



Figure 1: Marlette Lake with Lake Tahoe at left.
Photo by John Nulty. Courtesy of the Nevada State Archives.

As Nevada moved away from the Boards and Commissions form of state administration, and to further the process toward professionalizing the state bureaucracy, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was established in 1957. The Nevada State Legislature believed the consolidation of natural resources activities into a single department under unified guidance and control would develop a long range, integrated, and correlated program.

The original legislation brought together existing natural resources agencies into one umbrella department under a departmental director. The original alignment of divisions were Water Resources, Forestry, Oil and Gas (along with the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission), as well as State Lands. The Director became a member of the State Commission of Industry, Agriculture

and Irrigation, as well as the Irrigation District Bond Commission. The Director would also coordinate all studies in the state concerned with the supply, development, use and conservation of water.

After the original legislation, the Department continued adding and subtracting divisions as subsequent state administrations redefined natural resources agencies and federal authorities introduced new programs requiring state oversight. When the Colorado River Boundary Commission was established by the Legislature in 1959 to determine the location of the common boundary with the State of Arizona, which had established a similar commission, the Director became a member. Also that year, Governor Grant Sawyer created the Governor's Natural Resources Council to better coordinate the activities of the several federal and state agencies operating in the field of natural resources, naming the Director chairman.

The State Parks system was in 1963 incorporated into the Department and the Division of State Parks came into being. The Legislature placed the State Multiple Use Advisory Committee on Federal Lands within the Department two years later. Also during the 1960s, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), a bi-state cooperative between Nevada and California, was created with the Director playing a very active role as a member.

Changes came to the Department in 1973 as the Legislature added more Divisions including Conservation Districts and Colorado River Resources. Two commissions were also included within the Department: the State Conservation Commission and the State Environmental Commission. Four years later, the Division of Colorado River Resources became the Division of Water Planning and the Division of Mineral Resources replaced the Oil and Gas Division. New divisions joining the Department were Environmental Protection and Historic Preservation and Archaeology.

The Division of Mineral Resources left the Department in 1983 to become a separate state agency. No other major changes happened until 1993, when the Legislature moved the Nevada Natural Heritage Program, the Division of Wildlife, and the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses into the Department; the Legislature also created the Advisory Board on Natural Resources that year, making the Director a member. In 1993, the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology was removed from the Department and in 2003 the Division of Wildlife was taken out. The Division of Water Planning ceased to exist as a separate entity in 2005, becoming a program within the Division of Water Resources instead.

Current Divisions of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are: Water Resources, State Lands, Forestry, State Parks, Conservation Districts, Environmental Protection, Environmental Commission, Conservation Commission, the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses, and the Nevada Natural Heritage Program.

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Director's Office Records 1955-2001 27 cu. ft.

Correspondence 1955-1999 19 cu. ft. CNR-0001 to CNR-0019

These records include correspondence from the Governor's Office, from the divisions of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, from the Legislative branch, and correspondence regarding the budgetary process. Arranged chronologically overall and within each year by type of record (correspondence, budget), and then alphabetically by division.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency 1975-1998 6 cu. ft. CNR-0020 to CNR-0025

These records were gathered as a result of the Director's membership on the board of the TRPA. The records include correspondence, meeting material and minutes. Arranged chronologically.

Correspondence,	1975-1977;	meetings,	January-June	1989	CNR-0020		
Meetings,	June-December	1989			CNR-0021		
Exhibits,	1989;	correspondence,	1990;	meetings,	January	1990	CNR-0022
Meetings,	January-October,	1990					CNR-0023
Meetings,	October-December,	1990;	exhibits,	1990			CNR-0024
Correspondence, 1991, 1992-1996; meetings, Jan.-May, 1991; exhibits, 1991 CNR-0025							

Boards and Commissions 1978-2001 2 cu. ft. CNR-0026 to CNR-0027

These records were gathered as a result of the Director's membership on various boards and commissions. The records includes meeting material and minutes from various boards and commissions including the Advisory Board on Natural Resources and the Advisory Board for Water Resources. Arranged chronologically.

Conservation Districts 1937-1996 11 cu. ft. CNRCD-0004 - 0014

This series contains records created by current and former soil conservation districts and after 1973, conservation districts. Included are minutes of meetings, reports, annual reports made to the State Conservation Commission, financial reports, annual work plans, audit reports, correspondence, charters, district dissolution/realignment agreements, maps of individual districts, district newsletters, and newspaper clippings and articles. Arranged alphabetically by district name; files for districts no longer in existence are filed after current districts.



