

Sage-grouse in Utah: an overview

Presented to County Commissions/Councils
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Outline

- Basic sage-grouse biology/ecology
 - What is a sage-grouse ?
 - What it needs, where it lives, history
- 2009 Utah sage-grouse state wide plan
 - State level actions/strategies
- History and listing decision 2010
 - Candidate species decision
 - What this means for Utah and the counties
- Local working group plans
 - What we do, actions/strategies

What is a sage-grouse?

'cock'



'chick'



'hen'



lek



nest/eggs



Sage-grouse Leks

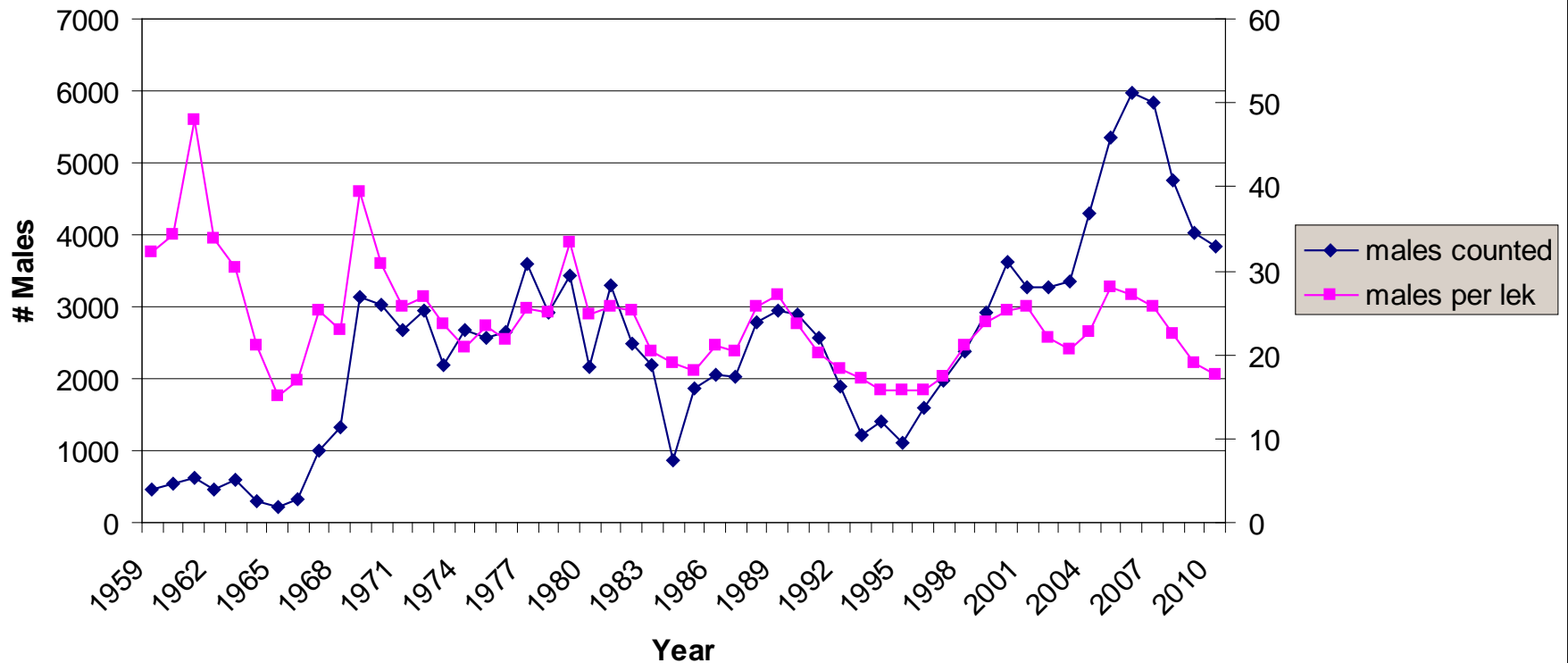
- A *lek* is a gathering of males, of certain animal species, for the purposes of competitive mating display.
- Utah's sage-grouse lek mid March through early May.
- Leks are very traditional -- some leks in Utah have been monitored/counted for over 50 years.
- Center point for population, population estimates and trends, hunting permit allocation



