

Nevada Board of Agriculture

Meeting Minutes – Draft

Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.



Nevada
Department
of Agriculture

Meeting Location: Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA)

405 S. 21st Street
Sparks, NV 89431
775-353-3601

Video Conference:

NDA
2300 East St. Louis Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89104
702-668-4590

NDA
4780 East Idaho Street
Elko, NV 89801
775-778-0270

Agenda

1. Open meeting-Chairman Snyder called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Moment of Silent Reflection
- C. Virtual Attendee Reminders
- D. Roll call – Total Attendees (38)
 - Board of Agriculture (10):
 - Jim Snyder
 - Thomas Baker
 - Mackenzie Campbell
 - Hank (James) Combs
 - David Coon
 - Debbie Gilmore
 - Varlin Higbee
 - Heather Lackey
 - David Ruf
 - Craig Schank
 - Deputy Attorney General Richard Yien (1):
 - Department of Agriculture (21):
 - J.J. Goicoechea
 - Doug Farris
 - Cathy Balcon
 - Meghan Brown
 - Scott Clifford
 - Heather Countryman
 - Jake Dawley
 - William Dawson
 - Julieanna Hendrix
 - Patricia Hoppe

- Julia Miller-Ketcham
- Brittany Mally
- Ciara Ressel
- Pete Rolfe
- Shawna Sabo
- Ray Saliga
- Melanie Sanchez
- Chad Sestanovich
- Liz Smith
- Bill Striejewske
- Scottie Vega
- Public Attendees (6):
 - Leana Carey
 - Jim DeChambeau
 - Tim Goff
 - Janet Hou
 - Phil Johnson
 - Mary Snyder

2. Public Comment

The Nevada Department of Agriculture received no public comments in advance of the meeting.

- **Virtual Public Comments (Microsoft Teams)**
 - Mary Snyder (Snyder Livestock, Yerington, Nevada) encouraged Nevada's agricultural community and the Board of Agriculture to oppose Senate Bill 172. She stated that Senate Bill 172 is dangerous for the agricultural industry and highlighted three major components that cause concern: overtime for agricultural workers, farm worker protections, and the ability for agricultural workers to form unions. She noted that farm workers in other states have been documented to earn less money after the implementation of similar overtime laws. She said that an increased use of alcohol and drugs has also been recorded among farm workers in Oregon and Washington since the implementation of overtime legislation. Regarding farm worker protections, she indicated that the bill's sponsor acknowledged that these protections are already codified in existing federal and state laws; therefore, they are unnecessary. Finally, she stated that the potential unionization of agriculture workers could be disruptive to the food supply, which is why the National Labor Relations Act presently excludes farm workers. She concluded by stating farm workers do not want unions, and the bill would administratively burden Nevada ranchers.

3. Minutes

- A. *Approve December 6, 2024, meeting minutes (*for possible action*)
 - Board Member Combs moved to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2024, meeting with the following corrections:
 - On page 5, the spelling of Jim DeChamo be corrected to Jim DeChambeau;
 - On page 10, the industry of Member Schank be corrected from Dairy to Veterinary Medicine; and

- On page 10, the spelling of Member Ruff be corrected to Ruf.
- The motion was seconded by Member Lackey and passed 9-0 (3 absent; Member Higbee abstained, citing his absence from the December 6, 2024, meeting).

4. Board Management

A. *Appointment of one Board member to the Predatory Animal and Rodent Control (PARC) Committee (*for possible action*)

- Member Lackey moved to appoint Member Schank to the Predatory Animal and Rodent Control Committee.
- The motion was seconded by Member Campbell and passed 10-0 (3 absent).

