

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Eighty-Third Session
May 5, 2025**

The Committee on Natural Resources was called to order by Chair Natha C. Anderson at 4:03 p.m. on Monday, May 5, 2025, in Room 3143 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 2 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, Las Vegas, Nevada and to 123 High Technology Center, Great Basin College, 1500 College Parkway, Elko, 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/83rd2025.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson, Chair
Assemblymember Selena La Rue Hatch, Vice Chair
Assemblymember Venicia Considine
Assemblymember Rich DeLong
Assemblymember Bert K. Gurr
Assemblymember Alexis M. Hansen
Assemblymember Jovan A. Jackson
Assemblymember Venise Karris
Assemblymember Heidi Kasama
Assemblymember Elaine H. Marzola
Assemblymember Howard Watts

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Julie Pazina, Senate District No. 12
Senator Robin L. Titus, Senate District No. 17
Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen, Senate District No. 3



STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Becky Peratt, Committee Policy Analyst
Cindy Glass, Committee Manager
Karen Cook, Committee Secretary
Cheryl Williams, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Kacey KC, State Forester/Firewarden, Nevada Division of Forestry
Michael Scott, Deputy Director, Department of Wildlife
Katherine Villasenor, Legislative Intern for Senator Titus
Paul Young, representing Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners
Laura McSwain, President, Water Fairness Coalition, Inc.
Kelly Kopp, Plants, Soils and Climate, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources,
Utah State University
Stacy Standley, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Yvette Williams, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Norman Schilling, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League and
Education Fund
Robert Hillsman, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Julie Wignall, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Pete Foley, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Li Chen, Community Organizer, One APIA Nevada
Tera Anderson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Diane Henry, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada
Andrew Belanger, Director, Public Services, Las Vegas Valley Water District

Chair Anderson:

[Role was called. Committee rules and protocol were explained.] On today's agenda we have a work session and three bill hearings, but we will start off with the bill hearings because I know the first individual has to get back to her committee. I will open the hearing on Senate Bill 19 and welcome Senator Pazina to present the bill.

**Senate Bill 19: Authorizes the Governor to enter into certain interstate fire compacts.
(BDR 47-381)**

Senator Julie Pazina, Senate District No. 12:

I thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 19 today. I was fortunate to serve with a number of you in the room on the interim committee, and this is one of the bills that came out of the interim committee. I was pleased to serve as the chair and I was especially pleased because I felt everyone on the committee cared about what we could do to best help the state. That is how we came up with our interim bill. I thank everyone so much for your hard work over the interim.

That brings us to the State Forester/Firewarden, who joins me at the table today and who presented to the interim committee about the benefits of Nevada joining certain wildfire compacts. Ultimately, the interim committee unanimously approved requesting this bill draft, which is where we now find ourselves with S.B.19. Without further ado, I would like to hand it over to State Firewarden Kacey KC to proceed with the bill presentation.

Kacey KC, State Forester/Firewarden, Nevada Division of Forestry:

Senate Bill 19 is allowing the state agency, Nevada Division of Forestry, to enter into the Great Plains Interstate Compact and the Northwest Fire Fighting Compact. Those are wildland fire protection compacts authorized in the 1911 Weeks Act, which was allowing us to protect forests and watersheds across state boundaries and into Canada and providing the coordination of wildland firefighting resources across those states. There are currently eight compacts in the U.S. When I first presented this bill in the other house, we were one of three states not in. Now we are one of two—Utah just joined. Now it is just us and California who are out of the compacts in the U.S. I am not sure why, and I do not know why we did not enter into them before. I think it was largely due to having to have a neighboring state join in. You have to be touching a state that is in the compact.

The reason we are joining two compacts: the Northwest Compact was the first compact formed for fire mitigation purposes. They do not have the ability to share outside of that compact. Once you join, you can only share with the nine states in the northwest. The Great Plains Compact came in about 20 years later and it has the ability to share across the nation. We are going to try to create a bridge.

Why do we need this? We have the ability to do this already with our federal agreement. However, there are times when state agencies hold things back because we are protecting our states differently. California might send us something they may not send to Florida because they do not want the distance or the time, but they may be able to let it loose for us. It allows for state-to-state movement of vehicles—I think apparatus and people, aircraft, all things. What is important about that, this year in particular, is we have a few issues on the federal side and the agreements. Our reliance right now is pretty much solely on our one federal agreement. It would be nice to have the state-to-state in place as well. It is a quicker response in-state and it can also sometimes be a quicker or more timely payment reimbursement back. Usually, it is a state paying and so long as the state has the budget to pay, it is usually pretty quick. With that, I would be happy to take any questions.

Senator Pazina:

I want to emphasize the much faster reimbursement of payment, which is another reason we have been looking to join this compact. With that, as the Firewarden said, we would love to take questions and we thank you so much for hearing the bill.

Chair Anderson:

Members, are there any questions?

Assemblymember Considine:

Just going through this, it makes a lot of sense to me. One of my questions is, why did it take us so long to join? I know it does say requesting assistance from another state can be a "may," not a "shall"—to assist another state. When it comes to being reimbursed, what do we do if a request for reimbursement from Nevada to another state is not reimbursed? I do not see that anywhere in the bill.

Kacey KC:

I think the reason we did not get in sooner is because we did not have an adjoining state. That is my assumption. There may have been other things. Everybody was a little afraid of being California's neighbor because nobody wants California in their compacts because they have a lot of stuff and they take a lot of the stuff you want. I think that might have been part of our reason in the West; I am not sure. Also, there was the Civil Defense Act of 1955—I think it was in 1957 but do not quote me on that part. They actually put a fire protection agreement under the Civil Defense Act. Nevada had been utilizing that compact to mobilize across states. It was just negated as everybody started entering into the compacts themselves. Nevada could still use the Civil Defense Act; it is just none of our partnering states could.

The other question was what happens if they do not pay us back. We have never seen that. State-to-state reimbursements are usually quicker. Other states had times, and we had times ourselves, when we were not paying our bills—but there are times. In California, I do have an IOU sent to me from Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. It is signed and we have it still, so we are going to make lots of money one day on eBay. They send you an IOU. There is a requirement to pay each other back for these services, which is in the beginning of all compacts. If we agree to send these things, we have to pay for them.

Assemblymember Hansen:

I have a clarifying question. You mentioned nine states are in the Northwest Compact. Do you know how many states are in the Great Plains Compact? I am just curious.

Kacey KC:

In the Great Plains: Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and Saskatchewan. Utah is now added into that one as well.

Assemblymember Hansen:

When you said nine states, that includes ones you were classifying as Great Plains and Northwest.

Kacey KC:

I do not know if I said nine. I said there were eight compacts across the U.S. There is the Northwest, Great Plains, Northeast. There are a bunch of different compacts depending on when and how they joined, so eight compacts. They are varying, so the Northwest has a bunch of Canadian Provinces, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Hawaii. Hawaii was a recent join.

Assemblymember Hansen:

When you are a part of the compact, you share resources, but do you also share wildfire management techniques with each other? Do you get together and have training? It would be nice if California would join, so we could share some good ideas. I am curious if there is some other sharing [audio lost].

Kacey KC:

Yes, we do share. This does allow us, as does our master agreement with the federal agencies, to share wildland firefighting resources, but it also allows us to share for any reason. If we were to have a big, prescribed burn and we needed staff to come in, we can mobilize assets through this for that as well. For natural resource projects, we can do that. It happens less often because we are all busy doing our own things in our own states, but it does allow for that.