Figure 1: Talbot Creek, 7km northeast of Lamoille. Stones have been placed to prevent erosion and create eddies and backwaters. Courtesy of Nevada State Archives. SOIL-0135.

The series includes records for the following current and former conservation districts:

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Austin Conservation District | North Truckee Conservation District |
| Big Meadow Conservation District | Northeast Elko Conservation District |
| Carson Valley Conservation District | Owyhee Conservation District |
| Clark County Conservation District | Pahrnagat Valley Conservation District |
| Clover Conservation District | Pahrump Conservation District |
| Dixie Valley Conservation District | Paradise Valley Conservation District |
| Duck Valley Conservation District | Quinn River Conservation District |
| Elko Conservation District | Ruby Valley Conservation District |
| Esmeralda Conservation District | Sheckler Conservation District |
| Eureka Conservation District | Smith Valley Conservation District |
| Fernley Conservation District | Sonoma Conservation District |
| Gerlach Conservation District | Starr Valley Conservation District |
| Humboldt County Conservation District | Stillwater Conservation District |
| Humboldt River Conservation District | Tahoe-Verdi Conservation District |
| Jiggs Conservation District | Tonopah Conservation District |
| Kings River Conservation District | Vegas Valley Conservation District |
| Lahontan Conservation District | Virgin Valley Conservation District |
| Lamoille Conservation District | Vya Conservation District |
| Lander Conservation District | Washoe Valley Conservation District |
| Lincoln Conservation District | Washoe-Storey Conservation District |
| Mason Valley Conservation District | White Pine Conservation District |
| Meadow Valley Conservation District | Winnemucca Conservation District |
| Moapa Conservation District | |
| Nevada Tahoe Conservation District | |

Minutes 1937-2000 3.5 cu. ft. CNRCD-0001 - 0003; 0020

This series includes records of meetings of the State Soil Conservation Committee (1937-1972) and its successor, the Soil Conservation Commission (1973-2000). Early minutes discuss the formation of specific soil conservation districts, reports on votes for election of board members for districts, reports of meetings in individual districts, reports on projects undertaken by the Committee/Commission, conditions in the districts, and proposed conservation-related legislation.

In 1973 the State Soil Conservation Committee became the State Conservation Commission, a division with the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Minutes from 1974 onward are for the Commission and discuss a wider variety of topics, including budgets, employees, and the Commission's support of the Division. Watersheds became as important a topic as the soil conservation projects were previously, as districts became the primary means of implementing national legislation related to soil, water, and the environment. The minutes reflect these activities and contain more support materials than previously, as well as reports and meeting related correspondence.

These records are arranged chronologically. For later years there are only tape recordings of meetings and no transcripts. Minutes from March 5, 2003 to the present time are available online at the Conservation Commission website: <http://dcd.nv.gov/conser.htm>

Administrative Records 1967-1997 1.5 cu. ft. CNRCD-0024 – 0025



Figure 2: Fred Baker, Roy Malsor, and Bill Shea of the Soil Conservation Service and US Forest Service. Baker Creek, White Pine Soil Conservation District. 1962. Courtesy of Nevada State Archives. SOIL-0161.

These materials were created in carrying out the daily functions of the Conservation Division and include some subject files, memorandum of agreements, cooperative agreements, goals and objectives, speeches, and correspondence. Special topics include daily updates on the Reno/Northern Nevada Flood of 1997, watershed programs, the Bureau of Land Management, water quality and quantity, and the Public Lands Committee.

Associations 1953-1993 1.5 cu. ft. CNRCD-0020 – 0021

This series includes records of meetings of the Nevada Association of Conservation Districts, the National Association of Conservation Districts, and the North Cal-Neva Resource Conservation and Development Area [Association] as well as correspondence and reports generated by those associations. Arranged by name of organization and then chronologically.

