

**CASTLE  
COUNTRY  
LOCAL  
WORKING  
GROUP**

**Date:** 1/20/16

**Place:** DNR office in Price, Utah

**Present:** Nicole Nielson (UDWR), Makeda Hansen (UDWR), Leah Lewis (NRCS), Jim Spencer (NRCS), Daniel Eddington (DWR), Robert Edgel (DWR), Clint Wirick (USFWS), Bill Butcher (Conservation District; landowner), Roger Barton (UDAF), Brad Crompton (DWR), Klint Eastman (Nutter Ranch), Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator)

**Information Presented/Discussion Highlights**

*Proposed WRI projects*

The group discussed three projects pertinent to sage-grouse in the area.

A PJ treatment in Joe's Valley, #3638, is actually in the Parker/Emery SGMA, but is near where our summer field tour went this year. It is a fairly straightforward PJ removal project.

The Porphyry Bench project (#3616) proposed by Robbie, generated a lot of good discussion. The area has had a number of concerns, including drought, overgrazing, and insect infestations, the combination of which has left the area in poor shape and with very little sagebrush. The proposed project involves planting sagebrush seedlings. Leah noted that she just recently watched an NCRS webinar about planting sagebrush, which she will pass along to Robbie via Lorien. Lorien will send out the webinar to the full list as others may be interested as well. The group discussed how to time the project for greatest effectiveness, suggested other seeds to include in the mix to help forbs establish, and discussed the idea of making a field day out of the project if it is funded to get additional help in the field and provide an opportunity to learn about the technique. Lorien will write a comment in the database regarding the working groups' support for the project.

Project #3583 is for about 4000 acres of PJ treatment in the Carbon SGMA. It is next to a project completed this year that was about 2500 acres.

*Sagebrush conference*

Lorien announced the sagebrush conference happening at the end of February. Makeda explained that many of the sessions would be broadcast live in the DNR conference room in Price (same location as the LWG meetings) during the conference. Among the topics explored in sessions will be grazing, hydrology, cheat grass, fire, and many other topics.

The group had a short discussion about the increased focus on wet meadows, which seems like an important area to understand more. The group was enthusiastic about finding ways to improve wet areas.

## *Tavaputs project*

Klint explained that there will be a lop-and-scatter done to diversify the grass and forb component of an area slightly downslope from a lek on Tavaputs this spring. It will connect the lek area with a recently completed chaining.

## *NRCS and Private Lands Efforts*

Leah noted that the SGI sign-up deadline is February 19<sup>th</sup>. She does not have any applications in the Price area, but it working on about 10 in the Uintah/Duchesne/Daggett area. She reminded the group that she can work on federal lands, as long as she is working with a private landowner. For example, this allows her to assist with grazing management improvements on Forest or BLM. There is a currently no SGI biologists working closely in this region, as Ted Donaldson left in the fall. Lowell, the District Conservationist, is a good contact. Brandon Steinberg (the Range Conservationist) is probably the best contact. Slate has also moved on and is now with SITLA (having taken over Ron Torgerson's position). Slate's position was advertised over the holidays so hopefully there will be a new contact soon.

Leah provided details about a landowner appreciation dinner she helped coordinate in Box Elder County last year. Both Roger and Klint were very supportive. Roger will get the Price Conservation District involved. Kathleen Clarke has come to other such dinners around the state – Roger will coordinate with Lorien to choose a date that will work for Kathleen.

It was noted that no USFS or BLM employees were present at this meeting. Lorien and Nicole will follow up to ensure that the appropriate people (including some new staff) are included on the listserv and have the LWG meetings on their radar.

## **Follow-up Needed**

- Leah will send Lorien the links to several webinars that may be of interest to the group
- Lorien will add comments to the WRI database referencing the LWG's comments.
- Lorien will follow up with Tom Monaco about snow fences.
- Roger will follow up with Lorien to find a date/time for the landowner dinner.
- Lorien and Nicole will reach out to BLM and USFS employees who would be appropriate to have at the LWG meetings to make sure they are on the lists and are aware of the value of attending.

## **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting may be the landowner dinner, depending on when it is scheduled. Another regular meeting will be scheduled in March or April depending on the dinner scheduling plans.