

**MSARM  
LOCAL  
WORKING  
GROUP**

**Date:** April 3, 2012

**Place:** Coalville, Utah (Courthouse)

**Members Present:** Mike Welch (QRM), Ron Greer (UDWR), Scott McFarlane (UDWR), Pam Kramer (UDWR), Dennis Fox (enXco), Casey Burns (NRCS), Thomas Hoskins (NRCS), Patti Barney (NRCS), Craig McKnight (NRCS), Ashley Koehler (Summit County), Tammy Koldyke (SGI biologist), and Lorien Belton (USU Extension; facilitator)

**Highlights**

- This meeting was held following a lek-viewing trip to the Henefer-Divide lek.
- Tammy Koldyke was elected to be the next co-chair, replacing Danny McBride who has shifted to a different area.
- MSARM will do a joint field tour with the Rich County group on June 14<sup>th</sup>, details TBD.
- QRM has offered to put \$1000 toward the planned sage-grouse study in the area. It is still not fully funded. With this contribution, there will be \$51,000 available, but about \$110,000 still needed. Pam and Mike will discuss this further following the meeting.
- NRCS staff brought up a proposed project on private land up Chalk Creek. The landowner is interested in changing water availability so he can change his season of use, some sagebrush thinning, and weed treatments. Scott McFarlane suggested that they check with Dave Rich with regard to mule deer winter range. The group endorsed the project for sage-grouse (which will be 75% EQIP) with the caveat that Dave Rich be consulted and the small changes suggested in the meeting would be followed.
- For new contracts with CSP, NRCS will now pay for grazing deferments in sage-grouse nesting areas until July 15.
- NRCS has a new program, called Working Lands for Wildlife, which will take the place of the WHIP program. Both ag and non-ag lands will be eligible, but the focus will be on non-agricultural lands here. The application deadline is April 30. Let Casey or Tammy know if you know of any landowners who might be interested.
- The NRCS sage-grouse initiative (SGI) now has a website
- Lorien provided a brief update on the USFS/BLM planning process. In addition to that planning process, the state of Utah still has a parallel process that may result in a replacement of the BLM and USFS interim guidelines on sage-grouse, but the USFS and BLM plans will still need to be amended long-term. The process for those amendments is currently in progress.
- Dennis Fox from enXco, a wind development company, brought up the concern that draft maps from the state of Utah's planning process may inhibit wind development options in the area. The group discussed what is known currently about the maps and how windmills might affect grouse, but did not make any decisions of formal recommendations.
- Craig will discuss the possibility of grazing the Henefer-Divide lek heavily during sheep shipping to reduce the cover exactly on the lek and improve visibility for the birds. Opening up the lek in this way could be beneficial for keeping more birds on the lek and

- off the highway during the next season.
- Other suggestions for how to benefit sage-grouse include:
  - Identify, when talking with landowners, where sage-grouse winter, so those areas can be protected from sagebrush work.
  - Consider focusing on increasing forbs and mesic areas in key sage-grouse areas. Minimize sagebrush thinning projects for grouse until we better understand where thinning could be beneficial and not harmful. Where thinning is already happening, continue to encourage mosaics, forb seeding, and other strategies to benefit sage-grouse.

### **Follow-up Needed**

- Lorien will continue to keep the group updated about opportunities to provide comments on BLM, USFS, and state planning processes.

### **Next Meetings**

The next meeting will be a joint field tour in the Rich County area, followed by a meeting at a location TBD.