Awards and Grants 1947-1996 1.5 cu. ft. CNRCD-0023 – 0024

Since 1947 individual conservation districts have been the recipients of grants and awards from several sources. Materials in this series include applications and award materials. The programs include:

- Allis-Chalmers/Deutz-Allis Awards in environmental conservation education, 1974-1990. Materials include documentation submitted about Nevada nominees and winners.
- Goodyear Awards from the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, 1982-1992. This program emphasized the concepts of planning for service, organizing to give that service, and evaluation of conservation district services.
- Exxon Overcharge Grants, 1988-1991. Money from this source funded the Agricultural Energy Conservation Program for three years. The Division of Conservation received money from the Petroleum Violation Escrow Account via the Nevada Energy Conservation Program and Energy Extension Service and promoted energy conservation activities and renewable energy use in agriculture throughout the state.
- Public Law 566 (PL 566), 1947-1985. This program, approved by the 83rd U.S. Congress, and initially under the supervision of the State Forester, promoted watershed protection and development. Applications made under PL 566 were for flood prevention; conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; and conservation and proper utilization of land in watershed or sub-watershed areas. Included are general information materials explaining the program, reports on Nevada programs, correspondence, and applications for funding.
- Miscellaneous grants: Bonneville Power Grant (1992-1993) and National Association of Conservation Districts (1996).

Coordinated Resource Management and Planning Task Group (CRMP) 1978-1990 1.5 cu. ft. CNRCD-0021 – 0022

The CRMP program began in the late 1970s in Nevada and was based on the concept of coordinated management in public land administration. CRMP's guiding philosophy was that conflicts among competing users and uses of federal lands can be most effectively resolved through direct discussion at the local level. Examples of participants include land owners and leasers, off-road enthusiasts, Sierra Club, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Farm Bureau, Nevada Department of

Conservation and Natural Resources, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Nevada Division of Forestry, Nevada State Lands Commission, and conservation districts. Representatives of each interest group formed the Executive Task Group.

The contents of this series include minutes and correspondence of the Executive Task Group, resource management plans for specific areas, and minutes of local task groups. Specific plans are for the Winnemucca Ranch (owned by the LaRues), Nye County, Pershing County, Reno area, Sheldon, Washoe County, Clark County, Elko County, Ely, Eureka County, Humboldt County, Lander County, Lincoln County, and Mineral County.

Resource Conservation Act (RCA) 1978-1985 .5 cu. ft. CNRCD-0014

The Soil, Water, and Resources Conservation Act was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 as PL 95-192. The act required the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out a continuing appraisal of the land, water, and related resources of the nation and to prepare long range policy by 1979 that set forth the direction for future conservation efforts on private and public lands. The law called for active participation by conservation districts and state conservation agencies in the development of appraisals and policies. Most of the responsibility for protection was delegated to private landowners and operators. This series includes background information about the act, plan development in Nevada, Nevada's response to the federal plan, and plans for individual conservation districts in Nevada. Arranged with general administrative materials first, followed by individual district files. All conservation districts appear to have had contracts to produce reports but few were found in these files.

208 Water Quality Planning 1968-1978, bulk 1976-1978 1 cu. ft. CNRCD-0015

208 was a section of PL 92-500, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendment of 1972. The goal of the act was to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. 208 was entitled "Area-wide Waste Treatment Management" and was intended to identify agriculturally and silviculturally related non-point sources of pollution. The states were given primary responsibility for water pollution control. In Nevada, conservation districts conducted surveys to identify problems and compile draft plans which were submitted for the approval of individual county commissions. The Nevada State Conservation Commission also drafted a working paper identifying sources of water quality pollution to be used by the State Environmental Commission and the Division of Environmental Protection. The result of all these plans was water quality legislation in the 1977 Legislature.

Included in this collection is background material on 208 legislation, committee minutes, correspondence, surveys, plans, and some files from individual districts.

Tahoe Basin Act Erosion Control Project 1986-1993 2 cu. ft. CNRCD-0016 – 0017

The 1985 Tahoe Bond Act provided \$31 million in funds to allow installation of pollution source control measures along the Nevada shore of Lake Tahoe. Control measures included curbs, gutters, rock slope protection, timber retaining walls, and sediment basins. The project was expected to reduce sediment and nutrient loads in the surface runoff into the lake. The bond act also allowed the purchase of privately-owned land around the lake to preserve the resources and natural beauty of the Tahoe Basin.

Included are background information, individual project specifications, reports (interim, progress, and final), correspondence, agreements, and maps.

