

**MSARM
LOCAL
WORKING
GROUP**

Date: February 13, 2012

Time: 3:00 – 5:15 pm

Place: Wanship, Utah, Fire Station

Members Present: Mike Welch (QRM), Ron Greer (UDWR), Thomas Hoskins (NRCS), Patti Barney (NRCS), Craig McKnight (NRCS), Adryan Slaght (Summit County), Rick Danvir (DLL), Tammy Koldyke (SGI biologist), and Lorien Belton (USU Extension; facilitator)

Highlights

BLM Planning Process

Lorien reviewed the planning process currently under way for the BLM and USFS to update land management plans with sage-grouse policies. She handed out copies of the BLM interim guidelines IM (2012-043). The group reviewed the content of that IM. The group had the following comments and questions regarding the BLM/USFS process:

- How will the BLM interface with the local working groups during the planning process? (No one was clear, but Lorien will see if she can learn more, or get someone from BLM to come talk to the LWGs about the process).
- The sections of the interim guidelines about mining and oil and gas may be relevant to some properties in the MSARM area where BLM manages the subsurface rights.
- The sections of the interim guidelines about grazing are of interest to MSARM landowners who lease allotments in the Uintah and Kamas ranger districts (primarily cattle) and on the West Desert (primarily sheep).
- Mike Welch noted that the Taylor Grazing Act might supercede any no-grazing alternatives considered during a NEPA process, as discussed in the grazing section, as long as there is forage available. Several people indicated that they did not feel that ranchers should be particularly concerned if their allotments are already well-managed.
- Ron Greer noted that it would be a problem if the BLM plans were too strict about not treating sagebrush, particularly in areas where sage-grouse habitat is limited in ways that could be addressed with treatments. Hopefully the BLM policies put in place will allow for reasonable vegetation treatment options.
- Rick Danvir noted that one of Utah's contributions is to help define places where sagebrush treatments have helped sage-grouse. Documenting what we have done will help define those parameters under which sage-grouse can benefit from vegetation treatments, which needs to be better understood.
- Rick also noted that grazing and any treatments need to be well coordinated, since a good treatment could be rendered useless by improper grazing management on top of it. It is important to make sure grazing and vegetation treatments are always considered together.
- There is also a document attached to the planning IM (2012-44) which details the scientific background that will provide consistent scientific data for the planning process. Several group members requested that Lorien email a copy as they had not seen it.

Updates

The Governor has convened a team to create a state sage-grouse plan that will supercede the interim guidelines and provide guidance for other lands as well. It was suggested that the team be invited to our next lek viewing meeting.

Tammy Koldyke, the Sage-Grouse Initiative biologist based out of Ogden, reported that she is still in intensive training and is only just beginning to get into the field to work on projects. She is working with Steve Wilcox on one project currently. Hopefully she will soon be able to direct her focus toward specific landowner projects, such as those this group has brainstormed in the past.

Two UPCD projects on private land have been proposed, both of which could benefit sage-grouse. One is PJ removal in Crandall Canyon, and the other involves riparian fencing as part of a larger improvement involving rest-rotation at Six Feathers. This would likely be in summer habitat for sage-grouse. Project funding decisions have not yet been made for the year.

Bill Fenimore provided his lek etiquette and directions sheet to MSARM for comment. Although the group did not have time to delve into it extensively, some suggestions were made of items that could be added, such as turning radios off, not talking, and staying on the far side of the road (near the corrals) from the lek. Lorien will pass these suggestions on to Bill.

Related suggestions for addressing disturbance at the lek included:

- Posting the etiquette list – as general advice, without the directions – for how to behave while watching sage-grouse in various places, such as on DWR’s website and the Morgan and Summit county websites.
- Providing the etiquette list to Wasatch Audubon (Wayne Martinson) in case they know of others, such as school teachers, etc. who lead trips to leks.
- Patti suggested that a radio PSA might be worth considering, focused on watching sage-grouse.
- Someone suggested that “Be Good to Your Grouse” could be a catchy way to advertise the need to be respectful and not alarm the birds during lekking.

Follow-up Needed

- Lorien will send various documents to LWG members
- Lorien will keep the group updated with regard to how BLM plans to interface with the working groups during the plan update process, and maybe schedule a presentation at a future LWG meeting.
- Lorien will solicit comments from the group to submit to the BLM process, and will include some of the topics from the discussion at this meeting.
- Lorien will extend an invitation to the Governor’s sage-grouse task force to attend a lek viewing trip with the MSARM group at the next meeting.

- Lorien will follow up with Bill Fenimore and Wayne Martinson regarding ways to get the lek etiquette a broader distribution, as well as contacting DWR regarding the website.
- Lorien will draft a generic lek etiquette based on the conversation at this meeting and provide it to the counties to see if they would be interested in posting it on their websites.
- At future meetings, the group may focus on how to get a PSA on air.

Next Meetings

The next meeting will be on April 3rd, sometime in the morning, in Henefer, and will follow a lek-viewing trip. The County Council, as well as members of the Governor's sage-grouse task force, will be invited specifically to join on the lek viewing trip.