

**MSARM
LOCAL
WORKING
GROUP**

Date: February 10, 2015

Place: Morgan County Courthouse

Members Present: Brandon Flack (USU), Loralie Cox (UACD), Craig McKnight (NRCS), Scott Walker (UDWR), Pam Kramer (UDWR), Erin Bragg (Summit Land Conservancy), Caitlin Willard (Summit Land Conservancy), Eric Ellis (UDWR), Taylor Payne (GIP/NRCS-SGI), Terry Messmer (USU Extension), Lorien Belton (USU Extension; MSARM facilitator)

Discussion and Updates

Predation Video Presentation

The first item on the agenda was viewing a presentation on predation and habitat, given by Peter Coates at the November sage-grouse forum in Salt Lake City. The recording is available online. The presentation covered topics such as habitat, raven behavior, and the relationship to tall structures, all in a context where the sage-grouse populations limiting factor is nest survival specifically. In other situations (where, for example, winter survival is a limiting factor), different information might apply. Terry Messmer noted that the FWS is not as focused on predation as s concern.

Newly-signed Governor's Executive Order for sage-grouse and other state planning efforts

Several hours before the start of the MSARM meeting, the Utah Governor signed an Executive Order relating to sage-grouse, focused on implementation of the state sage-grouse plan. According to Eric Ellis, the Executive Order “puts teeth” in the existing plan. It makes sure that all state agencies work to implement the plan, and it requires that those other agencies make sure they are consulting with DWR on issues that might affect sage-grouse. For example, the Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (DOG M) already has a consultation process in place for consulting on public lands, but it will now be expanded so they consult with DWR in other situations as well.

Questions from the group, many of which were not answerable due to the very short amount of time the EO has been available, included:

- What is the process for consulting?
- Will it impact where state dollars will be spent?
- How are private lands dealt with? (Eric noted that the EO does not change property rights at all)
- Is DWR responsible for gathering data (the answer was yes)
- How is this related to the RDCC process?
- Is this only for within the SGMAs (the answer is yes)
- Does this add stipulations to the state plan?

Lorien will send these questions to Eric so that if a FAQ is developed, they can be included.

Terry Messmer explained that one provision is that it increases the priority of sage-grouse habitats in fire suppression efforts. After human life and structures, sage-grouse habitat will be a high state priority for firefighting efforts.

Eric Ellis explained that one goal of the EO is to increase coordination between state agencies on sage-grouse issues. Basically, if it is a state agency permitting something, they will need to include sage-grouse considerations in their decision.

Terry also noted that there is a bill in the legislature to provide funding to the LeRay McAllister Fund, which helps fund conservation easements in the state.

Someone brought up the concern that there are areas in Morgan and Summit Counties that are listed in the state plan as having winter habitat, but are definitely not. This prevents projects from happening in those areas even if the ground is actually, for example, in oak shrub and the project proposed is a firebreak. Several people expressed a need for a more streamlined process for places where brush treatments are needed. Eric explained that if habitat is incorrectly categorized, there is a map adjustment process on the DWR sage-grouse page. Lorien will forward that link to Craig and Taylor so they can request and adjustments that they are aware need to happen.

Yaryca Update

Bill Cobabe gave a brief update about current Yaryca progress. They are planning to get back in front of the County Council at a March meeting. Bill clarified that at the most recent meeting when the topic was discussed, the issue was tabled at the landowner's request. He did not have additional detail and no one from Yaryca was in attendance.

Bill explained the general process that would be required for a development to move forward in the area. First, they apply for an amendment to the general plan to allow a different kind of development zone. This is what the landowners are doing currently. If that is approved (and only if it is approved), they could then ask for a zone change. The zone change does not require the applicant to do anything to request it (i.e. no plans need to be presented).

Under the current ordinances, 60% of a development like this would be required to be in open space. There is no guarantee that the space left open would be the space sage-grouse prefer, but that percentage is a requirement currently. Bill explained that any process to develop this area would no doubt be a very long process. He recommended that the LWG just stay informed and provide input when there is opportunity to do so.

Pam asked how the previous conversation about the local area plan worked into the decision-making process. Bill explained that all those area plans are appendices to the general county plan, so the decisions and recommendations in them are part of the general plan. There was

another question about Envision Utah. Bill explained that the process had been done, but was not popular, and the county did not adopt it.

Bill will let Lorien know if the Yaryca item is on a future County agenda so the MSARM group can be informed.

USU Research Project

Brandon Flack, from USU, updated the group on the research project which is starting up in the area. He has been working to get landowner permission for trapping and tracking sage-grouse. Many landowners have agreed. Trapping begins March 1st. The goal is to put 12 GPS collars on in the area, and 30 radio collars (which require different tracking systems). Next year, 10 more radio (VHF) collars will be added. Anyone interested in coming out to trap or track birds can contact Brandon.

Follow-up Needed

- Lorien will forward the EO to the listserv
- Lorien will pass along the questions from the group about the Governor's Executive order so there can be additional information available in the future.
- Lorien will forward the link for the DWR map adjustment page to Craig and Taylor so they can request and adjustments that they are aware need to happen.
- Bill will let Lorien know if the Yaryca item is on a future County agenda so the MSARM group can be informed.
- Anyone interested in coming out to trap or track birds can contact Brandon

Next Meeting

The next meeting date was not set; a summer field tour will be developed later unless the group needs to meet sooner about specific topics.