B. Legislative Update – Director Goicoechea and Julieanna Hendrix, Executive Assistant (*for information only*)

Director Goicoechea provided an update on the following budget accounts and policy bills under consideration in the 83rd Session of the Legislature:

- Budget Account 4552
- Budget Account 4545
- Budget Account 3194
- **Assembly Bill 29**—Revises provisions relating to motor vehicle fuel. (BDR 51-271)
- **Assembly Bill 80**—Revises provisions relating to soil health. (BDR 49-387)
- **Assembly Bill 85**—Authorizes the management of designated invertebrates. (BDR 45-229)
- **Assembly Bill 171**—Revises provisions relating to the State Quarantine Officer. (BDR 51-985)
- **Assembly Bill 208**—Restricts the use of certain products by governmental entities and government-funded entities. (BDR 19-737)
- **Assembly Bill 251**—Revises provisions relating to the inspection of meat and poultry. (BDR 51-154)
- **Assembly Bill 268**—Makes an appropriation to the State Department of Agriculture for universal free breakfast and lunch for Nevada pupils. (BDR S-340)
- **Assembly Bill 333**—Revises provisions relating to governmental administration. (BDR 49-833)
- **Assembly Bill 352**—Revises provisions relating to businesses. (BDR 51-890)
- **Assembly Bill 405**—Revises provisions relating to agriculture. (BDR 50-911)
- **Senate Bill 31**—Revises provisions relating to the adjudication of vested water rights. (BDR 48-260)
- **Senate Bill 36**—Establishes provisions relating to the conservation of groundwater. (BDR 48-384)
- **Senate Bill 172**—Prescribes certain rights for agricultural workers. (BDR 53-959)
- **Senate Bill 204**—Establishes provisions relating to employment. (BDR 53-724)
- **Senate Bill 233**—Revises provisions relating to agriculture. (BDR 51-704)
- **Senate Bill 274**—Establishes provisions governing state boards and commissions. (BDR 18-973)
- **Senate Bill 282**—Revises provisions relating to food security. (BDR 18-75)

Chairman Snyder called for a break at 10:25 a.m.

Chairman Snyder called the meeting back to order at 10:36 a.m.

C. *Discussion and potential adoption of formal Board position on the measures being considered in the 83rd Legislative Session (*for possible action*)

- **Senate Bill 172**—Prescribes certain rights for agricultural workers. (BDR 53-959)
 - Member Schank moved that the Board oppose Senate Bill 172 and authorize the Director to represent the Board's position at the Legislature.
 - The motion was seconded by Member Higbee.
 - Member Combs inquired whether the Director would need approval from the Governor's Office to represent the Board's position at the Legislature. Director Goicoechea clarified that the adoption of a formal Board position would provide cause to seek approval from the Governor's Office to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 172.
 - The motion passed 10-0 (3 absent).
- **Senate Bill 31**—Revises provisions relating to the adjudication of vested water rights. (BDR 48-260)
 - Member Combs moved that the Board oppose Senate Bill 31.
 - Member Baker seconded the motion.
 - Member Ruf raised concerns about the reduction in groundwater due to potential overpumping, suggesting that federal regulation may be beneficial for the prevention of overpumping. Director Goicoechea acknowledged that while the overpumping of groundwater is a concern, this bill only pertains to vested claims for surface rights.
 - Member Higbee inquired how the federal government can prove beneficial use of surface water. Director Goicoechea cited firefighting and instream flows for wildlife as two reasons, among others, that the federal government can use as a basis for securing vested claims for surface rights.
 - The motion passed 10-0 (3 absent).
- **Senate Bill 204**—Establishes provisions relating to employment. (BDR 53-724)
 - Member Baker moved that the Board support Senate Bill 204.
 - The motion was seconded by Member Combs and passed 10-0 (3 absent).
- **Assembly Bill 333**—Revises provisions relating to governmental administration. (BDR 49-833)
 - Member Schank moved that the Board support Assembly Bill 333.
 - Member Campbell seconded the motion.
 - Member Ruf mentioned a state fair that is held in Carson City and expressed concern over drawing the event away from the state capital. Director Goicoechea clarified that the event referenced by Member Ruf is not the official state fair, which is statutorily authorized to take place under the direction of the Nevada Department of Agriculture.
 - Member Combs inquired whether an entity branded as the "Nevada State Fair" would have any effect on an official state fair. Director Goicoechea clarified that the bill does not create a Nevada State Fair; rather, it restores authority and oversight of the Nevada State Fairgrounds to the NDA. Deputy Director Farris further clarified that the bill renames the

Washoe County Fairgrounds as the Nevada State Fairgrounds and establishes an account by which the department can accept gifts, donations, and other revenue for the promotion of agriculture and to invest into maintaining and improving the facility.