As far as the sharing of ideas, yes, that we do. I am a part of the Council of the Western State Foresters and the National Association of State Foresters (NASF). I chaired their committee for a year. Being a part of the national level, we are always sharing ideas. That is where the idea for us to come in and actually join came from. The NASF Fire Committee came after us and asked, Why are the five of you not in? None of us could answer that question because many of us were new at the time, but it seemed like we should be in. We do share good ideas. We share resources where we can. We learned from the state of Utah the formula for it when we built our WFPP [Wildland Fire Protection Program]. We are always constantly learning.

Chair Anderson:

There are two Articles [in the bill] I would like to go into a bit. The first is on page 6, Article III, where it just says you are able to work together on fighting wildland fires, which I think right now is already taking place sometimes across state lines, but it would still be great if California wished to join us. Also, Article VIII on page 8, again goes into that. I did not know if you want to dig a little bit deeper into those two items. It is up to you if you wish to or not.

Kacey KC:

I should say, we have a state-to-state agreement with the state of California right now, and Arizona. Because we do share resources often with California, we wanted to make sure we could legally pay each other back and forth, so we do have that agreement. We have the option to enter into state-to-state agreements in lieu of this compact. It just requires us then to enter into 50 state agreements and those with the Canadian provinces. This is a way to streamline it, somewhat similar to what we did in the streamlining of allowing local government to opt into the Wildland Fire Protection Program and then that tiers them into our federal agreement.

Where this gets really confusing, and worse for anybody, is in our dispatch centers. We have five interagency dispatch centers which is how wildland fire stuff gets dispatched in the state. The first call is to 911 usually, it gets bumped out of 911 when it is a wildland fire, then it comes into our dispatch centers. If we are mobilizing out of state, even off-district—if

Truckee Meadows is going to go to a fire in Reno, they are utilizing our agreements through the WFPP to move off-district. Our dispatchers have to know how everybody is moving because they have to put a pay code in that top corner and everybody has to know how we are going to pay each other. That comes in a dispatch record; it is at the top of the dispatch record who the jurisdiction of payment is, and that is how we follow bills through the whole process.

It is critically important we be able to share and access these resources, not necessarily so much for going out of state, that is helpful, but when we need them to come here, we really need them. In the Davis Fire, I think that was the difference between a seven-mile run into Reno and having all the assets we needed. We pulled those two scoopers out of Washington, two off of the national ordering system, and the night flying helicopter out of California, which we have never had before. We got lucky; we were number one on the priority list that day, because California was not burning.

Chair Anderson:

Are there any other questions? Seeing none, we will start testimony. Senator, if you need to leave, we totally understand. As a reminder, please try to keep your testimony to two minutes and please avoid repeating testimony made by previous speakers. Ditto always works. I will open testimony in support of A.B. 19. Is there anybody in Carson City, Las Vegas, Elko, or on the phone. [There was no one.] We will move to opposition. Is there anybody in Carson City, Las Vegas, Elko, or on the phone for opposition testimony? [There was no one.] We will move to neutral testimony. Is there anybody in Carson City, Las Vegas, Elko, or on the phone for neutral testimony? [There was no one.] Are there any closing remarks [There were none.] I will close the hearing on Senate Bill 19. I will open the hearing on Senate Bill 215 (1st Reprint), which revises provisions relating to wildlife.

Senate Bill 215 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to wildlife. (BDR 45-576)

I believe Senator Titus was going to join us, but I am not seeing her. How about Deputy Director Mike Scott or Senate Intern Katherine Villasenor? Mr. Scott, do you want to take this on yourself or do you want me to wait a few minutes for the Senator to join you?

Michael Scott, Deputy Director, Department of Wildlife:

I would much prefer we wait for the Senator.

Chair Anderson:

I will give her about five minutes. If I still do not see her, I will let you go. We will be in recess until Senator Titus joins us.

[The meeting was recessed at 4:19 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 4:21 p.m.].

Welcome back. We will hear Senate Bill 215 (1st Reprint), which revises provisions relating to wildlife. You may begin whenever you are ready.

Senator Robin L. Titus, Senate District No. 17:

District 17 is six rural Nevada counties with a lot of wildlife. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 215. With me at the table is my intern, Katherine Villasenor, to help me present the bill, and Deputy Director Mike Scott from the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to assist with any questions the Committee may have.

Katherine Villasenor, Legislative Intern for Senator Titus:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 215 (1st Reprint) to you today. Senate Bill 215 (1st Reprint) seeks to reduce waste and promote the responsible use of Nevada's wildlife resources by allowing for the salvage of edible portions of animals accidentally killed in a vehicle collision or any other fatal incidental event.

Current state law places strict limitations on such salvage, leading to otherwise usable products being left to waste on Nevada's roadways. Senate Bill 215 (1st Reprint) has garnered support from the Nevada Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus and reflects a balanced approach to wildlife management, particularly in Nevada's rural areas, where animal-vehicle collisions are more frequent.

To aid in your consideration, we have submitted two exhibits on NELIS. The first is an article from the 2024-2025 *Nevada Big Game and Hunting* magazine regarding chronic wasting disease, or CWD, more commonly known as Mad Cow Disease [[Exhibit C](#)]. Testing roadkill is paramount to preventing the spread of this disease, an effort which S.B. 215 (R1) would support. The second is a memo prepared by the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau on roadkill salvage policies across the U.S. in different states [[Exhibit D](#)].

Next, I would like to briefly walk you through the bill's two sections. Section 1 of this bill requires the Board of Wildlife Commissioners to adopt regulations directing NDOW to issue salvage permits. Similar legislation has been passed in 35 other states. These permits would authorize individuals to collect unintentionally killed animals from vehicle collisions or any other incidental fatal event. The bill also prohibits the Commission from imposing any fee for such permits, ensuring accessibility for Nevadans is possible regardless of income. To protect public health and the integrity of Nevada's wildlife populations, the bill includes a safeguard. The Commission may, by regulation, suspend salvage permits if any wildlife in the state is confirmed to have tested positive for chronic wasting disease. Chronic wasting disease is a fatal neurological condition affecting cervids like deer and elk. This provision ensures we remain vigilant against its spread. Please see the submitted handout for additional details [[Exhibit D](#)].

In section 2, we outline that because wildlife does not observe hunting seasons, this section ensures individuals who lawfully obtain a salvage permit under this program will not be penalized for possessing wildlife or wildlife parts outside of designated hunting times. This clarification will protect citizens acting in good faith under the new system. This bill is scheduled to take effect on October 1, 2025.

Senator Titus:

If you have any questions on the disease itself, that is why we have brought the NDOW authority, if you would like to get a little presentation about chronic waste disease. If you are in a hurry, we can skip that. You have the information in front of you.

Chair Anderson:

I am comfortable already with it, but I will see if anybody else wishes to get some more information about chronic wasting disease. [There was no one.] We appreciate the handouts.

Senator Titus:

With that, Madam Chair, we are happy to take any questions.

Assemblymember DeLong:

I think this bill is a good idea. I do have a question with implementation. You have roadkill, you hit a deer, it takes out your windshield, hopefully does not kill you, it is sitting on the side of the road. Are you then supposed to go get a permit to salvage it? What is the concept on how this is going to work?

Senator Titus:

Section 1, subsection 1 of the bill says the Commission shall adopt regulations based on what they think is best for Nevada. Of the 35 states that have it, they all have a slightly different regulation. I am going to have Mr. Scott give you some ideas of what NDOW thought and then they are going to present to the Board of Wildlife Commission, who will come up with the ultimate regulations, whether it is going to be an on-the-phone permit. Most people, when they are in a car accident, they are going to report it because of insurance purposes. There is already a process. What I foresee is a digital permit, Yes, you reported this. Here is your permit. It is yours. I will have Mr. Scott give more details.

