and the placement of those students in jobs.

Senator REID. When you say "in the top three," you mean in all universities around the country?

Mr. MURPHY. Yes.

Senator REID. After your students leave the university after working as part of the initiative, what do you have to report about those students?

Mr. MURPHY. Certainly their placement within the agencies working on these issues has been common, and they have been placed throughout the United States.

But I think quite importantly that graduates in the State of Nevada are now playing substantial roles in decisionmaking that has, I dare say, contributed to obviating the need for future species listing.

Senator REID. I'm grateful for everyone for having been here today. When you do a hearing like this it is not nearly as sexy as one dealing with capital punishment or other issues.

But the fact of the matter is it's a very important hearing. The wide range of witnesses that we have had, the Congressman from Texas, we have had people who worked out of the goodness of their own heart in improving wildlife habitat, helping sportsmen be able to do the things that they enjoy so much.

It has shown to me that there's the ability for government at all levels to work with those on the ground. As we have heard here from the very first witness, these programs will not work unless local people support the programs. I look forward to making sure that what we do in Washington takes that into consideration, programs that are so essential to the literal survival of various habitats around the country, no matter what the case is, that it won't work unless local people support it. As Larry Johnson in his written testimony said, "The Nevada Bighorn Unlimited actions prove that true sportsmen are the consummate conservationists."

Having said that, this hearing of the Committee on Environment and Public Works is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:49 p.m., the committee was recessed, to reconvene on April 12, 2001, in Fallon, NV.]

[Additional statements submitted for the record follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DON HENLEY, CADDO LAKE INSTITUTE, INC.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for permitting me to address the committee, today. First, let me thank Congressman Sandlin for his positive efforts on behalf of this local initiative. His introduction and his photograph provide an excellent overview of our vision. I also thank the committee members for hearing our concerns about a possible need for oversight and support for community-based initiatives that fulfill important Federal conservation commitments.

My remarks today will address not just the local, but also the national and global conservation benefits that could result from congressional support for The Caddo Lake Ramsar Wetlands Science Center Program.

However, my comments about our Caddo Lake program may apply equally well to other community initiatives that are also fulfilling important Federal conservation commitments. One example is the Elko habitat restoration program in your State of Nevada, Senator Reid. My conclusion will note some features and needs which both programs seem to share.

We have provided the committee with a pamphlet about our Caddo Lake initiative. The front cover contains the Caddo Lake scene Congressman Sandlin showed you, prefaced by the phrase, "A Woods Hole for Wetlands." That phrase was coined in a local editorial several years ago, referring to the famous Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts. This editorial is in the pamphlet. Together the picture and the phrase show the reason for, and the essence of, this local vision. This booklet also contains schematic plans for the Center's campus, the office building for our Research Coordination Network, interpretive and accessory support buildings. A possible hemispheric mission is noted in the letter from John Rogers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Finally, the pamphlet contains the 1999 Costa Rica Conference Resolution of the Ramsar Nations, which endorses powerful guidance to maximize the involvement of local communities in management of Ramsar wetland sites. The resolution notes that the approved guidance was co-authored by the Caddo Lake Institute, among others. Thus, this rural Texas initiative has already influenced both the local and international practice of wetland conservation.

The Caddo Lake Ramsar Science Center is a proposed public/private partnership between the Institute, as the local facility manager and program coordinator, and two Department of Interior agencies, which have special expertise.

These Federal agencies are: the USGS' National Wetlands Research Center of Lafayette Louisiana and the International Affairs Office of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Washington, DC. Both agencies have been our informal partners at Caddo Lake since 1993.

The purpose of this Ramsar Center is to institutionalize a brilliant community achievement that could light the way for other communities. The Center is charged with demonstrating nothing less than the "exemplary fulfillment" of an important U.S. treaty commitment, specifically the Ramsar Convention on "Wetlands of International Importance, especially as waterfowl habitat." Our national credibility in keeping this commitment underpins our ability to ask other nations to manage wisely the wetlands in their parts of our common flyways. In addition, the Caddo Lake Ramsar Center fulfills an official pledge by the U.S. Government and the Caddo Lake Institute to more than 100 Ramsar nations at their 1996 Conference at Brisbane, Australia.

At Brisbane we jointly pledged to establish at Longhorn the first U.S. Regional Ramsar Center. To assure the availability of the facility and fulfill the pledge, the Caddo Lake Institute leased a 1,400-acre old growth forest at Longhorn for conservation research purposes, as well as a 14-acre campus and buildings for eventual renovation. We originally pledged \$100,000 to this purpose. We have incurred expenses greatly in excess of that amount to fulfill our share of the Brisbane Pledge.

The purpose of the requested appropriation is to augment the Department of Interior's budget for our partner agencies to underwrite the costs of the Center and its programs for community members and scientists. Together we will create operate and demonstrate the Caddo Lake wetland management plan, as an exemplar of the best Ramsar guidance. The renovation plan contemplates that the facility will be a learning venue. It will include powerful modeling tools for this wetland and its watershed. Interpretive and outreach programs will showcase the practical realities of a community-based wetland management program, and its watershed science foundation.

Because of its wetland science expertise and proximity, in Lafayette Louisiana, we think the National Wetlands Research Center (or NWRC) is the logical agency to receive a budget augmentation to fund and provide oversight for the Caddo Lake Ramsar Center program. Although we know it to be an excellent science agency, we believe NWRC is "fiscally under-appreciated" within the Federal budget. It deserves both the funding, and the credit it will earn by congressional augmentation to provide its expertise to local Ramsar communities—a task we know that NWRC does well. FWS International Affairs, which executes our government's Ramsar obligations, would be reimbursed for its costs of provide Ramsar oversight and U.S. policy coordination. We understand that FWS may also wish to use some Center resources to assist other Ramsar sites whose requests for help are currently underfunded. This new assistance capacity might include training at Caddo Lake, and support for delegations of our citizens and scientists who visit other wetland communities in response to their requests for advice or assistance.

We use the term "budget augmentation" purposefully. It should be counter-productive to compromise the historic missions of NWRC or FWS International Affairs by reallocating to our program any of their shrinking resources. NWRC would reimburse itself and other Federal agencies from this budget augmentation for direct Federal agency costs as well as NWRC's costs of fiscal and wetland science or oversight, passing through the balance of at least 80 percent to finance the locally managed program.

Beyond fulfillment of the Brisbane Pledge, there are compelling reasons to create a program of this type at Caddo Lake. The Caddo Lake communities have made a solid beginning in showing that rural communities have the potential to manage an internationally significant wetland conservation program. Last summer we facilitated a "Lake Residents Working Group" to master and make local presentations of lake management science information. Many Working Group participants, like our grocer and guide Robin Holder, are also members of key local businesses, community groups and the local navigation district. Our initiative formalized the practice of regular consultation with our colleagues of Texas Parks and Wildlife fisheries and waterfowl divisions, as well as their personnel managing their Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area, the original 1993 Ramsar site. Together, they represent the nucleus of the Ramsar-like structure that joins community groups with science experts, a structure which this appropriation would enable us to formalize to manage the Caddo Lake Ramsar wetlands.

To assure that there will always be a sound science foundation for this ambitious program, we have expanded our historic academic monitoring program. It has become a much broader Research Coordination Network (RCN) The RCN's mission is to provide scientific information to our communities for exemplary implementation of Ramsar guidance, not just for Caddo Lake but also as a model and encouragement to other wetland communities. Today the RCN is composed of scientists from Texas A&M, Stephen F. Austin State University, East Texas Baptist University, Wiley College, Panola College and Louisiana State University, Shreveport. Anticipating that some committee members may be alumni of other Texas universities, I hasten to note that both University of Texas and Texas Tech University, among others, have been invited to participate. This network includes agency scientists from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wetlands Research Center. Next week the RCN meets in Jefferson, Texas to review Ramsar guidance and to create interpretive materials about "what we know" and to define research projects about "what we need to find out to manage better." These Conference products will become part of the annual Research Action Agenda for the Center. The Center's interpretive program will routinely showcase the findings of this applied research, and how such research informs the manage-

ment of “critical issues” in the Caddo Lake Basin. These critical issues include by way of example: how to maximize and measure the effectiveness of community management itself, how to deal with invasive species, how to maintain hydrological integrity, and how to assess and monitor risks to ecological character. Examples of risks already calling for sound science are: measurement of the effects of acids, and nutrients and trace metals from airborne and point sources, including levels of mercury and other pollutants found in the fish and wildlife throughout the basin.

Community members of the lake management Working Group will attend the annual RCN Conferences, as full participants, as a part of their ongoing wetland science orientation. Therefore, much of the funding will be passed through to implement or showcase the Research Action Agenda that the RCN will produce annually with the community management entity. As a result, we expect that the Center will become a model of an advanced research and educational facility for our participants as well as natural science visitors.

Congressman Sandlin perceptively stated a belief we all share at Caddo Lake: Like politics, all conservation is “local” conservation—at least the best kind is. That has been true in our case. Contrary to popular characterizations of rural southeasterners as being alarmed by local Federal conservation activities, our communities are proud of the Ramsar designation, understand its value and use the designation as a tool for stewardship.

During our preparation for this hearing we noticed that similar local initiatives were happening with the sage grouse habitat initiative by rural people in Elko, Nevada. Both programs even share the feature of local people recruiting two willing Federal agencies. We suspect that these may be two examples, perhaps of many similar situations, where extremely important Federal conservation commitments are actually being fulfilled by local initiatives—just because local people decided it was the right thing to do.

But community-based initiatives, especially those pursuing Federal conservation commitments are very vulnerable. The local effort required to create them is potentially exhausting. If they are not institutionalized and incorporated into local cultural pride, they can rapidly deteriorate. They may be undermined by the death, illness, aging and the personal and family needs of key participants. Local efforts can also be demoralized by indifference, or by “turf wars” or manipulation by the agencies whose missions they are furthering. They may die simply for want of an appropriate institutional vessel to carry them on. Often these local efforts achieve a critical mass—and their greatest promise and vulnerability—just when their need for costly institutionalization is also critical.

Survival of model community conservation initiatives, like survival of model conservation bureaucracies, requires funding to pay for expertise and institutional structures which foster continuity of programs and personnel, as well as the means to retrieve essential information, to plan, manage, train, and recruit successors. We believe that helping to institutionalize model community programs, which fulfill Federal commitments, is justified, especially where they are funded to support other local efforts.

So we suggest that, as we examine how we accomplish conservation in this country, we should make note of and accommodate the flashes of community brilliance that occur to illuminate and fulfill a Federal conservation commitment. I believe one such situation is occurring in our Caddo Lake Ramsar Communities. This significant conservation effort can be continued as a model for our Nation and the world, especially if the vessel for institutionalization is the local vision; like our vision of “a Woods Hole for wetlands,” the Caddo Lake Wetlands Science Center.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF LETA COLLORD, NORTHEASTERN NEVADA STEWARDSHIP GROUP,
ELKO, NV

For the last 7 years I've been working on the very idea that brings us together at this meeting; that science needs to be better connected to, and used by, citizens and communities if its going to have much of an effect on solving the many challenges we face now and into the future. Much of my work has been with citizens and communities of place which, I believe, explains why I was invited to speak here today.

To prepare for this presentation, I called a number of people with whom I've worked (or have otherwise come to know during those years) to get their views on this matter. Basically, I wanted to know whether or not science was being used by people and the community. And, if not, why? I also asked for their thoughts on what

could be done to make science more widely understood and used by people and communities in the course of their making choices and decisions.

Let me begin by sharing with you what people feel are the problems. Armed with that information, perhaps we can better understand how to proceed in the future. Keep in mind that the following views come from the West where the public lands play a much larger role in people's lives. Views from other areas of the country may be different from these.

The following is a summary of what I heard:

- When people hear about science, it's frequently in a negative context. Many people believe that science will only be used against them.

- Negative stories concerning science often abound in the local culture (e.g., spending large sums of money studying "useless" things, using science and information to take away or diminish what they view as constitutional rights [private lands, grazing "rights"], etc.).

- People think that science is politically driven and nonobjective. There's always a purpose behind it that serves someone else's agenda, someone who doesn't live in their community.

- Because of the polarity over environmental and land use issues in the last 30 years or so, that agenda is typically suspected to be an environmental one. Across much of the rural West, science is viewed as seldom, if ever, serving the well being of the local people. More often, it represents a threat to them.

- There's a sense that all science and information are done to support authority and regulation, little if anything is done to help people understand and/or solve problems themselves.

- Locals are highly suspicious of government initiated studies and surveys. They're particularly suspicious of remote sensing. These activities invigorate and give credibility to the "black helicopter and one world government crowd." Misinformation flourishes when people are not well informed. Once it is in place it's very difficult to overcome.

- Most locals see scientists as living in such "different worlds" that they can neither understand nor relate to the needs of average people.

- Scientists tend not to involve people effectively as scientific findings and information are released. People generally learn the results from local/regional news services. The information is often met with suspicion, refuted, and labeled as "bad science."

- Scientists come across as elitists. They're not in touch with the local people; they don't involve the locals; and they don't listen to their concerns or input.

- People don't like to feel that scientists are there to educate them.

- People don't see the different agencies of government working together. It's widely held that the BLM and FS don't use the same information, procedures, or policies for their science. Now, people don't see how the USGS fits into the picture, particularly concerning the "biological sciences."

- More and more, people go to sources other than government agencies for their science and information.

I could go on, but I think this feedback paints a very clear picture of why "they" don't use "our" information? But the news isn't all bad. I also got some very encouraging feedback. Here are some examples:

- I talked to a county commissioner in Idaho who thought that the Columbia River Ecosystem Management Project had been a failure because it was not a "community-based project." However, when I asked him if he thought there was any good that came from that project his response was, "Yes, the science. But for it to be applied it needs to be brought down to the community level and adapted to the local situation."

- A person in Elko, Nevada answered my question about science essentially this way, "When people in a community are pulled together and empowered to solve natural resource problems they naturally begin to look for sources of expertise and information. If they think the information is objective and useful, they will use it."

This feedback tells me that under the right circumstance people view science as important and will make an effort to put it to use. So the question before us today perhaps should be thought of a little differently. Maybe we should be inquiring into what we can do to help foster a social *environment* at the community/citizen level that supports the application of science. In my view, we're faced with a social challenge, not a technical one.

In effect, we should be looking for a new relationship between government, science, and citizens that supports stewardship by people, rather than looking for more regulatory and decisionmaking powers in government. The future can be much brighter if we learn to work with people. In fact, there are those who believe that the *only* way that many future problems can be effectively resolved is through peo-

ple and community of place, that other course of action simply won't lead to sustainable solutions. I believe that. I think that many of you in attendance at this meeting do too.

So, what would such an environment, or social setting, look like relative to science? Well, it might look something like this:

- People would become *actively and constructively involved* in understanding science and its implications.
- People would gain a sense of *ownership and responsibility* over science and information, especially that which is important to them locally.
- People would *apply science and information* to solving problems and in making decisions and choices.

Of these statements, the most important is the one containing the word "ownership." If we could approach this interface of science and community in a way that resulted in people having a sense of ownership, the other outcomes would have an excellent chance of materializing, naturally so. I believe, that if people are to have ownership they must be "empowered." I really think that it's as simple and, at the same time, as complex as that.

