

Rich County CRM Field Tour Notes

Date: 6-26-2014

Attendees : 29 (Organizations Represented: USFS, UDWR, BLM, USFWS, TNC, Grazing Association, Wayne County Commission, Emery County Commission, SITLA, GIP, RC&D, Farm Bureau, USU Extension)

Topics: Utah Prairie Dog habitat was discussion and future management on USFS lands, especially near Big Lake on the Dixie National Forest. SITLA received a proposal from TNC and USFWS to purchase land through a federal grant near the Tanks Colony and Forshea Draw on the Parker SITLA Block for prairie dog conservation. Approximately 1500 acres was proposed in total. Discussions ensued to consider concerns over such a purchase. Local grazing association and count commissioners were concerned about philosophical differences for using federal funds to purchase private lands, future grazing rights, past investments, and maintaining current grazing regimes. USFWS and UDWR expressed interest in purchasing the land so that prairie dogs within those areas could be counted towards a delisting of the species. Currently only dogs on federal or conservation easement lands are counted towards population objectives within the Utah Prairie Dog Recovery Plan. All involved came to a better appreciation of local concerns as well as larger scale issues for prairie dogs. Sagebrush treatments, especially past large scale spike treatments in Butte, South, Nick's, Forshea, and Chicken Springs pastures were discussed. We discussed USU's, in association with SITLA and GIP, vegetation study within these areas. USU is monitoring vegetation response over time scales (time since treatment – each pasture was treated in a different year going back to the mid-2000s) by treatment, response of passerine sagebrush obligates and sage-grouse as well.