

Morgan-Summit Adaptive Resources Management (MSARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The Morgan-Summit Adaptive Resource Management (MSARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group (LWG) focuses on southern half of the Rich-Morgan-Summit Sage-Grouse Management Area (SMGA). This group is facilitated by Lorien Belton.



Description of Area and General Population Information

The LWG area covers Morgan and Summit Counties. The two counties consist largely of privately-owned land, particularly where sage-grouse are found. Sage-grouse habitat in these areas occurs at higher elevations and is usually more mesic than some of Utah’s other sage-grouse areas. The sage-grouse populations in the area exhibit highly localized behavior, but are believed to have connections to populations in Rich County and southwestern Wyoming. The most prominent populations live near the Morgan/Summit county line in the vicinity of East Canyon Reservoir.

Vehicles lined up to watch sage-grouse strut at the popular Henefer-Divide lek on the Morgan-Summit country line. This lek may be the most visited lek in the western U.S. Photo by Brandon Flack.

Table 2. Meetings and Tours held by MSARM LWG during 2017.

Meeting and Tours	Date	Location	# attending	Topics
Dinner meeting	February 8, 2017	Wanship	22	Landowner appreciation and research presentation and Q&A
Related meeting		Salt Lake City	12	Application of GPS data to land disposition decisions
Field activities	Spring-summer	East Canyon area	Varied	Finalizing research activities in coordination with private landowners
Regular meeting	November 1, 2017	Coalville	12	BLM planning updates, state mitigation plan discussion, state plan updates

Project and Research Highlights

The group has been very active, both during and between meetings, in providing comments on the state of Utah's sage-grouse mitigation plan. Because much of the sagebrush landscape in the area is in relatively good condition and held in private ownership, easements are a highly relevant tool for conservation activities in the area. Much of the habitat project work relevant in the rest of Utah, such as pinyon-juniper removal, is less relevant here. Group members participated in providing feedback to ensure that mitigation opportunities were also available to private landowners in the MSARM area.

The first local research project, conducted by Utah State University graduate student Brandon Flack, finished up in 2017. His thesis is available for review. The group was grateful to learn a suite of new information about the local sage-grouse population, including confirmation of small areas of seasonal habitat use, and migration corridors outside the SGMA. The preliminary wildlife corridor information from that research provided the impetus for a related partner meeting on how to use data like this to bring more voices to the table in land use prioritization discussions within and outside the Division of Natural Resources. The relationships built during the research project also provided many opportunities for local landowners to engage in sage-grouse research findings and other conversations outside of regular working group meetings.

Upcoming Year Work Plan

The group is ready to revise the local sage-grouse conservation plan in the coming year when the state plan revision has been finalized. The group hopes to promote the use of conservation easements and compensatory mitigation it as an option for local landowners. The group will also emphasize helping develop and evaluate local projects, to the degree appropriate on private lands. Working more closely with Natural Resources Conservation Service and county departments, such as weed management, will be key to this effort.