

**MSARM
LOCAL
WORKING
GROUP**

Date: November 1, 2017

Place: Summit County Courthouse, Coalville

Members Present: Mike Welch, Anthony Gray (USFS-Heber), Alan Clark (UDNR), Pam Kramer (UDWR), Scott Walker (UDWR), Kate Sattelmeier (Summit Land Conservancy), Craig McKnight (NRCS), Arlin Judd (landowner), Ben Nadolski (UDWR/PLPCO), Lisa Yder, Summit County), Ron Patterson (USU Ext), Wendy Fisher (Utah Open Lands: on the phone), Lorien Belton (USU Extension; MSARM facilitator)

Discussion and Updates

Brief Updates

- Brandon Flack, the USU graduate student on the research project for the last several years, has taken a biologist position in Idaho. He will share his thesis when it is officially finalized.
- NRCS has some SGI projects in Summit, primarily grazing management
- Lorien, Scott, and Pam met with Morgan County planning staff recently, to discuss basics of sage-grouse and other wildlife issues in the area

BLM updates

No one from BLM was present at the meeting, as there is no BLM land in the MSARM area. However, in case anyone might be interested due to grazing permit elsewhere, Ben Nadolski and Lorien provided brief updates. The BLM is gathering comments on the previous plan amendments, such as whether and how to improve or change them. Additional detail can be found in working group minutes from the Uintah Basin, Carbon, and others. The deadline for the scoping process comments is November 30th. Any comments people have can be send through Ben. The interest in looking back at the amendments finalized in 2015 comes from a Secretarial Order from Sec. Zinke. Lorien will send the order and other information out to the group list. Public scoping meetings are scheduled for Nov 14, 15, and 16. The closest one to MSARM is in Snowville on the 16th.

State of Utah plan updates

Ben Nadolski presented information on the state's sage-grouse plan update process so far, and requested additional feedback. Ben explained some of the topics that area already under consideration, so that the time could be focused on any new or different topics. Ben took detailed notes from the conversation. Key discussions included:

- Land trusts are concerned when SGMA boundaries might split a property and weaken applications for easements. Ben explained that if an area should, according to what is on the ground, be included in the SGMA, get a biologist on the ground to look at it. There is

actually a form and a process for changing the SGMA boundaries. The revised state sage-grouse plan Ben is working on will make that process more clear.

- Pam asked how migration factors into SGMA boundaries. It was noted that SGMA boundary changes can have big impacts depending on how the BLM interprets them, and with BLM potentially changing its plans also, there is a lot of uncertainty. Ben explained that migration areas are currently handled on a case-by-case basis if it looks like the maps are not adequate or accurate. USU, however, is working on a massive telemetry study with the federal agencies to try to refine mapping techniques, and some of that may address this question.
- The state plan is unlikely to include changed SGMA boundaries in the new revision, but will include a process for updating them. There is not likely to be any change to the current policy that on-the-ground assessments take precedence over coarsely mapped boundary lines.
- The mitigation plan that Alan has been working on will also be part of the plan, insofar as the upcoming rule explains how the mitigation standards in the plan will be managed.
- The group discussed the population objectives, and why they are statewide instead of SGMA specific. Ben explained that it was aspirational, rather than something that was to drive SGMA-specific work. Having the statewide objective allowed us to test the idea that the sage-grouse in Utah are habitat-limited, and creating more space for them would help the population.
- The habitat treatment objectives are not as much of a focus for the MSARM group as PJ is less of a concern in this area.
- The land protection objective in the plan was of interest to the group. Ben explained that the objective was likely to be rewritten to perhaps conserve fewer acres, but focus more on habitat quality and location. The current plan just asks if it is in an SGMA, to count toward the goal, but we can be more specific.

The group noted that the local plan should be updated to add new data from Brandon's work and incorporate information on seasonal habitat usage, among other topics.

New Compensatory Mitigation Program

Alan Clark explained the current status of the mitigation program rule. There will be a second comment period this winter, because the first comment period generated so many comments that it was not possible to finalize the rule in time to not have to advertise it for public review again. The new comment period will be 30 days happening in November or December.

Key changes from the original proposal include:

- A third way to develop credits: provide permanent protection to occupied habitat on private land. Fee in-lieu payments will be allowed (they are currently available) but only for project implementation, not permanent protection.
- Key definitions updated and clarified

There is a habitat quality validation process that has been developed while the rule was being

updated. It has now been tested twice, and will be ready to roll out publicly as soon as the rule is published. In addition, a contractor has been working on the database that will house all the information on credits and be used to manage the exchanges. The whole state is the service area.

Alan explained that he has committed to staying on the program through May, to help it get rolled out, but then he will be moving out of state.

Follow-up Needed

- Lorien will send the secretarial order and other information out to the group list.
- Lorien will provide the group with a copy of Brandon's thesis when it is available.
- Future meetings should include a review and update of the MSARM LWG plan.
- Once the mitigation rule is finalized, Lorien will explore the possibility of hosting an event for landowners and land trusts to learn more about the options.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was not set. In the past, the idea of holding a meeting to explain the mitigation plan and associated opportunities to local landowners; once that rule is final, this may be the best choice for an upcoming meeting.