

West Desert Adaptive Resource Management (WDARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The West Desert Basin Adaptive Resource Management (WDARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group (LWG) is facilitated by Lorien Belton. The group covers two areas: Ibapah, on the western border of Utah with Nevada, and the Sheeprock Mountains (in Tooele and Juab counties). Due to concern over population declines in the Sheeprock, the WDARM group has also become the Technical Committee tasked for overseeing a series of enhanced efforts in the Sheeprock to reduce threats to sage-grouse and help the population rebound. Since July 2015, WDARM has increased its meeting frequency from three-four times a year to approximately every other month. The group will continue its increased activity until the urgent need for coordination and implementation goes down. Although the majority of the groups’ focus is on the Sheeprock population area, the group tries to meet once each year in Ibapah.



The 2017 joint tour with UPCD and UBARM visited wet meadow restoration sites on Forest Service land. Photo by Lorien Belton.

Description of Area and General Population Information

The WDARM LWG conservation area encompasses sage-grouse habitats in Tooele and Juab counties. The two primary population locations are far apart: one in western Tooele County in the Ibapah region (including the Goshute Tribe’s land), and the other at the eastern side of the two counties, known as the Sheeprocks. These more eastern populations include birds in the Vernon area as well as in the Tintic Mountains. Population trends in the area have declined over the last few years. In 2015, lek counts which rebounded in other part of the state, including Ibapah, did not rebound in the Sheeprocks.

Table 5. Meetings and Tours held by WDARM LWG during 2017.

Meetings and Field Tours Type	Date	Location	# attending	Comments
Meeting	January 26, 2017	Tooele	23	Research updates, BLM travel management planning, WRI project review
Meeting	March 15, 2017	Tooele	16	Riparian restoration, seeding success

				research, recreation research baseline data
Work day	October 31, 2017	Vernon Creek	Unknown (~12?)	Working group members were invited to assist in building BDAs on Vernon Creek
Field Tour	Postponed due to project delays	Tintics	NA	Site visits to riparian projects and water monitoring were delayed due to project timelines
Meeting	November 30, 2017	Tooele	23	BLM policies, hydrology research

Project and Research Highlights

The group scaled back its previously very aggressive meeting schedule from the previous year. However, the group remained quite active, with several research projects going on in the area and a wide array of projects. Utah State University (USU) research headed up by Melissa Chelak, PhD student, involved many group members in a second year of translocations of sage-grouse into the Sheeprocks area. The group uses periodic research updates to constantly revise and adapt project plans and priorities. The completion, late in the year, of the instrumentation of several watersheds in the Tintic Mountains marked the first step in a project designed to assess the water quality and quantity impacts of conifer removal in spring systems. The long-range planning for projects in the area allowed the project to be designed in a way that will provide several years of data before the trees are cut.

In addition to research, the group actively communicates in multiple informal subgroups about habitat treatments and the fire/fuels staff at Bureau of Land Management (BLM) work well with the wider group on many aspects of project planning, implementation, and reporting. This year saw several water improvement projects implemented, including spring projects and beaver dam analogues (BDAs) for riparian restoration.

Upcoming Year Work Plan

The West Desert group is very active. The focus for 2018 for the group will include continued conifer project implementation, the third year of the translocation research, preliminary data from the groundwater project, and involvement with a USU recreation study in the Sheeprocks. Finding time to balance research presentations, project planning, and other discussions in the group's busy agendas will be a challenge!