When people feel dis-empowered, disenfranchise, or otherwise threatened, they have the choice of ignoring, refuting, or even demonizing the science that comes their way. Their power (at least within their own social circles) comes from doing just that. As one person told me, "If the locals don't consider it important, it just isn't going to happen." I think that person is telling us that we can complete all the studies, assessments, reports, and decision support models we want. By themselves, these things are not going to really change anything. We need to work for the trust, understanding, ownership and responsibility of people if science is to be effectively applied on the ground.

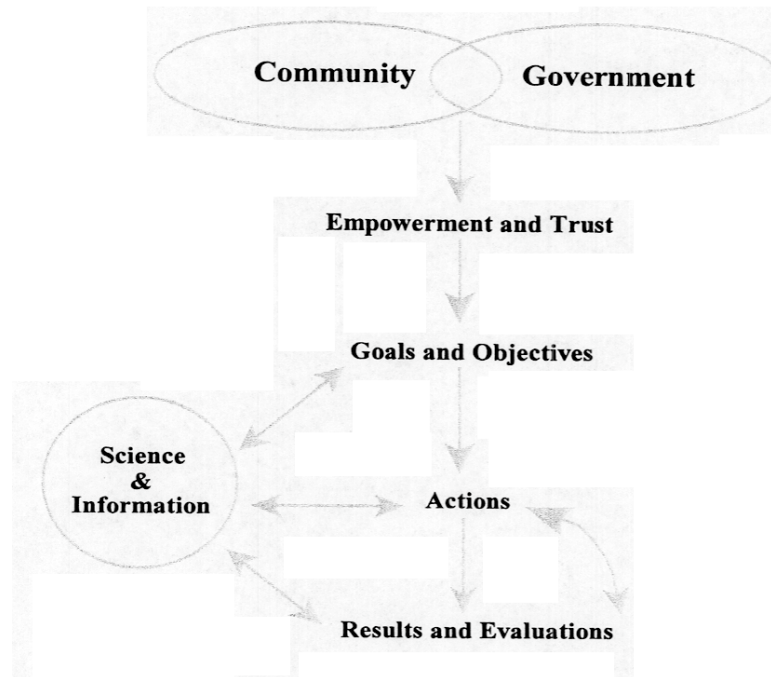
There is a process for creating such an environment. I call it "Community-based Stewardship." Now, there are lots of terms being thrown around these days, "collaboration," "partnerships," "collaborative stewardship," etc. What I'm talking about is a process of empowering people, particularly people in place based, or community, settings. It is not simply a process for getting people, or representatives of special interests, together to talk for the purpose of finding "common ground." We're talking about a place-based, community-based, in fact, *community-led* process for stewarding landscapes, watershed, and ecosystems.

It is local people living in a community construct who have the attachment to the surrounding landscapes needed for lasting, sustainable stewardship. My sociologists friends have convinced me that there is always a cultural setting that defines the interrelationship of people to land. That culture may not presently contain all the knowledge, or even the right land ethic, needed to steward the land in the greater interest of society, but all that can change through a process aimed at incorporating science into local knowledge and wisdom. That's our challenge.

Imagine a future in which a majority of the community holds, practices, and teaches land and environmental ethics that are scientifically sound and inclusive of the larger interests of society. Imagine further that the role of government and scientists has largely shifted from regulation and formal decisionmaking to that of supporting citizen-based, citizen-led solutions to many environmental issues, at least those that lend themselves to solving at that level. In my mind, that's the future that we need to work toward. A fantasy? Perhaps, but I do see us moving in that direction.

Given the space and support for doing so, the process I speak of seems to come together and evolve almost naturally. Although it doesn't readily lend itself to modeling or text book descriptions, the following diagram serves as a visual reference to help our discussions here today.

COMMUNITY-BASED STEWARDSHIP



The relationship between community and government, as implied by this model, primarily depends upon those agencies that have a local presence in the community, such as the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, or the Fish and Wildlife Service. Typically, a lot of front end work is needed between the community and these (and other) agencies to make community-based stewardship operational. It's not our purpose here today to talk about that relationship. However, I do want to again emphasize the importance of "Trust and Empowerment." In my opinion, community-based stewardship cannot be made operational without these qualities of human interrelationships. Empowerment, in all its complexity and subtlety, also affects the role of science in this model, and certainly its effectiveness.

So, let's see what the people I interviewed had to say concerning what needs to be done for science to become more effectively involved in the community. Here is some of what I heard:

- We need to have scientists available to us; they need to demonstrate that they care about us and have a first hand knowledge of, and concern for, where we live.
- Scientists need to be close enough, or available enough, to gain credibility. They need to be more than just someone who occasionally shows up to explain or present something.
- Scientist need to be out on the ground and talking with people to gain credibility.
- Scientist need to listen to us as well, learning is not a one way street.
- Scientific information needs to be brought down to the local scale and communicated through local language and culture for it to be effective.
- Scientists need to respect the local knowledge.

- Before starting major surveys, work with local people to help them understand what's going on, and why. After that, stay involved with them. If ground truthing is needed, get the locals involved.

- Similarly, get local people involved in monitoring; help them to feel that you and they are working with common purpose.

In short, all this says to me that science needs to have a “face put on it” at the local level. If I may, I would like to leave you today with some recommendations on how to do that.

1. *Train scientists to work effectively in a community context (i.e., establishing credibility, gaining trust, and helping people to become more a part of the science that should be considered important to them and the area they live in).*—Most people I interviewed indicated a need to have more local contact with scientists, not less. They want to bring that knowledge and expertise down to the local level and they want to feel that the scientists involved are truly concerned and knowledgeable about them or the area they live in. While there are ways of attaining these goals, they often are disallowed by agency and/or professional protocol. Having key people regularly sitting in community gathering places, drinking coffee, and discussing matters of local interest is not often considered productive work. Nor is it viewed as a way of getting the “important” reportable work out. Yet, that may be exactly what is called for if we are to become effective as change agents on the ground, where, in my opinion, it counts the most. There is now training available on how to work effectively in a community setting. I would hope that in the near future the importance of this kind of work becomes better understood and accepted, and that a part of the work force becomes committed to working for trust and credibility at the local level.

2. *Staff the culture.*—To be even more effective in gaining confidence and application of science at the local level, we should think about permanently locating scientists within communities and expect them to become active members of the community, both locally and more regionally. This is not without precedent. At least some, and perhaps most, of the scientist who came to USGS from different agencies to staff biological services remain in their former duty stations. In one such case that I'm familiar with, the scientist is well known and respected throughout the region she works. At the same time, I know this person to be deeply committed to the ecology of this particular area. Here is an example that appears to be meeting many of the conditions people are asking for. She is also proving that you do not have to compromise your values to be effective in this role. In fact, I believe the opposite is true; you lose respect if you do compromise yourself. Fairness, objectivity, and caring are, however, mandatory prerequisites.

3. *Form “regional science teams” and work toward establishing their regional credibility.*—There are examples of regional science teams already in existence in various parts of the country. But, in my opinion, they're being formed mostly for the wrong reasons—typically to put the best possible science together to advise agency administrators and support formal, government-led decisionmaking processes. These are the very actions that people are telling us only promote suspicion and distrust for science from government sources. The idea that such teams could support community-based stewardship across the area they cover is mostly absent from the thinking behind their formation. The concept of local empowerment and trust is missing. Regional science teams, if set up to serve community-based stewardship, could be extremely effective in getting science applied on the ground. If oriented to gaining people's confidence and trust, and if effectively connected to communities as discussed above, they could become recognized sources of expertise and information for the region. This could grow to be even more true over time. As the county commissioner in Idaho said, “Yes, the science is good, but if it's going to make a difference it needs to be brought down to the local level and delivered in a way that gains people's confidence.”

STATEMENT OF LARRY JOHNSON, NEVADA BIGHORNS UNLIMITED

INTRODUCTION

My name is Larry Johnson. I am an engineering geologist by profession. I am President of a geotechnical engineering and construction service consulting firm in Reno. While I serve on numerous professional boards and committees, my true love and life is in the Nevada outdoors. As such I have been a director of Nevada Bighorns Unlimited for the past 15 years.

Nevada Bighorns Unlimited was founded in 1981 by a small group of Nevada sportsmen and conservationists. Since its beginning, NBU-Reno has grown into one

of the most successful and respected, action-oriented, non-profit organizations in the State of Nevada with a growing membership base of well over 3,500. NBU is an organization concerned with the conservation and management of not only Bighorn Sheep, but all of Nevada's wildlife. The organization's mission is to promote and enhance increasing populations of wildlife in Nevada, to fund programs for professional management and habitat improvements, and to protect the heritage of sportsmen and hunters. The organization is led by a rotating group of 16 volunteer Board Members dedicated to making a difference in Nevada's natural habitat. The membership is made up of primarily hunters, but also includes conservationists, outdoorsmen and wildlife lovers of all ages. NBU-Reno is striving to protect wildlife, habitat resources, and hunting rights through the use of game reintroduction programs, conservation activities, education, scientific research, legislative action, and honest hands-on labor. NBU holds only one major fund raising event each year. The annual banquet and auction attract well over 1,500 hunting enthusiasts and wildlife lovers from all over North America. The funds generated from this event are what enable NBU to accomplish their mission. We have invested millions of dollars into Nevada wildlife projects. Now more than ever, those who participate with NBU by donations, time, or participating as a member have a profound effect on the future of wildlife resources not only throughout Nevada but throughout the world as well.

WILDLIFE PROJECTS

Before the turn of the century, Bighorn Sheep were Nevada's most numerous big game animal. Emigrant journals documented Bighorn Sheep silhouetted against the sky on every rock pinnacle in the Truckee River canyon below present-day Reno.

Historically, Nevada was the only area in the Nation to have three subspecies of Bighorn Sheep; the Rocky Mountain Bighorn, the California Bighorn, and the Desert Bighorn.

By the turn of the century, however, Desert Bighorn populations had been drastically reduced while Rocky Mountain and California Bighorns had become completely extinct within the State. This virtual extinction was caused by a combination of market hunting, loss of habitat, and disease from the introduction of domestic sheep.

NBU's mission to promote and enhance increasing populations of wildlife in Nevada, and to fund programs for professional management and habitat improvements was born out of the desire to put back what was lost. NBU's goals of protecting our heritage as sportsmen and hunters was inspired by a group of individuals who believe there is nothing more important than protecting our land and its wildlife.

NBU is well known for transplanting big game animals back into their original habitat—animals including not only Bighorn Sheep, but also Elk, and Antelope.

Today the Division of Wildlife, funded by groups like NBU has reintroduced these majestic animals back into their original habitat throughout the State.

The future of big game in Nevada is extremely promising due to a high percentage of public land, and the fact Nevada has one of the most progressive Division's of Wildlife in the Nation.

NBU, along with Federal Pittman Robinson matching funds, provides all funding for the Nevada Division of Wildlife's Big Game Reintroduction Program.

A lengthy land management process which takes several years is necessary for a single reintroduction decision to be made. On average an original reintroduction consists of approximately 20 animals. Within 5 years, another augmentation of a similar amount to the same area from a different gene pool is then reintroduced. This process will produce a huntable population of viable sheep within a decade.

Bighorn Sheep when reintroduced into an ecological niche that was once their original habitat usually experience a population explosion.

For the first time in modern history, the State is opening up the management areas for hunting each year.

At this time, Bighorn Sheep have been reintroduced into over 50 mountain ranges in Nevada. Though a tremendous come back by any measure, there is still work to be done.

NBU's actions prove that true sportsmen are consummate conservationists. In their efforts to create a more balanced and healthy wildlife population in Nevada and beyond, generations of hunters and non-hunters alike will benefit for years to come.

HABITAT PROJECTS

Not much more than a hundred years ago, Nevada's landscape was primarily that of grasslands and wooded mountains. This habitat supported grazers, including Elk, Antelope, and the three species of Bighorn Sheep.

With the spread of mining and ranching came the deforestation of the mountains and the destruction of the grasslands. Sagebrush then took over as the primary vegetation. Many of the native big game animals became extinct in Nevada. Deer, never present in much of Nevada before, came to feed on sagebrush.

The Federal grazing laws of 1932 put a stop to uncontrolled livestock grazing and true wildlife and habitat management practices began to be implemented.

NBU supports Nevada's habitat with funding for a number of special restoration projects, as well as many volunteers donating hands-on labor for these projects. NBU's major habitat improvement programs take areas of poor quality and restore them to usable land which benefits all types of wildlife, including man.

Reseeding

Range fires have devastated millions of acres of big game winter range and habitat over the years, significantly decreasing the animals' potential winter survival rates. Without the assistance of groups like NBU, reseeded efforts would not have been possible.

If these areas had not been reseeded with sagebrush and other natural grasses, a noxious weed known as the cheatgrass would have taken over almost immediately, choking out all other forms of vegetation. Cheatgrass has no nutritional value. Deer have been known to literally starve with a belly full of cheatgrass.

Timely donations from NBU and other organizations have aided in purchasing seed and private helicopter services to assist in the reseeded effort of critical range areas literally saving the lives of potentially thousands of animals.

Water Developments

Water is often the limiting factor in the expansion of wildlife populations. Nevada's climate ranges from arid in the south to semi-arid in the north, making access to a healthy water supply an even greater issue.

NBU is involved with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Fraternity for the Desert Bighorn's water projects in all facets of planning, design, funding, and construction of water development projects. This allows for expansion of habitable ranges for wildlife, including Desert Bighorn Sheep, California Bighorn Sheep, Antelope, Elk, Sage Grouse, Chukar, and a multitude of non-game species.

Hundreds of these water development systems known as "Guzzlers" have been completed in Nevada over the past couple of years with great success. As a consequence, big game animals are not the only animals benefiting from these water developments. As anticipated, everything from Coyotes to Eagles to Bats have been sighted drinking from these guzzlers.

Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project

Nevada Bighorns Unlimited is involved in a successful collaborative partnership with the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition. The objective of the Coalition is to develop a consensus on the overall health of the Great Basin in eastern Nevada, and to implement actions to restore the health of the land. The Coalition is a partner with BLM's Ely Field Office as they implement the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project. The goal of this 10-million acre project is to restore and maintain the biological and ecological conditions of the Great Basin landscape in eastern Nevada through collaborative efforts.

In order to maximize restoration capability and success while achieving mutual goals, approximately 75 independent, non-governmental partners including agricultural, conservation, cultural, environmental, universities, private enterprise and other interests have joined the Coalition to help the BLM implement decisions on public land. The centerpiece of the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project is the partnership between the Coalition and the BLM. Nevada Bighorns Unlimited has supported this project from its inception. Other partners include Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, University of Nevada at Reno, Nevada Cattlemen's Association, Nevada Woolgrowers Association, Society for Range Management, Red Rock Audubon Society, White Pine, Lincoln and Nye Counties, and others.

Public involvement is expanded through landscape teams. These teams, comprised of agency staff and scientists from outside the BLM, will identify landscape goals, conduct landscape/watershed assessments, support NEPA compliance and plan amendments, develop site-specific objectives designed to meet established goals, develop and recommend actions designed to meet objectives, and monitor and evaluate implemented decisions. All of which will assist the Agency in its decisionmaking regarding appropriate restoration activities. All stakeholders, including academic researchers, educators, Native Americans, interest groups members, and interested citizens will have input and be a part of the process.

Congress could help by adequately funding this project to facilitate the Coalition's involvement in restoring public lands in eastern Nevada. Second, Congress could adequately fund the Coalition's partnership activities to facilitate involvement by Coalition members and the public.

Nevada Bighorns Unlimited has joined the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition to help the BLM restore healthy ecosystems in the Great Basin. Doing so will improve wildlife habitat, watershed stability, riparian areas, species diversity and composition, and Native American values.

