

**MSARM
LOCAL
WORKING
GROUP**

Date: November 3, 2020

Place: Virtual meeting via Zoom

Present: Hailey Peatross Wayment (USU graduate student), Brett Denney (Summit Land Conservancy), Pam Kramer (UDWR), Melissa Early (NRCS/DWQ), Adam Wickline (Summit Land conservancy), Jared Reese (BLM), Cjay Buttars (USDA-Wildlife Services), Elizabeth Cohen (Summit County USU Extension), Joe Moore (USFWS), Kate Sattelmeier (Summit Land Conservancy), Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator)

Discussion and Updates

Rich County grazing and sage-grouse study

Hailey presented to the group about the research she has been doing in Rich County on grazing and sage-grouse. Her research is looking at vegetation characteristics and sage-grouse vital rates in two large grazed areas in Rich County: Three Creeks and Desert Land & Livestock. The two study areas have used different grazing systems for many years (rest-rotation on Desert and season-long on Three Creeks). Three Creeks is now moving toward implementing a rest-rotation system.

Hailey has been gathering new sage-grouse data, but is also using data that has been collected on sage-grouse in the area since 2012. In addition, she is using NDVI (satellite imagery that provides a measure of vegetation greenness) to understand why the grouse might be spending time where they do.

Her research hopes to inform two questions: 1) how can grazing regime be used to lengthen, even if by a day or two, the peak of the “green wave”?, and 2) are sage-grouse broods following the grazing or otherwise tracking movements related to the green wave? She is hoping to have results that can be useful to landowners on the ground.

The study has encountered a number of challenges, including that the birds do not stay on the study polygons, creating complex data to manage. Last season (2019) was also difficult due to high snow levels. There are also complex confounding factors due to past vegetation treatments on the two study areas. She is currently analyzing her data.

Summit Land Conservancy RCPP

Kate explained to the group that SLC was awarded an RCPP award for conservation easements and water conversation work. Trout Unlimited is one of the key partners, focused on enhancing habitat for fish, and the lands around those areas. RCPP is a complex grant: each individual project still needs to apply to funding, but if the “RCPP box” is checked, then the ranking criteria set up as part of the partnership becomes part of the application approval process. Kate noted

that there is a lot of landowner interest, but a key challenge is that not all resource values line up with property lines. The current priority is to work with ready and willing landowners, since easement negotiations can be extensive, multi-year processes, and the chance of success is higher with landowners who are already committed to what it is going to take, not just somewhat interested. The group brainstormed several other partnerships who might be able to help SLC with the projects, habitat work, and more. One possibility was to bring the new low-tech restoration methods for wet meadows to the landowners in the area, regardless of their RCPP participation. Elizabeth and Melissa would like to work together to get this out to landowners via USU Extension and the watershed projects.

Other updates and discussion

- Jared noted that the HAF habitat map updates will hopefully be ready in December. He emphasized that the state is broken up into regions, so habitat quality measures will be relative to local conditions, not compared across the state.
- Pam noted that there was a fire on the Henefer-Echo WMA on Oct 17, about 1600 acres. It has burned a lot of big game winter range but the long-term impact is not yet clear.
- Raven control is happening on the Henefer Divide lek.
- Fence markers were also renewed at that well-known H-D lek.
- The Summit CWMA is doing seeding trials after garlic mustard removal, which may be interesting to others in the group once results are known.

Follow-up Needed

- A field tour for next spring should be discussed at the next meeting
- Lorien will connect SLC staff with others who may be interested in partnering on the RCPP project.
- Lorien will work with Elizabeth and Melissa to find ways to get the low-tech wet-meadow information out to landowners.

Next Meeting

Lorien will send out a doodle poll for the next meeting, which will likely be in February.