



February 24th, 2025

The Honorable Natha Anderson
Chair
The Honorable Selena La Rue Hatch
Vice Chair
Nevada Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
401 S. Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701

Re: Statement of The Pew Charitable Trusts in support of AB104

Dear Chair Natha Anderson and Vice Chair La Rue Hatch:

On behalf of the Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew), I am writing to express support for Assembly Bill (AB) 104. AB 104 will provide a needed financial tool to compensate willing water right holders to retire their water rights in perpetuity, conserving water and reducing groundwater decline.

Pew's U.S. Conservation program seeks to sustain biodiversity and resilient ecosystems by collaborating with Tribes, local communities, businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders to achieve balanced, commonsense policy solutions at the federal and state level. Protecting, restoring and conserving freshwater resources that sustain local economies is a key component of our work.

Nevada, the driest state in the country, relies heavily on groundwater to support its economy, natural resources, and residents. Accounting for approximately 30 to 40 percent of total water usage, groundwater is a crucial component of the state's water supply. However, excessive groundwater use has caused significant declines in water levels, with recoveries that can take years, decades, or even centuries. This depletion poses serious risks to biodiversity, threatens the long-term sustainability of water resources, and adversely impacts rural communities that rely on these water sources for their daily needs and livelihoods.

Groundwater depletion can have far-reaching impacts on biodiversity, particularly in arid regions like Nevada, where many ecosystems depend on stable groundwater levels. As water tables decline, springs, wetlands, and riparian habitats that rely on consistent groundwater inputs often diminish, leading to the loss of critical habitats for fish and wildlife. Aquatic species are especially vulnerable, as they depend on specific water conditions to survive.ⁱ

Groundwater depletion also can have significant adverse impacts on migrating deer, elk, pronghorn and bighorn sheep by disrupting the availability of water sources, altering habitat quality, and affecting the overall health of ecosystems they depend on during their seasonal

movements. These large mammals rely on specific migration corridors that provide access to food, water, and shelter, and groundwater availability plays a crucial role in sustaining these pathways, especially in Nevada's arid Basin and Range region.ⁱⁱ

To address these issues, AB104 proposes to establish a voluntary water rights retirement program in Nevada. If enacted, this program will provide another tool financially compensating willing water right holders to retire their water rights so that they cannot be available for any use in the future, conserving water and reducing groundwater decline while protecting Nevada's diverse economy.

Thank you for your consideration of Pew's support for AB104. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at ncallero@pewtrusts.org or 503-977-5467, should you need additional information.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Callero
Senior Officer, U.S. Conservation
The Pew Charitable Trusts

CC: Members of the Nevada Assembly Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Venicia Considine
The Honorable Jovan Jackson
The Honorable Venise Karris
The Honorable Elaine Marzola
The Honorable Howard Watts
The Honorable Richard DeLong
The Honorable Bert Gurr
The Honorable Alexis Hansen
The Honorable Heidi Kasama

ⁱ Saito L, Munn L. 2023. Strategies for Managing and Sustaining Groundwater-Dependent Ecosystems in Nevada. Reno: The Nature Conservancy. Available at groundwaterresourcehub.org/where-we-work/nevada.

ⁱⁱ Kevin L. Monteith et al, Functional attributes of ungulate migration: landscape features facilitate movement and access to forage, *Ecological Applications* (2018). DOI: [10.1002/eap.1803](https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.1803)