

POWERPOINT SCRIPT - Minden

1. TITLE PAGE: This year the Nevada Legislature experienced Conservation District Day for the first time. I titled the power point we played at the booth in the lobby, “Nevada’s Conservation Districts – Nevada’s Best Kept Secret;” ***

1A. This is us beginning to change that! Most people don’t know about us; people in this room probably don’t know what they should about CDs. Too often, CD Supervisors themselves don’t know!

I have left in much of what I showed at the Legislature so you can see. ***

2. and 3. WHAT IS A CONSERVATION DISTRICT?

- **Founded in 1937 during the Dust Bowl**
- **With a philosophy that conservation decisions should be made at the local level**
- **Focusing on voluntary, incentive-based actions.**
- **Governmental entities, much like school boards, directed by locally elected Supervisors**
- **Authority comes from NRS 548**
- **A vital link to connect private and public land interests in Nevada; they encompass all Nevada**

Conservation Districts started because in the 1930s people understood something - if you want the government to help; it will work much better if local people guide it. NvACD is part of the movement to make that thought the way we do business in Nevada again.

In this slide you see clouds of dust from the 1930’s Dust Bowl; ***

FAST FORWARD 80+ YEARS - this slide (**#4**) is clouds of smoke from the Lodgepole Complex Fire in Central Montana this year and the question becomes ***

5. WHAT CAN A CD ACCOMPLISH? Sorry the photo isn’t clear; it is - a small group of cows and calves on an unburned patch in a sea of black on the Lodgepole Complex Fire. I read from the Billings Gazette of July 29, 2017

Thousands of cattle displaced by the 270,000-acre Lodgepole Complex fire have been greenlighted for grazing on the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced Saturday...

The grass isn't free. Ranchers will have to meet standard lease terms. No one expects free grass, said Dean Rogge, farmer/rancher and board member of the Garfield County Conservation District...

Rogge said the conservation district has spent years developing a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. That relationship helped open up CMR grass to ranchers in a hurry.

Relationships are what drive conservation forward. Relationships are about showing up. We are going to talk about that from a variety of angles. ****

6. NRS 548.105 – As I said earlier, because in the past people thought locally first, since 1937, Nevada Revised Statutes 548.105 states: “... **persons in local communities are best able to provide basic leadership and direction for the planning and accomplishment of the conservation through** organization and operation of **conservation districts.**”

7. I was a CD Supervisor for many years before I understood the differences so I want to go through the various **CD ORGANIZATIONS in Nevada:**

- **State Conservation Commission or (SCC)**
 - Has seven positions appointed by the Governor; two from each Area, one at large and one each from the College of Ag and the Nevada Department of Ag. Commissioners are nominated by NvACD at our business meeting.
 - The Commission determines CDs “in good standing” to receive the annual grant from the Legislature, administers the Sage grouse Habitat grants and act as liaison with federal and state agencies and organizations concerned with conservation in Nevada.
- **The Conservation District Program in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or DCNR has a**
 - CD Program Manager who is the Executive Secretary for the SCC and keeper of CD records. It operates as the connection to the state for Nevada CDs. Their website has the list of Commissioners on the SCC as well as all the Annual Reports and Annual Work Plans for each CD, which is a wealth of information of the good work being done around the state.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD – which is why we are insistent on being called NvACD to distinguish)**

- Represents America's 3000 CDs in Washington DC and provides training and education for CDs to use. They do this via meetings and on their website. They also run the Conservation Poster Contest and Envirothon and deal with whatever else comes up.
- **The Nevada Association of Conservation Districts or NvACD**
 - Is the non-profit, statewide network, voice, and advocacy association for Nevada CDs. We can lobby and are not subject to the open meeting law like CDs and the SCC.
 - We provide forums to train and educate Supervisors and those associated with CDs and recognize outstanding conservation work by Awards given at our Annual Meeting banquet.
 - Your current officers are myself as President, Agee Smith of Cottonwood Ranch in Elko County as 1st VP, Gary McCuin of Cooperative Extension in Eureka as 2nd VP, Barbara Perlman-Whyman as Council member to NACD, and Jake Tibbitts as Treasurer. ***

8. Now that the basics are established; WHAT HAS NvACD BEEN UP TO SINCE WE LAST MET?

A lot. (pause)

- All to encourage the idea of **locally led conservation** in Nevada. ***

9. NvACD has been involved in a whole lot of PARTNERING this year.

9A. The Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network idea began a year ago and has been feeling its way forward. It began as a way to successfully implement the actions described in the Greater sage-grouse plan amendments for Nevada, but it is growing to be more than that. State and federal agencies and many other groups in Nevada including NvACD AND CDs are and will be involved. It is based on the idea that the best results for effective conservation and economic viability will be accomplished by working together at the ground level, and from the bottom up. Sage grouse is the instigation, but as relationships are built, it can be about any conservation decisions.

