

Mono County, California - Washington, DC Itinerary
March 1-5, 2014



Mono County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Tim Fesko
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Overview:

Mono County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair and National Association of Counties alternate appointment, Tim Fesko and County Administrator Jim Leddy attended the 2014 National Association of Counties Annual Legislative Conference in Washington DC. This Conference has over 2,000 attendees from across the country and offered opportunities for educational sessions, presentations from federal policy makers and the critical chance to meet with members of Congress.

Beyond the two days of meetings at the National Association of Counties, Mono County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Tim Fesko and County Administrative Officer Jim Leddy had 8 meetings on Capitol Hill.

The primary focus of the meetings was seeking support for the locally developed Bi-State Sage Grouse Preservation Plan. This Plan was developed thanks to Mono County staff working with federal agencies and stakeholders to come up with a five year plan that would prevent a listing of the Bi-State Sage Grouse and all of the impacts, most of which would be felt by Mono County.

The meetings included with the offices of:

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California)
Senator Barbara Boxer (D-California)
Senator Harry Reid (D-Nevada)
Senator Dean Heller (R-Nevada)
Congressman Paul Cook (R-California)
Congressman Buck McKeon (R-California)
Congressman Steve Horsford (D-Nevada)

The schedule below was put together by CAO staff and with free support from Paul Schlesinger of the firm Alcalde and Fay which represent dozens of counties from across the Country.

Saturday, March 1st

1:00 - 4:00 NACo Western Interstate Board of Directors

CAO Leddy attended multi-state meeting. Presentation by Pam Haze, Assistant Secretary for Policy Management on Payment in Lieu of Issues (PILT). She urged ongoing support for a permanent funding source.

Future advocacy by Mono, CSAC and RCRC will be on creating long-term stability for program.

Sunday, March 2nd

8:00-9:00 am NACo Western Regional Caucus Meeting

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy attended. 60 plus people (standing room only) from across western states including a few California Board members. Focus on PILT, multi-state sage grouse listing and focus on transportation funding (MAP-21, etc).

9:00 -12:00 NACo Public Lands Steering Committee

CAO Leddy attended the NACo Public Lands Steering committee and received update from Undersecretary for Natural resources and Environment, US Department of Agriculture Robert Bonnie.

After his presentation, Mono County's Plan was presented to him. Staff will follow up.

Another issue of import to Mono County discussed with the property In Lieu of Tax (PILT) program. Federal land is not taxable by counties. PILT provides payments to counties as an offset. 1,850 counties receive payments for these lands. Mono County receives approximately over \$1.5 million annually for the federal lands in the county.

Chief of Staff to Congressman Rob Bishop, Fred Ferguson, presented on the issue. CAO spoke with Chief of Staff Ferguson about supporting these efforts. Congressman Bishop is working with a multi-state delegation of legislators to create a long term funding stream for the program. Mono Staff will follow up.

9:00-10:00 am Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee: Agriculture Subcommittee Meeting

Vice Chair Fesko attended the session. Speakers included Elise Golan (Director, Sustainable Development, Office of the Chief Economist) and Jennifer Yezak (Director, Office of External and Internal Government Affairs), both from the Dept. of Agriculture. Discussion revolved around Particulate Matter.

10:00-11:00 am Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee: Rural Development Subcommittee Meeting

Vice Chair Fesko attended the session. Two speakers today were Mike Dunlap (Senior Professional Staff, House Committee on Agriculture) and Dr Emilia Istrate (Director of Research, National Association of Counties).

Dr Emilia Istrate spoke about the “NACo County Tracker 2013” (<http://www.uscounties.org/countytracker/>). A website that shows, County by County, Patterns of Economic Recovery across Rural Counties. A website full of data from 2002 to 2013.

11:00-12:00pm Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee

Vice Chair Fesko attended this session with topics that included: Proposed resolution on Particulate Matter Regulations, Bringing 21st Century Education to America’s Counties and Criticality of Access to Broadband Internet and Cellular Phone Technology in Rural Areas.

1:00-3:45 pm Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee Meeting

Vice Chair Fesko attended this meeting. Chair was Hon. Victoria Reinhardt, Commissioner, Ramsey County, Minn.

Items discussed and voted on were: Ensuring Energy Remains Affordable by using Existing Resources, Improving Quality Planning thru Regional Watershed(s) Protection, Regulations regarding Particular Matter, Greater Sage Grouse request for no-listing.