Michael Scott:

Hopefully, we could have a phone application that would allow people to apply for that permit with the caveat NDOW would retain the head so we could test that animal for CWD because animals with CWD are more likely to be hit by vehicles. That would be the direction we would want to go. How long that would take would be a bit questionable.

Senator Titus:

I have had this bill in many forms in the past with former Assemblymember Bilbray-Axelrod. This was our pet bill for three sessions. It never really moved anywhere, partly because the Department of Wildlife felt it was going to be very cumbersome to get these regulations going. Finally, before I put this in again this year, I reached out to Director Jenne and asked, How can we make this work? I am a hunter and when I put in my applications, it says on it they want the roadkill to do more studies on chronic wasting disease. I said, Aha, I got them now. I reached out and said, Okay, let us make this work together. How can we come to some agreement? You want more data, you want more heads, and we want the meat, so let us work together on this. Leaving it up to the Wildlife Commission to decide what works best for everybody is how we felt this would best come about.

Assemblymember Considine:

I understand this will really be fleshed out in regulations. The way section 1, subsection 1 is written, it seems to me it does not have to be the person who hits the animal who can salvage it. It can be someone who can get a salvage permit who actually salvages as something they do.

Senator Titus:

I think that is really the key. It does not have to be the person. The reason we said any other vehicle or any other means is because a train could hit it. Somebody says, This just happened. I saw this deer get hit, and that is perfectly good meat there. I want to get a permit. They could apply for the permit. It does not have to be the person who actually hits the animal. The person who hits the animal may be somebody who does not want to eat the animal. Somebody driving through in a small little vehicle and they have no intention of eating that animal. That does not mean it has to be wasted; it is fresh meat. If somebody wanted to apply for it, there is that process.

Assemblymember Considine:

Is this a situation where it is a permit per animal or could somebody get a salvage permit that could last for a period of time and they could salvage things as it happens.

Senator Titus:

The original intent would be, and my intent is, for the individual animal, one at a time.

Assemblymember Hansen:

I have appreciated your efforts to try to get this bill through. I have a logistics question on the permitting. Have we studied how some of the other states are doing it, because I think you said 35 states have something similar?

Senator Titus:

I have submitted to you a document on the other 35 states in a brief of how they all have something a little bit different on what they are doing [[Exhibit D](#)]. Nevada would have to work out what is best for Nevada. I think we could make it the most simplistic with that application and applying to be legal. There is a dead deer or an elk, or whatever you would choose to eat, frankly, but you do not always need to get a permit for all of those.

Assemblymember Hansen:

I was curious if a preemptive salvage permit was a thought. Actually, I was discussing this with Assemblymember DeLong earlier today. I think with mountain lion tags you get a tag—it is not a lottery—you get a tag if there are that many available. On the salvage permit, maybe if preemptively you have one, because I can think of some legislators who have had numerous hits commuting from here to Elko. It probably would be a good idea to have one preemptively, but I do not know if that is something we have seen in other states.

Senator Titus:

Frankly, I would not be receptive to that because if I have a permit, if I hit one, I am not going to avoid it as much because if I just gently hit it, then I can put it down or wound it. In my mind, it would be giving them permission to harvest something, anticipating they are going to kill an animal or finding an animal. I would prefer it happen as an easy simple, Yes, you hit it. Yes, you can salvage it, as opposed to anticipating it. I want to anticipate people missing these with animal crossings eventually and not hitting one. Believe me, when the Wildlife Commission meets to have these regulations, I will be actively involved in it.

Assemblymember Gurr:

You said the head would be salvaged to go to the Department. I cannot find that in the bill.

Senator Titus:

We did not say what you would do. That would be part of the regulations to salvage. Currently, there are mandatory areas where you have to turn in the skull. I am in one of those hunting areas and I had a tag on this western slope and, frankly, the deer that was positive was out of my area pretty much in Bishop. It was close to the western slope where I am when I hunt. When I got my deer last year, I did not return the whole head. Fortunately, I know how to dissect a skull. I was able to turn in just the portion they needed. That is the point; more data is one of the things that makes this work.

Assemblymember Gurr:

I am hearing you are going to build all this into the regulation and not put it in *Nevada Revised Statutes*.

Senator Titus

Correct.

Assemblymember Gurr:

That is a much better place to do it. Then I can keep the 200-inch buck I ran over with my truck.

Assemblymember La Rue Hatch:

You touched on a little bit of my concern. If we do have preemptive permits, people might be able to farm it and manipulate it. I appreciate we share that concern. To avoid that, will people have to prove the accident? Will they have to take pictures of the vehicle or the train? How can we ensure how this animal was killed?

Senator Titus:

I can tell you, nobody ever wants to run into an animal if you have ever seen the damage on a vehicle. That would be very unlikely. That will have to be worked out with the regulations. Other states have not had the issue of people wanting to hit deer. I think it is already vetted. You would ruin a very fancy or even an unfancy vehicle if you hit one of these animals, so that usually does not happen. Proving that it was not shot or maybe there was an investigation or something like that—maybe you did actually shoot it. It is on the side of the

road. I think it is going to have to be vetted out. The rarity of these being used, how often people are actually going to use a salvage permit, how often people want to take the time while driving down the road? There have been a couple of times in my valleys and certain areas will use this more because deer are hit frequently—not every day but at least once a week or so on my drive. Number one, the meat has to be edible, all of those things, and the cautions will be built into the regulations. Frankly, more deer are killed by vehicular accidents in the state than hunters. Vehicles kill an incredible amount of our wildlife, and wasting it is just sad.

Assemblymember La Rue Hatch:

I agree. I do not know if anybody is going to purposely destroy their car to get some deer meat. I want to confirm though, there will be some element of having to prove or confirm this was from an accident, and not, as you said, someone just shot the deer on the side of the road?

Senator Titus:

What I perceive and what other states have done is, when you get in a car accident you notify law enforcement. At that time, law enforcement will either issue the permit, sign on a permit, or give you access to the code you download. You cannot automatically download it. I see a dead animal, I am not just going to download this thing, it is public information. I see some tag with law enforcement that will have to be notified to give me access for the permit so there is that check and balance. There are always people on the outside one cannot control. I absolutely believe in a check and balance.

Chair Anderson:

Are there any other questions? [There were none.] I appreciate the fact this is creating the regulations, and I appreciate Assemblymember Gurr's questions. One little thing to put on the record for when it is time for the regulations to be created—as you know, there are many areas of our state that are difficult at times to get a signal on your phone. If you are trying to download that application, if the regulations could also have something about how to handle that in those situations, that would be greatly helpful. It is not necessarily something that has to go into the law. I think it is more something that when it is time for the regulations to be discussed it should be

We will start with testimony in support of S.B.215. In an effort to change it up a bit, we are going to start in Elko. [There was no one.] Is there anyone in Carson City who would like to testify in support?

Paul Young, representing Board of Wildlife Commissioners:

I would like to thank Assemblymember Titus for bringing S.B. 215 (R1). We are in support.

Chair Anderson:

Is there anyone else in Carson City, Las Vegas, or on the phone to provide support testimony? [There was no one.] We will move to testimony in opposition to S.B. 215 (R1). Is there anyone in Elko, Las Vegas, Carson City, or on the phone? [There was no one.] We will move to neutral testimony. Is there anyone in Elko, Carson City, Las Vegas, or on the phone? [There was no one.] Are there any closing remarks?

Robin Titus, Senator, District 17:

Thank you, Chair and members, for allowing me to present this bill. Please consider passing this bill. I think its time has come. The animals deserve not to lose their life in vain.

Chair Anderson:

I will close the hearing on Senate Bill 215 (1st Reprint). I will now open the hearing on Senate Bill 143.

Senate Bill 143: Revises provisions relating to natural resources. (BDR 17-10)

Chair Anderson:

Senator Nguyen, I believe there is someone on Zoom. Is that correct?

Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen, Senate District No. 3:

That is correct.

Chair Anderson:

I know there is a lot to this bill, so if we could just stick to the bill. I believe we just received an amendment [[Exhibit E](#)]. Thank you for working on this today. I know you have been working for the last few hours to get it cleaned up.

Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen, Senate District No. 3

I am here to present Senate Bill 143. I previously submitted a conceptual amendment [[Exhibit E](#)] to take out the study, which was something inadvertently missed in the Senate Finance Committee and was going to be headed to the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, but hopefully it will not be headed to Ways and Means any longer because we did remove that study that was included in the bill. I apologize, there is a typo in the conceptual amendment, and the typo is not a part of it

Our intention is to have the interim committee look at some of these other issues, including excessive use charges based on lot size, the classification of grass under trees and on slopes as functional protection of mature trees, equitable application of penalties in consideration of environmental standards, such as material toxicity and surface temperatures.

For those of you who are familiar with my district, a large part of my district is in older neighborhoods, often historic neighborhoods. A lot of those older neighborhoods have lots of mature landscaping, including a tree canopy that is often 50 to 75 years old, if not older. When you think of Las Vegas and you think of southern Nevada, a lot of the district

I represent does not traditionally look like what you think of when you think of southern Nevada. These older residential communities are really the closest things we have to urban green spaces in places that are lacking investment, buyer municipalities, new parks, and green spaces for outdoor recreation.

For those of you who have sat on other committees, you have heard a lot about how cities use and invest new resources, property taxes, and all those things in creating new parks in some of the newer neighborhoods while not maintaining so much the older parks in some of our established neighborhoods. When I started listening to my neighbors, I would hear over and over again about how there was a disproportionate impact. This bill comes from those conversations from neighbors in my community about things they were seeing. You will see some of those incorporated in the programs we want to have the interim committee look at regarding water rates, charges of the municipal water providers in the state's composing the Colorado River Basin, and other issues related to fairness.

For those of you who know me and for those of you who do not, I have a background in criminal justice and I worked for about 20 years as a public defender or doing indigent defense work. Fairness is something you would see a lot when talking about the criminal justice system. Why am I bringing that up here? I think this is an alignment with my own personal philosophy and policies because we see that kind of unfairness in the way conservation efforts are falling on the backs of certain people and being avoided by other people.

The reason we want to include the examination of excessive use charges is, for those of you who do not know, the only people who are charged excessive use charges in the state are people and residents in the City of Las Vegas. You could be hit with excessive water rates if you are in one place in the City of Las Vegas, in neighborhoods such as mine since most of my district is in the City of Las Vegas or unincorporated Las Vegas. If you live in Henderson, North Las Vegas, or Boulder City, or you live up here in Sparks or in Reno, you do not have those same kind of considerations. Those are some of the things.

We have plenty of people who cannot afford the landscaping and water costs associated with maintaining their existing landscaping. I can tell you firsthand, I have recently removed all of the turf in my front yard and went to xeriscaping, but my first bill out of the gate, I still had excessive use charges. I think this is something to consider, and I think there is some further examination that needs to take place when it comes to what we are doing to evaluate the effectiveness of this and what we are doing to maintain some of our mature tree landscaping. We have had people in our community pulling out existing 50-year-old trees and putting in brand-new trees so they can capture a tree rebate, but they are going from having a tree 50 years old to a tree that is maybe 4 years old. Those are some of the things.

With that, I am going to turn it over to my neighbor, Laura McSwain, to briefly go over some of the reasons she has found in her community on why we need the interim study to examine this more fully. Then we will turn it over for a brief presentation from Dr. Kopp, who is a professor at Utah State University.

Laura McSwain, President, Water Fairness Coalition, Inc.:

Thank you so much for your time earlier today and for the consideration of the additional language for the bill. I am a native of Las Vegas and the founder and president of the Water Fairness Coalition, Inc., which was basically created to bring the community together to answer one basic question. Why would the agency responsible for water delivery and water safety so aggressively seek the removal of elements that so much protect our quality of life, including creating oxygen, air filtration, carbon sequestration, heat mitigation, lots of things we are seeing around this building. While there are other bills trying to address this as well, we are looking at the core issue, which we believe is at the root of our water policies.

Senate Bill 143 should address this, or at least it gets the conversation going. We wonder why we did not consider first how to go in and protect everything while we are conserving. Instead, we basically fell back on the fact that for 20 years, SNWA [Southern Nevada Water Authority] and the Las Vegas Valley Water District (LVVWD) executive team has focused on the removal of grass for water savings and spends millions of dollars each year in community outreach advertising, using Lake Mead levels to convince residents to submit to their policy prescriptions for water savings. However, all the while technology advancements in smart meters, water delivery systems, and other areas of conservation have been overlooked.

Las Vegas is an oasis in the desert and that oasis has been extended through human grit and the tremendous technology advances made by SNWA. Existing residents paid for these assets, which allowed Clark County to grow and maintain quality of life, in spite of the disruption to the desert floor. Technology in one form or fashion will solve the Colorado River shortage impacts. In the immediate, technology and irrigation and turf grasses will reduce water coefficients and have been shown to reduce water consumption while producing our quality of life. I think that is something we can all agree is really in our future's best interest. With that, I would like to introduce Dr. Kelly Kopp, foremost expert in water conservation and turf grass development. [Written testimony in support was also submitted, [Exhibit F.](#)]

Kelly Kopp, Plants, Soils and Climate, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Utah State University:

I am a professor of landscape, water conservation, and turf grass science at Utah State University, where I also direct our Center for Water Efficient Landscaping, which was founded in 1999 to sustain the quality of life we enjoy from landscaping while conserving water. I will begin by saying word has certainly gotten out about Assembly Bill 356 of the 81st Session, and other states are passing or considering nonfunctional turf grass bills, including California.

Like A.B. 356 of the 81 Session, California's Assembly Bill 1572 does not apply to single family or multifamily residential properties, nor does it apply to recycled water use. A big difference between the two bills, however, is California's A.B. 1572 makes exceptions for turf grass growing under trees, as well as exceptions to address immediate health and safety needs. The reason the California bill has an exception for trees with turf grass underneath has

to do with the state's history with turf grass removal. In 2008, when their turf grass removal programs began, they were entirely voluntary and they remained so until the passage of this bill. Unfortunately, their voluntary program resulted in many trees dying and they learned a hard lesson from that experience.

Other states have also adopted nonfunctional-turf grass bills, including Colorado. However, Colorado's bill applies only to new and redeveloped commercial, institutional, industrial, common interest, and state properties. In addition, their bill allows the use of low water use grasses, and grasses developed for arid conditions. Still, other states, like Utah and Texas, have turf removal programs but they remain incentivized and voluntary. Additionally, in San Antonio, Texas, their programs focus more on irrigation than turf replacement because they simply do not see significant water savings by removing grass.

One of the ways a state like Colorado identifies low water-use grasses and grass varieties is through university-based trialing programs. These programs test newly developed grasses under drought conditions to identify those that perform well with much less irrigation. As an example, these are images from trials I have conducted with different varieties of a grass called tall fescue [[Exhibit G](#)]. You can see obvious differences between the images, but what is less obvious is these images were taken after ten weeks without any irrigation whatsoever. Clearly, some were better able to thrive under drought conditions than others.

One of the most important ecosystems or environmental services we get from landscaping is atmospheric cooling, which happens through both shading and evapotranspiration. These cooling effects not only reduce temperatures in urban environments but they also significantly reduce energy use, cooling costs, and the associated carbon emissions from power plants. In these images, for example, taken in the same location at the same time, air and water temperatures are 94 degrees, the grass temperature is 104 degrees, bare sand 132 degrees, asphalt 136 degrees, and the artificial turf grass temperature is 165 degrees.

