

Castle Country Meeting Agenda

2/14/2011

Wayne County Court House Loa, Utah

10:00 Welcome Introductions	Dorrell Barker
10:15 Scoping letter to BLM	Group
10:40 Report on Plan (Actions/Strategies CAP)	Group
12:00 Lunch	

Members present

Todd Black	USU/EXT
Ron Patterson	USU/EXT
Wade Pasket	UDWR
Brad Crompton	UDWR
Jeff Fenton	NRCS
Dorrell Barker	landowner/Chair
Nicole Nielson	UDWR
Makecla Hanson	UDWR
Clint Wirick	USFWS
Bill Butcher	landowner
Darris Jones	BBC
Val Payne	landowner/Grazers

The group revised and drafted a letter to send to the Western Regional BLM team for official comments on the revision of BLM's LUP/RMPs. (final draft attached).

The bulk of the meeting was spent reviewing actions and strategies from the 2006 plan. The report will be finalized and sent out to the group and published on the web page by June 2012.

TO:
Western Regional Project Manager
BLM Nevada State Office
1340 Financial Blvd
Reno, NV 89502
sagewest@blm.gov

National Greater Sage-grouse Planning Strategy

Location: Price, Utah

Scoping Comment

Citizen's Group: The Castle Country Adaptive Resource Management Group (CaCoARM) the Sage-grouse local working group.

FROM:
Dorrell Barker
Chair CaCoARM sage-grouse LWG
1568 Barker Ln.
Price, UT 84501

Comments:

As Utah's efforts to develop and implement a strategic approach to the management and conservation of sage-grouse (*Centrocercus* spp.) began in 1996 with the formation the Parker Mountain and Monticello local working groups (LWGs). The LWGs process was officially formalized in 2002 with the adoption of Utah's Strategic Management Plan for Sage-Grouse by the Utah Wildlife Board. By 2006, eleven LWGs were meeting regularly and had completed written conservation plans and were actively their plans on a volunteer basis.

The LWGs emerged to assist state and local governments and private landowners in conserving these species while achieving community social and economic objectives. Given the long term declines of sage-grouse populations, and the increased interest of state and local governments and private citizens in species conservation planning, there has been an effort to expand this process in Utah and the region. As such, the LWGs welcome the opportunity to participate as an active member in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) National Greater Sage-grouse Planning Strategy Process.

The Castle Country LWG was organized in 2004. In 2006 the LWG had drafted and entered into an implementation phase of their local sage-grouse conservation plan. This group continues to meet 3-4 times annually to discuss, report, and coordinate sage-grouse research and conservation projects implemented within the defined geographic area of the plan. Members of this group include state and federal land management agencies, landowners, state wildlife and habitat managers university researchers, local landowners, industry, and local citizen/county government and other groups. See <http://www.utahcbcp.org/html/groups/carbon> for more information.

With regards to public scoping comments for the BLM and FS to amend their local land use plans, we recommend the following:

- That the BLM/FS incorporate specific language into the LUP amendments that recognizes and acknowledges the role of Utah's LWG's in sage-grouse conservation issues. This language must emphasize the importance of sustaining a working relationship with LWGs to accomplish the species and community conservation strategies contained within the **local** LWG plans.
- We recommend that these LUPs contain specific language that they are adaptive and dynamic plans and thus responsive to new information, research, technology, knowledge, and/or changing environmental conditions. As new sage-grouse or sagebrush best management practices are developed, the LUPs are and can be adaptive as well.
- The IMs repeatedly reference monitoring activities but provide little information about what specific monitoring methods will be used or what specifically will be monitored. We ask that the BLM/FS work with these LWGs to identify and implement **locally** accepted sage-grouse habitat and population assessment and monitoring methods that are being used to document the effects of management actions of **local** population trends.
- We request that LWG members are kept informed through LWG meeting communications with BLM/FS throughout the NEPA process to ensure all aspects of the local sage-grouse populations and their habitat use are discussed and important aspects of the **local** sage-grouse ecology are incorporated into the LUP amendments.
- We recommend that the final LUPs be flexible enough to ensure avoidance of a 'one size ~~shoe~~ fits all' approach by the BLM/FS. Based on research conducted by Utah State University it is clear that some LWGs areas may never achieve published recommended sage-grouse habitat guidelines. Yet, these populations continue to thrive. Thus, regulatory and management decisions should not be based on unachievable standards but rather embrace **local** sage-grouse population needs as identified by the LWG and the LWG plans. The LUPs should be local in nature and not based on national LUPs. We recognize the BLM/FS plans must ensure sage-grouse and their habitats are protected, they must also incorporate local differences in habitat and populations.
- We recommend that the BLM/FS look for opportunities to incorporate or merge multiple (held in common) grazing allotments under a single landscape based management plan. Sage-grouse are a landscape species not a single allotment species. These landscape opportunities should be identified LWGs. Livestock grazing constitutes a major land-use within Utah LWG areas. As such it is and can be an important component to sage-grouse persistence in Utah. We encourage the BLM/FS to be open to innovative process such as landscape-based grazing allotments as a tool in improving grazing management practices.
- The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) has developed draft guidelines to assist stakeholders in managing Utah's sage-grouse populations. These are found in Appendix 5 of

Utah's 2009 Sage-grouse Management Plan. We recommend these guidelines be incorporated into BLM/FS scoping process and be implemented into LUP Amendments. Further, the State is in the process of updating Appendix 5 and will by a Governor's Executive Order and Buyoff by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service submit this plan for the lead Agency; BLM to accept and Utah's interim management plan until the BLM/FS LUP's can be amended. We recommend that this Appendix be accepted and used.

- We strongly support the off-site mitigation language and encourage BLM/FS to work within the LWGs to identify project areas that would be best suited for any off site mitigation.
- We agree and encourage several reasonable alternatives be analyzed in each NEPA document prepared dealing with grazing. The LWG plans identify the use of prescriptive grazing as an important tool for sage-grouse habitat management. Even though we realize that in order to establish a full range of alternatives for the NEPA process a no-grazing alternative will probably be set, we firmly believe that to ~~To~~ even consider a no-grazing alternative would be contrary to LWG sage-grouse plans; it would negatively impact **local** economies, and be contrary to the multiple use concepts mandated by FLPMA. Conversely, we believe an alternative for full range of multiple uses with little or no restrictions be added and analyzed if the no grazing alternative were to be placed into the NEPA analysis. However, we strongly encourage logical alternatives such as the consideration of practices to include deferred or rest-rotation systems implemented on a landscape level simultaneously across multiple allotments. This may require "blurring" jurisdictional boundaries, but may provide the best option to achieve sustainable sage-grouse conservation and **local** communities.
- Full consideration of other resource users is considered. Natural resources including; coal, oil, and gas development in the Carbon and Emery Counties has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to study and implement our local sage-grouse programs. The loss of the funding together with the negative economic and social impacts the restriction or prohibition of renewable resource development and would create in our opinion harm the local economy and the progress of sage grouse R&D programs in our area.

Thank you for considering our recommendations

Dorrell Barker

CaCoARM Chair
Carbon, Emery, Utah, and Sanpete Counties

CC;
Carbon County Commission
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