1:30-5:00 pm National Association of County Administrators General Membership and Idea Exchange

CAO Leddy attended the session with CAOs from across country. Received presentations on Affordable care Act implementations; alternative to Self Insurance; transportation bill funding; and Veterans healthcare funding.

Monday, March 3rd

Note: Due to a snow storm that blew in on Sunday evening, Monday morning D.C. was treated to ~5 inches of snow that literally shut down all of D.C. All of the meetings on the hill were cancelled due to the snow. Several of the meetings were re-scheduled to Tuesday.

9:00 – 10:15 Educational workshop: Communicating effectively with members of Congress

Vice Chair Fesko attended this workshop. This workshop focused on effective approaches to grassroots advocacy for county officials, including tips for tailoring messages to specific members of Congress. How to make the most of NACo's "On the Hill" day, and other communications with members of Congress. (Staff Liaison: Deborah Cox, 202/942-4286). Many of these strategies will be used on the Hill meetings.

9:00 – 10:15 Affordable Care Act: Outlook from Capitol Hill

CAO Leddy attended. Heard from congressional staff on any major changes expected to ACA.

J.P. Paluskiewicz, Deputy Chief Of Staff for Congressman Michael Burgess (R-TX) Matthew Siegler, Counsel from U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee Minority Staff presented and bottom line nothing major expected in this year (2014) but could see changes after new Congress elected.

10:30-12:00 30 years of the State and Local Legal: Why Counties should Care about the Supreme Court

Vice Chair Fesko attend this workshop. For 30 years, the State and Local Legal Center (SLLC - www.statelocalc.org) has provided critical support for state and local governments with Supreme Court litigation. Filing over 300 amicus briefs in the Supreme Court, the SLLC ensures that the voices of state and local governments are heard in cases that could dramatically alter the landscape within which they govern. In this session, attendees will get a historical perspective of the SLLC's work and what it means for counties.

10:45 -12:00 Educational workshop – Communicating clearly in a crisis

Jessica Beyer, communications manager and business analyst from Blue Earth County, MN and Lori Hudson, Communication And Digital Media Services Director from Hillsborough County, Florida presented on “dos and don’ts” for how to best share information during a crisis.

CAO Leddy attended workshop with several case studies of examples of effective county communication during natural disasters.

12:00 – 3:30 pm NACo General Session

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy attended – presentation from former Governor John Huntsman and former Senator Evan Bayh on the NoLabels.org effort to find members of congress who are problem solvers vs. being purely partisan.

4:00-5:00pm California Caucus meeting

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy attended along with California County Board members who received a presentation from Joe Krahn, Waterman Associates including updates on PILT efforts, Transportation funding and the emergency drought funding bill that would get California \$650 million to support drought stricken California communities.

Tuesday, March 4th

9:30 am **James Peterson, Legislative Assistant**
Office of Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
(202) 224-3841

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy met with James Peterson to present the County’s proposal to prevent the listing of the Bi-state Sage Grouse. Mr. Peterson is Senator Feinstein’s lead environmental staff person and specializes in public lands.

Vice Chair Fesko explained that Mono County staff, US Fish and Wildlife and members of the State Local Area Working Group developed the Bi-state Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Plan. The Plan would call for \$37.9 million over five years and would, if fully implemented, could prevent an endangered species listing of the Bi-State Sage Grouse.

Vice Chair Fesko explained in detail the impacts that a listing would cause on the County’s local economy and on use of private land. Mr. Peterson

understood the potential impact a Listing could have on California and Nevada and will be presenting the proposal to Senator Feinstein. Mr. Peterson understood the need to prevent the listing and expressed support.

Vice Chair Fesko also discussed with Mr. Peterson the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area Land Exchange bill (H.R. 1241) and reiterated that the Mono County Board was in support. Mr. Peterson said Senator Feinstein would be carrying the bill in the Senate.

11:00 am **Sara Moffat, Legislative Assistant**
Office of Senator Harry Reid
522 Hart Senate Office Building
(202) 224-3542

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy met with Ms. Moffat and presented the Bi-State Sage Grouse proposal. Ms. Reid stated Senator Reid is supportive of the proposal as it is a proactive effort. She further recommended touching base with Senator Barbara Mikulski's Office, as she is Chair of Appropriations.

Ms. Moffat also recommended seeking House Republican support (see meeting with Congressman Paul Cook below as well as meeting with Robert Yavor of Congressman Buck McKeon's office).