12 hens 4 males at Deseret Land and Livestock, 2010

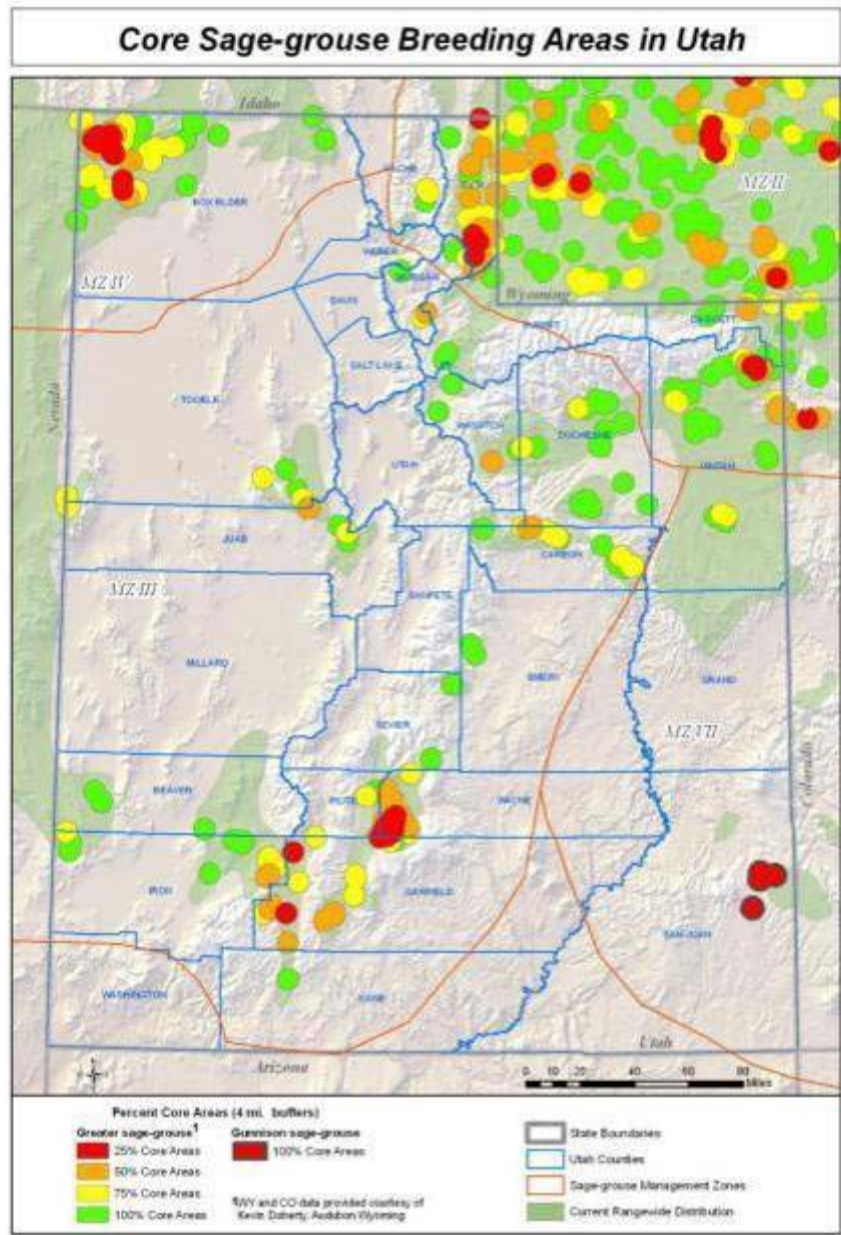
Number of male sage-grouse counted in Utah

Utah Sage-grouse Max Males Count



Increased counts in the past 10 years probably reflect increased searching effort, new leks, and increases in populations

Core Areas



Nesting Habits

- Most hens nest within 4 miles of a lek
- Most nest under sagebrush
- 'Clutch' average ~8/nest
- 'Nest success' ~50%



Survival

- Adult survival rates are 50-70% but much lower for chicks
- For stable populations, need 2.25 juveniles/hen
- Rain and snow influence survival
- Many things directly kill grouse: predation (raptors, corvids, canids, badgers), hunting, and disease.
- Combinations of factors can decrease survival