9B. The NCCN recognizes that it will take coordination to make this all work. Therefore, the BLM proposed a partnership with the **Intermountain West Joint Venture** to create a position in Nevada to help coordinate all the connections between agencies and local stakeholders. What will really help is the primary purpose of this position proposal is to ensure that needed

technical partnership assistance is provided to LAWGs. NvACD has committed \$2500 for the next three years to support this position.

9 C. The Humboldt River Basin Network was formed in January 2017. We wanted to determine if a process could be developed to address watershed scale issues while incorporating the needs and concerns of all stakeholders or resources inside this 16-million-acre geographic area. A daunting task, but people came together to help Nevada's river. The next step is a basin-wide Situation Analysis to be done in December by Laura Van Riper and Mike Lunn of the National Riparian Service Team.

They will meet with individuals and small groups who live within the Basin to listen and learn. The Network is considering sponsoring a watershed conference or similar educational event in 2018. Right now, the Network is operating under the auspices of the State Conservation Commission. If you live in the Basin, I hope you will make an appointment to share your thoughts with Laura and Mike. ***

9D. In 2016, the SCC, with support by NvACD, applied to NRCS for a Regional Conservation Partnership Program or RCPP grant called the "Nevada Coordinated Resource Management Initiative," modeled after the RCPP grant approved for New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts. The Initiative was proposed to provide the technical and financial resources to assist each Nevada CD to develop an individualized Coordinated Resource Management Plan and then fund the chosen conservation project that resulted from the development of that CRMP.

What in my mind was most significant in this process was the commitment made by the state and federal agencies and other organizations in Nevada. They were willing to dedicate both staff time to participate in the process and allow certain of their project funding to go to projects decided by the CRMPs. We didn't ask for new money, just to let a portion of their existing budgets run through this process. The RCPP application was for \$5 million; the commitments of our partners totaled almost \$18 million. That's \$23 million dollars going to locally led conservation in Nevada. We did not receive the RCPP grant in 2016. However, when I was in Salt Lake City at the National Wild Horse and Burro Summit I spoke with John Ruhs, BLM State Director currently on assignment in DC, and asked him if the ship had sailed on the BLM commitment to the Initiative; I was surprised when he said no and he encouraged me to seek a renewal of the commitment with all the partners. I have met with the USFS and BLM in person and received an encouraging response. I will be talking to the State and other partners soon. ***

9E. Other big news is NvACD just signed the final document on the 2017 NvACD – NRCS Cooperative Agreement to “promote and develop local work group areas” and energize the State Technical Advisory Committee or STAC. The STAC is led by the NRCS State Conservationist and is the means by which Local Work Groups can recommend how NRCS expends its program dollars or sets its conservation standards and specifications in Nevada. It is a voice from the local to the state and national level.

Last January State Conservationist Ray Dotson gave us a “blank piece of paper” for a proposal to invigorate the LWGs and STAC in Nevada. We tossed and turned over this decision for a few months and ultimately decided to go back to basics. The proposal will basically follow the NRCS farm planning process. NvACD is working to develop the tools and conduct the training to help 6 CDs in the first round complete a Resource Needs Assessment and provide input to the STAC.

Gary McCuin is writing a Guide to explain the steps for a conservation district to follow to conduct an inventory of resource concerns and begin to utilize the information gained to create a Resource Needs Assessment and subsequent Conservation Action Plans. The process will generate input for Local Work Groups to provide recommendations to the STAC and ultimately assist coordination and cooperation with federal, state and local planning and implementation of planning in your area. I know this is a process I have been waiting for to move forward in Lincoln County. ***

10 / 11A. We have a new logo! I hope you like it; we worked with a wonderful and gracious graphic artist that provided inspiration and modified his work until it met our needs. ***

We have been working hard to increase awareness of CDs and what we can do.

11B. Gary McCuin wrote two articles for The Progressive Rancher that I hope you saw and read. ***

11C. We are now on the NACD Soil Health Champion map thanks to Spencer Scott of Washoe-Storey CD. ***

11D. We sponsored events of partners and new ideas: the initial Stockmanship School at Cottonwood Ranch, Nevada Cattlemen’s Association Annual Meeting and we will be sponsoring the Producer’s Forum at the Society for Range Management’s International Meeting in Sparks at the end of next January. ***

11E. We began a conversation with Golden Productions to produce a documentary film about Nevada Conservation Districts, projects, authorities, what we are doing and what we can do.