Legislative Efforts

Over the past several years, NBU has become more involved in legislative activities in order to further support the future of Nevada's wildlife. NBU was instrumental in organizing a sportsmen conservationist group, known as The Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife, which provides a unified voice for sportsmen in the legislature.

The Coalition represents all types of sportsmen, including big game, waterfowl, upland game, fishing, trapping, houndsmen, rod & gun clubs and general conservationists.

During legislative sessions, the Coalition allows rapid dissemination of information to each Coalition member group pertaining to relevant wildlife issues. Each group maintains its complete autonomy, but can join in with other groups on a statewide basis to provide real political clout. Through NBU's efforts, a number of important victories have been won in the Legislature.

With continued support by groups like NBU and effective habitat management, the trend in Nevada today is a return to the grasslands of our past. This trend will assist in the State's augmentation efforts of big game animals across the State significantly.

EDUCATION PROJECTS

NBU faces the challenge of education head-on determined to win. Popular sentiment over the last several decades has not supported the hunter. From prime-time media to our children's teachers, the true picture of hunters and their impact on the environment has been distorted.

NBU fully believes that without educating our youth with the facts and merits of hunting, sportsmanship, wildlife management and conservation, the results of our other endeavors will be of little or no benefit to the future of wildlife in our State.

To this end, there are several programs funded and supported by NBU that merit mention.

Jim Lathrop Memorial Scholarship Fund

This scholarship fund was created by NBU in honor of NBU's founder, the late Jim Lathrop. The fund represents a cooperative effort involving NBU, the Nevada Division of Wildlife and the University of Nevada. It was set up for post graduate study in the fields of biology and wildlife management and has been extended to include funding of summer internships for selected individuals majoring in wildlife management and has been extended to include funding of summer internships for selected individuals majoring in wildlife management. The objective of these studies will be further understanding and development of big game populations and habitat enhancement within our State.

Wild Outdoor World Magazine

Nevada Bighorns Unlimited has formed a partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Nevada Division of Wildlife to publish a wildlife magazine targeting 4th graders throughout Nevada. The magazine is published in full color five times annually and is distributed in elementary schools throughout the State. (A copy is attached for review.)

We are limited by budget constraints in reaching all fourth graders statewide, even though teachers and students enthusiastically request increased circulation.

RESEARCH

NBU-generated dollars have assisted in the funding of several important research programs conducted by several distinguished institutions such as the University of California at Davis, The Caine Veterinary, Teaching and Research Center in Idaho, and Washington State University.

The most recent research project is being conducted by Washington State University under the direction of Dr. William Foreyt. The most important element of this research program has been the establishment of evidence outlining the devastating consequences upon wild sheep herds caused by interaction between Bighorn Sheep and domestic sheep.

It is believed the main reason for Bighorn Sheep extinction throughout their original habitat is due to pneumonia contracted from a bacteria transmitted from domestic sheep herds.

NBU is a firm believer in the multiple use of public lands. They recognize the rights of domestic sheep operators to graze on these lands.

It is NBU's goal in funding this research to find the causes and cures for these transmitted diseases so that domestic and wild sheep can coexist.

Funding provided by Nevada Bighorns Unlimited to Dr. Foreyt and Dr. Ron Silflow has greatly assisted in their efforts to develop a laboratory test to determine the potency of the bacteria responsible for causing pneumonia in wild sheep.

This test serves as the tool for discriminating between potentially dangerous and relatively harmless isolates of the bacteria. The test can now be applied to practical issues of Bighorn Sheep management and health maintenance. These developments pioneered in the study of bacterial organisms in Bighorn and domestic species can be immediately applied to other wildlife species such as Deer, Elk and Dali sheep.

The information gained from NBU funded research is already having an impact on policymaking decisions regarding the shared land use of Bighorn and domestic sheep.

The research promises to contribute valuable information to facilitate management decisions regarding the transplanted Bighorn Sheep populations. NBU expects management applications facilitated by this research tool will have a positive impact on the maintenance of healthy, flourishing wild sheep populations in future years, and assist in understanding and management of wildlife everywhere.

NBU's commitment to promote and enhance increasing populations of indigenous wildlife in Nevada will continue to be extended to those dedicated to increasing the knowledge and understanding of our wildlife.

PROJECT FUNDING NEEDS

Nevada Bighorns Unlimited receives funding requests for a wide variety of wildlife, habitat, education, and research projects from a wide variety of schools, universities, State and Federal agencies. We are continually involved in programs such as:

- Big game, fishery, and game bird reintroductions;
- Green stripping (protection) of existing habitat from wildlife;
- Noxious weed control;
- Habitat Restoration;
- Wild Horse Management (see attachment)
- Water Development in Desert Habitats;
- Education; and
- Research.

Many badly needed projects cannot be implemented primarily due to funding short falls. NBU would like to fund a full-time water development crew, big game transport units, aerial wildlife survey equipment, and GPS telemetry tracking systems for the Nevada Division of Wildlife, reseeding, green stripping, and water development projects for the Bureau of Land Management, as well as Sage Grouse research programs with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Additional and a continual source of funding would greatly assist in our goals—the enhancement of wildlife resources throughout the State.

ATTACHMENT

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT UPDATE.—MARCH 2000

SUBJECT: WILD HORSE AND BURRO MANAGEMENT

The Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, as amended, provides for the protection and management of wild horses and burros (WH&B) to assure a thriving, natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on the range. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for implementing this Act by assuring healthy, viable WH&B populations within herd management areas (HMAs) at appropriate management levels (AML), and through appropriate placement of excess animals.

ISSUE SUMMARY

“Restoration of Threatened Watersheds” is a vital initiative within the Presidents fiscal year 2001 budget for the BLM and includes a comprehensive strategy for achieving AML on all HMAs. This strategy is necessary to counter one of the major threats to watershed health and dependent resources that excess WH&B popu-

lations pose to the land's carrying capacity. Currently WH&B populations are 85 percent over the BLM's estimated AML. Attaining AML on HMAs is the most critical need of the WH&B program. With current funding, the BLM is unable to remove sufficient animals to make progress toward AML or even to maintain a static population.

BACKGROUND

Wild horse and burro populations are exceeding AML on 159 of 192 HMAs. Populations are increasing at approximately 18 to 20 percent per year. For all HMAs the BLM estimates the overall established FAIL at 27,379 animals. At the end of fiscal year 2000, the BLM projects the population will be 50,631 animals, or 23,252 animals over AML. WH&B populations are exceeding the capability of the land to support them. If the BLM does not reduce populations, irreparable damage will occur to riparian zones and watersheds, water quality, threatened and endangered species such as the Lahontan cutthroat trout and Desert tortoise, and special status species such as Sage grouse. In addition, degradation of native vegetation communities will accelerate the establishment and spread of invasive weeds. If the BLM does not manage WH&B herds within AML, the agency could face numerous lawsuits from a variety of interest groups, resulting in court management of natural resources.

The fiscal year 2001 budget proposal of \$29,447,000, which includes a \$9 million increase to base funding and 172 FTE (+5 FTE), will allow the BLM to implement a strategy to bring all HMAs to AML in 4 years. The strategy will require the BLM to remove 12,855 animals from HMAs (an increase of 6,855 animals) in the first year, dropping to 4,500 animals by the sixth year and remaining at that level. The strategy will allow the BLM to improve its marketing of animals and events; will allow the agency to implement techniques to enhance the adoption prospects of older animals; and will enable the agency to provide long-term care and holding (pasturing) for the oldest, least adoptable animals. With consistent funding through fiscal year 2005, the BLM can achieve AML on all HMAs. In fiscal year 2006 and beyond, the BLM will need to gather and adopt only 4,500 animals annually, which is below the current and anticipated long-term adoption demand. The savings from reduced gathers, holding and adoption costs will greatly offset the increased cost of long-term care and holding. As the number of animals in long-term caring and holding declines through natural attrition and adoptions, the BLM will realize lower costs for maintaining "a thriving, natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on the range".

CONTACT

Lee Delaney, BLM Group Manager for Wild Horse and Burro Management (202) 452-7744.

Bud Cribley, BLM Senior Wild Horse and Burro Specialist (202) 452-5073.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT—NATIONAL WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM THE "RESTORATION OF THREATENED WATERSHEDS" INITIATIVE—LIVING LEGENDS IN BALANCE WITH THE LAND.

A STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE HEALTHY RANGELANDS AND VIABLE HERDS—A FISCAL YEAR 2001 PRESIDENTIAL BUDGET INITIATIVE

One of the major threat to watershed health is an overabundance of wild horses and burros on rangelands. During fiscal year 1999 BLM completed a comprehensive program capability and population modeling analysis. This analysis revealed that at current funding capability and adoption demand, WH&B populations will increase at a rate faster than our ability to remove excess animals.

POPULATION STATUS

Projected populations for fiscal year 2001 is 50,631 animals;

- 23,252 animals over Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 27,379;
- 159 of 192 Herd Management Areas (HMA) are over AML;
- Reproducing at 18-20 percent per year; 9,475 animals in the year 2000.

IMPACTS OF CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Overpopulation leads to increased negative impacts on watershed health, habitat of the herds, and dependent resources and uses, specifically:

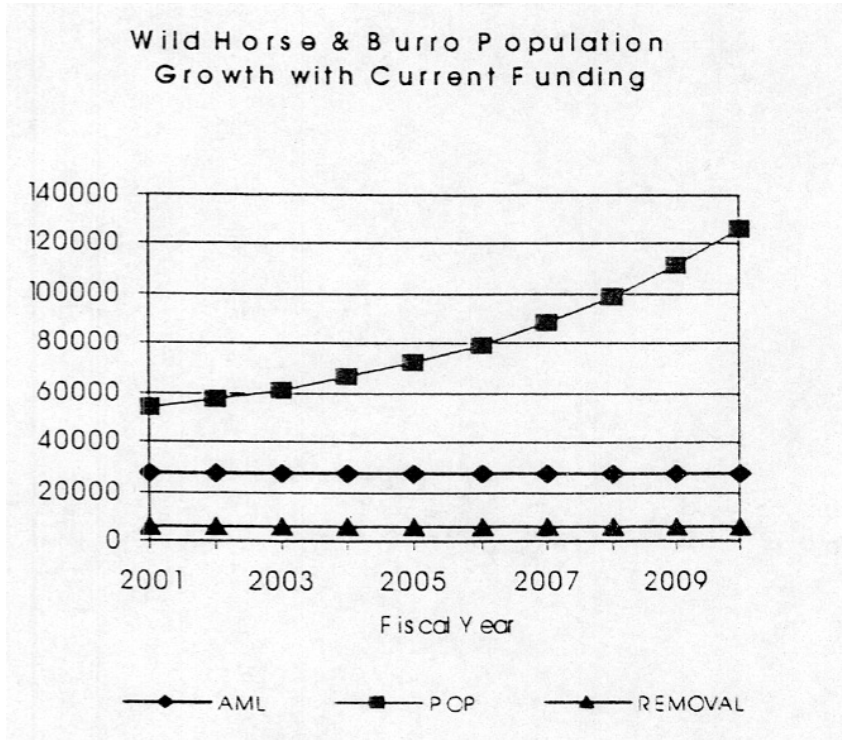
- Severely damages upland vegetation and riparian areas critical to wild horse and burro herd health;
- Significantly diminishes water quality and watershed stability;
- Contributes to potential listing of threatened species (i.e. sage grouse) and jeopardizes the recovery of listed species, (i.e. Lahontan Cutthroat Trout);
- Increases the threat to other Special Status Species;
- Threatens wildlife viability by creating unhealthy competition for limited forage;
- Increases the likelihood of exotic invasive weed species becoming established;
- Magnifies existing conflicts with public land users (recreation, cultural, livestock); potentially displacing these uses and leading to litigation by such groups;
- Litigation could cause the Courts to redirect BLM's budget to resolve the issue.

ATTAINING AML ON ALL OF BLM'S HMA'S IS THE MOST CRITICAL NEED OF THE PROGRAM

Faced with this critical need and acting on recommendations from the WH&B Advisory Board, BLM modeled several management scenarios for achieving AML to determine shortest timeframes and highest cost effectiveness.

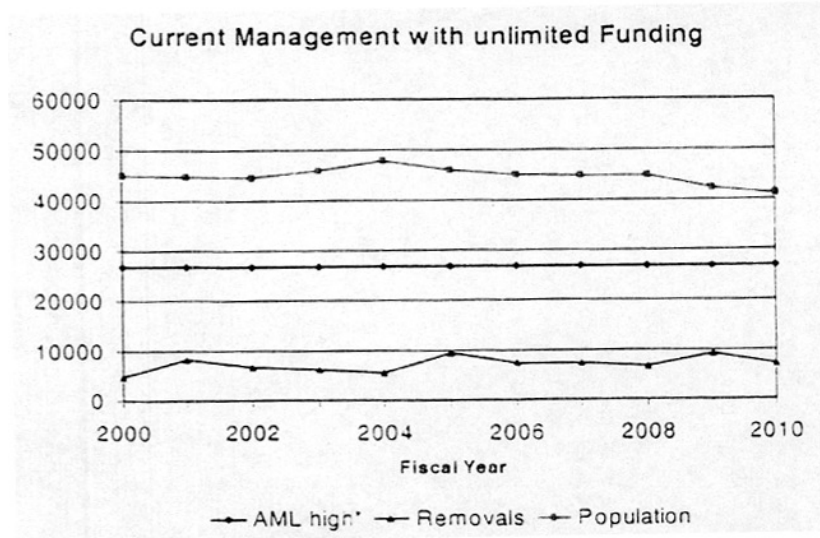
Current Management

- Current funding is only adequate to remove and adopt 6,000 animals/year.
- Current funding does not allow for achieving AML or maintaining a static population.
- Projected populations in 2010 will be 126,380 animals on the range.
 - 99,001 animals over AML (462 percent over AML).
- The Adopt-A-Horse or Burro Program is the only accepted tool for dealing with excess animals.
- Adopting only wild horses 5 years and younger to maximize adoptions.
- Fertility control research is ongoing, however, no widespread usage for several years.



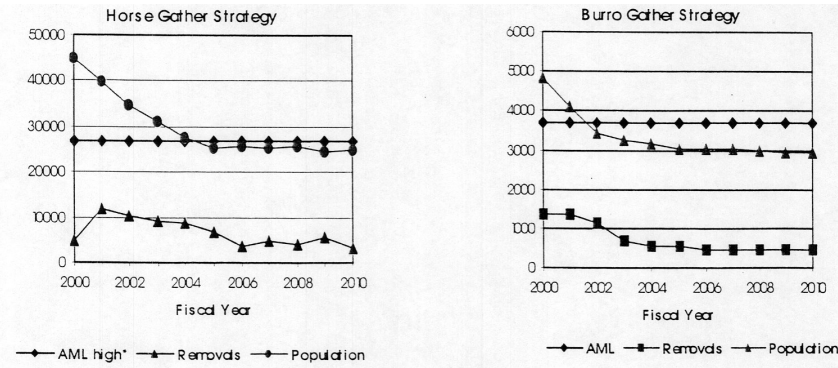
Current Management Without Budget Limitations

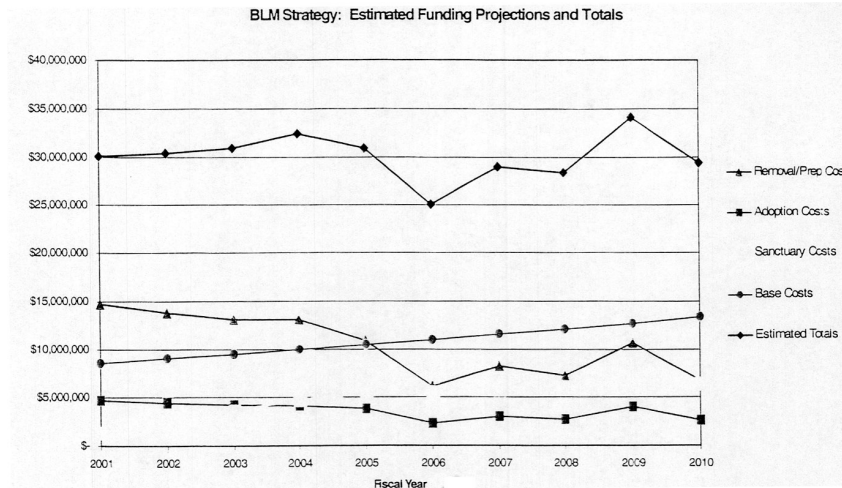
BLM's current management (only wild horses 5 years and younger removed) without budget limitations does not achieve AML within a 10-year planning period.



