

CCARM Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2012

Triple C Arena, Panguitch, UT; 1200-1400

In attendance: Rhett Boswell, UDWR; Nicki Frey, USU EXT; Dustin Schaible, UDWR; Nile Sorenson, UDWR/NRCS; Joe Helfrich, UDOGM; Norm McKee, resident; Jake Shoppe USFS; Kirk Nicholes, Alton Coal; Larry Johnson, Alton Coal; Kevin Heaton; USU EXT; Wally Dodds, UACD; Rick Blackwell, County Commission; Steve Peterson, BYU; Lisa Church, BLM; Laura Vernon, SWCA

A. Dustin update on monitoring: ground searches on 20 leks. 3-7 visits per lek.

- Panguitch 23
- Sage hen 84 using the south canyon project area in the bull hog areas
- Butler creek 0
- Dog valley 83
- Tom best spring alternate lek 4 years now ne of landfill 35 birds
- Cottonwood 0
- Whistle 0
- Hatch airport historic lek 3 birds first time since 1986
- Hoyt's ranch 13
- John L swale 3 birds
- Flake mtn 0
- Pole hollow 10 birds first time since 2005
- Haycock 0
- Cottem 0
- Spring creek 0. But saw a hen there the other day. Maybe more important brood rearing area
- Ford pasture 0
- Skutempah 0

Sink valley 4 - just west of the historic lek in a rehab area

Flights in March didn't see anything, flights in April saw birds in sink valley, hoyts and flushed a hen at hatch

In general seem to be up or increasing

Jake- part of johns valley project they found 2 different lek sites need to go bad and check them next couple of years to map them out.

B. Rest of time given over to the BLM and SWCA to discuss EIS mitigation.

1. Hoping this meeting will initiate the Alton coal DEIS mitigation plan. Want to hear mitigation idea and then outline the steps of the mitigation planning process.

2. Began writing DEIS in 2007. Comments came back in March 2012. About 15,000 comments. 127 comments related to grouse sensitive species but also had UPD and condor questions as well.

A. Want to use CCARM to help address these comments

3. Lisa came to SLC in March with state office. Quickly came to conclusion that the LWG needed to be a part of the mitigation creation process.

a. Working from the IM which instructs the BLM to counsel with DNR FWS and other specialist. All the needed partners are already here at the LWG.

b. This is the first project nationwide that will fall under the preview of this IM. So this is a pioneering effort.

c. Hoping this will take 6 months.

d. Not sure yet if everything in this plan will be a part of a certain action plan or across all alternatives. Again, this is new. **The first one in the nation.** We'll be feeling our way through this the best we can.

C. Step 1: the group is asked to brainstorm mitigation ideas. Maps available in order to specific location of off sight mitigation.

Geo sideboard: What is the scope of the mitigation? from pasture to dog valley? There is a region for the long term, but in the short term the sink valley corridor?

Kanab creek watershed?

1. Avoidance --- techniques to avoid impact to sage grouse

A. Seasonal

- Restrict mining activity in the area around the lek. Would need a buffer around the lek to allow for the shifting of bird use.
- Coordinate the mining of the lek site to avoid the hole existing during the lek season.
- Avoid activity in the brood -rearing area during the brood rearing season- maybe make this a certain percentage of habitat or restrict activities in a phased approach to limit the creation of bare ground during this period
- Avoid mining activity in the lek site during the lek season in the first 2 hours of daylight to keep decibels below minimum.
- What is the effect of the lights on lekking activity?

B. Short term/ long term

- negotiate best haul routes to avoid big game migration in crepuscular
- use monitoring to identify critical areas that become no-touch areas for any vegetation treatments
- Long term- relocation of birds back in the area to strength the population

2. Restoration/enhancement ideas

A. On site - the proposed DEIS for the LBA

- immediate priority improve and maintain brood rearing habitat. Another priority is to improve the corridor to the immediately adjacent leks
- Thin out sage stands to maintain good stands
- Removal of pj to restore areas to sagebrush steppe
- Water development
- the again the whole foot print will be made into a blank slate, so maybe restoring it to sagebrush steppe.
- But in this LBA there are areas that are not going to be disturbed but are still on site
 - retrofitting fences
 - Road closures and removing redundant fences
 - Predator management - may be important when restoring the area, to allow grouse populations to grow and disperse. Trapping, removal, and poisoning
 - Remove the carrion caused by increased road kill associated with the increased truck traffic.
- Perhaps give the mine the authority to remove the carrion altogether
 - Public education and awareness.
 - Kiosk where public can report bird sightings for the general public within the general area to perhaps see where the grouses are showing up.
 - Environmental education for mine employees.
 - Reduce perch sites when creating power lines and such
 - create some potential lek sites that would suffice as satellite leks
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B. Off site this could also include the private mine where the lek is

- preserve the lek, improve and maintain the site
- skutumpah and ford pasture enhancement -- pinon and juniper removal
- Hatch bench
- South canyon
- sage brush treatment to improve and maintain
- Pj removal to restore sagebrush steppe habitat
- priority - to preserve the lek and nesting habitat, to conduct activities that preserve this area. Need to create and promote the corridor of the immediately adjacent lek sites.
 - Improve seed mixtures to enhance forbs and grass
 - Water enhancements
 - Road closures and removing redundant fences
 - use decoys to get birds to use other sites
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3. Monitoring to track effects of the mitigation efforts

A. Vegetation effects

B. grouse and other wildlife effects

1. Corridor uses

2. Use of reclaimed sites

C. at the end of the day, who has the regulating authority to manage the monitoring of mitigation? It would be tied to the permit. If the monitoring doesn't happen, DOGM would be the enforcer.