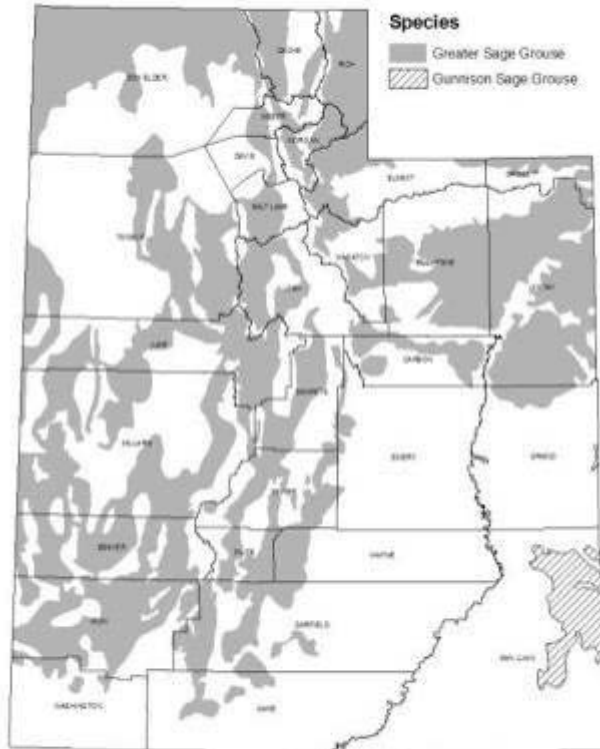


Sage-grouse need sagebrush

- Large unfragmented tracts
- Eat sagebrush Oct -- March
- Grocery stores: a variety of grasses/forbs = insects for chicks
- Cover in winter
- Not all sagebrush is good habitat
 - Season of use
 - Black sage vs. big sage



Distribution of Sage-grouse in Utah



Historical Distribution

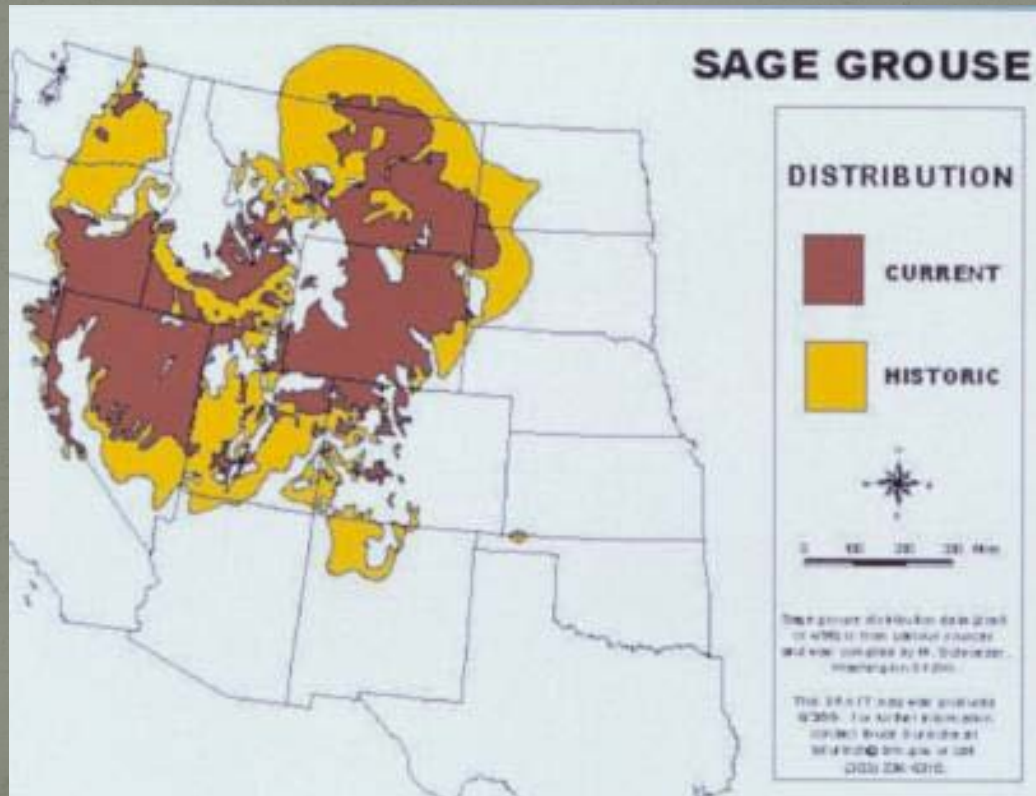


Present Distribution

Historical distribution is based on the distribution of sagebrush habitat in Utah, as well as observations by early settlers and explorers. Utah's sage-grouse populations were likely connected through these large tracts of sagebrush which have been lost to fires, habitat conversion, development, and invasive species such as cheat grass and pinion/juniper encroachment. Presently, sage-grouse populations are highly fragmented across Utah.