BLM's STRATEGY

- Establishes a 4-year gather schedule for all HMAs beginning in fiscal year 2001.
- Reduce all HMA's to AML by removing with no age restrictions.
- Remove 12,855 animals in first year dropping to 4,500 by sixth year and remaining at that level.
- Requires a funding increase of \$9,000,000/year over current funding levels sustained through 2005.
- Enhance marketing of animals and adoption events.
- Train and geld wild horses otherwise difficult to adopt.
- Place unadaptable wild horses in long term holding (pasturing).

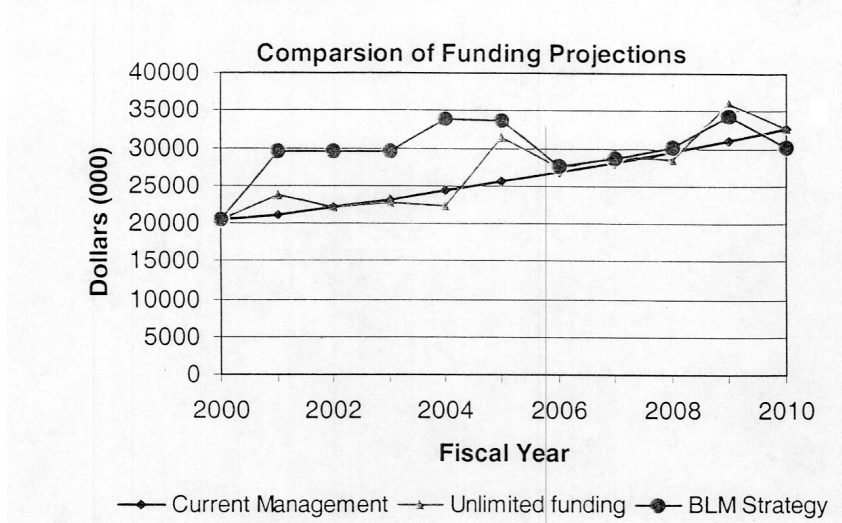


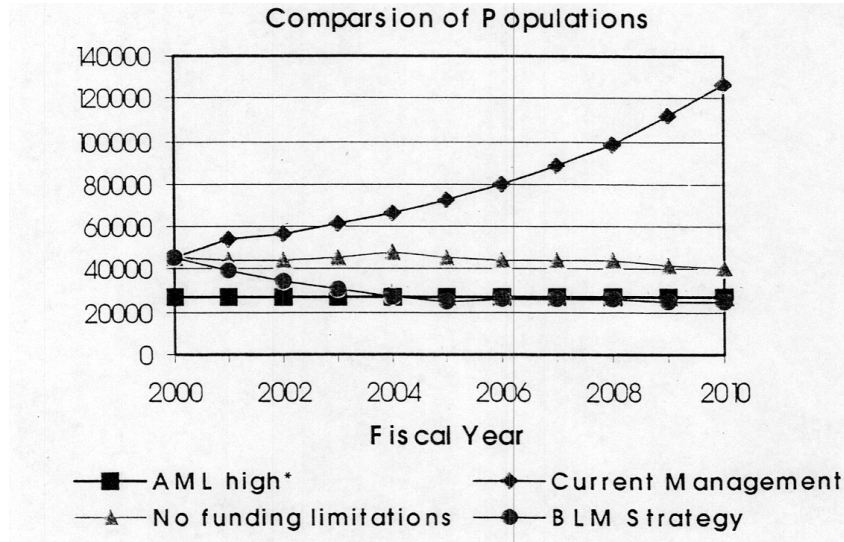


BENEFITS

- Significantly contributes to the improvement of watershed health.
- Contributes to healthy, viable herds on all HMAs.
- Balances wild horse and burro populations with the capability of the land.
- Achieves AML in the shortest amount of time (4 years).
- Removing fewer animals annually:
 - Equals fewer animals in the adoption system;
 - Reduces stress on the animals left on the range.
- Decreased removal numbers equals significant cost savings and is the most cost effective over a 10-year period.
 - Reduces resource conflicts and thus potential litigation.
 - Reaching AML on all HMAs in 4 years allows for achieving “a thriving natural ecological balance” as required by the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act thus achieving: Living Legends in Balance with the Land.

Comparison of Options considered:





NEVADA WILDLIFE FEDERATION, INC.,
Reno, NV, April 10, 2001.

Hon. BOB SMITH, *Chairman,*
Hon. HARRY REID,
Committee on Environment and Public Works,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Dear SENATORS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Good afternoon and I wish to welcome you to Nevada on behalf of the Nevada Wildlife Federation (NvWF). I am Elsie Dupree, president of this organization.

NvWF was founded over 50 years ago by dedicated sportsmen that wanted to work on wildlife and wildlife habitat. Our membership consists of affiliate clubs and members. We have nearly 10,000 members.

The public domain lands in Nevada are habitat to many unique plants and animals. We are very concerned about this habitat. I asked for comments from affiliates and members for this testimony.

The general concern of all was the lack of funding to take care of the land. Nevada could use funding to help with long term projects to include:

Flood protection along our few rivers to protect habitat. Water quality needs improvement as we remove mercury, arsenic and other pollutants.

Water issues are a concern on the Stillwater Refuge, and Lahontan Valley wetlands here in the North. There is a severe shortage of water to maintain the wetlands. Invasions of noxious weeds in the riparian areas are stealing valuable water. In the southern part of the State, the Multi Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) will need funding to continue the goals of recovery efforts for fish species such as the bonytail chub and the razorback sucker. (see attachment one)

Walker Lake is an unique situation where the water coming to the lake is allocated at 130 percent for irrigation. There is a need for money for willing sellers to give water rights to the lake. Right now our Division of Wildlife owns a small amount of water rights that in dry years does not even reach the lake. This desert lake will die and the waters where migratory birds rest will not support them with food.

The Great Basin Initiative is a good start for noxious weed control. There need to be many educational seminars to educate the public on the weeds and how to control them. Our State needs to be fully involved in this problem with funding.

Several affiliates commented on the lack of funding for control of the wild horses in our State. The herd populations are high and there is little to no money to bring the herds to the set limits of control. We see damage to the habitat from overgrazing in wildlife areas. Now that we are in a dry year there is even more damage. We do not have the man power to do the monitoring and repair work. Some of the range workers in our Federal agencies cover more land in a year then what is in some

States in the East. It is impossible to do a good job with this much territory. Our Federal agencies need budgets increased to meet this problem. State agencies need funding for wildlife habitat improvements. There needs to be grants for conservation groups to help out on projects.

Other affiliates are concerned with the lack of funding to do the proper studies. We need BEST SCIENCE to take the lead in wildlife issues. There needs to be monitoring, research, and studies to show that the program will work or has worked. Often funds dry up before this is done.

Education is vital. The NvWF is using time and money to work with our North West Sage Grouse Working Group for this purpose. We have members from all walks of life making a slide show and pamphlet to educate the public and the agriculture industry on just what a sage grouse needs to survive and stop the declining trends. Our Governor has a statewide committee working on Conservation Plans to help stop the decline of sage grouse in our State and we fully support his efforts. (See attachment two.)

Other educational programs by NvWF include our annual wildlife poster contest for school age children and Backyard Habitats for those wanting to help provide habitat for wildlife close to home. Our affiliate, the Truckee River Flyfishers started a trout in the class room program where grade school children raise trout fry in the class room and then put them in the river. Ann Privrasky got this program established so well that our Division of Wildlife is going to try to get this program in every grade school in the State.

Education can be as simple as having our city, county, State and Federal offices remember we live in a desert State and they should landscape their areas with desert landscaping instead of green lawns and other high water usage plants. This would educate the public also. In summary, our State needs guaranteed funding so we can do long term planning and repair the damage to the land.

The Pittman-Robertson and Dingell Johnson Funds were so successful in funding State agencies to administrate wildlife programs that some States and other local governments have never developed other funding sources to manage wildlife programs. A guaranteed CARA type fund would greatly enhance these programs. (see attachment three)

I thank you for your time and the chance to share some information about Nevada. I will gladly try to answer any questions you may have.

ELSIE DUPREE,
President.

ATTACHMENT 1

Subject: CARA Info
Date: Wed. 04 Apr 2001 23:18:58-0400
From: Myra Wilensky <Wilensky@nwf.org>
To: <dpree@pyramid.net>

Hi Elsie,

First, the wildlife title should include a specific amount. The proposed \$350 million in H.R. 701 for State fish and wildlife agencies is a must.

A river and So. NV example you could use in your written testimony is the following:

The second title could be used to provide funding for species recovery activities under habitat conservation plans such as the Lower CO Multi Species Conservation Plan. The MSCP is making a commitment to continue the recovery efforts of threatened and endangered species above the efforts mandated by the Endangered Species Act. While the States and private entities are providing a substantial amount of funding, funding under a species recovery agreement could further the goals of recovery efforts for such fish species as the bonytail chub, humpback chub, and the razorback sucker.

Funding under this title could be used to encourage species restoration efforts while eradicating invasive species. The Lower CO MSCP is encouraging the restoration of native species such as the cottonwood willow while controlling such invasive species as tamarisk and salt cedar.

I hope this is helpful. Good luck!

MYRA.

ATTACHMENT 2

Subject: Sage Grouse Article

Date: Thu. 5 Apr 2001 11:00:08-0700
 From: Julie Dudley
 To: The Duprees

NEVADA WILDLIFE FEDERATION WORKS ON SAGE GROUSE BOOKLET & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CAMPAIGN

(By Julie Dudley, Chair of Nevada Wildlife Federation's Endangered Species Alliance)

BACKGROUND

Sage grouse are the "Ambassadors" of the sagebrush ecosystem, spanning parts of California, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada and Utah. According to a Jan. 29, 2001 article in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, sage grouse once numbered 2 million, but today they are estimated at a mere "140,000 birds." During the past few years, scientists have noted a 30 percent decline in sage grouse numbers, and in some places, 80 percent.

There are many reasons for the decline in sage grouse numbers and no easy solution.

Because sage grouse are suffering from extensive loss of sagebrush habitat, the drop in their population is more than worrisome. To many it indicates the beginning of the collapse of the entire sagebrush ecosystem.

In early 2000, the Nevada Wildlife Federation (NvWF) formed the Northwest Nevada Sage Grouse Working Group (NWNVSGWG) to begin discussing the sage grouse problem at monthly meetings in Reno and Carson City. This group's mission is to advocate improvement of habitat for sage grouse and other wildlife dependent on the sagebrush ecosystem in Northwest Nevada.

Former Nevada Wildlife Federation President, Gale Dupree, is chair of the NWNVSGWG and I am the vice chair. The NWNVSGWG has three goals:

1. To educate ourselves about a healthy sagebrush ecosystem and sage grouse habitat requirements.
2. To insist State and Federal agencies immediately develop and implement sage grouse conservation plans.
3. To build public involvement and support among Nevadans about the urgency of improving the sagebrush ecosystem and sage grouse habitat requirements, including operating a Web site with information on sage grouse conservation needs.

Based on scientific research conducted throughout the West, there are many reasons for the loss of sagebrush, and thus the decline in sage grouse. These reasons are one or a combination of the following:

- Invasion of annual, non-native plant species like cheatgrass;
- Increased fire frequency followed by weed invasions;
- Brush control followed by seeding of non-native grass species;
- Invasion of pinyon and juniper woodlands into shrub communities;
- Conversion to agriculture;
- Various livestock management practices;
- Habitat fragmentation due to power lines, fences, roads and urbanization.

Because of the sage grouse's potential listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), comparisons are being drawn between the grouse and the spotted owl controversy ("The Next Spotted Owl," Audubon, Nov/Dec 2000) which divided communities in the Pacific Northwest. If the sage grouse is listed under the ESA, much larger areas of the West will be affected than those in the spotted owl controversy. Many Nevadans would like to take positive, preliminary steps to avoid the heated polarization displayed during the spotted owl controversy.

The NNNVSGWG is seeking funding to accomplish one such project by answering Nevada private landowners' question: "what can we do to restore sage grouse populations?" The Sage Grouse Booklet and Public Involvement Campaign will provide the answers to this question by giving private landowners information about seasonal sage grouse habitats and ways to make conditions more conducive for the birds.

Based on shared information at NWNVSGWG meetings, the Nevada Farm Bureau and Society for Range Management are helping make this project a success. Conservation groups are also well-represented at the working group meetings with members of the Sierra Club, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, American Lands Alliance and Lahontan Audubon Society attending, plus many State and Federal agency contacts.

The Sage Grouse Booklet and Public Involvement Campaign aims to print an informational booklet based on science distributed to Nevada private landowners rec-

ommending steps to enhance sage grouse habitat. Second-tier audiences include the media, State and Federal agency scientists, county commissioners, State and Federal legislators and the general public.

Accompanying the printing and distribution of the booklet is a public involvement campaign that includes press releases, media relations, ad placements, flyers and a special sage grouse Web page added to the current NVWF site at www.nvwf.org.

If you would like more information about this project, or would like to attend a NWNVSGWG meeting, please call Julie Dudley, at (775) 323-4500 or Gale Dupree at (775) 885-0405.

ATTACHMENT 3

Subject: Testimony thoughts

Date: Thu, 05 Apr 2001 18:35:43-0700

From: Leontine Nappe

To: Elsie Dupree

Elsie, I have been all day on a Black Rock NCA RAC meeting and will be going out shortly for the evening.

So . . . here are my thoughts.

The Pittman-Robertson and Dingell Johnson funds were so successful in funding State agencies to administer wildlife programs that States and local governments have never developed other funding sources to manage wildlife programs. Without PR and DJ funds, the States, at this time, would have no wildlife program. With all the other commitments, States have made, they are unable or unwilling to step up to the plate now to fund wildlife programs. The PR and DJ funds primarily administer the agencies, some research and contribute to purchase of key lands and water.

Because of Federal lands in the West, lakes, reservoirs, and streams, DJ and PR funds have not had to stretch to purchase habitat. Many wildlife management areas and National Wildlife Refuges were created to exist on drain or excess water from irrigation projects. As we know now, "waste" or drain water is a disappearing commodity and too late wildlife agencies both State and Federal must purchase water to support these lands.

