

Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

201 Roop Street, Suite 101
Carson City, Nevada 89701
Telephone (775) 684-8600
Facsimile (775) 684-8604

www.sagebrusheco.nv.gov

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor



**STATE OF NEVADA
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program**

Tim Rubald, Program Manager
John Copeland, Forestry/Wildland Fire
Melissa Faigeles, State Lands
Kelly McGowan, Agriculture
Lara Niell, Wildlife

Request For Information
for

State of Nevada Conservation Credit System for Sage Grouse Habitat

Release Date: May 15, 2013

Deadline for Submission Date: **May 24, 2013**

For additional information, please contact:
Tim Rubald, Program Manager
timrubald@sagebrusheco.nv.gov
775-684-8600

The State of Nevada's Sagebrush Ecosystem Program (SEP), on behalf of the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (SEC), is requesting information on possible options and methodologies to establish a state level conservation crediting system for mitigating disturbances to greater sage-grouse habitat in Northern Nevada. This will include determining the structure, mechanisms, metrics, and values in order to qualify as a regulatory mechanism for the protection of the greater sage-grouse.

Request for Information (RFI) process is different from a Request for Proposal (RFP). The State expects respondents to propose creative, competitive solutions to the agency's stated problem or need, as specified below.

1. Background

On March 30, 2012 Governor Sandoval created by executive an Advisory Committee to provide him with recommendations on strategies to help preclude the listing of the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This group met extensively and submitted their recommendations to the Governor on July 31, 2012.

In August of 2012, Governor Sandoval provided the acknowledged recommendations to his Director of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and directed DCNR to develop a program based on the recommendations submitted by the Advisory Committee.

November 19, 2012 Governor Sandoval issued another executive order creating the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (SEC) and providing for nine Governor-appointed members, with additional ex-officio members. In January of 2013 those members were appointed by the Governor, and Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (staff to the SEC) was hired, and in February of 2013 they began work.

One of the Advisory Committee's major recommendations is the implementation of a conservation credit system to create a consistent, transparent framework to promote landscape level conservation projects. The SEC has subsequently requested staff to investigate what types of structures and mechanisms are available in order to determine the most appropriate method in which to proceed in developing the credit system. A future Request for Proposals (RFP) is anticipated from the results of this RFI.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 Need

The overall purpose of this RFI is to gather concepts to establish a fair market valuation system for specific sage-grouse habitat in order to develop a conservation crediting system for discrete anthropogenic disturbances in sage-grouse habitat. The state of Nevada is not looking to develop a typical mitigation bank framework as defined by the FWS, finalized in November of 1995 (*60 FR 58605*). It is anticipated the system will eventually encompass a broad spectrum of mechanisms that will be available to provide clear and transparent opportunities to mitigate disturbances on both public and private land. Additionally, the SEC is looking to maintain consistency with federal land management policies, primarily those of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), as well as the requirements of the FWS, in the FWS' capacity as the agency administering the Endangered Species Act, should the sage-grouse be listed.

We are requesting respondents provide concepts for the following:

- Metrics to be developed to determine fair market values for specific sage-grouse habitat, including different seasonal uses.
- Metrics to value types of habitat disturbances and impacts.
- Structures and mechanisms for potential conservation credit systems.

- A system of issuing credits over time as mitigation projects mature.
- Metrics to be developed for mitigation actions that address and reduce the risks to greater sage-grouse and their habitat in Nevada. Concepts should include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Actions on public and private lands;
 - b. Actions in seasonal habitats;
 - c. Actions that incorporate state and transition models to guide treatments that would maintain or enhance ecological resistance to invasive weeds and site resilience after disturbance; and,
 - d. Actions that address wildfire and invasive species.
- Any additional information not specifically requested, but which the respondent deems important and relevant.

The above framework needs to be developed to meet the state's objective of no net loss of sage-grouse habitat. The conservation credit system should integrate with habitat suitability modeling currently being undertaken by the U.S. Geological Survey, led by Dr. Peter Coates. Concepts should also be provided on how this conservation crediting system could be expanded from sage grouse habitat to the entire sagebrush ecosystem in the future. In addition, it needs to provide for a high degree of transparency in the process.

3. SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

3.1 Respondent Question

The SEP will accept questions and/or comments regarding this RFI in writing, received by email. These questions and/or comments will be made public.

The process for submitting questions is as follows:

Questions must reference the identifying RFI and be addressed to the State of Nevada, Sagebrush Ecosystem Program, Tim Rubald, Subject: "Conservation Credit System", via email at timrubald@sagebrusheco.nv.gov. The deadline for submitting questions is May 17, 2013 at 5:00 p.m., Pacific Time. All questions and/or comments will be addressed in writing and responses emailed or faxed to all of the respondents submitting questions on or about May 21, 2013. Please provide company name, address, phone number, email address, web site address, fax number, and contact person when submitting questions.

3.2 Response Submission Requirements:

A short executive summary detailing proposed concepts is due no later than 5:00pm on May 24, 2013. These executive summaries will be reviewed by the SEP and up to five respondents will be selected to make 20 minute presentations to the SEC on May 31. These respondents will be notified by May 28th of their selection. In addition to the presentation on May 31, 2013, respondents shall submit their response as designated below:

Executive summaries must reference the identifying RFI and be addressed to the State of Nevada, Sagebrush Ecosystem Program, Tim Rubald, Subject: “Conservation Credit System”, via email at timrubald@sagebrusheco.nv.gov. Please provide company name, address, phone number, email address, web site address, fax number, and contact person when submitting executive summaries.

For those respondents that are selected to present to the SEC, if the respondent wishes to distribute any hard copy materials to the SEC, twenty-five copies of the material should be delivered to the SEP office at 201 South Roop St. Ste 101, Carson City, Nevada no later than noon on May 30, 2013.

3.3 RFI Timeline

DATE/TIME	TASK
May 17, 2013 @ 5:00pm	Deadline for submitting questions
On or about May 21, 2013	Answers to all questions submitted available
May 24, 2013 @ 5:00pm	RFI response to SEP – an “Executive Summary” that will be used to determine those respondents invited to make presentations to the Council; and provided to the Council in advance of presentations.
May 28, 2013 by 5:00pm	Invitations to make presentation to the Council on May 31 in Carson City, Nevada issued to respondents.
May 30, 2013 @ noon	Any materials respondent wishes to provide to the Council are due to the Sagebrush Ecosystem Office. Electronic copies accepted also, but must not be more than 10mb in size.
May 31, 2013 9:00am – 4:00pm	Selected respondents will be allowed a 20 minute presentation to the Council

NOTE: These dates represent a tentative schedule of events. The State reserves the right to modify these dates at any time, with appropriate notice to prospective respondents.

Responses, in the form of presentations, will only be accepted in a public meeting format. All documents submitted for this process should also be considered available to the public. Responses not suitable for that venue, may not be considered in the development of this project. Respondents may submit their responses any time prior to the above stated deadlines, but will only be allowed to present at the designated public forum.

Thank you for your interest and response to this Request for Information