- Chairman Snyder asked if the bill applies to a specific portion of the property. Director Goicoechea explained that under the provisions of the bill, the southern portion of the property will continue to be leased by Washoe County, and the northern part of the property will be administered by the NDA.
- Chairman Snyder inquired whether the Reno Rodeo has expressed a stance on the bill. Director Goicoechea confirmed that the Reno Rodeo is supportive and testified in that position during the bill hearing.
- The motion passed 10-0 (3 absent).
- **Senate Bill 260**—Revises provisions relating to air quality. (BDR 53-961)
 - Member Baker moved that the Board oppose Senate Bill 260.
 - The motion was seconded by Member Combs and passed 10-0 (3 absent).

D. Board Member Updates on Represented Industries (*for information only*)

- Dave Coon, representing Dairy Production, stated that highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) continues to affect both cattle and birds. He expressed gratitude to the Board, the industry, and the NDA for continued oversight and support, including NDA Public Information Officer Ciara Ressel for her assistance fielding numerous media inquiries related to HPAI. Member Coon emphasized that pasteurization and proper safety protocols are key and are being adhered to by dairy producers. He stated that Lisa Burnett, NDA Operations Manager – Dairy/Food Safety, and others continue to visit dairy production facilities to keep the industry in stable condition.
- Hank (James) Combs, representing General Agriculture, stated that labor is an issue, as are tariffs and their potential effects on inputs and prices. He cited Senate Bill 172 as an industry concern, along with the lack of water resulting from dry conditions.
- Heather Lackey, representing Pest Control, expressed concern over the management of rodents and Mormon crickets. She stated that her operation is up by more than 185 percent in regard to the treatment of rodents following recent rainfall.
- Thomas Baker, representing Semi-Range Cattle Production, stated that cattle prices are up; however, the southern part of the state has been dry. The latest snow survey resulted in two historic low levels at the end of February. Additionally, feeder hay is becoming scarcer, highlighting the need for spring storms.
- Craig Schank, representing Veterinary Medicine, applauded the Director's recent recruitment of Dr. Pete Rolfe as the Nevada State Veterinarian and stated his belief that Dr. Rolfe will be a blessing to the state. He lamented the outbreak of HPAI but expressed hope that residents who feed their pets a raw diet or unpasteurized milk will become aware that such practices are unsafe and can make animals ill.
- Varlin Higbee, representing Semi-Range Cattle Production, referenced Member Baker's comments and again called attention to dry conditions in southern

Nevada. He stated that forage is still adequate from last year, but more moisture is certainly needed. He affirmed that prices are good as calving season approaches, but cow hay may be needed if dry conditions persist.

- Mackenzie Campbell, representing Petroleum, thanked the Governor's Office and the NDA for working with the industry to prevent any disruption to the fuel supply during the Los Angeles fires earlier this year. She stated that 90 percent of Nevada's fuel supply comes from California via pipeline, which leaves it vulnerable to disruption during emergencies. She also expressed gratitude to the NDA for sponsoring Assembly Bill 29 and stated that the fuel business continues to do well.
- David Ruf, representing Nursery Stock, called attention to legislative measures in other western states that require homeowners to utilize exclusively native and locally harvested materials to landscape their yards. He stated that the purpose of such legislation is to assist pollinators, reduce water consumption, and protect against fire, but that these measures, even though they may sound well-intentioned, can be detrimental to almost all communities. He urged opposition if similar legislation were to be introduced in Nevada.
- Debbie Gilmore, representing Specialty Crops, provided an update on the 15th Annual Nevada State Beekeepers Conference and the American Beekeeping Federation's annual conference. She called attention to the current nationwide crisis of declining bee populations. She warned that the losses are severe, geographically broad, and likely to affect food security and grocery prices. She said millions of dollars' worth of bees have been lost since January in California. Of nearly 2 million colonies that were needed for almond pollination, fewer than 300,000 colonies were available. She said that some commercial beekeepers have lost from 70 to 100 percent of their colonies over the past year. In Nevada, most local beekeepers are working to secure replacement bees from suppliers in northern California. A bill in the U.S. House of Representatives has been introduced to protect the integrity of the honey market. In addition to losses, a lack of local expertise is another challenge facing Nevada beekeepers. Some producers have had to reach out to out-of-state researchers to assist in investigating the cause of their bee losses. She estimated that honey production is down by at least 80 percent over the last year.
- Chairman Snyder, representing Row Crops, discussed Agriculture Day at the Legislature and commended the NDA, Farm Bureau, and the broader agricultural community for supporting the event. He cited damaging windstorms and a below-normal water supply as two challenges facing the industry. Otherwise, he said the agricultural business in Lyon County is proceeding as normal.

