

**STRAWBERRY
VALLEY
LOCAL
WORKING
GROUP**

Date: December 2, 2019

Place: Wasatch County Health Building

Members Present: Charlie Holtz (NRCS/Pheasants Forever), Terri Pope (UDWR), Ryan Howell (BYU), Richard Mingo (Mitigation Commission), Tom Glass (High Mountain Nursery), Amber Helmus (USFS), Jim Spencer (NRCS), Chelcey Larsen (NRCS), Shane Hill (UDWR), Lorien Belton (USU Extension, facilitator)

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

Federal planning updates

Lorien provided brief updates about the BLM and USFS plans. Due to a court injunction in October, BLM has reverted back to the September 2015 plan amendments, and USFS plan amendment approvals are on hold during the objections phase, likely pending the outcome of some of the BLM plan progress. Lorien will provide updates via the listserv when decisions are finalized or there are additional opportunities for input.

Projects

The group discussed the new deer fence along the highway by the reservoir. Less information was available to USFS during planning and implementation as the group had assumed there would be, so there are still many questions. Key points:

- There are finally sage-grouse markers on the fence
- The installers hit a water line needed by permittees; resolution of that situation is still in progress
- It is not clear how the weeds will be managed that will almost certainly come up in the areas disturbed by the installation of the fence. Hopefully Title 2 money will be available to help pay for county assistance with spraying.

Chelsea asked Ryan how birds were using private property; and if there was a need for any particular projects. Weed management and maintenance of existing sagebrush areas was discussed as being import to the birds.

Steve Ellis has been working on tree-cutting projects.

No updates were available on easement conversations. Easements have become difficult for NCS since the local staff rarely have relevant experience and expertise, and easements are large, complex, long-term projects.

USFS is working on a 100-year plan for fire management, including all possible tools, for the

entire Heber-Kamas District. This will include burns on Strawberry Ridge in the future. The plan is involving county, adjacent landowners, etc. The goal is to be proactive and prepared for fire management in the whole area.

Population research updates

Ryan provided updates on the research project. There are currently 14 transmitters out now, including one male bird. This spring, 7 more GPS collars and 12 VHF are planned to go out. Ryan is working on the seasonal habitat use chapter of his thesis. Randy is considering putting cameras out to improve the spring lek count data, although there are considerable complexities with how to do that.

County planning: transmission lines, etc.

Several items have been discussed recently at the county level: transmission lines and development stages for the Strawberry Ranch Resort. Lorien read the announcements for upcoming planning meeting agenda items (like Strawberry Ranch Resort Phase 1b plans) on Dec 12.

The TransWest Express Transmission Project line only has 2 counties along the length of its run that do not yet have approved conditional use permits, and Wasatch County is one of them. The line will cross about 19 miles of the county. At a recent meeting, the county gave a conditional use permit conditioned on approvals from all the landowners that it passes over, which include mitigation commission and UDWR. Shane explained that DWR has given permits for cultural and biological inventories, but not construction. Mitigation commission is waiting for communications from TransWest that have enough information to conduct a NEPA analysis.

Round robin

- Emily Fife is now the NRCS state conservationist; Matt Phillippi is the state biologist.
- The group was interested to know what maps USFS is using for sage-grouse habitat right now; Lorien will ask Anthony.

Follow-up Needed

- Lorien will follow up with Anthony on mapping.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be determined by a doodle poll, probably late Feb or early March.