

**STRAWBERRY  
VALLEY  
LOCAL WORKING  
GROUP**

**Date: February 8, 2010**

**Time: 10:00 am – 12:30 pm**

**Place: Wasatch County Building**

**Members Present: Riley Peck (UDWR, BYU), Mike Tamillos (USDA Wildlife Services), Robert Riddle (Wasatch County Public Lands), Jan Anderson (Farm Bureau), Steve Gray (UDWR), Nathan Berg (USFS), Jason Robinson (DWR), Steve Smith (CWMU), Anthony Gray (USFS), Jared Zierenberg (USDA Wildlife Services), Mike Linnell (USDA Wildlife Services), Michele Devaney (UACD), Kim Hersey (UDWR), Brian Maxfield (UDWR), Lorien Belton (USU Extension: recorder)**

**Information Presented/Discussion Highlights**

**Project Updates**

Several projects in the SVARM area were presented for UPCD funding consideration, including Badger Hollow. Funding decisions will be made later this spring.

The USFWS listing decision for sage-grouse is due on February 26<sup>th</sup>. If the bird gets listed, the main impact in the SVARM area would likely be an increase in paperwork for federal agencies prior to projects, but otherwise mostly just business as usual. We are doing good things for sage-grouse, being vigilant about threats, and should just keep doing that regardless.

Jan Anderson updated the group about the Wallsburg knapweed project. He spoke to the landowner about his concerns. Mark Farmer and Jan will work further with the landowner to discuss concerns once the snow melts.

The Dept. of Natural Resources has asked Wasatch County to help with weed control to help sage-grouse in the area, and encouraged the county to apply for money to help the bird in this way. The county will be working on this in the near future.

It was noted that there are also weeds in the Deer Creek area on state land that need to be addressed: specifically, dalmatian toadflax in the area between Deer Creek and the road. Steve Gray will check with Mark Farmer to discuss the problem and possible solutions.

Jason Robinson said that helicopter surveys last year in the area worked well, and this year more surveys will be done by helicopter in two of the five DWR regions. He will be asking all LWGs to prioritize areas that might net new leks, so the DWR knows where to fly in each area once

they get there. Flights are done on a grid pattern, and each flight can cover about 50 miles. New lek sightings are always hoped for, but even just bird sightings help better understand where the birds spend their time during this time of year. The group discussed possible areas and ended up suggesting, in order of importance, 1) Renegade area, 2) Wallsburg, 3) Wildcat, and 4) Co-op and Trout Creek areas. These areas would be better to fly toward the end of April or early May.

Wildlife Services fixed-wing flights can also report what they see when they are out doing predator control.

Annual reporting for the sage-grouse actions will be done over email. Lorien will send out the strategies and actions for people to note work done in those areas.

The group requested that final annual reports from the LWGs be made available to the groups once they are completed. They are on the [utahcbcp.org](http://utahcbcp.org) website but can also be emailed out.

### **Predator Management**

Mike Linnell, state director for Wildlife Services, which does the predator control, briefed the group on the status of predator management efforts in the area. Their budgets have been reduced dramatically statewide. In the past, they have used helicopters in Strawberry area (for coyotes and red fox) but that will not likely be available this year for fox control. Jason Robinson noted that we need to see how the sage-grouse population in Strawberry Valley does without predator control, and we need to decide if we take away raven and red fox control simultaneously, or one at a time. However, we need to have one more year (this year) without translocations to observe how the birds do with only that variable (augmented populations) removed. Some kind of predator control will be removed next year (2011).

Mike Tamlllos reported that they are working to target ravens more effectively, using flags to attract ravens to pre-baited (non-poisoned) eggs, and will be working to understand how much that increased uptake of eggs by ravens. They are checking to see how volunteers might be used to improve efforts, since they cannot handle the poisoned eggs at all but may be able to help with pre-baiting eggs.

Riley suggested that WS focus raven control efforts in Trout Creek and Badger Hollow. He might also be able to organize folks to put out untreated eggs.

Jason noted that it would be great to have raven survey transects done to establish the effect that raven control actually has on local raven numbers during the lekking and nesting seasons. Brian Maxfield, Riley Peck, Mike Tamlllos, Jason Robinson, Tom Becker, and Mike Linnell might all possibly be able to help with transects surveys.

Jan asked if baiting associated with roadkill might be effective instead of poisoned eggs. The possibility exists but it would be more complicated than the current efforts. Mike Tamlllos noted

that the value of using the eggs early on is that they are available when less other food is available for ravens. They seem less likely to be eaten by ravens once other options are available.

### **Kiosk Development**

Lorien presented the most recent drafts of the kiosk design, based on feedback from the last meeting and from the Forest Service. The Forest Service landscape architect provided, via email, some suggestions for how to design the kiosk to be more eye-catching. The group did not feel that any of the specific suggestions sent the right message, but did agree that a more catchy, large message would be a great idea.

Additional recommendations from the group included:

- Make sure the picture on the kiosk is similar to what someone would actually see: a hen, or at least a male and female together, not just a strutting male.
- The idea at the snowmobile parking lot should be to have them walk away with the message “don’t harass the birds” even if someone only looks at it momentarily. Maybe “Enjoy your ride-- Don’t harass wildlife” or “Don’t risk your ride—leave sage-grouse alone” would be good basic messages.
- The phone number should be bigger so people are more aware that someone could call in and report bad behavior

The group decided that given the location of the major snowmobile threat to grouse (which is not so much near Trout Creek or even really near the lek, but comes from people who park at the lot on Ed Collard’s land and then chase groups of grouse), a kiosk focused only on the snowmobile harassment issue should be placed on Ed Collard’s land/parking lot, and snowmobile recreation focus should be dropped from the Trout Creek kiosk design, since that parking lot is not used in the winter. The Trout Creek kiosk design would be focused more on the habitat treatment in that area and basic sage-grouse information.

Lorien will re-draft two separate kiosks based on the new vision and send it to the group for feedback. The one at Trout Creek will need to go through further USFS review. The one for snowmobilers will not have to.

Mark Farmer will confirm for the group that Ed Collard is willing to have the kiosk placed on his property.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

The group discussed having an April lek-viewing trip. It was tentatively set for April 19 or 20, but will be heavily dependent on snow levels and lek activity. Riley will lead the trip.

The field tour should be in July or maybe as late as August. There has been discussion of

combining the SVARM tour with the Central Region UPCD tour, as well as including weed groups. Stops might include Chicken Springs and the kiosk assuming it is installed. UPCD would be interested in visiting several funded projects in the area, including multi-year projects. Riley can give a presentation to point out where grouse go in the landscape, and how they use the landscape at this and other times of year. Visiting an area with predator control ongoing is a possibility, and the weeds group may also have potential stops to recommend.

### **Actions Taken**

No formal actions were taken.

### **Follow-up Needed**

- **Lorien will draft two new kiosk designs and send them out to the group**
- **Jason, Mike Tamlos, and Lorien will follow-up on raven surveys**
- **Mark Farmer will confirm that Ed Collard will allow the kiosk on the parking lot where snowmobilers park**
- **Lorien will send out strategies and actions for the group**
- **Lorien will coordinate with Riley to plan a potential lek viewing trip in April**
- **Lorien will coordinate with UPCD, Riley, and Steve Smith to plan a summer field tour**

**NEXT MEETING: April 19<sup>th</sup> or 20th, 2010. We may do this as a lek-viewing field trip, which Riley Peck would lead.**