Sage-grouse Declines

- Declining throughout western U.S.
 - Occupy 56% of pre-settlement habitat (Schroeder et al. 2004)
- Utah has suffered loss of habitat and populations



2009 Utah Sage-grouse state wide plan

- 2 Species of sage-grouse in Utah
 - Greater sage-grouse
 - Gunnison sage-grouse (San Juan County)
- This plan addresses Greater Sage-grouse
 - An update/revision of the first Utah plan from 2002
 - Assistance from a specially chartered Sage-grouse Plan Advisory Committee



2009 UT SAGR state wide plan

- Dave Olsen UDWR; Upland Game Coordinator
- Jason Robinson UDWR; Upland Game Project Leader
- Anita Candelaria UDWR; Notes/Secretary
- Allan Smith Private lands/ranching
- Steve Madsen Bureau of Land Management
- Clint McCarthy U.S. Forest Service
- Kim Christy School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration
- Jan Anderson Utah Farm Bureau
- Joan DeGiorgio The Nature Conservancy/NGO
- Terry Messmer Utah Local Working Groups/Universities
- Dave Dahlgren Upland Game Advisory Committee/Research
- Ernie Perkins Utah Wildlife Board
- Jim Gaskill Utah Regional Advisory Committee
- Brian Maxfield UDWR; Region biologists
- Susan White Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining
- Tom Clayson Anadarko Petroleum Corporation

History and listing decision 2010

- Sage-grouse is an upland game species
- Utah State Sensitive Species
- Petitioned for listing under the ESA
- Jan. 2005, listing was “not warranted”
- 2007: Jan. 2005 finding was in error, issued a second 12-month review
- 12-month status review was up in December 2008—fast forward to...
- March 5th 2010:

*The USFWS announced that a “protected status for the greater sage-grouse **is warranted but precluded.**” This means that the species could be listed, but because there are currently so many candidate species, the USFWS is unable to do so at this time.*



Listing decision 2010

- What does the listing decision mean for Utah?
 - Business as usual
 - Data collection and monitoring
 - Continue current management and implementation of the state plan
- Going forward...
 - Reviewed annually by USFWS
 - UDWR still manages sage-grouse
 - USU Extension facilitates the Local Working Groups



What does the listing decision mean for the county?

- Support state and LWG plan implementation
- Be aware of sage-grouse and its habitat requirements
- Consider sage-grouse in all types of developments
 - urban, rural
 - oil, gas, mines
 - transmission lines, trails, etc
- Know your resources
 - Local working group
 - UDWR website and personnel
 - USU extension



Local working groups

- 2002 State Sage-grouse Plan:
 - *Sage-grouse management must be a cooperative effort between federal and state land management agencies, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Tribal governments, private landowners, grazing and livestock interests, and other interested groups.*
- 10 Greater-sage-grouse groups in Utah
- USU Extension administers working groups: “Community-Based Conservation Program”
- UDWR has management authority

USU Extension role in working groups

- Facilitate local working groups
- Engage all stakeholders
- Help each group write and implement a local sage-grouse conservation plans.
- Work with local stakeholders to identify, design, implement, and monitor management projects.
- Assist in monitoring and research
- Be a resource for all partners



Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program:

“If it's not good for the community, it's not good for wildlife”

<http://utahcbcp.org>

Local working groups



- 10 Local Working Groups for greater sage-grouse
- Every group writes a plan
 - Current situation/threats
 - Strategies to improve



Local working group plans

Each plan identifies local threats to sage-grouse, like:

- Loss of quality habitat
- Drought and weather
- Development
- Parasitism/disease
- Invasive plants
- Recreation
- Fire management
- Predation
- Livestock grazing
- Poaching



Local working groups

- All groups have completed plans.
- Plans are in a 10-year implementation phase.
- Groups meet at least 3 times/year, with a field tour
- Plans are modified as new information is learned through research, or the threats change
- USU Extension tracks the groups' progress annually



Local working group website

- USU Extension has a website for the Community Based Conservation Program (CBCP)
 - Local working group information
 - Local conservation plan
 - Meeting times
 - Research projects
 - Research publications
 - Annual progress reports
 - Useful references and links

