

Southwest Desert Adaptive Resource Management (SWARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The Southwest Desert Adaptive Resource Management (SWARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group (LWG) consists of community members from Beaver and Iron Counties and is facilitated by Nicki Frey. The LWG meets every other month to discuss issues and concerns with grouse management and conservation in our region. The Governor's Task Force has recommended the development of two Sage-grouse Management Areas (SGMA) in the LWG conservation area; Hamlin Valley and Bald Hills.

Description of Area and General Population Information

The Bald Hills SGMA is located in southwestern Utah, in Beaver and Iron Counties, and is considered a population stronghold for this region of Utah. This population uses a series of leks throughout the habitat area, with males visiting more than one lek per season. Currently, the population is constrained to the Management Area by vegetation fragmentation and human development; however future improvements could connect this population to the Hamlin Valley SGMA to the west, and further north into Beaver County. The primary land uses in this Management Area are grazing, agriculture, and swine production; predominant land ownership is Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private. The BLM manages the Bald Hills for multiple uses including conservation, recreation, energy development, and big game hunting. Residential development is present in Minersville, in the north of the Management Area, where most of the agriculture production also occurs. There is potential for wind energy production as well as current and future power transmission lines.

The Hamlin Valley SGMA is located in southwestern Utah, in Beaver and Iron Counties, on the border of Utah and Nevada and is considered a population stronghold for this region of Utah. Although currently isolated from other habitat areas, habitat restoration could link this population to the Bald Hills SGMA. The primary land use in this Management Area is grazing; predominant land ownership is BLM. The BLM manages Hamlin Valley for multiple uses including wild horse conservation, recreation, and big game hunting. Development is limited to scattered houses, generally in the southern portion of the Habitat Area.

Recent Activities and Accomplishments

The SWARM continues to be active in conducting greater sage-grouse research, management guidance, and communicating issues with the group. In cooperation with Dr. Nicki Frey, SWARM has been conducting satellite telemetry research in the Hamlin Valley SGMA since 2015. This is in addition to the satellite telemetry study that was conducted in the Bald Hills SGMA from 2014-2016. The Hamlin Valley study is designed to determine female nest location, success, and recruitment in response to habitat treatments throughout the valley. This study will continue for two more nesting seasons. Currently, Dr. Frey is advising a PhD student that will analyze this data, as well as synthesize and analyze all data that has been collected by Dr. Frey's studies since 2013. This project is also coordinating with Nevada Department of Wildlife to study grouse that use the northern Hamlin Valley in Nevada.

Upcoming Year Work Plan

The SWARM will revise its local plan during 2018. The group plans to learn more about sage-grouse responses to habitat improvement projects. Dr. Frey's PhD student will continue to analyze and synthesize data for the group.