

CCARM local working group meeting

June 10, 2020, 10:00 – 12:00

AGENDA

1. Introductions

Lorien Belton, Community-Based Conservation Program, USU Extension
Heather Talley, Upland Game Coordinator, Utah Division Wildlife Resources
Lisa Church, Kanab Bureau of Land Management
Todd Miller, Division of Oil Gas and Mining
Jared Reese, State Sage-grouse Biologist, Bureau of Land Management
Clint Wirick, USFWS Partners Program
Rhett Boswell, Utah Division Wildlife Resources
Nicki Frey, USU Extension
Kevin Heaton, Garfield and Kane Counties USU Extension

2. Lek count updates?

- PSGMA lek counts were down; 2018-2020 was 255, 197, 155
- Individual leks hit a couple soft triggers, but nothing activated a trigger that would affect change.
- The low lek counts are quite alarming. Is this due to biological factors? Or personnel changes?
 - What were the dates of the first count? Nicki was getting reports of hens attending leks in Bald Hills in late February. Also, Sink Valley is usually done by the 2nd week of April. Maybe a couple stragglers.
 - Even if the dates influenced the low numbers, there probably was still a decline, based on such low numbers. Later counts can't account for all of it.
 - The concern is that we don't really know what to do to make the numbers better in the next year. ~ the soft triggers are an opportunity to group up and discuss the history of the lek, activities in the area, and come up with ideas as a group.
- Jared Reese provided a discussing about hard and soft triggers (see attached recording)

3. Policy and planning updates – Lorien Belton

- CBCP is rearranging a bit, so that there is some consistency to policy or statewide updates throughout the local working groups.
- Brief update on where the state habitat mapping progress sits.
- Appendices of maps are online. Newest drafts should be sent out for comments this month. Waiting for ALL the seasons to be complete.
- The new maps will be accompanied by an instructive video by Dr. Kohl on what the maps can and cannot do.
- Nicki worked directed with Dr. Kohl to look at the model fit for southern Utah. We were able to select individual model parameters for each region of the US. So, the two of them worked together to select the correct model to fit the known locations as well as local reports of grouse.

- Dr. Simona Picardi is working on an interactive model will help us identify conifer removal projects based on both cost effectiveness AND habitat change impact. We don't really have a timeline for that.
 - Jared Reese: the BLM is helping Dr. Picardi with this effort.
- Programmatic EIS updates: the vegetation treatment and fuels management comment period just closed last week.
- Forest Service updates: in October the BLM 2019 plan was challenged, so then they had to go back to the 2015 plan. Both BLM and FS were almost ready to go with their latest versions and updates when this happened.
 - USFS: the reviewing officer, Allen Rowley, is working on concerns identified, planning on a follow-up call in May – June. Changes will be written up and distributed to regional offices to make appropriate adjustments. Goal is to avoid similar lawsuit to BLM.
- Regional raven efforts – there is a team within the migratory birds office of USFWS to look at what we can do about ravens. They are trying to come up with a larger regional strategy, rather than piecemealing that by species.
 - At the corvid conference, the discussion was about 'how' to present a unified front so that people understand what is happening in the landscape, and 'how' do we get the political support.

4. Research updates – Nicki, BLM?

Nicki – discussion on the Sink Valley research started by Ben. We are looking at how sagebrush and forbs have re-established in the treated sites in the last 10-15 years. Going to collaborate with Coal Valley Mine to look at their data on restored sites as well. Going to use bird dog surveys and pellet count surveys in addition to GPS telemetry.

5. 'Open Mic' for additional updates and news

- WRI funded project came out this year. It was a lot fewer projects that were selected this year. Not as much money, so getting some of it is getting harder and harder.
- What map is being used by BLM to assess impacts statewide? Is there a map that we are all supposed to be looking at?
 - The VHF map that we are currently using is considered an 'interim' map. Being used by BLM and UDWR.
 - There was concern with the Panguitch SGMA 'boot', but it won't be there in the new map.
 - The new maps will incorporate all our GPS telemetry data and local knowledge; based on regional habitat factor variability, not statewide averages.
- Kevin Heaton submitted a grant to remove tamarisk in UKC. Did get some funding from an invasive species mitigation fund to get that project started.
 - There could be opportunities for beaver relocation in a couple of areas ones the treatments occur. Stan Gurley, Rhett Boswell will need to discuss that.
 - Would need an agreement to allow for damage treatment if needed

- 2000 acres project in Dickenson Hill planned. Maintenance work will occur in the fall. It is cleared by NEPA for 400 acres.
- So much money and effort has been put in habitat treatments. Are the birds responding to these? Or is it something else holding them back? Hard to think that it is habitat with all the treatments we have conducted in the area.

6. Next Meeting Date: September 9, 2010, 10am – 12pm. We will set up a WebEx link regardless of if we can meet face-

What can we add to the meeting to make it more worthwhile to you?