Related, there has been increasing urban heat island impacts in many cities across the country, Las Vegas included. I would like to share a bit more on that. Since 1970, we know summertime temperatures in the U.S. have been increasing and we also know cities are hotter than rural areas, which is becoming increasingly important because heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths and it disproportionately affects both our youngest and our oldest citizens whose bodies have a reduced capability to handle temperature changes. There is also more ozone pollution associated with urban heat, which can lead to a multitude of other health issues.

Las Vegas has also had the unhappy distinction of having the most intense overnight urban heat island effects. This is a concern as well because it prevents people from recovering from daytime heat stress, which again increases the risk of heat-related illnesses. Not to mention, increased nighttime temperatures also increase plant water requirements. Recently, the Desert Research Institute (DRI) conducted a study of turf removal in urban heat in Henderson. The image on the left shows an area of Wells Park prior to turf removal and the image on the right shows the same area following turf removal. The important thing is the darker colors

represent cooler temperatures. The authors concluded the grass areas in these parks were the coolest features they mapped and the grass removal would lead to warmer surfaces during hot, sunny weather regardless of the surface treatment applied afterward. They also recommended preserving trees as much as possible because their work corroborated other research findings that have quantified the benefits of trees for cooling.

In reviewing DRI's report, I also became aware of additional relevant research from Israel. This research evaluated the cooling capacity of different landscaping strategies in the Negev desert region, which has a similar climate to Las Vegas. The researchers there studied six different cooling strategies, including various combinations of trees, grass, and shade mesh, and measured the associated temperatures. In all cases—and this is illustrated in the figure on the left—using shade mesh actually increased temperature as compared to grass alone, although mesh over the grass was cooler than mesh alone. We generally expect any sort of shade to reduce temperatures, but apparently not all shade is created equal. What I found particularly interesting here were the results on the right, where they compared trees alone, grass alone, and the combination of the two. They found the combination of trees and grass together created more cooling than either trees or grass alone.

Chair Anderson:

Doctor Kopp, I am going to interrupt you very quickly. Did you provide us this PowerPoint? I know there are some individuals who are here in the audience who were looking for it. Was this submitted to our committee manager or will it be submitted after the hearing?

Senator Nguyen:

It is my understanding we submitted this when it was given a hearing, and I believe there are copies on the table. I believe it is already uploaded on the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS) [[Exhibit G](#)].

Chair Anderson:

We wanted to make sure. I am going to ask you to start wrapping it up in the next three to four minutes, that way we can move on.

Kelly Kopp:

There are biophysical reasons for this finding. We know trees, of course, will create shade, they will also reflect solar radiation, and while grass does shade the soil surface to some extent, the primary mechanism by which it cools is the process of evapotranspiration, which in this case was actually cooling the trees above. The enhanced cooling described by the combination of trees and turf grass is one compelling reason to provide exceptions for turf grass growing under trees. California's experience with tree death is another.

We know irrigation system testing and appropriate irrigation scheduling can reduce outdoor water use from 20 to 50 percent, and that is without changing plant materials. However, since Nevada's programs with turf removal began, there have been some really exciting technological advancements with landscape water conservation. Smart irrigation controllers;

multistream, multitrajectory sprinkler nozzles; and the latest low water use grasses, for example, have all demonstrated outdoor water use reductions ranging anywhere from 29 to 55 percent. The question then is how best to achieve water savings while keeping Nevada communities livable, cool, and healthy. [Written testimony was also submitted, [Exhibit H.](#)]

I would like to thank the Chair and Committee again for your time, and I am very happy to answer any questions.

[[Exhibit I](#) was submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

Senator Nguyen:

Thank you, Chair, for your indulgence. Part of the reason I wanted Doctor Kopp to be able to present is that is the very reason I think it would be important for the interim committee to look at this. I will say Southern Nevada Water District and our state has always been on the forefront of live water conservation efforts and looking for the next best thing. If this is in fact the next best thing, I think it should apply to everyone across the state when it comes to excessive water charges or removal of turf. However, I think the science is very dynamic. I think things are always changing. You heard from people who are actually doing academic and scientific research and there are new products, there are other things out there, and we should be flexible enough to adjust when new technologies, new turfs, and new things come around that might aid in the conservation efforts and also protect us from this heat island effect. We are ready for any questions you might have.

Chair Anderson:

Thank you for getting it all back on track. I also appreciate all the work you did on the amendment. Members, are there any questions?

Assemblymember DeLong:

Reading the original bill and the first conceptual amendment, since you took out NDEP [Nevada Division of Environmental Protection] doing the study, how are you expecting what seems like a pretty comprehensive study to be completed during the interim? Are you looking at having staff on the interim committee deal with it? What is your approach there?

Senator Nguyen:

Part of the reason we took that out is we are very cognizant of the financial circumstances and economic forum, realizing our state unfortunately does not have about a million dollars to dedicate to a study like this. I think if the interim committee of legislators is directed to address some of these issues, we can hold hearings during those interim committees, call in experts, call in different people who maybe never had a voice in this Committee or in this legislative body to be able to fully address some of the other options we might have. There might be recommendations that come out of that interim committee we can address in the 2027 Legislative Session, to address either some of these fairness issues, or we will have testimony that maybe we do not need this, or there are other issues that might come up. That is my thinking on how it would take place through the legislative committee hearing testimony.

Assemblymember DeLong:

The bill as it was written, obviously less section 2, was looking at seven different states and how they are approaching water conservation efforts. The impression I got is it seemed to be trying to gather data from how other states are approaching things to maybe do things better in the Las Vegas Valley. With this conceptual amendment focusing on excessive use charges, it looks like it is really a backlash to how Southern Nevada Water Authority is dealing with certain issues in the basin. I understand that, but it seems like it is getting away from the approach. Is it your intent there should actually be two studies here? It appears we are mixing issues.

Senator Nguyen:

I think they are all interrelated. We did not take out the information about looking at the states comprising the Colorado River Basin. That is still considered as part of this bill. We wanted to make sure we are looking at some of these other issues. You heard Dr. Kopp talk about how her research has looked at some of these other states in the surrounding area that may have similar conservation efforts, including California, Utah, and Arizona. My intention is, we are basing excessive water charges or use charges, we are basing the elimination of turf or the insertion of artificial turf, but we are not looking to see whether or not this is in alignment with what other states are doing. Maybe we have the best practices, and what we would learn from this study of other states along the Colorado River is we are in the best position to move forward. But we are not having those conversations. Having this conversation in the interim committee would allow this legislative body to fully vet that in a more thorough manner than a ten-minute hearing in a legislative committee during session.

Assemblymember DeLong:

You had mentioned something about the rates—I forget who spoke about the rates—what are the rates in Las Vegas versus Henderson or Boulder City. Do they all charge the same rates?

Laura McSwain:

The general underlying rates are very comparable. They might be within \$1.50. The City of Las Vegas and unincorporated Clark County are the only parts of the community experiencing excessive use charges. Those are based on a one-size-fits-all, regardless of lot size, which is very, very punishing in an environment where we are trying to expand our tree canopy. Somebody on a one-acre lot versus a quarter-acre lot, the person on the quarter-acre lot technically has four times more water availability per square foot before being impacted with an excessive use charge than the person on a one-acre lot. Somebody on a one-acre lot, based on this model, is relegated, if they want to avoid the excessive use charges, to reducing their use to maybe 20 percent of the properties. My research has shown about a 3,300 square foot lot is about the place where people can avoid the excessive use charges, if that answers your question.

Assemblymember DeLong:

Are you suggesting it would be appropriate in the cities of Henderson and Boulder City to apply the excessive use charges?

