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ANNOUNCING UTAH ALL LANDS – ALL HANDS SUMMIT FEBRUARY 5-7, 2019

By Terry Messmer, Utah State University

The Utah Community-based Conservation Program has committed to host the 2019 Utah All Lands – All Hands Summit. The last Summit, known as the Utah Sage-grouse Summit, was last held February 2014. Between then and now, the partners have hosted the International Sage-grouse Forum in the fall of 2014 and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Conference in 2016.

Tons of events have happened since 2014. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the Bi-State and greater sage-grouse populations did not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act. A Presidential election occurred. The Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the State of Utah, and other states have revised or are in the process of revising their sage-grouse plans. Utah also hosted a Wild Horse and Burro Summit in 2017 to bring attention to another looming environmental and economic crisis. In May 2018, a federal judge overturned the USFWS BI-state sage-grouse decision (see this story on page 3).



Registration will open soon. More information can be found at: UtahAllLandsAllHands

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In 2018, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies embarked on writing a range wide sagebrush conservation strategy that focuses on the landscape to preempt a repeat of the sage-grouse saga for the other 350 species of wildlife that call sagebrush habitat their home. The strategy should benefit wildlife and the people who also depend on this working landscape. To help achieve this end result, the Utah CBCP and our partners are hosting the Utah All Lands – All Hands Summit on Feb. 5-7, 2019. The Summit will start on Tuesday afternoon (Feb. 5) and end Thursday by noon. Please reserve these dates on your calendars and plan to attend.

We are planning for about 250 participants with a nominal registration fee of \$100. Much of the content of the Summit comes from a survey we did last year of the local working groups and conversations held since then. There was increased interest to expand our focus on more than just sage-grouse and include the entire sagebrush working landscape. We have taken your comments to heart!

Summit Purpose
To provide an on-going forum for information transfer and continued dialogue to better engage management agencies, scientists, private landowners, industry, Utah's local working groups, and others in actions to sustain healthy sagebrush ecosystems across all boundaries for multiple-use benefits.

Continued on page 4.

THE MORE YOU KNOW - THE MORE YOU GROW: UTAH LANDS MANAGEMENT EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT NETWORK

By Jordan W. Smith, Director, Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, Utah State University
Department of Environment and Society

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act 1976 (FLPMA, Public Law 94-579) defines multiple use as “management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people.” Arguably, one of the best examples of an integrated land management approach is the Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI). The basic tenet of WRI was to not just protect Utah’s range and forest lands from fire and disease, but to think big and restore the health (resistance and resilience) of watersheds over large landscapes to benefit wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, livestock forage, and reduce the risk of catastrophic fires.

Since 2006, partners have completed nearly 1,500 projects managing over 1.5 million acres. In 2015, over 122 agencies, organizations and individuals contributed to WRI projects by providing funding or in-kind assistance. WRI is interested in ensuring public land managers are incorporating the best available science to design and implement watershed projects. Additionally, WRI is seeking to expand the scope of the program to engage private landowners in projects that manage for multiple-use and reduce the potentials for public wildlife to cause damage on private lands.

In 1991, Utah launched a concept now known as the Utah Cooperative Wildlife Management (CWMU) Program in an effort to address increased concerns about wildlife damage on private lands. The CWMU program, administered by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, recognizes the contribution of private lands in the management of public wildlife and provides additional incentives for private landowners to provide big game habitat and hunting opportunities on private lands. Currently, there are 120 CWMU units that are enrolled in this program. Given the growth in the program and a desire to continue to provide benefits to wildlife, landowners, and hunters, the CWMU operators are interested in providing training opportunities for program participants and other private landowners regarding additional opportunities to diversify their operations by providing increased public multiple-use benefits.

To build the capacity of all land managers to manage for multiple-uses on all Utah lands, the Utah State University Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, Jack H. Berryman Institute, the CWMU Association, and WRI have partnered to launch the Utah Lands Management and Assessment Network (ULMEAN). The goals of ULMEAN are to: 1) improve interagency, stakeholder, legislative, and university communication and partnership in managing for multiple-uses; and 2) increase the effectiveness in managing public and private land and implementing restoration projects to optimize multiple-use benefits and incorporate the best available science. In 2019, ULMEAN researchers will initiate a comprehensive needs assessment of Utah public and private land managers regarding their information, data, and decision-making tool needs. The process will involve identifying key stakeholders (individuals, organizations, and agencies) who manage public and private land within Utah and engaging them in an on-line survey and workshops to assess their management priorities and needs. The information obtained from the needs assessment will be used to develop and implement workshops in 2020 that better engage university-based researchers with public and private land managers in project planning and evaluation. Ultimately, ULMEAN will increase the engagement of university faculty with stakeholders in managing lands for multiple-uses and result in increased incorporation of the best available science in management projects to enhance multiple-uses of public and private lands.

For more information contact Jordan W. Smith at 435-797-9174 or by email at jordan.smith@usu.edu.



Jordan Smith is leading the ULMEAN effort.



ULMEAN has been designed to change stakeholder perceptions about science by engaging the public and scientists in open and frank dialogue leading to a new partnership

LANDOWNER-HOSTED TRIPS ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

By Lorien Belton, Utah State University

This year, two different Utah Community-based Conservation Program Adaptive Management Local Working Groups (LWGs) focused their summer field tours on conservation successes and opportunities on private lands.