We were unable to meet the financial requirements this year, but are hopeful we can continue this project in the future. It will depend on your help. Golden Productions was at Nevada Youth Range Camp this past June and Dennis Golden is here today to show a short clip of what they filmed. It was great to have them in camp; they were very unobtrusive. I hope you will take a minute and visit with Dennis while he is here. ***

11F. Our Executive Secretary, Andi Porreca, has been keeping our website updated; I hope you visit often to check up on other District's activities and general information available. Thank you to Andi for doing that. Please send me anything you are working on so I can share it and place it on the website. It is important to increase people's awareness of our existence and how we can be involved to help them. ***

11G. Two things I am very proud of this year. One is we held the first ever Conservation District Day at the Legislature.

Thirteen Supervisors, four staff and two spouses participated and we had a booth with displays, handouts, a power point and conversations with passers-by, we were introduced on the Senate Floor, and every Senator and Assembly member's office was visited and our information either conveyed directly to the Legislator or explained to their staff and left for them to read. Many CDs completed the template of information specific to their CD and submitted it to their Legislators as well. ***

11H. And we got our own page in the 2016 Nevada Agricultural Statistics Annual Bulletin! Thanks to Scot Rumberg who asked the question of who are we and did we want to remain combined on the NRCS page that was confusing? He and I worked back and forth to make clear information available and educate anyone who peruses the Ag Statistics Annual Bulletin from now on! ***

12. This is what our page looks like. The links are to the Conservation District Program, NvACD and NRS 548 ***

13. CONTRIBUTING

NvACD contributed to important work this year. ***

13A. On March 27 Interior Secretary Zinke sent a memo to the Acting Director of the BLM directing them to "go back to the drawing board to... improve the Federal planning process." Nevada Association of Counties invested a considerable effort to respond with suggestions and specific examples of problems and successes. NvACD worked hard to provide input and helped prepare the document submitted to BLM on August 21; we also sent a supporting letter. ***

13B. I attended the National Wild Horse and Burro Summit in Salt Lake City in August. It was an invited event to provide participants the best available information regarding science, management, and policies to be able to make informed decisions. The goal is to promote healthy horses on healthy rangelands by full implementation of the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act. You can view all the information on the website for the Summit and much information is available at the National Horse and Burro Rangeland Management Coalition website.

Summit attendees represented over 100 groups,

Organizer Terry Messmer, who spoke at our meeting in Las Vegas last year on the partnership work in Utah said, "One theme that was repeated over and over again was the sense of urgency and responsibility." "If the current management policies continue, the impacts to fragile western rangelands, wild horses and burros, wildlife and their habitats, and humans will intensify resulting in irreversible consequences. History will not be kind to us if we continue to pass the management of wild horses and burros on to those not yet born. This history will be written on a landscape that can no longer support a diversity of life because we failed to act."

This is a huge issue, in fact I would go so far as to say it is the defining concern for Nevada for our time as horses affect all other resources by their presence in large numbers and the bulk of wild horses are in Nevada. I will continue to keep you apprised of how you can be involved.

13C. We sent support letters for repeal of BLM's Planning 2.0, Nevada Department of Ag's weed bill, and Conservation Technical Assistance for NRCS to Congress. ***

13D. I submitted your nominations to the Governor for the expiring terms of four of the State Conservation Commission members per our right and responsibility. In other states the Commissioners are political appointees and may not have connection to conservation so our system is better. The Governor chose to retain the current Commissioners so Eric Reiman, Jake Tibbitts, Leland Wallace and Agee Smith will retain their seats on the SCC. ***

13E. We sponsored a Leadership training in Reno by Fred Steinmann. Our current plan is to offer a Leadership training the day before the NvACD Annual Meeting during election years and not in the off years. Other leadership trainings will be available at other times. ****

13F. We contributed by making significant contributions of time, experience and support to the Partnership items discussed in a slide before. ***

13G. We derive the funds to give our scholarships from our raffle and auction at each Annual Meeting. The scholarships are for college students studying subjects beneficial to agriculture or natural resources and our policy is to spend no more than half of what is available in the account. This year we were able to give out four \$450, and four \$300 scholarships to eight students who were a good mix of large animal vet, ag science and wildlife interests; all the applicants demonstrated great citizenship and references. You should volunteer to be on the scholarship committee – it will give you hope for the future to see these great kids that are out there that apply. I hope you will buy raffle tickets and come to the Banquet tonight and generously support the auction! ***