MX Missile Files 1979-1981 2 cu. ft. CNRCD-0018 – 0019

The MX or "missile-experimental" was a four-stage intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) called the Peacekeeper. A new generation of Soviet ICBMs was introduced in the early 1970s that lead to a U.S. military fear of a disarming first strike aimed at the U.S. defense system. In response, the U.S. began development of a ballistic missile that would be deployed on a circular railroad track with 200 missiles

moving between 4600 shelters constructed along the track, 42,000 miles of which were to be in Nevada and Utah. This Multiple Protective Shelter System (or shell-game system) idea failed because of the huge areas of land that would have to be dedicated, the lack of Congressional and Presidential support, and the end of the Cold War. Existing ICBMs were instead housed in old Minuteman silos. Weapons Reduction Treaties between the U.S. and Russia eventually resulted in the retirement and dismantling of the Peacekeepers.

These records document the role and contributions of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, coordinating with the Nevada Department of MX Project Coordination, in determining potential MX deployment impacts on Nevada's water resources, fire protection capabilities, cultural resources, renewable and nonrenewable resources, land use, environment, and parks and recreation resources. Included are minutes of research/investigative teams, draft environmental impact statements reviews, reports, comments on reports, maps, bibliographies, contracts, budgets, and work plans.

Photographs 1933-1990 648 photographs, negatives, and slides CNRCD-0026 – 0027

The photographic images in this collection document the activities of the Soil Conservation Committee, the State Conservation Commission, and the Division of Conservation Districts. Subjects include water control, floods, erosion and erosion control, annual meetings of the Nevada Association of Conservation Districts, sheep deaths from atomic energy related causes, mine tailings ponds, snow surveying, and slide shows documenting Nevada's conservation programs. Specific geographic sites include the Carson Valley and Carson River, Virgin River, Bunkerville Diversion, Moapa Valley, Smith Valley, Mason Valley, Rio Tinto Mine, Elko area, I-80 Carlin Tunnel, Humboldt River, Talbot Creek, Pine Creek, Lake Tahoe, Incline Village, Baker Creek, Mt. Wilson burn area, White Pine County, Lamoille Canyon, McDermitt Creek, Quinn River, Vya, Water Canyon near Winnemucca, and the Barger Ranch in Elko County.

Book of Soil Conservation Districts Vol. 1 1937-1969 SECSTATE-0384

Although this record was created by the Official Filings Office of the Nevada Secretary of State it contains information of interest regarding the formation of soil conservation districts. It contains copies of petitions and applications to form or join soil conservation districts and certificates of formation of individual districts which were issued by the State Soil Conservation Committee. Arranged by district but districts are in no particular order.

The dust storms of the 1930s brought attention to the economic plight of American farmers, already hard hit by the Depression. The problem was particularly acute in the Great Plains. It was widely believed that dust storms and other forms of erosion were the results of poor tillage practices. To combat the problems, a federal Soil Erosion Service was created in 1933 as a temporary agency in the Department of the Interior. It was transferred to the Department of Agriculture in 1935. Later that year it received a statutory basis and the name was changed to the Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

The early mission of the SCS was the propagation of the use of soil conservation practices in agriculture. Operations of the service included (1) the demonstration of practical and effective measure of soil conservation by (2) actual work upon the land in cooperation with landowners, and (3) the consistent development and improvement of such measures through research and investigation. Among the service's specific activities were flood control, the purchase and development of sub marginal land, making water available for crops and livestock in the sub-arid states of the West, research in cooperation with state agricultural experiment stations, and the promotion of farm forestry.



Figure 1: Rip-rap construction of inlet to Walker Reservoir on W. Walker's Artesia Ranch, 1962. Courtesy of Nevada State Archives. SOIL-0056.

To better carry out these responsibilities the Department of Agriculture requested state participation. In fact, enactment of suitable State legislation became a prerequisite for receiving federal funds for erosion control. The department drafted a Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law and in 1937 sent copies to the state governors, with a letter from President Franklin D. Roosevelt urging adoption. With only a few minor changes, the Nevada Legislature passed the proposal unanimously; it became law on March 30.

The act established the procedures for organizing and administering soil conservation districts. To assist the districts and to coordinate their activities, a state Soil Conservation Committee was created. Three of its four members were ex officio: the Director of the state's Agricultural Extension Service, the Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station in Reno, and the State Coordinator of the Federal Soil Conservation Service. A fourth or "farmer member" was to be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture upon the advice of the Committee. The members served without remuneration, except for expenses.