5. Director's Report

A. Report – J.J. Goicoechea, Director (*for information only*)

- Nevada State Veterinarian Dr. Pete Rolfe and Executive Assistant Julieanna Hendrix were introduced, and NDA staff were thanked for their work orchestrating Agriculture Day at the Legislature.
- The Director and Alan Jenne, Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife, represented the State of Nevada in the Western Governors Association Greater Sage Grouse Task Force. Nevada aligned with five other western states on proposed changes and provided an extensive governors' consistency review that is

currently awaiting a response. The intent is to build on the existing plan from 2024, rather than starting completely over.

- Nevada's biosecurity protocols were covered in a presentation by the Director at two national events earlier in the quarter—Cattle Con 2025 in Texas and the League Footing Academies and Symposium in Las Vegas.
- The NDA submitted comments to the Bureau of Land Management regarding the proposed re-establishment of desert bighorn sheep in the Cortez Mountains. The comments highlighted the need to protect domestic livestock and reinstate suspended AUMs to local permittees.
- Statewide silo testing of HPAI was implemented in December of 2024, precipitating the discovery of a new variant in northern Nevada. Nevada found itself in the center of the national media for several weeks, and the Director identified NDA Public Information Officer Ciara Ressel as being immensely helpful in his task of keeping the public calm and informed. Despite Dr. Rolfe being new to his position as Nevada State Veterinarian, he immediately assisted with visiting producers in the field to answer questions and support their disease response.
- After encountering collaborator issues with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Wildlife Services, Animal Industry Administrator Chad Sestanovich organized staff from across the state to accomplish abatement of starlings, which was key to stopping the spread of HPAI. The outbreak remains contained in Churchill County.
- The Director invited Dr. Rolfe to speak about his background. Dr. Rolfe outlined his experience managing a response to the B3.13 variant of HPAI during his previous tenure with the Colorado Department of Agriculture. He explained that the clinical symptoms of the D1.1 variant are milder in comparison to B3.13. The milder symptoms of D1.1 include lower losses of milk production and a shorter duration of infection.
- Dr. Rolfe stated that out of 13 dairies in Churchill County, 10 have been infected and quarantined. Quarantines have already been released on 3 dairies following three consecutive weeks of negative bulk tank testing and no presence of clinical symptoms.
- Dr. Rolfe explained that the source of the outbreak is still being studied, and the likeliest origin is spillover from wild birds. He stated that after conducting extensive epidemiological surveys and genetic studies, it remains difficult to definitively identify the source of the outbreak and determine whether each farm experienced its own incursion or whether the virus spread from one farm to the next. Nevertheless, he affirmed that containment has thus far been successful, and the variant has not spread beyond Churchill County. Statewide bulk tank testing will continue until the department determines it is no longer necessary.
- Director Goicoechea commended producers in Churchill County for adhering to guidance administered by the NDA. He also highlighted the NDA's lockstep partnership with state and local health authorities to ensure the safety of farm workers.
- The Director sent a letter this week to USDA Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins outlining funding concerns and the urgent need to preserve the collaborative partnership with Wildlife Services.