<http://utahcbcp.org/>



Your local working group: WDARM

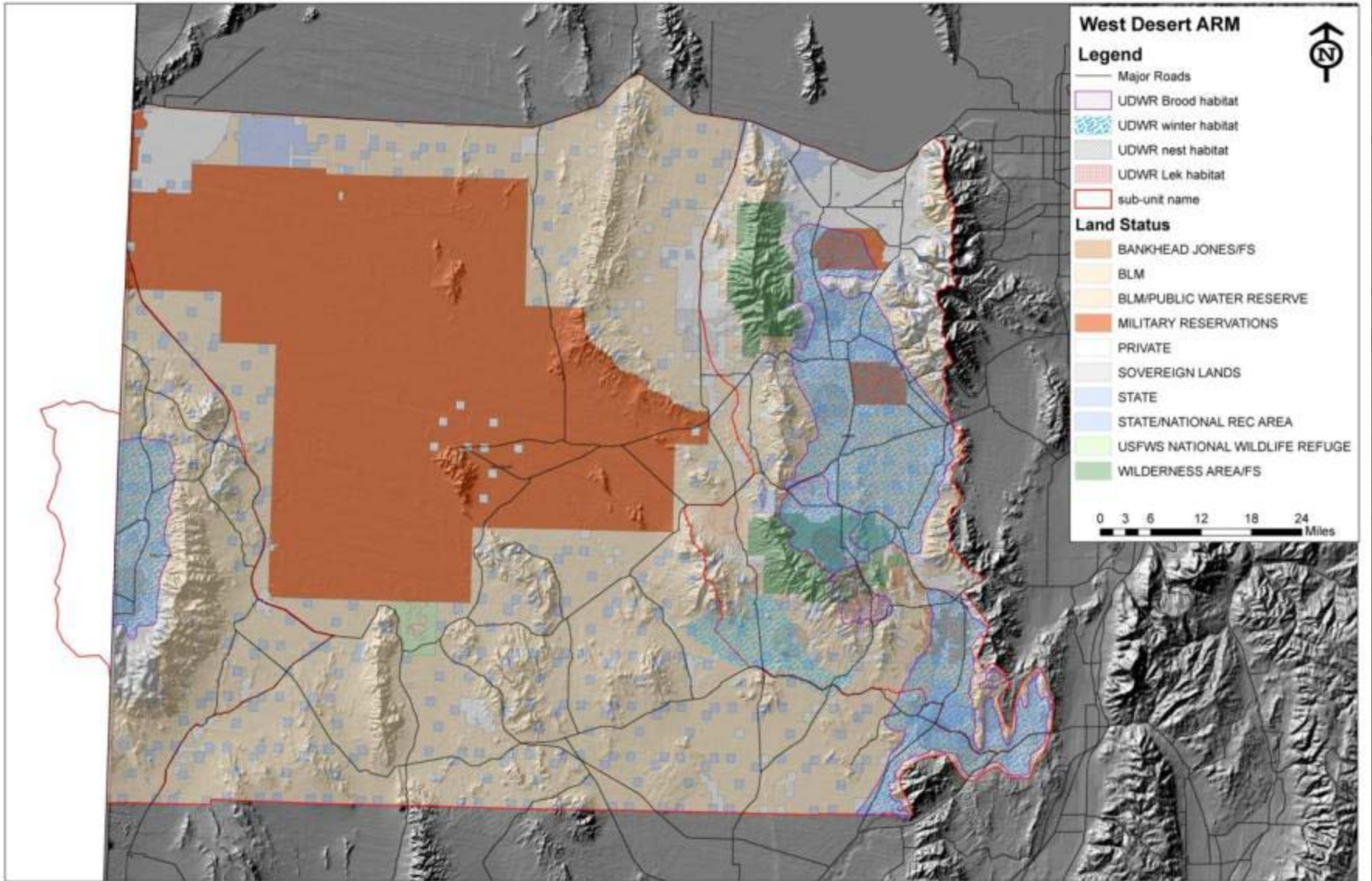
- West Desert Adaptive Resource Management group
- Actions/strategies
 - **Habitat improvement**
 - Lek conditions
 - Breeding & winter habitat
 - Control noxious weeds
 - **Address threats**
 - Recreation disturbance
 - Predation
 - Fragmentation
 - **Learn about local populations**
 - Share that info: new polygons
 - **Work with private landowners and other partners**



Your local working group: WDARM

- Research:
 - Tracking birds in Tintic area
 - Proposed Dugway research
- Current Projects/Issues
 - Pinyon-Juniper encroachment
 - Recreation disturbance
 - Road-to-trail conversion in sensitive areas
 - Weed management
 - Poaching
 - Keeping partners informed





**Next WDARM Meeting:
February 23rd
1:00 pm Tooele County Health Bldg**



Questions?