Senator Nguyen:

I think that is why we need to look at this during the interim, to see whether or not there is inherent fairness in this. If this is the most accurate, the fairest way to look at overuse, to have this kind of one-size-fits-all model for excessive water charges and that is the best model then, yes, it should probably apply to everyone. All the conservation efforts should not fall on one jurisdiction within the entire state to do that. If it is not, and there are better, more efficient ways to do this, then we should look at those.

Assemblymember Considine:

I want to thank my colleague for bringing up the question because I was a little confused if we were asking for two conflicting things. Nevada is the driest state in the nation, we have some of the fastest growth, and I am grateful for a lot of the studies being done by other states. Being in Las Vegas as long as I have, Las Vegas means meadows. We had all that water until we used it up. I am on the east side; so this is going to be more of a focus question on the east side. If we are doing these things since the heat island effect is actually happening on the east side—it is 10 degrees hotter on the east side—will some of this be focused on those areas regardless of the size of the lot—because they are typically smaller? Because the heat effect is happening more, will there be some parts of this study that will focus on those areas that are really suffering from those heat island effects?

Senator Nguyen:

I think that is exactly what the study in this bill would give to whoever chairs Natural Resources during the interim; the ability to say, Hey, we should look at this. Maybe this model we have or what we are looking at, there are better ways we can combat this. If it is disproportionately affecting certain communities more, what can we do? What can we look at? What are the advances in technology and science we can look at to decrease the heat island effect we have in some of these areas? It could be some of the things we already have existing, like our tree programs and other things. It could be more investments in parks that are in these older neighborhoods that have been neglected. It could be allowing people with mature landscaping to keep it if that is, in fact, decreasing the heat island effect.

I know Senator Neal would probably agree with this statement. In some of these artificial turfs there is PFOS [perfluorooctanesulfonic acid] and "forever chemicals" that are currently allowed, but maybe they should not be allowed as a replacement for grass. Those are all things I think the interim committee should and would be able to look at under this bill if it were to pass.

Chair Anderson:

Members, are there any other questions? [There were none.] I did not think about this question this morning. It was after talking with our incredible staff. This states very specifically it is about the Natural Resources Committee. Our Subcommittee on Public Lands is required to review the programs and activities of the Colorado River Commission in one of our statutes, *Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.525. Are you expecting it both in the Subcommittee on Public Lands as well as the Natural Resources Committee or would the subcommittee's work that is already required in statute suffice for what you are looking for?

Senator Nguyen:

At the end of the day, I think it is always appropriate. I would appreciate the full committee because I think that is a more comprehensive group. However, I do know it is studied. I do not see there being any reason why it cannot be in both of those places. To be quite honest, I would hope no matter what the circumstances are, this interim committee would take a look at these things whether or not they were mandated to by statute or not, because I think it is an important issue that affects a lot of our constituents. Looking at the science being on the forefront of whatever new technologies and inherent fairness there might be in this process is there.

I think part of the reason for this hearing—and you might hear from a lot of my neighbors and community members in support of this piece of legislation—is because they feel their voice has really been lost in this legislative process. They feel their voice has been lost in these water authority meetings and other places where they are not hearing from people who are doing the science, whether it is horticulturists or scientists like Dr. Kopp. They are hearing from executives and other people who have an interest in maintaining the status quo.

Chair Anderson:

Seeing no other questions, we will move to testimony. We will do 20 minutes of support, 20 minutes of opposition, and 20 minutes of neutral. We will start in Las Vegas. Is there anyone who would like to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 143 in Las Vegas? If you are in Carson City, you may also come up to the table.

Stacy Standley, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a retired director of the World Wildlife Fund at the International Secretariat in Switzerland, and a former director of the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies. Assembly Bill 356 of the 81st Session was not science based. That is the reason this amendment is critical to correct a wrong that is destroying our environment unnecessarily. Grass under trees is critical to the survival of Las Vegas. This is a statement you will probably hear repeated often from the Southern Nevada Arborist Group, which is a group of 120 certified arborists. Their position is grass is what keeps trees alive.

The Nevada urban forester [sic] in Carson City also did a report. That report extrapolated the water requirements of trees in southern Nevada. Our trees require more water than the grass under them. This was recently confirmed by the DRI study on turf removal and urban heat done in Henderson last year and reported in December this year. They concluded grass shaded by trees uses 50 percent less water than open field grass. Therefore, we are saving water, saving trees, and protecting our environment by keeping the grass under the trees. A UNLV professor where I lecture published several books on trees and he took us for a walk around the UNLV campus where the turf under the trees had been removed and the trees are now dying.

Las Vegas is under an ozone advisory since 1919 [sic]. This is from April through September. Interestingly, just last week, a full page ad in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* by an air conditioning company stated Las Vegas air is not just dry, it is dirty. This is the way they are making money. They are talking about how terrible our air quality is even though we think we have got great air quality. This is a problem of not having a proper environment. The SNWA mandate to remove 3,900 acres of grass by December 2026 will cost the residents of Las Vegas \$1.2 billion based upon the conversion cost to xeriscaping after the rebate by SNWA, according to one [unintelligible] board member who was one of the very few who actually is a landscape professional.

Chair Anderson:

Sir, if you could start wrapping it up.

Stacy Standley:

The reason for the environmentally degrading and economically penalizing impact of SNWA, A.B. 356 of the 81st Session, is due to lack of oversight and accountability required by other agencies that operate under public utilities such as Southwest Gas, NV Energy, and even NDOT [Department of Transportation]. This bill and the amendment will bring the necessary structure to evaluating the decisions being made by SNWA. [Written testimony was also submitted, [Exhibit J](#)].

Chair Anderson:

Thank you, sir, we must move on. Please submit your testimony in writing if needed.

Yvette Williams, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am speaking not on behalf of any of the organizations I belong to as an activist, but for myself. I actually live in Senator Nguyen's district and there has been a huge lack of oversight, fairness, justice, and strong-handed policies implemented in the last couple of years. It is punitive and unjust.

Senate Bill 143 will help provide our state's governing body with more oversight and us, the people, with more transparency. Too many policies are being implemented behind closed doors without public input. Unfortunately, the integrity of open meeting laws is questionable. Recent policies are extreme and punitive, although residents have cut back tremendously on water use as indicated by monthly water bills showing significant savings year after year. Southern Nevada Water Authority is squeezing the life out of us as reflected in these pictures [[Exhibit K](#)]. I know you might not be able to see them, but this is our beautiful park at Davis Park. This is a canopy we had just three years ago. This is the canopy last year and you can see it starting to decline. We just had our fourth annual neighborhood block party on Saturday and this is what the canopy looks like now. If you drive around our neighborhood, you see dying trees all over the place. This is totally unacceptable.

The trees in my yard provide enough clean oxygen for my entire block. My backyard serves our wildlife as a place of refuge for migrating birds, pollinators, trees, which provide enough oxygen for everyone on my entire block, God's grass so those birds have worms and insects to eat. My backyard is certified by the National Wildlife Association as a certified backyard habitat. We watched just yesterday a mother hawk feeding her new baby in the nest in our tree. They come two to three times a year.

Another example is the excessive use charge penalties adopted in 2022 targeting older neighborhoods. You may not realize that these penalties are regularly more than the actual cost of my water. The excessive water charge is higher than my actual water commodity. The fact is, we are not rich in our neighborhood. We are working class people who bought our homes 25 years ago and sometimes longer.

Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Miss Williams. If you could please make sure to submit the pictures and if you have your testimony in writing, you are more than welcome to submit that as well

Norman Schilling, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am an arborist and horticulturalist. I have worked as an arborist and horticulturist in southern Nevada for almost 40 years. I am the owner of Schilling Horticulture Group and Mojave Bloom Nursery. I am also a founding member of the Southern Nevada Arborist Group. I am here to testify on behalf of our urban forest. It is under assault, it is dying. These are really strong statements, but I have watched literally tens of thousands of trees, mature trees especially, dying. These trees build their root system to take best advantage of the existing systems, water systems that are beneath them, and many species need the lawns they have grown in. You take the lawn out, they die. The value of our urban forest is incredibly important in battling the urban heat island effect here in the valley and global warming.

These trees, especially our heritage trees, are at the forefront of this battle against the heat war. With that comes the issue of artificial turf, which the SNWA and LVVWD are promoting by giving rebates for the use of it, as Kelly Kopp pointed out. My experience was, when I would take those temperatures on a 105-degree day: concrete, full sun, 155 degrees; asphalt, full sun, 165 degrees; artificial turf, full sun on a 105-degree day, 180 degrees. Grass in the meantime was somewhere around 89 degrees to 92 degrees. The effect of grass is actually very cooling. It is helping our urban forest and the myopic and incredible lack of vision of LVVWD, and Southern Nevada Water Authority is actually damaging our environment, our economy, and our quality of life to a great degree. The SNWA and the LVVWD have imposed many of these policies without oversight and without notification of the community itself. We need to have much greater oversight.

The other thing I want to say is on the excessive use charges, I think Las Vegas and unincorporated Clark County are probably paying the highest water rates in the Southwest.

Chair Anderson:

Mr. Schilling, if you could start wrapping up your statement.

Norman Schilling:

I will do so. I do a lot of consultations. People with half-acre lots are telling me, Look, I bought this place because of the grass and the trees and my children. Now I have to choose between paying my mortgage and paying for my water bill.

Chair Anderson:

We will continue support testimony in Carson City, then we have three callers, before returning to Las Vegas.

Christi Cabrera-Georgeson, Deputy Director, Nevada Conservation League and Education Fund:

We are here in support of S.B. 143. As the driest state in the nation, Nevadans place a high value on the conservation of our water resources. Recent polling shows 92 percent of Nevadans are concerned about inadequate water supplies in our state. We are grateful to Southern Nevada Water Authority and the legislator's leadership in implementing strategies to help the state become a leader in water conservation efforts across the West. We believe critical conversations about robust water conservation strategies continue in the interim, and we are looking forward to being part of those.

Chair Anderson:

Is there anyone else in Carson City who would like to testify in support? [There was no one.] We will take the three callers on the phone.

Robert Hillsman, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I previously testified in support of S.B. 143. As our air quality falls and our temperatures rise, there is only one way to combat the rapidly rising carbon dioxide levels in our city: with plants and trees and utilizing the energy of the sun via photosynthesis to convert CO² into oxygen and water. This process is critical for clean air, cooler temperatures, and our very survival. Each mature tree provides enough oxygen for over four adults each day. My landscaping supports approximately 200 trees, so greater than 800 adults and children benefit. I am doing my part to support the community and clean our shared air.

Very briefly, my career includes a degree in psychology from the University of Colorado, [inaudible] certified patrolman for the City of Colorado Springs, then seven years in Denver, where I remained the public service officer for the University of Colorado. I received my medical doctor degree, then trained as a board-certified anesthesiologist. I returned to Colorado Springs to serve in the city/county level I trauma center. Years later, I was recruited to come to Las Vegas to help establish their new level I trauma center at University Medical Center. This is a bigger contribution to our community.

I bought a home built in 1989, Section 10 of Clark County. Section 10 was a magical place—no streetlights, no sewer, septic only, and a minimum lot size of one-half acre. My lot size is 1.25 acres after hundreds of thousands of dollars in landscaping. Despite the removal of grass, my water bill now exceeds \$3,000 per month. This is due to the very unfair lowered limited gallons in each [unintelligible], plus the very abusive excess water surcharges. Newer

homes in Section 10 have little or no greenery to speak of. For example, a home recently built behind me on 1.25 acres is 13,500 square feet with a secondary home on the property of 2,400 square feet. It is all concrete, artificial plastic grass, and two home sites. It does absolutely nothing to help clean the air or cool our rapidly escalating urban heat island effect. Because I am on septic, no sewer, I cannot build anything further and this devalues my land. The estimates provided by the county to bring sewer into Section 10 are in the range of multiple millions of dollars.

Chair Anderson:

Sir, if you could start wrapping up your comments,

Robert Hillsman:

I am down to the last few sentences. Las Vegas, second only to Reno, has the most rapidly increasing temperature in the entire country. On Saturday, May 3, 2025, at the community center, Commissioner Jones announced all the trees in our beautiful large mature neighborhood park were to be removed. Finally, I have been here for 30 years—

[Written testimony was also submitted, [Exhibit L.](#)]

Chair Anderson:

Thank you, sir. We will be moving on to the next caller. You may submit the rest of your comments in writing. Next caller, please.

Julie Wignall, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a resident of Senator Nguyen's district and I would like to thank her for her work on this bill. I am an international consultant specializing in environmental conservation and leadership within organizations and corporations. I am here today in support of this bill with the amendments as presented.

Nevada faces critical decisions about the future of our environment, especially when it comes to water use. Southern Nevada Water Authority has done an excellent job recycling indoor water and that is a key part of the conservation. But conservation is not just about recycling water from our taps, it is also about making smart, balanced choices for our outdoor spaces. Our grass and trees play an essential role in filtering our air pollution, cooling the heat island effect, and supporting biodiversity, even here in the desert.

Las Vegas is on the Pacific Flyway, a migratory path used by hundreds of thousands of birds and waterfowl. These animals depend upon these places under trees and on grass to rest, to eat, and refuel. As we remove grass and trees, we are taking away an important habitat for them, at a time when nearly one half of the world's migratory species are experiencing decline. Residents who responsibly manage larger lots with environmentally beneficial landscaping should not be penalized with excessive use fees.

Finally, artificial turf should be better regulated. It may look green but it carries toxic consequences. I would like to see us aim for an environmental policy that is not only smart and efficient but also sustainable and healthy for generations to come.

Chair Anderson:

Just so everybody knows, there are about six minutes left for support testimony. There is nothing wrong with a ditto. Next caller and then we will be able to go back to Las Vegas.

Pete Foley, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am a Ph.D. chemist whose thesis was in the area of environmental chemistry. I am also more recently a published behavioral scientist who specializes in behavioral modification in marketing communication, especially in the context of areas associated with science.

I would like to make two quick points. The first is on the whole issue with toxicity and fake or plastic grass. The bottom line with the potential toxicity of these materials is the high temperature conditions in southern Nevada and the record temperatures we are experiencing make us uniquely susceptible to unwanted toxicity, degradation, and chemical pollution from this synthetic grass. This uniqueness makes it absolutely critical we have dedicated environmental impact studies carried out in Nevada before we continue with further large-scale conversion of our natural grass to synthetic. These record temperatures mean we are now likely to see much higher levels of contamination because chemical reactions occur as a function of temperature. The higher the temperatures are, the faster those reactions are likely to be. To some extent, Nevada is at the very edge of likely conditions and the worst possible case for synthetic grass. We need our own studies before we carry on with this.

The second point is in my area as a behavioral scientist. The extreme amount of money being used by southern Nevada for so-called outreach, somewhere between \$10 million and \$35 million, depending on how you look at it. This is really money directed toward behavioral manipulation and carrot and stick attempts to cut community water consumption. While that is laudable in its own right, the hardship many people have been describing to me on the unfairness of the way the penalties are being applied means what Southern Nevada Water Authority is actually doing—

Chair Anderson:

Thank you, sir. If you can start wrapping up your comments,

Pete Foley, Private Citizen:

They are creating resistance to future conservation because there is a thing called—

[Written testimony was also submitted [\[Exhibit M\]](#)].