6. Division of Plant Health and Compliance

A. Board Update – Meghan Brown, Administrator (*for information only*)

- A temporary regulation hearing on Nevada Administrative Code 586, regarding increasing the annual registration fee for each pesticide, was held on March 3. A permanent adoption hearing will take place after the conclusion of the 83rd Session of the Legislature.
- The division is continuously receiving new information regarding the status of federal grants. A previous hold on the Specialty Crop Block Grant has been removed. Additionally, the Native Seed Contract Grow-Outs, the Foundation Seed Program, and entomology and pathology survey work are able to move forward at this time.
- The division has drafted comments on Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service projects concerning public lands, wild horses and burros, grazing permits, and energy developments.
- The Plant Pathology laboratory completed analysis of 1,806 soil and plant samples, which are used to detect exotic pathogens.
- Over the previous quarter, Seed Certification and Native Seed programs have seen an uptick in source identification, certifying 129 sites and tagging 117,501 pounds of seeds collected on public lands.
- The Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Technical Team is assisting producers with applying for virtual fence projects, which are beneficial for moving and containing livestock.
- Laboratories in the Plant Division are officially part of the Laboratory Information Management System. The division has seen a large increase in the processing of samples, including ground/surface water, hemp, and pesticides.
- So far in this fiscal year, 256 federal and state phytosanitary certifications have been issued, allowing for the export of hay, coffee, mushroom spawn, onion, sage, and other spices. A slight drop in onion exports has been observed compared to last year.
- The division's Hemp Program has received 6 applications from growers and 7 applications from handlers, covering 7.5 acres of outdoor production and over 207,000 square feet of indoor production.
- The division is stepping up regulatory actions in the Noxious Weed Program. So far this fiscal year, 754 regulatory letters have been sent out, which is a significant increase from the last fiscal year.
- The NDA cannot implement treatment of Mormon crickets and grasshoppers until USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service completes its environmental assessment (EA) for Nevada, which is currently in draft form. The window of accomplishing the EA process before treatment must occur is rapidly closing. The NDA's survey work will continue, including the use of a new real-time map that the agency is utilizing and a new mobile app to report crickets and grasshoppers. A FAQ sheet has also been created to correct misinformation and support communication around these pests.

7. Division of Measurement Standards

A. Board Update – Bill Striejewski, Administrator (*for information only*)

- Visitors at Agriculture Day approached NDA staff about issues that Assembly Bill 29 seeks to correct, including instances when a sign may advertise a fuel price that does not match the pump price. The division has not received any negative responses about the bill from the industry or elsewhere.
- The Joint Interim Standing Committee on Growth and Infrastructure has submitted Bill Draft Request (BDR) 51-428, which seeks to remove the state petroleum inspection fee assessed on lubricating oil and add diesel fuel as a type of fuel subject to the inspection fee. The BDR would reduce the inspection fee from 0.055 cents to 0.0035 cents per gallon. It is effectively a cost-neutral measure that could be beneficial to the industry.
- The division is currently preparing for livestock scale inspections, with the goal of continuing to improve communication between NDA staff and ranch personnel. At this time, the inspections team is fully staffed.
- Two capital improvement projects have been approved for the Measurement Standards building at the Sparks office: one to replace the electrical system and the other to upgrade the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system. The Metrology lab may pose a challenge since it relies on a temperature-controlled environment. Still, staff are already working to adapt workflows to accommodate projects, and other states and/or municipalities may be willing to assist with projects as needed.
- Due to the weather in southern Nevada, the division's Petroleum Technology inspectors are in the busiest time of the year and are collecting all the samples they can for testing.
- The division has received an increased number of consumer complaints regarding the performance of pumps—either pumps running too slowly or leaking.
- A large-capacity weight truck is expected to be delivered in April. Equipment is also being added to other trucks that should be ready for service this spring.

