

Form 1023, Part II, Line Item 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group (NNSG), a Nevada non-profit organization, is applying for 501(c) (3) tax-exempt status as an *educational and natural resource conservation organization*. Our primary purpose is to sustain healthy natural ecosystems by: (1) educating citizens about the benefits of multiple land use; (2) educating citizens to work collaboratively in order to resolve land use disputes by using sound scientific principles; and, (3) participating in public and private land management. Our goals are to enhance community and economic sustainability. (*See Attachment One – Organizing Document*)

NNSG MEMBERSHIP, BOARD AND MISSION:

The Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group (NNSG) was incorporated in May, 1999. Members include miners, ranchers, conservationists, federal and state agency personnel, business leaders, and other interested citizens. Membership is open to all and no dues are charged. The Board of Directors is comprised of the NNSG officers (president, vice president, treasurer and secretary), two at-large directors, and non-voting advisory representatives from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Elections are held annually in April. Bylaws have been adopted and guide NNSG's organizational affairs. (*See Attachment Two – Mission Statement and Bylaws*)

Key elements of our mission are:

- to ensure a better future for our families, community and future generations,
- build trust among our diverse citizenry, and ensure sustainable resource use,
- to provide a collaborative forum for all willing participants,
- provide science-based educational forums for resolution of important issues related to resource stewardship, informed management of our public lands, and positive socio-economic outcomes.

NNSG PROJECTS : Current projects and past events which show support of our mission goals are:

- The development of an Elko County Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation Strategy. (May of 1999 – to present)
- The sponsorship of thirteen one-and-one-half day educational events designed to bring to the membership the importance of community-based collaborative processes, ecosystem principles, natural resource restoration practices.
- Organize monthly meetings for the membership; forty-seven have been held to date. Meeting topics focused on earth and natural resources, science, regulatory requirements and relationship building.
- Establishing a web-site for ongoing informational sharing, and to display products from the ongoing projects.

NNSG OVERVIEW OF MULTIPLE USE OPPORTUNITIES

NNSG is based in the city of Elko, Elko County, Nevada located in the Northeastern corner of the state. Elko County contains four incorporated cities and is home to about 51,000 people. It is also the sixth largest county

in area in the United States with eleven million total acres, including eight million acres of public lands. More than 4,000 miles of fishing streams, 80+ lakes and reservoirs, and one of the highest annual deer harvests in the West, are found in the region. The area has a diversified economy built on gold mining, gaming, ranching, transportation, tourism and governmental services. Northern Nevada is the largest producer of gold in the United States and hosts national and international mining concerns employing over 10,000 workers. Livestock, in the form of cow-calf operations, has been an important aspect of the county's history and economy. The Nevada gaming industry is historic. Recreation and heritage tourism are becoming strong contenders for public land space and resources. Environmental values such as wildlife, water and clean air capture budgets and human energy.

INCREASED USE OF PUBLIC LAND LEADS TO CONFLICTS AND LITIGATION

Approximately 86 % of Nevada and 78 % of Elko County is federally managed by the BLM and USFS. Increased use of public land and differing land-use values has led to conflicts among recreational users, ranchers, miners, the environmental community and the federal agencies charged with protecting natural resources and wildlife. These conflicts can lead to lengthy appeals and litigation. Many citizens are attracted to NNSG because of the organization's desire to resolve conflicts through a community-based, citizen-led process before appeals and litigation.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS SUPPORTED NNSG FORMATION, AND SUPPORTS ITS CONTINUATION

Many actions supported the formation of, and now, the continuation of NNSG as a viable organization, including:

- Results of two surveys conducted by a Nevada university showed that the public supports the full spectrum of multiple uses on public lands, that state and local level management decisions were preferred over decisions at the national level, and that there was strong agreement that informed citizens from a broad spectrum of interests should be a part of the decision-making process on public lands (*See Attachment Three – 1997 Survey*). Additionally, a 2000 survey found that: (1) respondents preferred a collaborative citizens' participation or "grassroots" approach to problem-solving versus debating these conflicts in the courts; (2) respondents indicated willingness to work with a citizen's group to identify and discuss natural resource issues; and, (3) respondents said there was a need for continuing education regarding the process of collaborative discussion and resolution of natural resource issues/conflicts. (*See Attachment Four – 2000 Survey*).
- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) "Partnership Series" principles developed in the early 1990's recognizes the importance of the collaborative community-based efforts. (*See Attachment Five – BLM Letter of Invite*)
- In 1997, the Western Governor's Association created eight Enlibra principles that encourage broad-based neighborhood collaborative processes, scientifically oriented toward problem solving and positive results. Nevada's Governor encouraged use of these principles, "...by local resource planning groups statewide." (*See Attachment Six – Enlibra Case Study*)
- In addition, in 2000 the U.S. Forest Service made a "commitment to Collaborative Stewardship to achieve sustainable resource management." The agency said it would focus on: (1) removing procedural and other barriers to collaboration; (2) providing resources and help on collaboration; and, (3) using the ongoing work of the agency as learning laboratories for collaboration. (*See Attachment Seven – Collaborative Stewardship*)

Some Elko area citizens had been desiring to be a part of a process to achieve sustained healthy ecosystems, improve community relationships, and to have a meaningful involvement in the Elko area public land planning process. Time and failed natural resource planning and practices, has evolved to allow the community-based, collaborative planning efforts a chance. This was supported by the BLM and USFS willingness to participate in local collaborative planning efforts, and was encouraged by the bipartisan Western Governor's Association Enlibra problem-solving principles. It was also backed by the surveys indicating Nevada citizens' willingness to participate in community-based problem solving. This led to the development of NNSG's mission to educate and inform, and to address natural resource/public land needs by offering symposia, presentations and collaborative training designed to educate citizens so they can more knowledgeably participate in resource planning.

NEED FOR ESTABLISHING EXEMPT STATUS

The Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group is a "citizen led" collaborative process; its strength lies in citizens being directly engaged in the leadership and vision of its mission. Success depends on the trust and respect the complex membership builds. Public land management and the management of land held in private ownership have very close and sensitive associations. NNSG's goals are designed to help both components. We will work to attract foundations and other sources of funding who share in our objectives.

Ongoing and varied sources of funding will be necessary to support NNSG's goals. By establishing our exempt status as a 501(c)(3), potential contributors will be able to deduct their contributions and our organization will qualify for important, substantial funding. NNSG will have the capability to solicit funding to support and sustain: 1) ecosystem planning and research; 2) the finalization, implementation and monitoring of the Elko County Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation Strategy; and 3) mechanisms or products to share the results of individual and coordinated restoration efforts.