

Rich County Coordinated Resource Management (Rich CRM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The Rich County Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group (LWG) is facilitated by David Dahlgren. The Rich CRM consists of state and federal agency personnel, representatives from local government, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, private industry, and private individuals.



Description of Area and General Population Information

The Rich CRM management area is located in northeastern Utah, and is a significant population center for grouse in three states – Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming. The Sage-grouse Management Area (SGMA) includes Cache, Rich, Weber, Morgan, Summit and Wasatch Counties. The area boundary was determined by consulting with adjacent states, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), and the Morgan-Summit Adaptive Resources Management LWG, and the Rich CRM. It incorporates vegetation types used by sage-grouse, mostly in the Wyoming Basins eco-region.

A major LWG research effort for the Rich CRM has been to evaluate greater sage-grouse response to livestock grazing. The results suggest livestock grazing and sage-grouse conservation are compatible. Photo by Todd Black.

Recent Activities and Accomplishments

The Rich CRM continues to meet regularly. We were able to have several project proposals come through the group before going through the Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) ranking process. The major activity within the group is the Three Creeks Grazing Project Consolidation. The Environmental Assessment for the consolidation was approved and the project is starting to move forward at this time. Personnel employed by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food Grazing Improvement Program and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have been applying for multiple grants through Utah WRI elsewhere to help make the necessary improvements to the allotments and pastures to allow the grazing system to change. We anticipate a full change in grazing management by 2020.

Upcoming Year Work Plan

The sage-grouse research initiated in 2011 on the Three Creeks (3C) and Deseret Land and Livestock (DLL) has continued through 2017. Graduate students are completing their data analysis and writing theses. Additionally, the Utah Community-Based Conservation Program has continued to monitor sagebrush community characteristics in the area to assess the federal Sage-Grouse Habitat Assessment Framework for the Bureau of Land Management in Rich County.

This work is ongoing and will help federal managers and other to assess sage-grouse habitat appropriately in the future.

We are also proposing to continue monitoring female sage-grouse that were fitted with global positioning system (GPS) rump-mounted transmitters from 2015-2017 through the 2018-2020 breeding seasons. We will recover transmitters from mortalities, refurbish, and redeploy them on female sage-grouse to sustain a minimum 10 female sage-grouse on the DLL and 3C study areas that are radio-marked. We began deploying GPS radio-collars on sage-grouse in 2015 to scientifically describe the range of sage-grouse behavioral responses to the presence of livestock and grazing.

Completion of this project will provide definitive information regarding sage-grouse behavioral responses to the presence of cattle and the effects of livestock grazing on the vegetation composition and structure based on rangeland ecological sites. This science-based information will help to better define the role of working landscape in species conservation.