Each of the soil conservation districts was to have a board of five supervisors (two appointed by the Committee, three elected by the district's land occupiers, all for three-year terms). The districts, designated as subdivisions of the state government, were given the power to prescribe regulations for beneficial land use, especially for the control and prevention of erosion. The regulations, to be adopted by referendums of the land occupiers in the district, would have the force of law. The act provided for the enforcement of the regulations by court order, and for punishment by fines of those violating the regulations. Each district was to have a Board of Adjustment, which was granted the authority to permit variances. Funding for the districts was to come from direct appropriations from the state treasury and federal grants-in-aid. The Nevada Soil Conservation Districts Law defined "land occupier" as "any person, firm, or corporation who shall hold title to, or shall be in possession of, any lands lying within a district organized under the provisions of this act, whether as owner, lessee, renter, tenant, or otherwise."

The act also authorized the districts to carry out research on erosion control, conduct demonstrations, enter into contracts with farmers and assist them financially, lend or give them equipment, operate state and federal erosion control projects, and recommend land-use plans.

Other contents of the law pertained to the formation of the districts, determination of their boundaries, and finances.

Although the programs required close cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service and several other federal and state agencies, the emphasis was on local control and the autonomy of the districts. Public

meetings, petitions, and referendums were among the democratic means by which the activities of the districts were to be conceived, changed, and implemented.

The 1937 act was amended in 1945, 1947, 1951, 1955, and 1960. These and later changes mostly affected the electing of supervisors, their powers and duties, qualifications of electors, the creation and discontinuance of districts, and the changing of their boundaries. The amendment of 1951 enlarged the Committee's membership to six. The directors of the State Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Station, along with the State Conservationist (formerly Coordinator) of the Soil Conservation Service remained the members ex officio. The Governor was to appoint four members, chosen from a list of ten names submitted to him by the Nevada Association of Soil Conservation Districts. The appointed members had to be or have been farm operators in Nevada. Their terms were for two years. The 1960 amendment designated the Dean of the University of Nevada's Max C. Fleischmann School of Agriculture, the Executive Officer of the State Department of Agriculture, and the Director of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as members ex officio; there was no change in the status of the appointed members.

In 1969 and 1971 the legislative appropriations for the Soil Conservation Committee were included within those for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, an agency established in 1957. By an act of 1973 the Soil Conservation Committee was renamed the State Conservation Commission and placed under the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. This legislation created the Division of Conservation Districts and placed it also in the Department. The Governor was to appoint the Commission's seven members.



Figure 2: Looking east from proposed dam site upstream on the East Fork of the Quinn River, 1/4 mile upstream of the Ft. McDermitt Indian Reservation, 1968. Courtesy of Nevada State Archives. SOIL-0354.

The 1973 act expanded the responsibilities of the Conservation Districts (formerly Soil Conservation Districts) to include not only soil but other renewable natural resources: "land . . . , water, vegetation, trees, natural landscape and open space." The section declaring the "legislative determination" eliminated the federally-conceived rhetoric of the 1937 law and replaced it with: ". . . persons in local communities are best able to provide basic leadership and direction for the planning and accomplishment of the conservation and development of renewable natural resources through organization and operation of

conservation districts." The principal conservation practices the districts have promoted include: land leveling; irrigation systems; improved water application; range seeding; pasture seeding; drainage of excess ground water; crop rotation; windbreaks; farm and ranch ponds; land newly irrigated.

The districts, the Soil Conservation Committee, and the State Conservation Commission have worked with a number of federal agencies, chiefly the Soil Conservation Service. They include the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Geological Survey, U. S. Navy, Army Corps of Engineers, Agricultural Research Service. Among the cooperating state agencies are the Department of Agriculture, Department of Highways, the Division of Forestry, State Environmental Commission, Department of Fish and Game, State Engineer, Agricultural Extension Service, and Experiment Station. Local governing units that have been involved with conservation programs include irrigation districts, weed control districts, county and municipal governments, and watershed projects. In addition, the Commission, Division, and districts have cooperated with private agencies.

By the early 1990s the State Conservation Commission was no longer a coordinating and advisory body, but rather a policy-making and regulatory board that "directed the Division of Conservation Districts. Similarly, the Division was defined as an agency that regulates the activities of the state's locally elected conservation districts.

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