On the August 27, 2018, tour for the Morgan-Summit LWG, three landowners provided opportunities for the group to visit existing projects and areas with conservation potential. Ensign Ranch manager Jeff Young hosted the group on a tour of a vast stream restoration project. Then Dusty Morgan took the group to a variety of locations on her family's property, discussing aspen stand regeneration, water management challenges, and conservation easements. To wrap up the day, Terry Diston hosted the LWG touring his spring-filled property outside Henefer. The LWG brainstormed together about lessons learned from each project, ideas that could be carried forward to help others, and opportunities for further work together that will benefit these private lands.



The Ercanbracks (daughter Dusty Morgan, and father Ed Ercanbrack) hosting the tour on their property in the Chalk Creek Watershed. Photo by Lorien Belton.

In October, the LWG based in Price (Castle Country, aka CaCoRM) was hosted by group member Bill Butcher on his property in Whitmore Park. The LWG visited a series of treatments done over the years to control rabbit brush on historic agricultural fields where Bill's cattle graze. The LWG had numerous thoughtful conversations about long-term conservation strategies. Bill shared his wisdom about navigating the challenges of treating manageable numbers of acres in ways that provide sage-grouse habitat, improve forage production, and keep making incremental positive change on the landscape.

Both LWG tours provided great opportunities to share knowledge and get the collective brainpower of a collaborative group providing ideas for the benefit of private lands.

SHOULD THE BI-STATE SAGE-GROUSE POPULATION RECEIVE ESA PROTECTION? A FEDERAL JUDGE CHALLENGES THE SCIENCE

Adapted from a USFWS press release by Terry Messmer, Utah State University

The Bi-State greater sage-grouse are found along the California-Nevada line in the Mono Basin. They are related to the greater sage-grouse but have been declared to be a distinct genetic sub-population. In October 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had proposed listing the Bi-State sage-grouse as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This was based on long-term population declines due to the loss and fragmentation of its sagebrush habitat caused by urbanization and development, encroachment by conifers, and invasive grasses which increased wildfire frequency. In April 2015, the USFWS removed the threatened designation for the population and withdrew 1.8 million acres of land as critical habitat for the bird.

Why? The USFWS determined that the Bi-State Action Plan developed by the partners had mitigated the threats to bird and its habitat population and the population no longer needed ESA protection. The BI-State working group's executive oversight committee raised more than \$45 million in federal and state funding to ensure conservation projects would be implemented and completed over the next 10 years. These projects included population monitoring, urbanization abatement measures, livestock management, wild horse management, invasive conifer removal, disease and other habitat improvement and restoration projects. This commitment gave the Service some certainty that the conservation measures identified would be implemented.

However, in May of 2018, Judge Joseph Spero, a federal judge, ruled the USFWS illegally denied ESA protection for Bi-State sage-grouse population. Judge Spero has reinstated the proposed listing of the bird as threatened until a new review is completed. Spero agreed with environmental groups that USFWS "failed to adequately explain why it reversed course and denied protection" to the population and that it was "arbitrary and capricious" in making the 2015 decision. Spero's ruling directed USFWS to provide a new opportunity for public comment on the Proposed Listing and shall prepare and publish in the Federal Register a new and final listing determination on the proposed rule. The deadline was set to be October 1, 2019.

In 2015, then U.S. Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell, in announcing the USFWS decision, stated "What's more, the collaborative, science-based efforts in Nevada and California are proof that we can conserve sagebrush habitat across the West while we encourage sustainable economic development." Science had been a key partner in monitoring the Bi-State population and interpreting data collected to assure the Bi-State partners were using the best science in their conservation efforts. Yet, a federal judge still overruled the science. Could this fate also loom for the greater sage-grouse range-wide population and the partners?



Photo courtesy of USFWS.

UTAH ALL LANDS – ALL HANDS SUMMIT FEBRUARY 5-7, 2019, CONT.

Here is a thumbnail of the draft program:



Tuesday Feb 5, 2019 – 1:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Welcome, Invited Governor Herbert - TBD

Sage-grouse Plan Updates - State of Utah, BLM, USFS, USFWS

Regional and State Updates - Western Association of Fish and Wildlife
Agencies Sagebrush Conservation Strategy, USGS, Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network, Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho Local Working Groups



Utah All Lands All Hands.



Wednesday – February 6, 2019 – 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM

Concurrent and repeated workshops - each will be 2 hours and materials provided.

1. Managing sagebrush for multiple-use – when, where, and how
2. Managing wildfires and their rehabilitation – integrating and streamlining the policies
3. Grazing, grouse, and groceries – monitoring and management
4. Managing communications to mitigate conflicts – the role of social media and 20-second sound bites

Thursday Open General Session - 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM

The Science Says - On-going research studies - graduate student presentations, Utah science, and USGS updates,

The LWGs respond – A forum for LWG members

Conclusions

Concluding comments - TBD

Photos courtesy of USU Extension.

Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program Mission

Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program is dedicated to promoting natural resource management education and facilitating cooperation between local communities and natural resource management organizations and agencies.

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

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