Belatedly, some States have through bonding issues started to invest in land and water purchases or capitol improvements. The State of Nevada has had parks and wildlife bonds in 1973 and 1990; a bill has been introduced for another park and wildlife bond. Some counties have also invested in open space through bonds. Washoe County recently passed a \$38,000,000 bond; however, parks for recreational development were the primary expenditures.

The success of Pittman-Robertson and Dingell Johnson is also a shortcoming. Although States are responsible for managing all wildlife within the States, wildlife agencies spend virtually all of their funds managing game species. Nongame species management is limited.

Federal lands once so vacant and available for wildlife are now becoming filled with receptionists, utility and transportation corridors, energy development, and other uses. Growing populations will require Federal lands and tap agricultural water on both private and Federal lands.

If we are to sustain wildlife populations, then States must expand their responsibilities to managing wildlife species. All species of wildlife dependent on wetland and riparian areas will require more knowledge of their habitats and distribution, more education of the public and more law enforcement. State wildlife agencies are well equipped to handle these new tasks. Many, like the Division of Wildlife, have with minimal State funding provided limited nongame programs since 1970.

Some of the species which could benefit from these funds are: the long billed curlew which is declining. Development and maintenance of habitat for sandhill cranes. Creation and preservation of wetlands for both waterfowl and shorebirds.

The Spring Mountains in southern Nevada host endemic mammals whose distribution and habitat needs must be incorporated into an area increasingly popular for recreation.

The Division of Wildlife could build Nature trails, and interpretive centers, in existing areas and provide additional education programs for schools. The Division of Wildlife could work more closely with local government and Federal agencies, for instances, to identify critical habitat for nongame species and to develop programs to minimize impact on the habitat.

While nongame is important in this legislation, I would like to point out that in the sage grouse potential listing has made us aware that ecosystem protection is important. CARA funds could be blended with game funds to build comprehensive

programs. The bear in Nevada is not a game species but is a species which is requiring more time and commitment because people are encroaching on its habitat.

TINA NAPPE.

STATEMENT OF TERRY R. CRAWFORTH, ADMINISTRATOR, NEVADA
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Good afternoon. I am Terry Crawford, Administrator of the Nevada Division of Wildlife. I would like to thank the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works for conducting these investigations into wildlife conservation needs and inviting me to share our perspectives on wildlife conservation and management in Nevada.

As the seventh largest State in land mass, Nevada's extensive wildlands support a broad and diverse assemblage of plant and animal communities. This diversity of wildlife and habitats is amplified by the geographic and climatic character of the Great Basin in the north and Mohave Desert in the South. Also, because Nevada is the driest State, water is even more critical to wildlife distribution and abundance. A wide variety of topographic features from low river valleys to 13,000 foot alpine peaks offers habitat to Nevada's wildlife, resulting in an astounding ecological diversity.

Managing this broadly diverse assemblage of animals and plants presents many unique and formidable challenges. While some species such as mule deer and rainbow trout have broad distributions across Nevada, other species such as the Palmers chipmunk and the Amargosa toad exist only in very localized landscapes. All are worthy of attention, though, and therein lies the management challenge to the Division. As the smallest wildlife agency in the Nation, the Nevada Division of Wildlife is constantly faced with the difficult task of allocating limited resources to the preservation, protection, management and restoration of *all* elements of this vast and diverse wildlife resource.

The prioritization of management activities by the Division has historically been largely a function of economics. The wildlife receiving primary emphasis in Division management programs are those species for which there is a consistent and adequate funding source. For years hunters and fishermen who support the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sportfish Restoration Act by paying excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment have paid for the majority of wildlife management programs in Nevada. In addition, the matching funds required to capture these trust funds are provided by these same sportsmen in the form of license and tag fees. Hence, the wildlife species that have for years received priority funding are those that are hunted and fished.

These extensive management programs funded by Nevada's sportsmen can boast significant success in the conservation of wildlife in the State. The big game management program in Nevada is second to none. Trapping and transplant projects for species such as bighorn sheep, antelope and elk have resulted in record animal numbers and distributions throughout the State. The variety and abundance of fish species available to anglers is impressive. Upland game species including exotics such as the chukar partridge are pervasive. Nevada is renowned in the West as a high quality hunting and fishing destination. It is obvious that consistently funded, collaborative programs can represent Nevada wildlife well.

It is important to note, however, that though management efforts have been concentrated on sport wildlife, those species typically not hunted or fished have not been summarily ignored. Good habitat management fostered by successful game and sport fish programs ultimately benefits all wildlife species. In addition, consistent, albeit small, non-sportsman funded annual appropriations are dedicated to non-hunted or fished species.

But we have been aware for some time that those species which do not receive program emphasis because they lack dedicated funding deserve more than they are getting from project "spin-off" or residual funding. While our history of successful management of game wildlife and protection of habitat provides a good model for the conservation of Nevada's "other wildlife," these species that are not sought for sport or recreational purposes deserve more. Reliance on reactionary and often "last ditch" tools such as the Endangered Species Act is not productive. We see a profound need to be proactive in the management of all Nevada wildlife.

What is essential for Nevada's wildlife diversity is sustained funding to apply to already proven management techniques. Some recent congressional appropriations will help when they eventually reach us, but we need long-term legislation that provides an uninterrupted flow of funds for Nevada's "other wildlife". We came close to this goal with the near passage of title III of the Conservation and Reinvestment

Act in the 106th Congress, which would have provided consistent and sustained funding for non game wildlife conservation. Nevada's "other wildlife" deserves this degree of attention.

Senator Reid, I have always appreciated your dedication to the wildlife resources of our beautiful State. I applaud your present efforts to make a consistent and adequate funding source for Nevada's "other wildlife" a reality. I pledge my agency's support in this endeavor. Securing a reliable funding source for Nevada's "other wildlife," when combined with Pittman-Robertson and Wallop-Breaux funds that exist for game wildlife and sport fish would put a third leg on the conservation stool and better balance Nevada's wildlife conservation effort.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF GARY GRAHAM, DIRECTOR, WILDLIFE DIVISION, TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE, AUSTIN, TEXAS

BACKGROUND

Texas is possibly the most unique State in the continental United States. We have more species and habitats than all other States, except perhaps California. However, unlike California, 97 percent of the land and habitat in Texas is privately owned, which provides unique conservation opportunities and challenges. The diversity of people and perspectives in Texas is also impressive and healthy. Texas Parks and Wildlife serves this diversity by promoting the conservation of all wildlife, including over 1,000 species of nongame and rare wildlife, as well providing conservation assistance to people interested in these species. The funding provided by the Title III of CARA would go directly to TPW, enhancing its ability to manage all of the State's wildlife.

For Texas, the stakes are huge. By *keeping common species common, adding species to lists of endangered species will be uncommon*. This is particularly important in Texas with so many species and so much private land. Wildlife-watching, hunting, fishing and other wildlife-related recreation in Texas generated about \$6.7 billion in direct spending in 1996. Healthy landscapes and wildlife populations are vital to both of these important issues.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Texas has several well-established programs targeting nongame wildlife, including one of the largest wildlife diversity programs in the country, as well as an extensive resource protection division that has responsibility for monitoring and protecting wildlife habitat in Texas, particularly aquatic habitats.

Overall, Texas Parks and Wildlife spends over \$10 million a year in these areas, out of a total agency budget of \$250 million. In addition, we spend about \$21 million on game and general wildlife management, \$20 million on fisheries management, nearly \$40 million on law enforcement and about \$8 million on communication and education activities.

Over the past 10 years, Texas Parks and Wildlife has made major additions to its private lands assistance program (technical guidance staff) as well as creating and staffing new urban and nature tourism programs. But with a State as big as Texas, even this isn't enough. Even \$10 million a year doesn't go far in a State with over 267,000 square miles of land, 80,000 miles of rivers and streams, 254 counties, 20 million citizens and 1,200 species of vertebrate wildlife.

Still, we have seen some tremendous success stories, such as our Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), the first program in the country that offers financial assistance to landowners who wish to manage for rare and endangered species and habitats. The LIP program stimulates conservation by recognizing and rewarding landowners who are willing to manage their land for rare species, using a voluntary, incentive-based approach. While many landowners are already willing to manage their land for wildlife without financial reward, there are times when a little advice and startup funding is all it takes. Over the past 4 years, Texas Parks and Wildlife has spent nearly \$1 million on 45 projects affecting 46,000 acres of habitat, matched by \$425,000 in outside funds.

Concurrently, we have increased our technical guidance program to 20 biologists. These biologists assist landowners in developing LIP projects, as well as providing general wildlife management advice. In their work with landowners, our technical guidance biologists have developed wildlife management plans for 12.6 million acres, promoting a habitat-focused conservation approach that works for wildlife as well as for private landowners.

We also aggressively use nature tourism and Watchable-wildlife projects as incentives for conservation through economic development. We have seen this approach work particularly well along the Gulf Coast and in South Texas, which now have a national reputation as bird-watching destinations. Each April, birdwatchers in Texas can see over 300 of the 600 species of birds that occur in the State. Texas Parks and Wildlife has been a leader in working with landowners and communities, showing them that the bird habitat they provide can return them direct economic benefits. And once people accept that nature tourism is part of their business, it's easy to convince them that they need to maintain the habitat their business depends upon.

We have already established and marketed the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, producing maps that identify over 300 premiere bird-watching sites on the Gulf Coast in cooperation with over 100 communities, as well as cost-sharing site improvements with those communities. And we are following up with plans for the Great Texas Wildlife Trail in central Texas and the Panhandle.

We have taken this nature tourism model a step further by proposing a new complex of visitor and education centers, called the World Birding Center, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The Lower Rio Grande Valley is one of the most economically challenged areas in the country—4 of the counties there are among the poorest counties in the United States. But bird watching has become a big business in the Valley, generating nearly \$100 million a year in tourism income. The World Birding Center will serve as a focus for this new industry, and is expected to generate an additional \$10–\$15 million a year in new income to the region.

In addition, Texas Parks and Wildlife has had tremendous success developing cooperative agreements with private landowners, precluding the need to list a number of species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. By working with landowners and other States, we have developed conservation agreements for swift fox, lesser prairie chickens, Arkansas River shiners and Devils River minnows, restoring and securing the status of these rare species in Texas.

One of our greatest challenges in conservation agreements concerns the black-tailed prairie dog—a conservation issue that, if not handled well, could lead to one of the biggest endangered species train-wrecks in history. We are working now to develop a conservation agreement for black-tailed prairie dogs, developing the plan in cooperation with landowners and agricultural interests, as well as conservationists. And the lesson we're learning is that we need to address more than prairie dog conservation—we have to address the habitat and the suite of species associated with it. It's no coincidence that prairie dogs, swift fox, and lesser prairie chickens are all species of concern, because prairies are a habitat of concern.

Through these various programs, by making a small investment now, we have avoided the much larger costs associated with endangered species issues—not only the direct costs that relate to regulating, protecting and restoring the species themselves, but also the much larger social costs that citizens bear when endangered species are on their property.

The conservation incentives are there, but landowners, local governments and communities need advice and assistance to put conservation measures into practice. State wildlife agencies are in the best position to offer this assistance.

THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION

As these examples all show, conservation in Texas depends upon our close-working relationship with landowners and communities. In Texas, we know what needs done, how to do it, and who to work with—but we simply lack the resources to affect the hundreds of species that are in need of conservation, as well as assuring the future of species that are currently common. All the conservation we've accomplished to date has been the “easy stuff”, involving a few hundred wildlife species whose needs are known and which readily respond to the habitat changes humans impose on the landscape. But now we're faced with dealing with another 1,000 species that aren't so easy. The conservation challenge is just beginning.

And many of these species are not unique to Texas, their conservation depends on States working together to affect habitat throughout a species range. Interstate conservation requires funding beyond what States can access themselves. And it requires long-term, predictable funding.

For example, over the past 20 years, Texas Parks and Wildlife has reintroduced over 7,000 eastern wild turkeys throughout the State, as well as relocated thousands of native Rio-Grande wild turkeys. Thanks to these restocking efforts, and combined with the habitat management assistance we provide landowners, the wild turkey is back in Texas. We now have turkeys throughout the State, occupying all of the available habitat and supporting over 3 million hunter-days each year. Our

turkey restoration efforts worked because we had a reliable funding source over an extended period of time, plus the technical assistance to provide to landowners.

So that is the obstacle we're facing, obtaining the long-term financial resources needed to expand our conservation partnerships with citizens and communities. In Texas, we estimate that need to be at least \$30 million a year. This would allow us to expand our efforts in:

1. *Landowner Incentives*.—Estimated need: \$6 million/year.
 - Habitat cost-share program and
 - Landowner incentive program.
2. *Technical Assistance*.—Estimated need: \$4 million/year.
 - Expand technical guidance program and
 - Urban wildlife program
3. *Increasing Recreational Opportunity*.—Estimated need: \$3 million/year.
 - Nature trails
 - River access
 - Watchable-wildlife projects
 - Nature tourism cost-share grants
4. *Habitat Conservation and Restoration*.—Estimated need: \$4 million/year.
 - Conservation planning for wildlife
 - Habitat restoration projects
 - Re-establish populations of native species
 - Research and surveys
5. *Conservation Outreach*.—Estimated need: \$5 million/year.
 - Demonstration habitats
 - Outreach programs
 - Urban wildlife program
 - Visitor and education centers (World Birding Center, River Center)
 - Volunteer programs (Texas Master Naturalist, Texas Nature Trackers)
 - Conservation information, literature, video
 - Schoolyard habitats Project WILD
6. *Wildlife Research*.—Estimated need: \$1 million/year.
7. *Resource Protection and Monitoring*.—Estimated need: \$2 million/year.
8. *Land Conservation (conservation leases, easements, acquisition)*.—Estimated need: \$5 million/year.

Total Estimated Need.—\$30 million/year.

I have a handout that is an excerpt of a document we gave to congressional representatives last year, focusing on wildlife conservation.

With that, I would be happy to answer any questions.

ATTACHMENT

TITLE III.—WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION FUND

THE BENEFITS OF CARA IN TEXAS

Texas is the most unique State in the United States. We have more species and habitats than all other States except perhaps California. However, unlike California, 97 percent of the land and habitats in Texas is privately-owned, which provides unique conservation opportunities and challenges. The diversity of people and perspectives in Texas is also impressive and healthy. Texas Parks and Wildlife serves this diversity by promoting the conservation of all wildlife, including over 1,000 species of nongame and rare wildlife, as well providing conservation assistance to people interested in these species. The funding provided by the Title III of CARA would go directly to TPW, enhancing it's ability to manage all of the State's wildlife.

For Texas, the stakes are huge. *By keeping common species common, adding species to lists of endangered species will be uncommon.* This is particularly important in Texas with so many species and so much private land. Wildlife-watching, hunting, fishing and other wildlife-related recreation in Texas generated about \$6.7 billion in direct spending in 1996. Healthy landscapes and wildlife populations are vital to both of these important issues.

For wildlife in Texas, CARA could support Texas Parks and Wildlife's conservation and outreach efforts in several areas:

Landowner Incentives.—Estimated need: \$6 million/year. TPW has a Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) which provides financial assistance to landowners interested in helping rare species. CARA funds would be used to expand the LIP and create new cost-share and incentive programs for landowners, focusing conservation efforts on the private lands that host more of the State's wildlife.

CARA funds would also allow the Department to expand the number and variety of workshops and held days it offers: teaching landowners by example.

Technical Assistance.—Estimated need: \$4 million year. TPW currently employs technical guidance biologists who work closely with private landowners, advising and assisting them with wildlife management plans that affect nearly 10 million acres of wildlife habitat per year. CARA funding would allow the Department to double its current effort.