13H. NvACD officers attended National Association meetings; Jake and Barbara attended the Annual Meeting in Denver in January, and Gary, Barbara and I attended the Pacific Southwest Region meeting in Tucson in September. At these meetings we have a chance to network, learn how other states do things, and develop relationships that benefit us when we need help. Barbara also attended the Fly-In at Washington DC to speak to Congressional and agency staffs last spring. ***

14. FUNDING We have been seeking ways to bring funding to CDs and to the Association.***

14A. We completed the 2016 NRCS-NvACD Agreement to promote sign-ups for the Conservation Client Gateway. Unfortunately, there were some technical difficulties with the process. Despite that we had 27 confirmed sign-ups. The Agreement was to pay NvACD \$1000 for each signup and then NvACD committed to share half of that with the CD from which the signup came. This means \$13,500 went out to CDs and \$13,500 came into the NvACD accounts. ***

14B. As I said before, we just signed a 2017 Cooperative Agreement with NRCS to revitalize LWGs and the STAC with a sideline benefit of providing the information a CD can use to participate in planning and project work in their area. The Agreement is for \$64,000: \$40,000 for NvACD to develop tools and conduct trainings and assist the six initial CDs with the process, and \$4000 to each of six CDs that completes the process of gathering the information needed for a Resource Needs Assessment, develops a conservation action plan and submits the information to the STAC. The bonus is the CD will have the information in place to participate in local, state and federal planning and plan implementation. ***

14C. The last point to share about what NvACD is doing for you is an opportunity that has just come to light. Wayne Carlson of Pool Pact offered an opportunity for CDs to obtain services from Pool Pact that could help with insurance, risk management, worker's comp, or human resource service's needs. A couple of weeks ago I sent some information out for you to ponder. I believe this is something CDs should think seriously about. Wayne will be at the Business meeting tomorrow to present a proposal and answer questions. ***

15. While we are talking funding. I haven't had time to see what happened in FY 2017 yet, but in FY 2016 Nevada CDs took the \$4000 grant to each CD from the Legislature and leveraged that \$112,000 into over \$2.9 million including in-kind contributions and partner matches. That is something to be proud of! ****

16. That means every \$1 appropriated by the Legislature became \$30. This year the grant is \$4500. What if it was more? ****

17-27. We do a lot! These are a sample of what CDs are doing around the state. From the ones that provided me with photos at least!

CDs are pivotal for weed control in many areas.

What could we accomplish with greater capacity? *****

29. CDs originally stood for these important points: (pause)

- And they still do today. ***

30. In NvACD we have been trying to create opportunity for your endeavors in your home CDs. You are elected officials, please don't call yourselves volunteers, you are elected officials and with that comes authorities and responsibilities. NvACD can do all this great stuff, but the power, authority and responsibility lie with you, working at the local level. In reality, my actual responsibility is to the Lincoln County Conservation District. That is what NvACD is fighting for, working hard for, putting in the hours and the miles around this big state of ours – it is to enhance the space for each one of our CDs to lead the voice of locally led conservation within their boundaries. It is a big job; but that is the point of NvACD, to help you with the job. Each CD works separately, but we can all work together for the goal of locally led conservation. I encourage you to read NRS 548 to fully grasp the authority you have as a CD. And then go out and use it!

Today we will talk about how you can accomplish it, make you aware of some challenges that might be in your path, and then decide together how to go forward. I do not just speak to the Supervisors in the room; all of you here, no matter your job title or connection should be part of the movement in Nevada toward locally led conservation. The exciting thing is the movement is happening from a variety of sources at the same time! When you help us get it done, in whatever your job title or capacity is, your goals are met as well and in a more lasting fashion because they were locally led and from the ground up. We have a moment to seize in Nevada right now; NvACD is trying to be part of it and I hope you will too.

It is always about relationships as I said early on. Relationships are about showing up. I appreciate all of you being here; I appreciate that you care about Nevada as well as your local concerns. Every positive thing each one of us does helps all the other positive actions around the state. When we all find something to say yes to, people can see our work and learn more about us and we can build relationships and see conservation happen. All of this that I have said today.... – what it means for you, is a chance to affect the future where you live. Duane Coombs said, “Conservation is the tracks we leave behind us when we’re gone.” *****

Any questions?