

Southwest Desert Adaptive Resource Management (SWARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The Southwest Desert Adaptive Resource Management sage-grouse LWG (SWARM) consists of community members from Beaver and Iron Counties and is facilitated by Nicki Frey. The LWG meets every other month to discuss issues and concerns with grouse management and conservation in our region. The Governor's Task Force has recommended the development of two SGMAs in the LWG conservation area; Hamlin Valley and Bald Hills.

Description of Area and General Population Information

The Bald Hills Management Area is located in southwestern Utah, in Beaver and Iron Counties, and is considered a population stronghold for this region of Utah. This population uses a series of leks throughout the habitat area, with males visiting more than one lek per season. Currently, the population is constrained to the Management Area by vegetation fragmentation and human development; however future improvements could connect this population to the Hamlin Valley Management Area to the west, and further north into Beaver County. The primary land uses in this Management Area are grazing, agriculture, and swine production; predominant land ownership is Bureau of Land Management and private. The BLM manages the Bald Hills for multiple uses including conservation, recreation, energy development, and big game hunting. Residential development is present in Minersville, in the north of the Management Area, where most of the agriculture production also occurs. There is potential for wind energy production as well as current and future power transmission lines.

The Hamlin Valley Management Area is located in southwestern Utah, in Beaver and Iron Counties, on the border of Utah and Nevada and is considered a population stronghold for this region of Utah. Although currently isolated from other habitat areas, habitat restoration could link this population to the Bald Hills Management Area. The primary land use in this Management Area is grazing; predominant land ownership is the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM manages Hamlin Valley for multiple uses including wild horse conservation, recreation, and big game hunting. Development is limited to scattered houses, generally in the southern portion of the Habitat Area.

Project and Research Highlights

Work on the sage-grouse research project for Sigurd-Red Butte transmission line continued and will be completed in 2016. Data will be reported at the February SWARM meeting. In 2015 group members deployed 10 GPS transmitters in Hamlin Valley to begin to assess sage-grouse use of treated areas in the valley. Data collected by group members during 2011-2012 will be used to compare pre-and post-use in some areas. We will continue to monitor those transmitters through 2016.

We sponsored an open house to discuss telemetry data results and WRI project plans in February 2015. Nicky Frey implemented the Wildlife Research Education Network program in Cedar City for the third time. Students were shown about radio-telemetry, collected field data on sage-grouse habitat, learned tracking and other field ID tools, and hiked through sage-grouse country.

We didn't see grouse in the fall, but we did see pellets. During the fall, a total of 40 students from two high schools (Kanab and Cedar City) participated in the program.