Increasing Recreational Opportunity.—Estimated need: \$3 million/year. TPW has identified over 300 wildlife-viewing sites as part of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. This nature tourism effort has directly benefited the local communities and landowners. CARA funds would be used to expand this kind of effort to the other four tourism regions of the State.

Currently TPW has 50 Wildlife Management Areas that are not all accessible to the public. With CARA, the Department could create a number of nature trails, with interpretive signage, to better serve the needs of today's outdoor enthusiast.

CARA funding would allow the expansion of river access and restoration programs initiated to work with private landowners to develop controlled access programs that address needs of both users and river landowners.

With CARA, staff would be able to fund a number of watchable-wildlife projects with individual landowners as well as communities. More work would be done with private landowners to develop controlled access programs that address needs of users and landowners.

Habitat Conservation and Restoration.—Estimated need: \$4 million/year. As wildlife habitat is converted to human habitat, Texas is losing a number of unique ecosystems. With the additional funding provided by CARA, Texas could begin creating strategies for conserving these unique habitats. Management efforts for aquatic and marine ecosystems would also be increased, focusing on riparian, wetland, riverine and estuarine ecosystems.

Texas has been a leader in conservation planning for wildlife (particularly birds and bats). CARA funds would speed the development of these plans on the status and management needs for species and allow the Department to develop similar plans and recommendations for reptiles amphibians lisp mammals and other important wildlife groups.

With CARA funding, TPW would also work to develop the capacity to establish populations of native aquatics to replace exotics in lakes and rivers. Programs would include habitat restoration, aquatic vegetation nurseries associated with hatcheries, development of educational outreach to engage population that impact or are impacted by displacement of native with exotic vegetation.

Conservation Outreach.—Estimated need: \$5 million/year. TPW has a network of urban biologists who work with residents to increase awareness of wildlife in urban areas. With CARA, TPW would be able to expand this effort into other metropolitan areas.

CARA funding would allow the development of demonstration habitats that combine many components of "an ecosystem" such as wildlife, wetlands, riverine habitats on small land areas near or in urban areas.

TPW has created a number of volunteer and . . . citizen-involvement programs and nationally acclaimed outreach programs, such as Project WILD and Outdoor Kids, involving children and school teachers in conservation education. With CARA these projects would be expanded across the State, involving citizens directly in conservation.

Texas has a network of nature centers and TPW has created a number of visitor and education centers—the Freshwater Fisheries Center, Sea Center, and the World Birding Center. CARA funds would be used to expand the efforts of existing education and nature centers. as well as fund the creation of new education centers as needed.

Communication with the large urban populations is essential to the success of all of these conservation areas, particularly outreach. TPW is well known for its outstanding media efforts, including video, radio and printed publications. CARA funds would allow TPW to expand these efforts, as well as provide them at less cost to the public.

Wildlife Research.—Estimated need: \$1 million Year. Good wildlife management depends on good science. Each year, TPW funds 40–60 wildlife research projects. gathering data on the management needs of native species. However, with 10 ecoregions, dozens of habitats and almost 1,000 different species of wildlife, this research only scratches the surface of what the Department needs to know concerning native plant and wildlife species. CARA funds would be used to increase research efforts statewide.

Resource Protection and Monitoring.—Estimated need: \$2 million/year. TPW is responsible for monitoring and correcting land and water problems that may affect native fish and wildlife. With the creation of the State Water Plan, these efforts have grown.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT V. ABBEY, STATE DIRECTOR, NEVADA BUREAU OF
LAND MANAGEMENT

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today to discuss wildlife conservation efforts in Nevada.

The State of Nevada encompasses a large portion of the Great Basin and Upper Colorado River Plateau of the United States. These lands were not divided into farms, primarily due to their lack of water. Towns remain widely separated. Curiously, Nevada is said to be the most urbanized State in our Nation. Those urban areas are concentrated, however, as is evident in Las Vegas and along the Eastern Sierra Front.

As a result, Nevada has a wealth of open land, largely in Federal ownership. These lands hold a wide and wonderful variety of wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for management of about 48 million acres of this land and the wildlife habitat on it.

Management of these lands is not an easy task. It requires coordination and partnership with local and State conservation groups and initiatives in order to be successful. The BLM in Nevada is fortunate to have many fine partners in this work, including the State of Nevada and its Division of Wildlife, as well as a number of private organizations, such as Nevada Bighorns Unlimited and the Nevada Wildlife Federation.

Recently, efforts to address some critical wildlife concerns in Nevada have been highly visible. These include projects to recover the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, management guidelines for sage grouse and the sagebrush ecosystems that are their habitat, and the desert tortoise.

These species serve as a red flag for the overall health of our environment. The sage grouse is suffering from a decline in habitat, a concern to the BLM and many of the organizations and entities here today. Under the leadership of Terry Crawforth, Administrator for the Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, in cooperation with the BLM, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others, have initiated a major effort to develop conservation plans for sage grouse in eight western States. In Nevada, Governor Guinn has taken a personal role in establishing a State sage grouse committee to develop strategies to conserve this game species. The BLM, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, as well as State, local and tribal representatives, have formed an interagency sagebrush habitat steering committee to coordinate habitat assessment, mapping, evaluation, and restoration for species at risk within sagebrush ecosystems in 10 States, and to coordinate ecosystem and species conservation planning in order to provide consistency across agencies in addressing sagebrush ecosystem-related issues.

Through the Great Basin Restoration Initiative, the BLM in Nevada is cooperating with State and local agencies to stop the spread of invasive weeds and other vegetation and to restore appropriate plant communities on the rangelands.

After major wildfires in 1999 and 2000, the demand for sagebrush seeds and the seeds of other native plant species has increased considerably in the Great Basin. Through issuance of permits for harvesting of sagebrush and other native species seeds, the BLM is tracking harvest activities to ensure that sufficient seed is available for rehabilitation efforts that are currently underway in the areas hardest hit by the wildfires. The BLM is working with the Plant Conservation Alliance, private seed growers, State and Federal nurseries and seed storage facilities to increase significantly the supply of native seeds available for rehabilitation and restoration work while reducing the cost of producing native seed in large quantities.

The BLM's Ely Field Office has taken a leadership role under the auspices of the Great Basin Restoration Initiative to restore and maintain the biological conditions of the Great Basin landscape in eastern Nevada through partnerships with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Nevada Division of Wildlife and dozens of other groups. Approximately 10 million acres of public land are in the project area, including 4 million acres of pinyon juniper woodlands, 2 million acres of pinyon juniper/sagebrush, 2.5 million acres of sagebrush, 1.5 million acres of valley bottoms and mixed forest conifer, 158 miles of stream riparian habitat, and 7,800 acres of meadows, springs, seeps and wetlands.

BLM field offices in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah have continued reintroduction and habitat improvement programs for bighorn sheep populations. Nevada contains some of the premier bighorn sheep habitats in the United States. Approximately 2.5 million acres of BLM-managed lands in Nevada provide habitat for 3 subspecies of bighorn sheep: the California, Rocky Mountain and Desert bighorns. Cooperative efforts with the Nevada Division of Wildlife and partners such as Nevada Bighorns Unlimited have successfully restored bighorns on many historic habitats throughout the State. We estimate that there are an additional 1 million acres of suitable but unoccupied bighorn sheep habitat on BLM-managed land in the State.

Federal, State and private partnerships have substantially enhanced successful wildlife habitat management on BLM-managed land. The BLM works closely with a variety of groups to restore habitats for native wildlife species on BLM-managed lands. Over the past 10 years, the BLM, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nevada Division of Wildlife, Trout Unlimited and local ranchers and sportsmen have made substantial investments to restore Lahontan cutthroat trout to 128 miles of the Marys River system, a premier trout stream in northeastern Nevada. The BLM's Challenge Cost Share program, established by Congress in 1985, has matched millions of dollars of private contributions with Federal appropriations through successful partnership efforts that have delivered conservation and restoration projects throughout the West.

The Outside Las Vegas Foundation, a new Federal/private partnership in Clark County, is restoring native plant communities in the Mojave Desert, including removal of the invasive tamarisk from riparian areas and replanting native willows and grasses to benefit desert tortoise, desert fish species and a wide range of native birds, mammals, and amphibians.

Following the disastrous, widespread wildland fires of 1999, the BLM extensively examined the effects of fire on habitat and ecosystem processes. We found that a fire cycle had developed, referred to in recent science reports as the "cheatgrass-wildfire cycle." This problem is acute in Nevada, where the cycle of fire disturbance has spurred the invasive cheat grass to alter range and wildlife habitats. Cheat grass has been on our landscape for many years, quietly spreading its water-stealing roots to ever increasing areas.

Cheatgrass sprouts quickly as winter moisture arrives on burned or disturbed lands. Its root mass quickly draws up all available moisture, denying it to sagebrush seed. Left unmanaged, sagebrush benchlands instead become fields of cheat grass. These fields dry out in the summer sun, and lay in wait for summer lightning.

There was a time when people thought that getting rid of sagebrush was a good thing. However, we now know that sagebrush is vital to the health of Great Basin wildlands. Sagebrush provides cover for sage grouse, mice and other rodents, smaller songbirds, ground squirrels—over 170 species which are inhabitants of the open land. It provides shelter from the summer sun and from raptors overhead. In winter, dry cheatgrass is buried under snow. Sagebrush rises above the snow, providing forage for deer, antelope, and sage grouse.

We look forward to working with our partners here in Nevada to address the cheat grass problem, along with other efforts at wildlife habitat and species restoration in a manner that balances the interests of stakeholders and addresses wildlife and habitat needs. This effort is massive, across the millions of acres of the Great Basin. Change will require labor intensive effort and significant amounts of native seed. Each landscape will call for its own prescription.

In some areas, we may need to plant sagebrush seedlings and sow native seed by hand. The entire spectrum of plant and landscape management must be brought into play if we are to begin a true Great Basin restoration program.

This concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that members of the committee may have.

STATEMENT OF HON. A. BRIAN WALLACE, CHAIRMAN, WASHOE TRIBE OF NEVADA AND CALIFORNIA

Senator Reid, thank you for your continued interest in the equitable distribution of Federal funding for wildlife conservation efforts, and for the opportunity to present the views of the Washoe Tribe and of Indian country generally on your proposed CARA legislation. I also want to thank you again for your on-going efforts to give the Washoe Tribe access to their ancestral homeland at Lake Tahoe.

Senator, as you well know, CARA was severely diluted last year into a "CARA Lite" that funded fewer activities with fewer dollars over less time. No stakeholder was more adversely affected by this dilution than Indian tribes, who lost every sin-

gle provision that had benefited them in the original legislation. I applaud your leadership in the effort to breathe new life into CARA.

Your proposed legislation deals with two of what are currently nine Titles in the House version of CARA. I will restrict most of my remarks to these two titles, though I will, at the end of my remarks, touch briefly on two other CARA Titles of import to Indian country.

Senator Reid, like States, Indian tribes have governmental responsibility for the conservation of fish and wildlife resources, and the regulation of hunting and fishing and gathering, on their lands. Native Americans who fish, hunt, and gather on Indian lands pay excise taxes on ammunition, fishing gear, guns, and boat fuel, just like other Americans. It is critical that any wildlife conservation Title of CARA, or a standalone bill, include a equitable distribution of Federal funds to Indian tribes for conservation and regulation, so that we can receive, and count on receiving, Federal moneys for these woefully underfunded areas for which States have been receiving money for many years.

WILDLIFE

Title Indian tribes play a unique and crucial role in four purposes identified under this title: (1) wildlife and habitat conservation; (2) development of comprehensive wildlife conservation and restoration plans; (3) cooperative planning and implementation of wildlife conservation plans; and (4) wildlife education and public involvement. Having lived in our homelands for thousands of years, Indian tribes have developed a unique understanding of the ecosystem and through our traditional and customary practices we have developed a traditional knowledge and science that enhances the scope of conventional science. Additionally, because tribal members have significantly more contact with the habitat and wildlife and because we rely upon the natural resources of our homelands, we are exposed to a greater degree of risk when the wildlife and habitat is impacted. An unhealthy ecosystem will directly impact the lives of Indian people.

Although there is little BIA funding and no EPA funding available for tribes to conserve and restore wildlife, the Washoe Tribe has pursued a commitment to habitat restoration and conservation, not just on tribal lands but within our entire ancestral homelands. On tribal lands we have used clean water funding to restore stream banks and improve wildlife and aquatic habitat along the riparian corridor of the Carson River. In addition, our conservation and restoration efforts have maintained a reach of Clear Creek that university students and local school groups visit to study. As part of our cooperative agreement with the U.S. Forest Service at Lake Tahoe the Washoe Tribe is preparing a wetlands conservation and restoration plan for the Meeks Creek meadow and the Taylor/Baldwin wetlands. The Tribe will implement the wetlands conservation and restoration plan in cooperation with the Forest Service. However, because of the lack of funding, these efforts are isolated and we are not able to achieve the full benefits of comprehensive habitat planning.

The Wildlife Conservation and Restoration title of the pending House legislation (H.R. 701) and last year's Senate bills (S. 2123 and S. 2567) clearly identifies the need for a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Plan, but the Washoe Tribe has no funding available for development of such a plan. While we have been able to implement and develop plans for isolated wetland areas through clean water funding, we have not been able to develop a comprehensive conservation and restoration plan or even collect data on wildlife populations. The need for such plans increases as commercial and residential development continues to creep in on tribal lands and the pressure on wildlife habitat increases. Furthermore, Tribal lands are often intermixed with lands under Federal and State jurisdiction, requiring a coordinated planning approach. In our case, the Washoe Tribe has jurisdiction over more than 60,000 acres of Indian allotment lands in the Pine Nut Mountains, which are located in a checkerboard pattern with BLM lands and private lands. Currently the BLM and State agencies are engaged in a planning process in for their portions of the Pine Nut Mountains, and the Tribe is a critical partner. However, the Tribe's efforts are clearly hampered by our lack of funding for wildlife and habitat planning. Similarly, conservation planning funds would enhance our efforts to work with our State and Federal partners on the conservation and restoration of habitats in the Lake Tahoe Basin and on along the Carson and Truckee Rivers.

The pending House legislation, H.R. 701, includes language that would provide Indian tribes with direct access to the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act funding. The allocation mechanism proposed in this year's House version of CARA, allocates up to 2.25 percent of total dollars to be divided among all 550 Indian tribes based on relative land area and population. The 2.25 percent is based in the acres of Indian trust land relative to total acreage in the United States (56,015,221 mil-

lion Indian trust acres divided by the 2,379,390,458 acres that comprise the entire United States). In fact, the 2.25 percent actually represents less than the full equitable share, for an example, the Washoe Tribe has done work on USES lands with the Forest Service to conserve and restore wetlands on lands at Lake Tahoe. Indian tribes will continue to work on conserving wildlife and critical ecosystems within ceded treaty lands and other ancestral homelands, which are no longer held in trust. Finally, it is important to note that current proposals of this nature do not reduce existing allocations to States and territories under the Dingell-Johnson or Pittman-Robertson Acts, but rather involve only new allocations never before raised and distributed.

The Senate CARA bills from last year omitted critical allocation to Indian tribes, and would have continued to exclude tribes from these funds, and I strongly urge you to use the language from Title III of this year's Senate legislation.