8. Division of Food and Nutrition

A. Board Update – Patricia Hoppe, Administrator (*for information only*)

- On March 7, the division lost almost \$8 million in federal pass-through funding for food purchase programs. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service terminated the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) and the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS). The LFPA contributed \$3.92 million to NDA for the Home Feeds Nevada program, and the LFS provided more than \$4 million to NDA, most of which was intended to be passed through to schools for the purchase of locally produced food. Approximately \$581,000 was intended to be passed through to childcare providers under the NDA's Community Nutrition program.
- The division received additional funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation to pass through to participants of the Senior Nutrition and Wellness Program at the tune of \$225,000.
- Coupon books are being prepared for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, a flagship program that is slated to return in April.
- The Request for proposal for USDA Foods is being processed and relates to entitlement funding.
- Round 1 of the Nevada Community Food Access Grant has been completed for

approximately \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds. That sum has been disbursed, and sub-awardees are now working to complete projects for Round 2 of the grant.

- About \$139,000 remains to be spent in the Home Feeds Nevada program. Despite the termination of LFPA funds going forward, the USDA has stated it will fund the remaining amount of the current award.
- Administrative funding for the Summer Food Service Program has been approved for over \$323,000. Community Nutrition programs tend to be more secure because they are statutory. Similarly, school breakfast and lunch programs have not been subject to the federal funding freeze because they are also in statute. Additionally, part of the \$850,000 pass-through funding for the Farm to School Program has been granted to sub-awardees.
- The National School Lunch Program Equipment Grant has been awarded. That grant, and State Administrative Expense Technology Funds, are considered discretionary funding, so their future security is unknown at this time.

9. Division of Animal Industry

A. Board Update – Chad Sestanovich, Administrator (*for information only*)

- The division is fully staffed with full-time permanent brand inspectors. Full-time employees are being utilized as much as possible to increase efficiency. Notably, full-time inspectors save the department costs on expenses that can increase when utilizing intermittent staff, such as fuel, mileage, and time.
- The Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) grant has been helpful in the laboratory and with the implementation of the updated ADT rule that was issued last fall. One challenge was the insufficient number of tags that the USDA initially issued to the department. With assistance from the Director, the division was able to secure additional tags.
- Approximately 53,000 ADT tags have been issued to industry partners so far. Issuing tags has been time-intensive, but the division expects to move forward more quickly now that premise IDs have been assigned to most operations.
- The installation of six miles of public safety fencing has been approved for the Virginia Range. The National Environmental Policy Act process for the Toll Road area of south Reno has been completed, and construction should be underway within the next month.
- A survey of the Virginia Range feral/stray horses was conducted in December. The Bureau of Land Management is currently analyzing the data, and results are forthcoming.
- The division conducted starling abatement in December to prevent the spread of HPAI, treating all dairies in Churchill County. Dr. Rolfe joined the division at a busy time but has been an asset. The division is still detecting positive results, but dairies will be transitioned off quarantine as appropriate.

10. Division of Administrative Services

A. *Review and potential adoption of proposed policy establishing an Infants-at-Work and Nursing Mothers Program at the Nevada Department of Agriculture (*for possible action*)

- Deputy Director Farris reviewed the proposed policy, which encourages new

mothers and fathers to return to work sooner by allowing them to bring their infant to work for up to one year after the child's birth. He explained that the NDA modeled this proposal after numerous other policies that have been successfully implemented at other state agencies.

