

**STRAWBERRY
VALLEY
LOCAL WORKING
GROUP**

Date: April 29, 2011

Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Place: Wasatch County Building

Members Present: Robert Riddle (Wasatch County Public Lands), Mark Peterson (Utah Farm Bureau Federation), Dave Hale (representing Ed Collard's property interests), Mike Tamlllos (USDA Wildlife Services), John Rice (Mitigation Commission), Covy Jones (UDWR), Lorien Belton (USU Extension: recorder)

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

The group focused the majority of the time during the meeting suggesting updates and edits to the table of threat rankings for sage-grouse in the SVARM area. Several additional suggestions for updates to the strategies and actions were also presented. Those changes will be reflected in plan updates after additional input from the group. A copy of proposed changes will be circulated to the full group for comment prior to finalizing the plan updates. A summary of key comments made during the meeting follows here, including some detail on rationale for changing treat levels.

- Weeds: The county has \$86,000 for weed control, which can be used to help protect previous investments in habitat projects. DWR weed crews need to go back in post treatment and spot-treat for weeds, because the county will go around the treatments. Reseeding helps provide vegetation that can out-compete the weeds. It will be valuable to get subdivisions and homeowners associations on board with weed management. For example, they should be spraying, not cutting off seed heads. Private individuals should know that Chaparral and other chemicals may be available from the county. The contact in Quentin Lewis.
- Research Needs: Information on the effectiveness of vegetation treatments is a crucial need currently. BYU and DWR will continue to coordinate to better understand this. Knowledge of how habitat treatments may have affected populations is reported annually to the USFWS. Although it is very difficult to see impacts of habitat projects at that timescale, having new information every 12 months is important.
- Fencing: this is not really a concern currently in the resource area. Many old fences have been removed.
- Development: No changes needed to threat assessment at the moment, particularly due to the downturn in the economy. If the large development that was discussed at the last meet actually gets proposed, the group would need to look carefully at what impact that might have on sage-grouse and comment or get involved at that time.
- Powerlines: Several power lines have been proposed through the resource area. The group decided that powerlines as currently proposed are only a medium threat, but that is specifically because they are not currently proposed to go over core habitat or lek areas, where their presence could have a much larger negative impact on sage-grouse.

- Energy development: In this area, oil and gas leasing is not a major issue. The Strawberry Water Users Association owns many leasing rights under federal land, in addition to about 45,000 acres of federal leases under federal land. New forest plans do not encourage energy development.
- Roads: no changes are needed to the threats chart.
- Vegetation treatments: this threat is confusing because past vegetation treatments, as well as potentially poorly done treatments, could have negative impacts on sage-grouse, particularly in winter range. However, because most current treatments are done carefully and for sage-grouse benefit, this threat just reflects the potential for vegetation treatments that are not done thoughtfully with sage-grouse in mind.
- PJ: more restoration work could be done, though lots has been done, particularly in the fruitland area
- Disease: this does not appear to be a concern in this area
- Recreation: a large new recreation area might pose a problem, but the group will wait to see if this really gets proposed. Not harassing the birds themselves on snowmobiles could be addresses in homeowners' association meetings. ATVs in the summer are probably less of a problem.
- Hunting: the group wants to change this to "poaching" since there is no hunting allowed in the area.
- Livestock: this will be changed to reflect that fact that overgrazing or improper grazing could be a problem, but that well-done grazing management can help sage-grouse and improve and maintain good habitat.

Several immediate action items also arose during the discussion. They are reflected in the following section.

Follow-up Needed

- Covy Jones and Bob Riddle will speak about using the money available through the county to manage weeds on treatment areas.
- Lorien will update the plan document based on this discussion and send the results to the full group for review.
- Lorien will follow up with individuals to do the annual reporting against the original strategies.

NEXT MEETING: June field tour, date to be announced

, I think that a few of these have shifted. My reasoning behind each is briefly outlined below.

- Drought and weather: Although we had some acres of sage die off near Hwy 208 in the migratory area, I don't think that it's a high level of threat. Due to the elevation we are at, the area generally gets more snow and summer precip than maybe the West Desert, for example. All that considered our survival model, that we recently completed, does show

seasonal variation (mostly weather and year effects) do play a role in survival.....so I think a medium threat is better than a high threat for SVARM.

- Powerlines, etc: I think that for now, the habitat needs to be downgraded to a medium threat due to the fact that there just aren't that many new powerlines or tall structures going in. Could there in the future? Maybe, but I don't know what the threat is currently, therefore I'd put it as a medium threat instead of a high threat.
- Historical Veg Treatments: I believe the treatments that went on in SV during the mid part of the 1900s was significant and presents a higher threat than medium to our issues of connectivity. If the area like it was prior to Griner's thesis, instead of how it is now, our population and seasonal connectivity would be much greater.
- OHV recreation: I think we can all agree that winter recreation at SV can be detrimental to grouse winter habitat use, but there just isn't a lot of ATV use around grouse use areas in the spring, summer or early fall, so I would downgrade those threats to medium.
- Parasites and Disease: I believe there are no empirical data from our study or any other in the region to suppose that parasites and disease are even a medium threat. WNV has not created a problem for the problem despite the amount of water and mosquito habitat around the SV. I would downgrade this. In addition, of all the necropsies we've had performed by a professional, only a few have died conclusively from any apparent sickness or disease. It is a low threat.
- P/J: I think this is becoming more of an issue than it ever was thought to be. We all know the propensity that P/J has to move downslope. It continues to occur in the migratory areas to the east of the SV. In fact, one of the ways that we might be most effective to improve our habitat (especially due to fragmentation, man-made and natural) would be through mechanical treatments of the P/J. This would be a great place to look for NRCS WHIP funding for work on private land. In addition I would encourage the state to look at treatments, to move P/J back onto steeper rockier slopes where traditionally fire would have been more aggressive at maintaining it.