

NDOW, A Dismal Failure
By Cecil Fredi

From July 1989 to June 1991, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) conducted a survey of sage grouse production and mortality. Fourteen hundred eggs were placed in two hundred simulated sage grouse nests with seven eggs per nest. This was during the 15 day period when sage hens lay their eggs.

The results of this survey are unbelievable. At the completion of the 15 day period, all fourteen hundred eggs were destroyed (100%) on both study areas. Ravens were believed to be the chief nest predator.

During the 1989 legislative session, a bill was introduced to do some raven control. NDOW did not show up to testify. Even after Senator Jacobsen requested that NDOW come to the legislature to testify on its own survey, NDOW chose not to testify in favor of raven control.

NDOW took sportsmen's money to identify the problem and when it was time to implement a solution, they were missing in action. Former Wildlife commissioner Bill Bradley phoned me to inform me that the study had been declared invalid. NDOW had marked all of the nests with a white flag. The ravens spotted the flags and realized the eggs were there. My answer to Mr. Bradley was, "NDOW must believe in the tooth fairy and Santa Claus."

A recent study by United States Department of Agriculture in Wyoming found that predation was the leading cause of grouse mortality. A USDA official stated that coyotes, eagles, badgers and ravens all contribute to sage grouse mortality. Predation accounted for 81% of chick mortalities. Grouse were seven times more likely to survive in areas where predator control efforts are under way, the USDA official reported.

When Governor Sandoval reappointed director Ken Mayer, NDOW's leadership has only gotten worse. Combine this with current Wildlife Commission chairman Mike McBeath and many others on the Commission who don't believe in predator control, nothing will be done for sage grouse or mule deer. Now let's prove it.

Pat Laughlin's group, Nevada Alliance 4 Wildlife had a project approved by the former Wildlife Commission. This project was for the protection of sage grouse nests and chicks from raven predation. NDOW Director Ken Mayer, was the major reason this project was held hostage for 2 ½ years. In addition to the Wildlife Commission, Elko County Commissioners, and Elko County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife approved this project. Director Mayer would not say the word "Request" so Wildlife Services could not start the federally approved DRC-1339 toxic egg program without this request from Mayer. It is obvious that Ken Mayer is against predator control. Does this sound like someone who is truly concerned about the seriousness of the sage grouse problem? He would rather feed the sage grouse eggs to the ravens than kill a raven. One reason former Governor Gibbons fired Mayer was for his refusal to help our diminishing mule deer herd by doing predator control.

Now enters Governor Brian Sandoval and guess what? Nevada Bighorns Unlimited puts on a big fundraiser for Sandoval to help him get elected and back comes Ken Mayer for a second round as NDOW Director. Governor Sandoval appointed him in direct opposition to other recommendations by the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners. The newly elected governor then also placed NBU members on the Wildlife Commission as former Governor Gibbons' appointed commissioners' terms expired. To date, their only interest has been in Nevada bighorn sheep. Good old Nevada politics!

Now enters Pete Mori, Elko County rancher. Governor Sandoval reappointed him as a Wildlife Commissioner to represent livestock interests throughout the state of Nevada. Like Ken Mayer, this is his second round. This was all done by NBU's writing a letter to Governor Sandoval and urging him to reappoint Pete Mori. So, why would NBU wish to endorse a livestock person to the Wildlife Commission? Because Pete Mori votes the party line with NDOW and NBU every time. They are assured a secure vote from Pete for all their programs! Again, this is called Nevada politics!

At the recent Wildlife Commission meeting held in Elko Nevada on June 22-23, 2012, Director Mayer, stacked Commission members, and with assistance from NBU messiah Larry Johnson lurking in the shadows directing traffic, had the Commission vote to repeal any money for the protection of sage grouse nests from raven predation. This shows none of these people truly care about seriousness of the sage grouse issue.

Of course, Commissioner Pete Mori, livestock representative, voted right along with NDOW by supporting this motion. He also voted with NDOW for a two-week sage grouse season, which makes no sense because we are trying to save sage grouse, not kill them. So you may ask, why is a Nevada-born, lifetime rancher from Elko County voting with these wildlife extremists? Doesn't it make you wonder what favors the Mori Ranching Company is getting out of all of this?

To my knowledge, Mr. Mori has not attended any Elko County CAB meetings since being reappointed. Additionally, he has not attended several sage grouse symposiums hosted by the Elko County Commission. He only appears at Nevada Wildlife Commission meetings to vote the party line with NDOW and NBU. It is very obvious that Mr. Mori has "sold out" to these wildlife organizations. He is not representing the livestock interests of Nevada. He is representing NDOW, NBU, and Mori ranches. Pete Mori may well be in contention for the Nevada Bighorns Unlimited Volunteer of the Year! Someone needs to put Commissioner Mori's feet to the fire and ask him who does he really represent?

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. NDOW has taken this cliché to an entirely new level. They do nothing for decades and expect different results. Sage grouse and mule deer have no chance of revival with the reappointment of Ken Mayer and Governor Sandoval's appointments to the Wildlife Commission.

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