- Member Combs moved to adopt the policy. Member Schank seconded the motion.
- Member Combs inquired about whether the policy would potentially expose the NDA to liability. Deputy Director Farris explained that liability will be covered in the procedures, which will be drafted in consultation with legal counsel. Deputy Attorney General Richard Yien stated he is unaware of pending cases against the state arising from the implementation of similar policies. Director Goicoechea clarified that children would not be permitted in areas that are potentially hazardous, such as in laboratories.
- Member Combs asked whether infants would remain with the parent at the parent's workstation. Deputy Director Farris confirmed that if the policy is adopted, infants must remain with their parents in a safe and secure workstation, such as in a cubicle or office.
- Member Ruf raised potential scenarios about buildings requiring retrofitting to accommodate secure areas for nursing mothers, but staff using those areas for other purposes. Deputy Director Farris explained that rather than retrofitting, supervisors can potentially allow employees to use existing offices. He noted that utilizing an office designated for traveling administrators is another potential solution to ensure department compliance with this policy.
- Member Gilmore asked whether the policy would apply to field staff. Deputy Director Farris stated that the policy is primarily geared toward office staff, whose duties take place in environments that are safe for infants. Deputy Attorney General Yien confirmed that if an off-site employee requested accommodations, the department would comply with the policy and all applicable statutes.
- Member Higbee shared his experience with a similar policy that existed for employees at the Lincoln County Courthouse. He stated that the policy was successful and contributed to employee morale and retention. He recalled that the public also responded positively. Director Goicoechea noted that the policy will aid in the Executive Branch's objective of reducing vacancy rates and benefit new employees who do not yet have accrued leave time. He noted that the NDA is one of the last state agencies to adopt this policy.
- Member Combs asked whether the policy would apply at all office locations in the state. Deputy Director Farris confirmed that it would be implemented at all three office locations: Sparks, Las Vegas, and Elko.
- The motion passed 10-0 (3 absent).

B. Board Update – Cathy Balcon, Administrator (*for information only*)

- The division's partnership activities include collaboration with Made in Nevada. Additionally, it has been working with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to facilitate the proposed budget transfer from DHHS to the NDA. The division also partnered with State Buildings and Grounds to execute a remodel at Sparks headquarters, including new cubicles, desks and chairs.
- The 2024 Economic Analysis and 2025 Nevada Department of Agriculture

Biennial Report were recently released. Additionally, the division's communications team contributed to the publication of 46 news releases and stories.

- The newly designed agriculture license plate was unveiled at Agriculture Day at the Legislature on March 18.
- In 2024, the division received 83 public records requests. Year to date, the division has received a total of 3 public records requests.
- Agriculture literacy outreach efforts included community events in Fallon, Winnemucca, and Reno, reaching about 3,500 people. Staff attended a 4-H event in Winnemucca to spread awareness about careers in agriculture and reached approximately 50 people.
- The fiscal team is working through legislative budget hearings while adapting to the state's newly launched financial system: CORE.NV.
- Budget Account (BA) 4554, Administrative Services, was reviewed with the following details:
 - Ninety-five percent of this budget is cost-allocated, which means it assumes a portion of other divisions' budgets. The other 5 percent of this account is funded from the General Fund.
 - Programs and services funded from BA 4554 include the Board of Agriculture, Fiscal Services, Information Technology, Communications, Market Development, Craft Beverage Passport, and the Meat Inspection Program.
 - Revenue in this account from federal sources includes the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program Grant, which is currently on hold. American Rescue Plan Act funds for 2025 were received in the amount of \$319,444.
 - The biggest expenditure from BA 4554 is personnel services which, for Fiscal Year 2025, is budgeted at approximately \$2.5 million. Those expenses have increased as more positions are filled and remain staffed, in addition to the recent 11 percent pay increase authorized by the Legislature for state employees.
 - Director Goicoechea stated that even with legislatively approved pay increases, the agency has avoided raising industry fees and instead has been implementing as many cost-saving measures as possible.

11. Public Comment

In-Person Public Comment (Sparks Office)

- Jim DeChambeau of Mason Valley commended the Board and the NDA for their work. He stated that he enjoys attending meetings to hear about issues impacting the agriculture industry.

Virtual Public Comment (Microsoft Teams)

- Leana Carey noted that she recently read a newsletter from the Public Lands Council and was surprised by the emphasis placed on proposals to use federal lands to accommodate housing growth. She raised the question of water and wondered where the water will come from to support such development. She said she was recently appointed to an agriculture/irrigation water committee through the Nevada Water Resources Association. She intends to keep the Board updated to invite them to participate in upcoming committee meetings.

12. Final Roll Call

13. Adjournment

Chairman Snyder adjourned the meeting at 12:38 p.m.