SENSITIVE, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES INCENTIVES TITLE

As to your proposals under the category of Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Species Incentives, we applaud your efforts to extend funding to conservation plans to preserve species that are not yet listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, but are species of concern. Hopefully, by focusing efforts on these species prior to their being listed we can avoid the need to list them. Additionally, we encourage you to move beyond the language as contained in CARA Title VII, and recognize the impacts of the conservation of these species on Indian tribes. Sensitive, threatened, and endangered species are a concern of Indian peoples everywhere, for they are a part of our cultural heritage and a consideration in our land management activities.

A classic example of this is the Lahontan cutthroat trout of the river basins of Nevada. Native and non-Native peoples alike share a desire for the recovery of these amazing fish. Habitat recovery efforts are underway by all stakeholders, and help from the Federal Government would be most welcome. Indian lands are integral to these efforts, and the inclusion of Indian tribes as potential recipients of Federal funds for the development of conservation plans and recovery agreements would be appropriate. The State-Federal-Tribal recovery LTC effort on the Truckee River is a specific example where the ability of Tribes to engage the other partners is limited by our lack of funding. Again, in order for Indian tribes to play our proper role in these conservation efforts, it is necessary that tribes have the ability to access these funds directly.

OTHER CARA PROVISIONS

I would like to briefly deviate from the two primary topics of your proposed legislation to talk about a couple of other aspects of the big CARA package that are important to tribes and that were stripped from last year's bill at the eleventh hour:

- The first is Title II, Land & Water Conservation Fund Revitalization, which would allocate Federal moneys from oil and gas revenues to various Federal agencies and State and tribal governments for the acquisition of land for conservation purposes. Tribes would be entitled to one State's worth of funding under current House bill language. This too was stripped from last year's "CARA Lite," and I encourage you to support the effort to include tribes in any Land and Water Conservation fund distribution in FY2002 and beyond. Although the Tribe has no funding for conservation land acquisition, the Washoe Tribe has been successfully partnered with Federal agencies and private parties to acquire sensitive environmental and cultural lands for conservation purposes. Indian tribes bring a unique element to the conservation effort, and with funding we will be able to achieve more win-win situations. Again, looking to the Pine Nut Mountains, to improve land management, Federal and State agencies and governments support Washoe Tribal acquisition of private land holdings which are surrounded by Indian allotment lands, and the private land owner is interested in selling the land to the Tribe, but there are no land acquisition funds available.

- The final provision of note is the National Park and Indian Lands Restoration, currently Title VI of last year's Senate bill. The Title would provide up to \$25 million annually for a coordinated program on Indian lands to restore degraded lands, protect resources that are threatened with degradation, and protect public health and safety.

The \$25 million allocated to tribes under this title is modest when you consider that it must be spread among more than 550 tribal governments and 56 million acres of Indian trust land. However, it does represent a critically important source of funds, and I strongly urge you to ensure that the Senate version of CARA Title

VI or its equivalent is kept intact in any CARA legislation that emerges from the 107th Congress.

Senator Reid, once again I thank you for your leadership on this and so many other issues important to the Washoe Tribe and Indian people across the United States.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT D. WILLIAMS, SUPERVISOR, NEVADA FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Thank you for the opportunity to present information on species conservation activities that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) is conducting in Nevada.

You requested that I comment on current conservation initiatives, what conservation plans have been successful, what initiatives have been planned but not implemented, what are the obstacles to engaging people in conservation efforts, and what can we do to encourage more participation in conservation planning.

It is crucial that the Service work cooperatively with our State, Tribal, and private partners on species conservation. Recognizing this the Service has developed and is implementing many approaches which enable cooperative conservation efforts. These approaches are flexible so as to encourage locally-based solutions to complex and sometimes contentious conservation challenges. The initiatives and agreements I will discuss are a result of these approaches. We need to continue seeking, and indeed expand opportunities for local communities and private landowners to share in the development of conservation solutions.

Let me start by providing you with a review of current activities in Nevada. Last year we and our partners signed two major conservation efforts, the Clark County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and the Amargosa Toad Conservation Agreement.

The Clark County MSHCP covers 78 species, only two of which are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This plan will allow for a permit to be issued under Section 10 of the ESA for an incidental take of the listed species due to development in southern Nevada. The MSHCP covers over 145,000 acres that are subject to development over the next 30 years.

The goal of the MSHCP is to conserve healthy ecosystems and the species that are supported by them, while allowing for development. A \$550 per acre fee is paid to the County with the issuance of development permits. The proceeds from the fees fund desert tortoise conservation and recovery activities, as well as other actions needed to protect the 78 species covered under the Plan. The plan provides certainty for Clark County developers while ensuring conservation measures that will help recover the listed species and prevent the other species from being listed.

The establishment of the MSHCP was successful because of the cooperation between Clark County, State and Federal agencies, the University of Nevada, Reno, environmental groups, recreational interests, and resource users.

The second major conservation action that was solidified last year was a conservation agreement for the Amargosa Toad that resides in the Oasis Valley. This agreement brought together Nye County, the city of Beatty, private landowners, the State of Nevada, several Federal agencies, environmental groups and The Nature Conservancy. The premise of the agreement provides the Nature Conservancy the ability to purchase valuable habitat for the toad from a private landowner. On October 14, 2000 the agreement was signed with the parties, and they are currently working together to manage the land and other resources for the protection of the toad and the other species that depend on the riparian wetland habitat.

Both of these plans depend upon private and public dollars for their success. Private funding supports mitigation efforts and conservation actions to protect the species listed in the agreements.

We are currently working on several other conservation actions. I will list them here and then discuss some of them in greater detail. Current initiatives include the following:

- Tahoe Yellow Cress Conservation Agreement;
- Coyote Spring Valley Habitat Conservation Plan;
- Lahontan cutthroat trout restoration, Truckee River;
- Sage Grouse Conservation Agreement;
- Spotted Frog Conservation Agreement;
- Lincoln County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan; and
- Nye County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

TAHOE YELLOW CRESS CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

A planning team has been formed to develop a conservation agreement for the Tahoe yellow cress, a plant that is found on the shores of Lake Tahoe. Some of the habitat occurs on private lands, so involving associations like the Lake Tahoe Lakefront Homeowners Association will be a key element to the success of finalizing such an agreement. One important measure to protect the Tahoe yellow cress is simply to build fences around the plant. Should a private landowner agree to fence an area to protect habitat, funds may be available through Candidate Conservation Agreement Grants for the costs of the fencing or other conservation activities the landowner may desire to make.

COYOTE SPRINGS VALLEY HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

We are also working closely with a developer in Southern Nevada on the Coyote Springs Valley Habitat Conservation Plan. Coyote Springs Valley is critical habitat for the desert tortoise. Coyote Springs Limited Liability Corporation has indicated a willingness to work, by signing a Memorandum of Agreement with the Service and BLM, to create a plan encompassing more than 40,000 acres of private and leased lands within the valley, that would conserve desert tortoise habitat while providing opportunities for residential and commercial development. This plan is envisioned to also address the long-term water needs of the developers, as well as the listed fishes in the nearby Muddy River, which could be affected by long-term groundwater use. This type of pro-active, early involvement with landowners is acknowledged by the Service as one of the most important objectives in our efforts to reduce conflicts and foster general acceptance of species conservation.

LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT TROUT RESTORATION, TRUCKEE RIVER

In our efforts to recover Nevada's State fish, the Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT), we have received funding to conduct habitat restoration work on non-Federal lands along the Truckee and Walker Rivers. We are working with the Nature Conservancy to conduct habitat restoration work on the Truckee River that will benefit the river, the riparian corridor, and all the fishes that live in the river. Our next step will be to develop Safe Harbor Agreements with private landowners to compliment our LCT recovery efforts.

SAGE GROUSE CONSERVATION AGREEMENT

We are working with the State on the conservation of the sage grouse. We appreciate the State of Nevada's leadership by heading up this coordination effort, with the establishment of the Governor's Sage Grouse Working Group. The working group is bringing together private landowners, counties, environmental groups and Federal agencies to develop a conservation agreement.

For private landowners with suitable sage grouse habitat, and who are willing to protect it, there are a variety of funding options and incentives from the Service. Congress authorized funding beginning in Fiscal Year 1999 for the ESA Landowner Incentive Program to provide financial assistance and incentives to private property owners to conserve listed, proposed, and candidate species. I will discuss these and other funding sources below.

As you are aware, under Section 6 of the ESA, funds are provided to the States for species and habitat recovery actions on non-Federal lands.

In Fiscal Year 2001, Congress appropriated 105 million for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund. The Service will use these dollars for Safe Harbor Grants, Habitat Conservation Planning Grants, Species Recovery Land Acquisition Grants and Candidate Conservation Agreement Grants. Each of these grants programs requires States to provide at least 25 percent of the project costs in order to receive funds from these grants. Additionally, some of the funds will be used for Habitat Conservation Land Acquisition by States.

The Nevada Office of the Service recently worked with a number of non-Federal partners on proposals for grants under the Service's Partners in Wildlife Program. Of the six proposals submitted, five grants were awarded through the Partners Program. Last fiscal year, we worked with the Nevada Division of Wildlife to develop and submit applications for Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grants, which led the Service to award \$176,000 to the State. These funds benefit 11 projects in Nevada.

In addition to the Section 6 moneys, Congress provided \$50 million in the fiscal year 2001 Commerce-Justice-State appropriations to be allocated among the States for wildlife conservation, with the objective of fulfilling unmet needs of wildlife within the States. One of the primary means of accomplishing this goal is to encourage

cooperative planning by State governments, the Federal Government, and other interested parties. Another \$50 million for competitive wildlife grants to the States was provided in the Interior appropriations.

You asked for examples of successful conservation agreements in Nevada. The Amargosa Toad Conservation Agreement is such an example. It came together after 6 years of meeting with local officials and private landowners to ensure they were comfortable with the direction of the program.

This agreement gave Nye County an opportunity to play a leading role in species conservation and is a good example to demonstrate that local communities are willing, and able, to be leaders on species conservation.

The Amargosa Toad's total range is limited to a 12-mile stretch of the Amargosa River in Nye County's Oasis Valley. The alarm over the toad's status was triggered by a 1994 survey that found only 30 adult toads, resulting in a petition to list the toad as an endangered species. Recent surveys conducted in cooperation with private landowners, however, lead scientists to estimate that as many as 16,000 adult Amargosa toads may live in the Oasis Valley.

The Nature Conservancy purchased the Torrance Ranch, an area that provides habitat for the Amargosa Toad, the Oasis Valley speckled dace, the Oasis Valley spring snail, and 10 species of birds, including yellow warbler, blue grosbeak, yellow-billed cuckoo, and Bullock's oriole. The Nature Conservancy's purchase of the Torrance Ranch was made possible with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and private donations.

The partners will undertake the restoration and monitoring of the ranch with financial support provided by the Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and The Nature Conservancy and the University of Nevada, Reno's Biological Resources Research Center. The land acquisition, combined with other actions specified in the agreement, will secure the toad's future.

One of the obstacles that has impeded local people from getting involved in conservation planning in Nevada in the past has been a lack of personal communication between employees of government agencies and landowners. Landowners may not know what incentives and options are available to them for funding conservation measures. We in the Fish and Wildlife Service's Nevada Fish & Wildlife Office are committed to doing a better job of reaching out and communicating with landowners and informing them on how they can play a bigger role in species conservation.

One way we are working to support local conservation efforts is by dedicating a staff person in our office to identify what grants and incentives are available for conservation, and to reach out to State and county agencies and private landowners to inform them of how they can take advantage of these opportunities.

There may be other obstacles, but the Service is working to identify and resolve them so that States, counties and private property owners can and will take more active roles in species conservation.

There are numerous threats in Nevada that impact ecosystems and cause species to decline, including: urban growth; invasion of non-native grasses (such as cheat grass and white top); fire damage; conversion of habitat to agricultural lands; and over-grazing. Involving more people in conservation and protection of public and non-Federal lands is crucial to preserving the health of the land and maintaining the biological diversity of Nevada.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and welcome any questions you may have.

STATEMENT OF DENNIS D. MURPHY, PH.D., RESEARCH PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO, NV

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you initiatives to bring better conservation of wildlife, fish, and non-game species to Nevada and the West.

Many of those concerned with Nevada's natural heritage have come to recognize that the critical environmental legislation of the 1970's—including the Clean Water Act, the National Forest Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, among others—has the potential of becoming a collection of unfunded mandates unless the Federal Government can deliver support for much needed management efforts. Funding for endangered species in particular has been woefully inadequate. As more species have been listed and the need for conservation responses grow in turn, appropriations have limped along. In the middle of 1990's, the United States spent more money on military bands than on species at risk. During the same period more money was spent on Domino's Pizza deliveries inside the Beltway than on imperiled species programs nationwide. The message is straightforward. The Federal Government must support programs that are necessary to conserve listed species, and must

aggressively pursue prelisting agreements and efforts to conserve species before they become listed.

Despite a starvation budget for species protection, conservation successes in Nevada have been many. The threatened desert tortoise survives across much of the southern State despite explosive land development and severe drought. Ash Meadows, described by Harvard University's E.O. Wilson as a sacred American landmark, "the equivalent of Independence Hall or Gettysburg," now has protection and work moves forward in earnest to conserve the many imperiled species that reside there and to control invasive, weedy species that threaten their habitat. The Spring Mountains Natural Recreation Area harbors more endemic species than any comparable location in the country and nearly all seem to be doing well despite rapidly increasing recreational visits.

But many challenges still face our land and resource managers. The sage grouse and its habitats have precipitously declined across much of the north of the State. No fewer than 14 imperiled butterfly subspecies are known from just a few dozen wetland acres across the dry middle of Nevada; each one at more risk of disappearance than any of the currently listed butterfly species found elsewhere in the western States. Once the most abundant amphibian in the State, the northern leopard frog now exists in just three of the more than one hundred sites from which it was historically recorded on museum specimens. Our most widespread frog may be just a few years away from disappearing from Nevada.

What these species have in common beyond their imperilment is that they live on a shared landscape—on both lands public and private. They live on public lands with a very long history of resource use and private stewardship. One conservation reality is apparent; that is, that saving species and the habitats that support them is a shared responsibility and will demand in coming years unprecedented cooperation. That cooperation must include Federal land and resource managers, State fish and wildlife staff, private stakeholders, and scientists. Recognizing our long history of landscape mismanagement and the twin threats from wildfire and invasive plant species, we have a great opportunity to fail the sage grouse. Certainly money alone cannot save the grouse. Federal and State managers must coordinate to find a common ground between the prohibitive policy that comes with listings under the Federal Endangered Species Act, and the State's management of fish and wildlife for consumption. Although we all agree that we must save sage grouse, we must ask whether we want to save them as part of our State's rich natural heritage, or so that we can have a season on them.

Any new funding must look to recipients beyond the Federal and State families. The shared landscape of the Intermountain West is not equally shared. Private interests have long controlled the most limiting resource—water. And, although the desert tortoise and sage grouse conservation challenges in this State are not solely driven by water allocation conflicts, most other species challenges are. It is not a coincidence that pupfish, frogs and toads, spring snails, and butterflies present land managers with the most immediate species challenges. The springs, seeps, and riparian areas that support those organisms have long been exploited and often overused. Where dollars can buy water for fish and wildlife, and where private interests have the desire to contribute to saving species our efforts will be rewarded. A Federal listing of the 14 butterflies I mentioned can be obviated with just a small redirection of waters and some three-strand fencing. It is that simple to save uniquely Nevada butterflies in Carson Valley, Big Smoky Valley, Railroad Valley, Steptoe Valley and points in between.

