

**MSARM  
LOCAL  
WORKING  
GROUP**

**Date:** April 11, 2016

**Place:** Summit County Courthouse, Coalville

**Members Present:** Brandon Flack (USU), Lisa Yoder (Summit County), Craig McKnight (NRCS), Pam Kramer (UDWR), Kate Sattelmeier (Summit Land Conservancy), Andy Pappas (UDAF), Christina Hacker (USFS-Evanston), Cooper Farr (Tracy Aviary), Lorien Belton (USU Extension; MSARM facilitator)

**Discussion and Updates**

*Intros and short Updates*

There were several new faces, so the group did introductions. Lorien explained that the landowner dinner, held in January, was a success. Brandon provided research updates to the attendees. The dinner was held in Morgan.

*Research Update*

Brandon Flack, USU graduate student in charge of the local sage-grouse research study, gave the group a presentation he had recently given at the Swaner EcoCenter in Park City. Brandon is looking at migration, seasonal survival, and vital rates; vegetation usage at nest sites; and whether collar type appears to affect survival or success.

Brandon followed those birds collared last spring throughout the winter. The one male that was collared on Guildersleeve spent the winter near the lek, and died the first week of April. No females were captured at that lek. On Ensign, only two birds were collared. One is dead, and one cannot be located. Therefore, the focus is on the birds near Henefer Divide. Several males died this winter. Winter tracking is done via GPS (computer downloads) as well as via airplane flights. Two females went south during the winter and spent time near leks outside the SGMA. There have recently been reports of birds potentially using the Henefer-Echo Wildlife Management Area, where birds have been historically observed, although generally not recently. Brandon will look into this this year. A trapper reported seeing a bird lekking, and a DWR employee found an egg last year.

Population estimates for the local sage-grouse population in the study area were 450 in 2014 and 540 in 2015. (These numbers are calculations derived via a formula based on lek count numbers.) It is not clear what the limiting factor for this population is. They don't use areas very nearby where they spent most of their time, even though the habitat appears to be very similar. This year, the numbers look good again. Many females have been counted on the lek, which is unusual as they are usually not as visible.

Brandon explained that there will be a "lek and loon" day on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the East Canyon State Park, where sage-grouse and loons will be discussed – and hopefully observed. Interested parties

should meet at the state park at 6:15 am or at the lek shortly thereafter.

### *Field tour*

The group discussed what a good field tour might be. There is interest in knowing where Brandon has seen birds, including where the two females went when they moved south for the winter. Brandon will develop a short itinerary and will also consult with some local landowners to see if they would be comfortable with the tour visiting their land. The group will pick a date in early July via Doodle.

### *Easements conversation*

The easement sub-team has not met since the middle of last year. Lorien will schedule a new meeting soon to discuss funding opportunities and how any new policy updates might apply to work in this area.

### *USFS update*

The USFS will be doing a lop-and-scatter project in Telephone Hollow (700 acres on USFS and SITLA land). The Forest Service is also going to be monitoring sagebrush/sage-grouse. They will have an internal training in May [update after the meeting: this will be May 18-19].

### *Breeding Bird Survey needs*

Cooper Farr, from Tracy Aviary, explained to the group that there are a number of unassigned volunteer bird survey routes (Breeding Bird Survey), and that Tracy Aviary is working to train new volunteers and get more routes covered. Currently only about 60% of the routes in Utah are covered. Cooper will send Lorien additional information that can be distributed to the listserv about trainings, and the mentorship program. Surveys are done from mid-May through July.

## **Follow-up Needed**

- Lorien will send out a doodle to schedule the field tour for early July.
- The easements subteam will meet again soon.
- Lorien will send out information on the BBS routes.

## **Next Meeting**

The field tour will be in early July, led by Brandon.