

“Protecting and preserving Nevada’s way of life”: NSLAPR Environmental Listening Sessions across northern Nevada (America’s driest State)

Between July 25 and August 3, 2019, the Nevada State Library went on a listening tour across 13 northern Nevada communities. The first goal was to better understand how each community believes Nevada’s environment should be preserved. The second goal was to determine which educational resources may be acquired and what programs might be offered to best fit rural Nevada’s environmental information needs.

Included here is a summary of 52 conversations held during 45 stops while traveling over 1,529 miles.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS (IN RANKED ORDER)

#1 WATER:

- drought
- changing precipitation: irregular snow pack vs. increased spring rain impacting ground water supply and growing season.
- losing water supply to Las Vegas
- over-allocation of ground water rights (Eureka)
- Arsenic in water (McDermitt)

#2 FIRE:

- naturally caused fires are increasing,
- man-caused fires are a concern, for example the Boy Scout Camp in Lamoille burned down in 2018
- Air quality, Nevada fire response, fire adaptive communities (fireadapted.org), cheat grass as a hot fuel. Nevada is the driest state in the west. Wetter springs but drier summers that leads to more fire.

#3 RANGELAND HEALTH

- Cheat grass
- Sage grouse
- Wild horses
- Grazing rights/issues

#4 RISING TEMPERATURES

- Drying out vegetation increases fire risk
- Water evaporates more quickly
- Changes in growth patterns, tree lines are getting higher
- Animal species are threatened (for example, Pica)

North Lake Tahoe (NV)	Winnemucca
Baker	McDermitt
Eureka	Denio
Ely	Fallon
Elko	Lovelock
Spring Creek	Washoe Valley
Lamoille	

Top 9 Insights Gained:

1. Librarians are community builders. In every town the library is the trusted community anchor and in some towns they are even the center of gravity. Librarians facilitate positive community development yet often aren’t fully aware of their impact.
2. The most important concerns are: (a) Water/drought, (b) Fire: it’s a threat to everyone and can foster discussion about prevention, which could be an opening to discuss extreme weather, (c) Rangeland health, (d) Rising temperatures.
3. Insights into language, i.e.: use phrases like “protecting our way of life and environment”, “regaining balance”; trigger words can like “climate change”, “biodiversity”, “sustainability”.
4. Some small communities are fragile and one environmental catastrophe or major business closure could result in an irreparable setback.
5. Most communities are playing defense out of necessity: they’re just trying to get by.
6. Every major stakeholder must be involved; we’ve identified the key ones.
7. All Nevadans love their Nevada way of life as well as the mix that makes us all Nevadans, but each group is trying to protect their way of life first.
8. Change will only occur if it’s led from the heart: the heart of all communities is in the trusted library because it’s the only institution for everyone.
9. The Nevada bookmobiles operated from the Elko, Lander, Eureka public library system (that also serves areas of White Pine County), the Humboldt County public library system and the Lincoln County public library systems are critical to the information needs of rural Nevadans.

Program Leadership:

Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records,
Development Office

- Tammy Westergard, Nevada State Librarian

In Cooperation with

Governors Office of Economic development

SCLL Ex Officio Member, Karsten Heise

Nevada Humanities

Nancy Cummings – Schmidt, Board member

STEAM Content Creators

Desert Research Institute, Education Division
Science Alive Amelia Gulling, Leah Madison
Lifeliqe, Inc.

Mark Andersen, Co-Founder & CEO

XR Libraries

John MacLeod, Director

Research Advisors

Professor Lynda Olman, University of Nevada,
Reno

Professor Jennifer Willett, University of
Nevada, Reno and AmeriCorps

Word for word ... a sampling:

“99% of our county is a resource economy.”

Jake Tibbitts, Eureka County Natural
Resources Manager

Water:

“Water is life.”

Abby Johnson, Great Basin Water Network

“Water rights have been over allocated in Eureka
County and have to be brought into balance by 2025.”

Jake Tibbitts, Eureka County Natural
Resources Manager

Fire:

“Months after Kate and I opened our restaurant a
wildfire came within one mile of destroying Baker and
our business.”

Jake Cerese, Owner Kerouac’s and Stargazer
Inn, Baker, NV

“80-year old youth camp destroyed on Sept. 30, 2018
in an explosive wildfire in Lamoille Canyon.

Elko Daily Free Press

Rangeland health:

“Today because of the overgrowth and vegetation the
fires are hot – way too hot.”

Donna Cossette, Former Chairwoman
Paiute-Shoshone Tribe

Rising temperatures:

“The average minimum temperature here in Great
Basin National Park has increased by 2 degrees in the
past decade.”

Gretchen Baker, Lehman Caves Ecologist



Next steps:

- 👍 Leverage DRI’s Science Alive program throughout Nevada public libraries
- 👍 Define resources to complete educational content and collections
- 👍 Start convening discussions in Nevada’s libraries on how to preserve Nevada’s environment: 2020