

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE,
AND MINING**

**Eightieth Session
April 24, 2019**

The Committee on Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Mining was called to order by Chair Heidi Swank at 4:01 p.m. on Wednesday, April 24, 2019, in Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/80th2019.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Alex Assefa
Assemblywoman Maggie Carlton
Assemblyman John Ellison
Assemblyman Ozzie Fumo
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Sarah Peters
Assemblywoman Robin L. Titus
Assemblyman Howard Watts
Assemblyman Jim Wheeler

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblywoman Heidi Swank, (excused)
Assemblyman Greg Smith (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jann Stinnesbeck, Committee Policy Analyst
Allan Amburn, Committee Counsel
Nancy Davis, Committee Secretary
Alejandra Medina, Committee Assistant



OTHERS PRESENT:

James R. Lawrence, Deputy Director, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Kyle Davis, representing League to Save Lake Tahoe

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Pursuant to Assembly Resolution 1, Rule No. 47, subsection 4, in the absence of the Chair, or upon the request of the Chair, the Vice Chair of the Committee shall assume the duties of the Chair. [Roll was called and rules and protocol of the Committee were reviewed.] I will now open the hearing on Senate Concurrent Resolution 5.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 5: Expresses support for the role of science in the Lake Tahoe Basin and recognizes the role of the Tahoe Bi-State Executive Committee and the Tahoe Science Advisory Council in guiding environmental preservation, protection, restoration and enhancement efforts in the Lake Tahoe Basin. (BDR R-438)

James R. Lawrence, Deputy Director, State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 5. I also would like to thank the interim Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System for all the time and work they spent dedicated to Lake Tahoe issues over the interim and for supporting this legislation.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 5 expresses support for the role of using best available science in land use policy decisions and environmental restoration in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Further, S.C.R. 5 recognizes the role of the Tahoe Bi-State Executive Committee and the Tahoe Science Advisory Council as the entities to provide coordinated guidance in decision making related to science.

As background, in 2015, the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the California Natural Resources Agency entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishing the Tahoe Science Advisory Council along with a Bi-State Executive Committee to provide guidance and oversight to the advisory council.

The execution of this MOU is a result of the ongoing and increased engagement between the two resource departments regarding Lake Tahoe issues. The increased collaboration and involvement started in 2011 when the two resource agencies convened a bi-state consultation in order to resolve the remaining sticking issues with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's update to the regional plan. The updated regional plan was approved December 2012. The success of this effort has led to increased collaboration as evidenced by this science effort.

In essence, the role of the Tahoe Science Advisory Council is to coordinate science and research activities in the Tahoe Basin and, perhaps even more importantly, be the bridge between the science and research community and land managers and policy makers. The goal is to put science into action.

The Tahoe Science Advisory Council has representatives from six research institutions including the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and Desert Research Institute (DRI). The Council is currently working on a number of endeavors including a comprehensive review and update of the environmental thresholds, standards, and indicators for the Tahoe Basin. A comprehensive update has not occurred since 1982 and is needed to reflect current conditions. Further, it is particularly important to have this coordinated science and research effort to address climate change and emerging impacts.

Passage of this resolution sends a strong signal for the support and need of a coordinated science program for the Lake Tahoe Basin and for Nevada's continued engagement in this effort.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time this afternoon and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Assemblywoman Peters:

How spread out are the entities that are engaged in science and research on Lake Tahoe? It is my understanding that S.C.R. 5 will bring them together with a little more cohesion to the effort.

James Lawrence:

There are numerous entities doing research and science in the basin. They are doing great work. This is to bring it all together, and also to be the bridge. To be able to do the research and science that is needed for land use planners and management agencies to make science-informed decisions. Also, this is for the land managers to be able to communicate directly to the scientists and say, This is what we need you to work on because these are our problems. Right now we have DRI, University of California (UC), Davis, UC Santa Barbara, and UNR all doing science work—everything from aquatic invasive species to water clarity; forest health issues, what do our forest systems need to look like, especially given climate change; the Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load program; and how to reduce sediments getting into the lake in order to achieve clarity, which is all science-based and involves DRI and UC Davis. Sometimes this can be duplicative; it needs to be strategic, and we need to ensure that when there is science and research, the findings are translated into action so that someone like myself—who is more of a policy person implementing projects—I can fully understand and digest the information that is coming to me so I can make the best informed decision. The breadth of science is occurring, it always has, and some really great stuff has come out. Now we are looking to make it focused and strategic so that we can be more timely in implementation.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any more questions? Seeing none, I will hear those in support.

Kyle Davis, representing League to Save Lake Tahoe:

We are here in support of S.C.R. 5. Our organization participates with a lot of these entities working cooperatively with state and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations in order to improve the quality and environment of Lake Tahoe. This is a critical piece of that and we appreciate the resolution going forward.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone here in opposition? [There was no one.] Is there anyone here in neutral? Seeing no one, we do have one question from the Committee.

Assemblyman Ellison:

What do these entities do with the information they gather? Is it strictly for the Tahoe Basin, or is it used elsewhere?

James Lawrence:

For the most part, much of the science and research is focused to the Lake Tahoe Basin, particularly issues with restoring lake clarity, reducing catastrophic wildfires, and aquatic invasive species issues. That being said, I think the Lake Tahoe environment and the extensive collaboration amongst local governments, the state, and federal agencies—there is a lot to learn, not just from the science process, but the findings from some of the projects. For instance, on the California side of the basin, is the Lake Tahoe West Landscape-Scale Restoration Partnership, which is a very ambitious forest health project in order to increase the resiliency of that forest. The thought there is that it is going to be embedded and infused with science to make decisions. While it will inform the actions in the basin, those findings and research can be taken to other places.

What we learn in the Tahoe Basin regarding forest health and resiliency would also work in the Carson Range on this side of the mountains. It can be transferred to the rest of the Sierra Nevada Range. This is important in forest health, because there are no boundaries when it comes to wildfire or insects. Senate Concurrent Resolution 5 is Tahoe-focused to ensure we are getting the environmental gain in the basin, but for much of this work, the research and findings can then be transferred to other areas.

Assemblyman Ellison:

We have had so many wildfires on the California side, and now we have the beetles that are spreading everywhere. I noticed last time I was at Tahoe, the trees along the roads are all dying. I am wondering if that is from pollution, insects, or what is causing that. Maybe you can touch on that issue.

James Lawrence:

There are multiple factors leading to the catastrophic tree mortality issue, which is mostly in California. It is the result of drought conditions, which weaken the trees and make them

easier for insects to basically take hold in the forest and cause devastation. There is also specific science and research looking into trees next to the roadways. How much of the tree die-off next to roadways is because of the drought, beetles, or because the trees are more susceptible as they are close to areas where salt is being put down in the winter. The rains wash the salt into the landscape. How do you take that science and research and not only tie it into forestry practices, but also water quality and stormwater practices for our roadways? That is why the integration of science efforts is very critical to achieve environmental gain in the basin.

Vice Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will close the hearing on S.C.R. 5 [provided but not mentioned is [Exhibit C](#)]. I will open up for public comment. Seeing no one, our next meeting will be held on April 29, and that concludes our meeting today. We are adjourned [at 4:14 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Nancy Davis
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Heidi Swank, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

[Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster.

[Exhibit C](#) is written testimony provided by Tracy Bower, Director of External Affairs, Desert Research Institute, in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 5.