Chair Anderson:

Thank you, sir. If you would please submit the rest of your comments in writing to our committee manager, that would be great. There are about three more minutes left. I would like to be able to go back to the people in Las Vegas. Again, there is nothing wrong with saying ditto. If you would like to say your name and ditto, whoever would like to start first may do so.

Li Chen, Community Organizer, One APIA Nevada:

We are a grassroots group working to empower the Asian community. I have also lived in Las Vegas for many years in a condominium community. I really appreciate this chance to speak in support of S.B. 143.

Like many people here, I have watched our community make big changes to save water. I fully support those efforts. In my neighborhood, I have seen natural grass being replaced with artificial turf in nonrecreational areas—like road medians, parking lot edges, and building fronts. Those spaces are not meant for playing or walking, I understand that. Even so, I have noticed how intensely hot the artificial turf gets during our summer months. The air around it feels hotter and sometimes you can smell the heat coming off the surface. Even in areas where people are not supposed to walk, this added heat affects the overall feel of the neighborhood and makes already hot air feel even more uncomfortable.

I also wonder about what happens over time. What chemicals might be in those materials and what happens when they break down in the sun or rain. I think those are fair questions to ask. I believe S.B. 143 is a smart, reasonable way to find answers.

This bill is not trying to ban anything but just to study the long-term impact of artificial turf on our environment, water conservation, and the public health. That seems like a reasonable thing to do before we install more of it. Thank you for your time, and I respectfully urge you to support S.B. 143. [Written testimony was also submitted [[Exhibit N](#).]]

Chair Anderson:

Thank you, Mr. Chen. I realize there are two other individuals at the table. If you would simply state your name and the fact you support the bill. We have reached our 20 minutes. I will allow you to state your name and state you are in support.

Tera Anderson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I do support this bill.

Diane Henry, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I do support this bill.

[[Exhibit O](#) was submitted but not discussed and will become part of the record.]

Chair Anderson:

We have exceeded the 20 minutes allotted. You are more than welcome to submit your testimonies in support if you wish to do so.

We will move to opposition. Testimony in opposition will again have 20 minutes. Is there anyone in Elko, Las Vegas, Carson City, or on the phone to provide opposition testimony? [There was no one.] We will move to neutral. Is there anyone in Elko, Las Vegas, or Carson City to provide neutral testimony?

Andrew Belanger, Director, Public Services, Las Vegas Valley Water District:

I am here today with comments about S.B. 143. We clearly support the idea of doing a study and going in front of the Interim Committee on Natural Resources to talk about each of these topics. Particularly in the bill as it was introduced, as we just saw the conceptual amendment when it came in, we probably need to spend a little bit of time looking at that language.

I want to note for the record, you heard a lot of things about the Water District and the Water Authority. I think the interim committee will be the appropriate place for us to describe why we did what we did, why it was important, how it helped the community, how it prepared the community for the future, and how it ensures our community can grow and develop. I could take maybe 20 minutes and respond to all the questions and all the comments. I am not going to do that, but I am happy to talk to anybody offline about why we did what we did.

In the meantime, I will note Las Vegas, Nevada, gets 2 percent of the flows of the Colorado River. Because of that, the decisions we make are different than what a state makes that gets a heck of a lot more water. That is why our turf programs are the way they are. That is why our community programs are the way they are. The excessive use charge was designed to increase water conservation among people who are price insensitive to water conservation, and it has done that. It was designed to hit the top 10 percent of water customers. It only hits the top 6 percent of water customers, because nearly half of them have changed their behavior. The people who are still paying that have been resistant to change. I would just note for the record, A.B. 356 of the 81st Session, which was passed four years ago, does not apply to single family residences. They can have grass, they can have trees, they are allowed to do that. If they are going to have a lot of grass and a lot of trees, then they are going to have to pay for that, and that is the thinking behind that. We are happy to further the conversation later.

Chair Anderson:

Is there anyone else in Carson City or on the phone for neutral testimony? [There was no one.] Senator Nguyen has messaged me she will not need to make any closing remarks. I will close the hearing on S.B. 143.

We will move on to our work session. [Rules and protocol were explained.] We will start with Senate Bill 106.

Senate Bill 106: Revises provisions relating to the operation of vessels. (BDR 43-371)

Becky Peratt, Committee Policy Analyst:

As nonpartisan legislative staff, I neither support nor oppose any of the measures before this Committee.

Senate Bill 106 is sponsored by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources on behalf of the Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. It was heard on April 28, 2025 [[Exhibit P](#)]. The bill makes it a misdemeanor to operate or permit to be operated any vessel at a speed of more than five nautical mph within 600 feet of the Lake Tahoe shoreline. There are no amendments.

Chair Anderson:

Are there any questions? Seeing none, I will entertain a motion to do pass Senate Bill 106.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER LA RUE HATCH MADE A MOTION TO DO
PASS SENATE BILL 106.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER KARRIS SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblymember La Rue Hatch. Next is Senate Bill 405 (1st Reprint).

Senate Bill 405 (1st Reprint): Creates the Transit-to-Trails Task Force (BDR 35-382)

Becky Peratt, Committee Policy Analyst:

Senate Bill 405 (1st Reprint) is sponsored by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources on behalf of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources. It was heard on April 30, 2025 [[Exhibit Q](#)]. The bill creates the Transit-to-Trails Task Force and there are no amendments.

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Chair Anderson:

Are there any questions? [There were none.] I will entertain a motion to do pass Senate Bill 405 (1st Reprint).

ASSEMBLYMEMBER LA RUE HATCH MADE A MOTION TO DO PASS SENATE BILL 405 (1ST REPRINT).

ASSEMBLYMEMBER WATTS SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblymember Watts.

We will move to the last item on our agenda, which is public comment. [Rules and protocol were explained.] Is there anybody in Carson City, Elko, Las Vegas or on the phone wishing to provide public comment? [There was no one.]

Our next meeting is on Wednesday, May 7, 2025. This meeting is adjourned [at 5:40 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Karen Cook
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblymember Natha C. Anderson, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
S.B. 215 (R1)	C	Senator Robin L. Titus, Senate District No. 17	Article titled "Chronic Wasting Disease (CDW) is Knocking on Nevada's Door"
S.B. 215 (R1)	D	Senator Robin L. Titus, Senate District No. 17	Memo from Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau, titled "Summary of Roadkill Laws in Other States"
S.B. 143	E	Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen, Senate District No. 3	Conceptual amendment
S.B. 143	F	Laura McSwain, President, Water Fairness Coalition, Inc.	Testimony in support
S.B. 143	G	Kelly Kopp, Plants, Soils and Climate, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Utah State University	PowerPoint presentation titled "Expert Testimony on Landscape Water Conservation and Preservation"
S.B. 143	H	Kelly Kopp, Plants, Soils and Climate, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Utah State University	Copy of presentation notes
S.B. 143	I	Kelly Kopp, Plants, Soils and Climate, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Utah State University	Curriculum Vitae
S.B. 143	J	Stacy Standley, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Testimony in support
S.B. 143	K	Yvette Williams, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Testimony in support
S.B. 143	L	Robert Hillsman, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Testimony in support
S.B. 143	M	Pete Foley, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada	Testimony in support
S.B. 143	N	Li Chen, Community Organizer, One APIA, Nevada	Testimony in support
S.B. 143	O	Southern Nevada Arborist Group	Testimony in support

S.B. 106	P	Becky Peratt, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau	Work Session Document
S.B. 405 (R1)	Q	Becky Peratt, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau	Work Session Document