

Strawberry Valley Adaptive Resource Management (SVARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The Strawberry Valley Adaptive Resource Management (SVARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group (LWG) is facilitated by Lorien Belton.



Description of Area and General Population Information

The LWG conservation area covers Wasatch and Duchesne Counties. There are leks and associated nesting/brood-rearing areas both at high elevations around the Strawberry Reservoir, as well as in the lower-elevation Fruitland area in Duchesne County. The birds winter primarily in Fruitland. In recent years, the population has grown increasingly stable. Predator control efforts, particularly with regard to red fox control, have played a large role in helping the sage-grouse population rebound from previous lows.

Mark Farmer (Utah Division of Wildlife Resources) and Anthony Gray (U.S. Forest Service) discuss project plans for habitat treatments around the Strawberry Reservoir. This project was proposed for funding in the 2018 WRI project cycle. Photo by Lorien Belton.

Table 3. Meetings and Tours held by SVARM LWG during 2017.

| Meetings and Tours | Date | Location | # attending | Comments |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------|--|
| Spring Meeting | Cancelled due to low interest | | | |
| Field Tour | Not held | | | |
| Meeting | November 29, 2017 | Heber | 9 | Grazing and sage-grouse information, HAF framework, project and fire updates, state plan revisions |

Project and Research Highlights

The planning for the next suite of habitat improvements in the Strawberry Valley has been moving very slowly. One project in Trout Creek was implemented this summer in an area where sagebrush was treated ten years previously to increase forb and grass diversity. An important first step in beginning the next round of projects was submission of a pre-treatment weed control proposal in the co-op creek area to combat a substantial musk thistle problem which could severely limit the success of any brood-rearing habitat enhancement projects. The group

maintained communication with Wasatch County regarding developments near Strawberry Reservoir which have the potential to impact sage-grouse, although on a very extended implementation timeline. A key project in sage-grouse wintering areas was designed and proposed for funding through the Watershed Restoration Initiative.

Upcoming Year Work Plan

The group hopes to do considerably more planning for habitat projects in the area. Developing multiple project proposals for brood-rearing habitat improvement projects will require involvement from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Forest Service. Group members will also be working strategically with local private landowners of key winter habitat to assist with appropriate project planning. The group will also work on local plan revisions during 2018, and work to engage Brigham Young University researchers in the group again to learn about results of the most recent research.