

PARM Meeting

2/16/2011

Wayne County Court House Loa, Utah

10:00 Welcome Introductions	Andy Taft
10:15 Scoping letter to BLM	Group
10:40 Report on Plan (Actions/Strategies CAP)	Group
12:00 Lunch	

Members present

Dave Christensen	landowner/parker grazers
Andy Taft	landowner/parker grazers
Gary Hallows	landowner/parker grazers
Todd Black	USU/EXT
Ron Togerson	SITLA
Tom Tippets	GIP
John Keeler	UTFB
Verl Bagley	USU/EXT
Clint Wirick	USFWS
Joanne Stenton	USFS
Ray Glosd	USFS
James Huggard	NRCS

The group revised and drafted a letter to send to the Western Regional BLM team for official comments on the revision of BLM's LUP/RMPs. (final draft attached).

The bulk of the meeting was spent reviewing actions and strategies from the 2006 plan. The report will be finalized and sent out to the group and published on the web page by June 2012.

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National Greater Sage-grouse Planning Strategy

Location: Richfield, Utah

Scoping Comment

Citizen's Group: The Parker Mountain Adaptive Resource Management Group (PARM) the Sage-grouse local working group.

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Comments:

As Utah's efforts to develop and implement a strategic approach to the management and conservation of sage-grouse (*Centrocercus* spp.) began in 1996 with the formation the Parker Mountain and Monticello local working groups (LWGs). The LWGs process was officially formalized in 2002 with the adoption of Utah's Strategic Management Plan for Sage-Grouse by the Utah Wildlife Board. By 2006, eleven LWGs were meeting regularly and had completed written conservation plans and were actively their plans on a volunteer basis.

The LWGs emerged to assist state and local governments and private landowners in conserving these species while achieving community social and economic objectives. Given the long term declines of sage-grouse populations, and the increased interest of state and local governments and private citizens in species conservation planning, there has been an effort expand this process in Utah and the region. As such, the LWGs welcome the opportunity to participate as an active member in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) National Greater Sage-grouse Planning Strategy Process.

The PARM LWG was organized in 1998. Early membership in PARM and supporters included local government, sportsmen, ranchers, Utah State University, Division of Wildlife Resources, BLM, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, USNRCS, USFSA, Utah Institutional and Trust Lands and the UDAF-Animal Damage Control. In 2006 the LWG had drafted and entered into an implementation phase of their local sage-grouse conservation plan. This group continues to meet 3-4 times annually to discuss, report, and coordinate sage-grouse research and conservation projects implemented within the defined geographic area of the plan. Members of this group include state and federal land management agencies, landowners, state wildlife and habitat managers university researchers, local landowners, industry, and local citizen/county groups. See <http://www.utahcbcp.org/html/groups/parkermountain> for more information.

Be aware that under Parker Mountain Resource Management (PARM) programming and practices-- populations of grouse have consistently increased, chick survival rates have topped other national inventories; active Lek sites have increased; predation has been reduced and habitat for sage grouse has consistently been improved with mechanical, chemical and livestock driven management practices.

PARM efforts at an International Symposium in Park City, Utah was referred to as the "Poster Child" of sage-grouse restoration. Our community based efforts on behalf of sage-grouse is nationally recognized in grouse management; regulatory and academic communities. PARM's efforts to improve habitat and increase grouse populations should not be interrupted by new "beginning stage" actions. Successful efforts by the **local** community based conservation group should be the natural spring board for continued success.

Agriculture on and around Wayne and Piute Counties has been identified as the number one supplier of earned income and source of new dollars generated by the multiplier impact. Efforts of the PARM group have led to significant increases in grouse inventories and habitat improvement without handicapping livestock production and the local economy.

With regards to public scoping comments for the BLM and FS land use plans, we recommend the following:

- That the BLM/FS incorporate specific language into the LUP amendments that recognizes and acknowledges the role of Utah's LWG's in sage-grouse conservation issues. This language must emphasize the importance of sustaining a working relationship with LWGs to accomplish the species and community conservation strategies contained within the **local** LWG plans.
- We recommend that these LUPs contain specific language that they are adaptive and dynamic plans and thus responsive to new information, research, technology, knowledge, and/or changing environmental conditions. As new sage-grouse or sagebrush best management practices are developed, the LUPs are and can be adaptive as well.
- The IMs repeatedly reference monitoring activities but provide little information about what specific monitoring methods will be used or what specifically will be monitored. We ask that the BLM/FS work with these LWGs to identify and implement **locally** accepted sage-grouse habitat and population assessment and monitoring methods that can be used to document the effects of management actions of **local** population trends.

- We request that LWG members are kept informed through LWG meeting communications with BLM/FS throughout the NEPA process to ensure all aspects of the local sage-grouse populations and their habitat use are discussed and important aspects of the **local** sage-grouse ecology are incorporated into the LUP amendments.
- We recommend that the final LUPs be flexible enough to ensure avoidance of a ‘one size shoe fits all’ approach by the BLM/FS. Based on research conducted by Utah State University it is clear that some LWGs areas may never achieve published recommended sage-grouse habitat guidelines. Yet, these populations continue to thrive. Thus, regulatory and management decisions should not be based on unachievable standards but rather embrace **local** sage-grouse population needs as identified by the LWG and the LWG plans. The LUPs should be local in nature and not based on national LUPs. We recognize the BLM/FS plans must ensure sage-grouse and their habitats are protected, they must also incorporate local differences in habitat and populations.
- We recommend that the BLM/FS look for opportunities to incorporate or merge multiple grazing allotments under a single landscape based management plan. Sage-grouse are a landscape species not a single allotment species. These landscape opportunities should be identified LWGs. Livestock grazing constitutes a major land-use within Utah LWG areas. As such it is and can be an important component to sage-grouse persistence in Utah. We encourage the BLM/FS to be open to innovative process such as landscape-based grazing allotments as a tool in improving grazing management practices.
- The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) has developed draft guidelines to assist stakeholders in managing Utah’s sage-grouse populations. These are found in Appendix 5 of Utah’s 2009 Sage-grouse Management Plan. We recommend these guidelines be incorporated into BLM/FS scoping process and be implemented into LUP Amendments.
- We strongly support the off-site mitigation language and encourage BLM/FS to work within the LWGs to identify project areas that would be best suited for any off site mitigation.
- We agree and encourage several reasonable alternatives be analyzed in each NEPA document prepared dealing with grazing. The LWG plans identify proper grazing as an important tool for sage-grouse habitat management. To even consider a no-grazing alternative would be contrary to LWG sage-grouse plans, impact **local** economies, and be contrary to the multiple use concepts. Conversely, we strongly encourage alternative practices to include deferred or rest-rotation systems implement on a landscape level simultaneously across multiple allotments. This may require “blurring” jurisdictional boundaries, but may provide the best option to achieve sustainable sage-grouse conservation and **local** communities.

Thank you for considering our recommendations

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