Finally, cooperation must extend to information gathering and sharing. We have to recognize we know woefully little about how our wildlands serve both common species and rare ones. Our best intended land management actions have often failed to achieve the desired results and frequently have had adverse effects on species of concern.

In Nevada we have come a long way toward a remedy. For 7 years the State has benefited from the Nevada Biodiversity Initiative, a cooperative effort joining Federal and State land and resource managers with university scientists to meet the goal of saving biodiversity in the face of human population growth and diverse land uses. In continuous communication, managers and scientists direct funds to species and habitats at greatest risk, work together to study biological systems that are poorly understood, and prioritize future conservation actions. The Biodiversity Initiative cannot take all the credit, but it is certainly not coincidence that although Nevada was fourth in the Nation in candidates species for Federal protection in 1993, not one new species was listed in the State until forces in Elko County caused the recent listing of the bull trout. Very unfortunately, the Nevada Biodiversity Initiative's funding has been removed by this administration from the Federal budget.

In Nevada we have a unique level of communication, cooperation, and collegiality on resource issues. That foundation has fostered the largest Habitat Conservation Plan in the country, 5½ million acres in Clark County, covering nearly 90 species of plants and animals, most not yet listed. In cooperation with California, Nevada is involved in one to the Nation's most visible and ambitious restoration efforts to save the fabled clarity of Lake Tahoe's waters. And, now we are embarking on perhaps the biggest conservation challenge yet—to sustain and restore the most Nevada of all habitats, the sagebrush ecosystem. Neglected, abused, and under incalculable threats, we frankly have no available technology to reverse the decline of our sagebrush. But Federal funding of a cooperative effort involving agencies and stakeholders, founded on reliable experimental science offers our best hope.

Senator Reid, I encourage you and the Committee on Environment and Public Works to fund cooperative efforts to bring more effective species conservation to our State and our neighbors.

STATEMENT OF KAREN R. DENIO, ACTING STATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEVADA
FARM SERVICE AGENCY, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Good afternoon. My name is Karen R. Denio and I am the Acting Nevada State Executive Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency. I appreciate the opportunity to present information on the conservation programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Nevada, the current levels of participation, and the rationale for producer participation.

FSA and NRCS have several conservation programs available to farmers and ranchers that provide incentives to encourage wildlife habitat. Among these programs is the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a voluntary program for agricultural landowners, offering wildlife and environmental benefits. Generally, offers for CRP contracts are competitively ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Environmental and cost data are collected for each of the EBI factors, including:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching;
- On-farm benefits of reduced erosion;
- Likely long-term benefits of reduced erosion;
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion;
- Benefits of enrollment in conservation priority areas where enrollment would contribute to the improvement of identified adverse water quality, wildlife habitat, or air quality; and
- Cost.

Under the CRP, producers receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible cropland and marginal pastureland that improves soil, water and wildlife resources. To be eligible to be enrolled in the CRP, cropland must also have been planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 2 of the 5 most recent crop years.

Conservation Reserve Program Continuous signups provide management flexibility to farmers and ranchers to implement certain high-priority conservation practices on eligible land. To encourage these high-priority practices, continuous signup participants do not go through the normal bidding process and can enroll non-competitively. One practice that offers significant wildlife benefits for farmers and ranchers is the riparian buffer practice. The land can be marginal pasture which is devoted to trees either planted or naturally regenerated. This provides cover for waterfowl and fish, along with other wildlife species.

A second wildlife enhancement practice is to develop or restore shallow water areas that provide a source of water for wildlife for the majority of the year. Other eligible acreage devoted to certain special conservation practices, such as filter strips, grassed waterways, shelter belts, living snow fences, contour grass strips, and salt tolerant vegetation may be enrolled at any time under the CRP continuous signup and is not subject to competitive bidding.

To be eligible under continuous signup, land must first meet the basic CRP eligibility requirements. In addition to the applicable CRP rental rates, payments up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent cover are provided to producers as cost-shares.

Up to \$350 million is available for additional incentives through fiscal year 2002 to encourage producers to participate in the CRP continuous signup, including:

- An up-front CRP Signing Incentive Payment (CAP-SIP) of \$100 to \$150 per acre.

- A Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) paid as a one-time rental payment, equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs to eligible participants enrolling certain practices, in addition to the standard 50 percent CRP cost-share rate.
- New rental rates that have been established for certain marginal pastureland to better reflect the value of such lands to farmers and ranchers.

Through mid-January 2001, over 1.4 million acres nationally have been enrolled under continuous signup practices. With these incentives, enrollment of filterstrips has increased over 600 percent compared to the historic program (signups 1-13)

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is used in many States as a vehicle for conservation cooperation. The two primary objectives of CREP are to coordinate Federal and non-Federal resources to address specific conservation objectives of a State and the Nation in a cost-effective manner, and to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, and erosion control related to agricultural use in specific geographic areas.

These unique State and Federal partnerships allow producers to receive incentive payments for installing specific conservation practices. Through the CREP, farmers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible land. Like continuous signup, CREP participants can enroll noncompetitively and receive the signing and Practice Incentive Payments.

Under CREP, Non-Federal partners provide a significant commitment, such as 20 percent, toward the overall cost of the program.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is carried out by NRCS. EQIP provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with Federal, State, and tribal environmental laws, and encourages environmental enhancement.

The purposes of EQIP are intended to be achieved through the implementation of a conservation plan which include structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible land. Five- to ten-year contracts are made with eligible producers. Cost-share payments may be made to implement one or more eligible structural or vegetative practices, such as animal waste management facilities, terraces, filter strips, tree planting, and permanent wildlife habitat. Incentive payments can be made to implement one or more land management practices, such as nutrient management, pest management, and grazing land management. By law, nationally, 50 percent of the funding available for the program is targeted at natural resource concerns relating to livestock production.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is another Federal wildlife conservation program administered by NRCS. WHIP is a voluntary program that provides cost-sharing of up to 75 percent for landowners to apply a variety of wildlife practices to develop habitat that will support upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fisheries, and other types of wildlife. The purpose of the program is to create high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of local, State and national significance.

Although these conservation programs are available, it is often a difficult decision for the producer on whether to participate. As energy, fertilizer, and transportation costs continue to escalate, it often puts the farmers and ranchers in the position of choosing between production-based practices to pay the bills and the conservation practices they wish to carry out.

Nevada's producer participation in CRP and the CRP continuous signup is limited, due to a variety of factors. One factor is the rental rate assigned to Nevada. Rental rates are based on the dryland agricultural value because ongoing irrigation is not required as a condition of enrollment. The dry land rate for enrolled land in Nevada is about \$17 per acre. Consistent with the statutory obligation prohibiting haying or grazing, a producer is required to keep cattle off the CRP land. Therefore, if a producer or a neighbor has cattle, it would be necessary to fence the CRP acreage.

Along with wildlife enhancement benefits, one of the purposes of CRP is to retire cropland in order to control erosion and improve water quality. Because much of Nevada's land base does not have a cropping history, due to its permanent grass cover or recently being put into production, it is basically ineligible to be enrolled in the CRP.

In Nevada, there are more EQIP requests for participation than available funding. For example, in 2000 there were 57 applications for a total of \$1,207,197 and, with the \$992,478 allocation, 43 projects were funded. The 2001 cycle is similar, in that 85 applications totaling \$1,769,873 have been received but, with \$1,151,300 allocated, a minimum of 44 projects will be funded.

Ultimately, participation in conservation programs benefits all of us, for even as we recognize our farmers and ranchers as the original conservationists, we each have a responsibility in preserving our land and natural resources for the following generations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you or the committee may have.

STATEMENT OF NICK PEARSON, STATE CONSERVATIONIST, NEVADA NATURAL
RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and provide an update on the Conservation Programs implemented by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (ARCS).

Mr. Chairman, as you know: farmers across America are faced with ever increasing pressures to maintain a productive and profitable business. Prices for many farm commodities have been the lowest in years and poor weather and growing conditions have been issues in many areas. Production costs have increased due to many factors including rising prices of nitrogen fertilizer and natural gas. In addition to these concerns, farmers face increasing pressures associated with natural resources. In recent years, concern regarding the health of our soils, water supply, and air have made farming and ranching increasingly difficult.

We know that farmers want to be good stewards of the land. They know that stewardship is in the best interests of long-term productivity of farming operations. And by and large, it is also important to farmers and ranchers who want to leave improved natural resources and a better environment for future generations. Our mission is to help farmers and ranchers meet the challenge of sustaining their natural resources while maintaining a productive and profitable business.

Today, I would like to highlight the many ways our conservation programs are making a difference around the countryside. Since the enactment of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (1996 Act), NRCS has experienced an increased national demand for participation in conservation programs. Farmers are utilizing these programs for a variety of benefits, including managing nutrients to save on input costs and protect water quality, restoring and protecting wetlands to create wildlife habitat, installing grassed waterways to control erosion, and designing grazing systems to increase forage production and manage invasive species.

Land users are using conservation to improve the productivity and sustainability of their operation, while also improving the asset value of their farm even during times of such dire economic strain. Our programs are voluntary. In response to new environmental regulations at many levels, we are helping farmers and ranchers meet some of the regulatory pressures they may face. In turn, the public benefits from conservation programs go well beyond the edge of the farm field. Mr. Chairman, I believe that the conservation programs Congress included in the 1996 Act, when coupled with our historic conservation programs, and the State and local delivery system are proving winners for the farmer, and the country as a whole.

CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The cornerstone of our conservation activities is the NRCS work force. Everything we accomplish is contingent upon the talents and technical skills of our field staff around the country. They are trained professionals with the technical tools, standards and specifications who get the job done. NRCS has operated since its creation through voluntary cooperative partnerships with individuals, State and local governments, and other Federal agencies and officials. That partnership may be even more important today if we are to meet the challenging conservation problems facing our Nation's farmers and ranchers.

While we are accomplishing much through the 1996 Act programs, it is important not to lose sight of the importance of our ongoing Conservation Technical Assistance program. For more than 60 years, the NRCS has used conservation technical assistance to build a foundation of trust with people who voluntarily conserve their natural resources. On average, the Agency's conservation assistance leverages more than \$1 in contributions for every Federal dollar invested. In States like Nevada, NRCS has placed special emphasis on the conservation of private grazing lands. As part of our efforts in this area, farmers and ranchers are benefiting from planned grazing systems, resulting in better productivity and improved natural resources. And through the National Cooperative Soil Survey, approximately, 22,000,000 acres have been mapped each year, so that natural resource decisions are based upon sound science and complete information about the natural resources.

NRCS accomplishes its goals by working with 3,000 local Conservation Districts that have been established by State law and with American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Governments. We also leverage our resources with the help of more than 348 Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils. State and local governments contribute substantially, with both people and funding to complement NRCS technical and financial assistance. Approximately 7,750 full-time-equivalent staff years are provided annually by NRCS partners and volunteers.

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP)

Next, I would like to highlight the accomplishments of the Wetlands Reserve Program. WRP preserves, protects, and restores valuable wetlands mainly on marginal agricultural lands where historic wetland functions and values have been either depleted or substantially diminished. Program delivery is designed to maximize wetland wildlife benefits, to provide for water quality and flood storage benefits, and to provide for general aesthetic and open space needs. Approximately 70 percent of the WRP project sites are within areas that are frequently subjected to flooding, reducing the severity of future flood events. The WRP is also making a substantial contribution to the restoration of the nation's migratory bird habitats, especially for waterfowl.

As directed in the 1996 Act, WRP enrollment is separated into three components (permanent easements, 30-year easements, and cost-share agreements). Pursuant to appropriations act directives, enrollment is being balanced to respond to the level of landowner interest in each of these three components.

The 1996 Act authorized a total cumulative enrollment of 975,000 acres in the program. At the conclusion of fiscal year 2000, the program had almost reached maximum enrollment. The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2001 provided an additional 100,000 acres, raising the cumulative enrollment cap to 1,075,000 acres and allowing 140,000 acres to enroll in fiscal year 2001.

From inception of the program in 1992 through 2000, interest in WRP has been exceptional. Historically, there have been more than five times as many acres offered than the program could enroll. One benefit of WRP is the amount of resources we have been able to leverage with other Federal programs as well as non-governmental organizations. It is clear from our experience to date, Mr. Chairman, that the WRP continues to be very popular with farmers and ranchers and is a program that clearly has strong support around the countryside.

WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM (WHIP)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program provides up to 75 percent cost-share for implementing wildlife habitat practices to develop upland wildlife habitat, wetland wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species habitat as well as aquatic habitat. The WHIP also helps landowners best meet their own needs while supporting wildlife habitat development, and to develop new partnerships with State wildlife agencies, nongovernmental agencies and others.

The program was initially funded at a total of \$50 million in the 1996 Act, to be spent over a number of years. As a result of strong interest, those funds were exhausted at the end of fiscal year 1999, at which time 1.4 million acres were enrolled in 8,600 long-term wildlife habitat development agreements. For fiscal year 2001, \$12.5 million will be provided for WHIP from funding in Section 211(b) of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000, as authorized in the fiscal year 2001 Consolidated Appropriations Act. NRCS has made an enormous effort to develop partnerships with government and private organizations to develop a program that targets specific State concerns.

FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM (FPP)

The FPP protects prime or unique farmland, lands of State or local importance, and other productive soils from conversion to nonagricultural uses. It provides matching funds to leverage funds from States, Tribes, or local government entities that have farmland protection programs. The FPP establishes partnerships with State, Tribes, and local government entities to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land. It ensures that valuable farmland is preserved for future generations and also helps maintain a healthy environment and sustainable rural economy. The program was initially funded in the 1996 Act at a level of \$35 million, to be spent over a number of years. To date, those funds have been exhausted, and local interest in the program continues to be strong. For fiscal year 2001, additional funding provided in the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 will fund the FPP at \$17.5 million. On January 22, 2001, a request for proposals was published in the

Federal Register. Eligible entities had until March 8, 2001 to submit their proposals. After the evaluation process is concluded, successful applicants will be notified in June 2001.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

EQIP provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to farmers and ranchers who face serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources on agricultural land and other land. The 1996 Act authorized \$200 million, annually for EQIP, utilizing funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). For fiscal year 2001, the final appropriation was \$200 million. In the 2 previous fiscal years, Congress appropriated \$174 million annually. Consistent with the authorizing legislation, the program is primarily available in priority conservation areas in order to maximize the benefits of each Federal conservation dollar. The priority areas consist of watersheds, regions, or areas of special environmental sensitivity or having significant soil, water, or related natural resource concerns that have been recommended through a locally-led conservation process. For fiscal year 2000, nearly 85 percent of the EQIP financial assistance funding was provided within priority areas.

The program has been extremely successful. We received nearly 76,168 applications in fiscal year 2000. After NRCS ranked the applications based on criteria developed at the local and State level, 16,443 long-term contracts with farmers and ranchers were approved. Since inception of the program, EQIP has averaged about 6 times the number of applications than could be approved with available funding. Certainly the demand for the program remains high around the country.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I would note that good conservation doesn't just happen. It takes all of us, including the Congress, the conservation partners, and most importantly, the people living on the land working together to make it happen. As exemplified through the many programs and activities we have underway, there is a great deal happening on the ground. And the work is not only helping farmers and ranchers build more productive and economically viable operations, but also is building a better natural resource base for the future. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to working with you to build on all that we have done thus far. This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman, and thank you again for the opportunity to appear. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.