Ms. Moffat directed the County to review the recently passed Farm Bill stating there may be funding opportunities within the Bill for preservation. Staff will research this option as well as follow up with USDA staff.

11:15 am **Andrew Dohrmann,**
Majority Professional Staff
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
(202) 224-8832

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy met with Mr. Dohrmann to discuss MAP 21 (The federal transportation bill and its successor which is under development). Concerns were recently raised that future transportation bills might move to a funding formula which is based on population versus road miles. This would deeply hurt Mono County and the MOU Mono County currently has with Inyo and Kern Counties.

Mr. Dohrmann stated Senator Boxer, who chairs the committee, would never allow that to occur at the federal level. There was discussion that the California State Legislature might seek this change for funds received by the state. Staff will follow up with CSAC and RCRC as well as state legislators to ensure this does not occur.

2:00 pm **Ryan Leavitt, Legislative Correspondent**
Office of Senator Dean Heller
342 Hart Senate Office Building
(202) 224-6244

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy met with Mr. Leavitt who sat in for Jeremy Harrell on behalf of Senator Heller and received information expressly on the Bi-State Sage Grouse issue. Mr. Leavitt was very enthusiastic about the County's proposal and stated he would be an advocate for its support with the Senator.

Senator Heller's state will be impacted by the Bi-State Grouse listing and is looking for any efforts to prevent listing. Staff will follow up with Mr. Leavitt.

3:00 pm **Robert Yavor, Legislative Assistant**
Office of Congressman Buck McKeon
2310 Rayburn House Office Building
(202) 225-1956

Mr. Yavor works for Congressman Buck McKeon who used to represent Mono County. Vice Chair Fesko presented the Bi-State Sage Grouse Plan and Mr. Yavor said that he would present to Congressman McKeon and ask him to support the effort.

Mr. Yavor also said he would be coordinating with James Peterson in Senator Feinstein's office to work together on this issue. Per Mr. Yavor, Congressman McKeon will defer to Congressman Cook as lead on this effort but would be an advocate for Mono County.

3:30 pm **Congressman Paul Cook**
1222 Longworth House Office Building
(202) 225-5861

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy met with Congressman Cook, his Chief of Staff, John Sobel, and Congressman Cook's Legislative Director Tim

Itnyre and presented the Sage Grouse Plan. Congressman Cook said he would take on the county's effort whole-heartedly.

Congressman Cook directed his staff to work with Mono County Staff to put together a meeting with USFW in DC (via phone for Mono staff) to move the Plan forward. Congressman Cook also requested Mono staff to work with his staff to develop a letter of support for the funding for the House Appropriations Committee Chair, Congressman Ken Calvert.

Congressman Cook's enthusiastic support is the lynch pin to moving this effort forward. With his meeting, the County has attained its most important advocate, Congressman Cook, who will help us move forward the proactive Bi-State Plan effort.

Staff has already begun working with Tim Itnyre on next steps.

4:15 pm **Amelia Jenkins, Deputy Staff Director, Minority Staff**
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
House Committee on Natural Resources
186 Ford House Office Building
(202) 225-2761

Vice Chair Fesko and CAO Leddy met with Ms. Jenkins and another member of the Subcommittee staff to seek out leads to support county efforts on the Bi-State Sage Grouse plan.

Ms. Jenkins recommended the following options might be pursued in addition to effort with Congressman Cook, Senator Feinstein, Senators Heller and Reid:

- US Marine Mountain warfare Training facility could be impacted by the listing – seek out Department of Defense authorization or funding for some of the mitigation work (namely the Juniper/Pinions mitigation);
- Request Congressman Steve Horsford (who is on Natural Resources Committee) during April Hearings with Secretary of the Interior to ask for support of the Sage Grouse preservation Plan in public hearing.
- Under the Department of Interior's Office of Policy Program (Climate Adaptation program) seek possible funding.

Wednesday, March 5th

10:30 am **John Brodtke, Legislative Director**
Office of Congressman Steven Horsford
1330 Longworth House Office Building
(202) 225-9894

Vice Chair Fesko and Paul Schlesinger (of the firm Alcalde and Fay and at no charge to the County) met with John Brodtke to present the County's proposal to prevent the listing of the Bi-State Sage Grouse. Mr. Brodtke is Congressman Horsford's legislative director.

The proposal to prevent the listing was well received and support was indicated. John was happy to hear that we have already spoken with Congressman's Reid and Feinstein's office. He stresses the need to get these two on board and indicated that Congressman Horsford would be willing to support the plan.