

SWARM Meeting Minutes

Introductions – attached sign up sheet has attendance

I. Project Presentations

During this meeting, project managers were given time to present their WRI project proposals that might impact Greater Sage-grouse. This allows the local working group the opportunity to suggest ideas and collaborations to these projects. The presentations were encouraged to be very informal to allow a conversation about the project. The idea was to present the areas, the acres and the possible impacts. Notes are as follows

1. Indian Peak Bull Hog
 1. Next to Indian Peak Chaining
 2. 750 Acres
 3. To restore sagebrush steppe from Phase 2 Pinyon Juniper
 4. Maintain adequate habitat for Greater sage-grouse
 5. This isn't in priority sagebrush habitat; we need to look at updating this in reaction to the treatments. But this project is along the norther edge of the mapped sage-grouse habitat.
 6. About 3 miles to the south of the Rain Gauge lek
 7. Potential outcomes - the climate is changing, this is going to provide opportunity habitat if the weather gets hotter and drier.
 8. Would provide year-round habitat value
 9. Would this be successful given drought conditions - yes.
2. Lizzie's Hill Bull Hog
 1. Hook into lop and scatter that was conducted in 2017
 2. Need to look out for cheatgrass in that area
 3. About 2070 acres

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4. Increase the vigor of sagebrush desert habitat
 5. Work to connect nesting - broodrearing - winter habitat.
 6. Request 10 GPS collars to begin looking at the changes that have happened in 2015.
3. Baboon ARTR Planting in the Bald Hills
1. Project initiated with emergency stabilization funding; not sure how much funding that they will need
 2. A grow contract and a planting project
 3. The 2018 planting looked pretty dismal; the fall 2017 planting had a 60% success rate.
 4. Want another 20,000 plants.
 5. Would concentrate in the northern section
 6. Follow-up : will GPS as many plants as possible during planting, then will return to those areas and count how many lived.
 7. It's risky but it is something that should be tried; nothing else was working.
4. Wet Meadow Development in Hamlin Valley
1. Trying to provide habitat at upper elevations for climate change.
 2. Provide check dams to heal drainages, and create a mesic environment by planting seed
 3. Input about 20 check dams initially and see how the grouse use it.
 4. If it works, we could use it in the Bald Hills area too
 5. The EA is already on the shelf
 6. Used Zeedyke book re: check dams
5. S Beaver Maintenance
1. 6200 acres of lop and scatter involves BLM and state. FS had projects adjacent to this area.
 2. Want to remove small trees from older project area

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3. Objective is to maintain the sagebrush desert habitat for grouse, and other game species.
4. The state sections really needs work, it is full of small trees
5. Grouse have moved through this area, although there no leks
6. N Buckskin/Fremont — Little Bear
 1. Continuation of last year's project to open up the valley and connect Buckskin to Dog north of highway 20
 2. Treatments occurring this year with NRCS to get trees out
 3. Phase 3 pinyon and juniper that needs to be opened up.
 4. There will be some wetlands clean up; could create some terrific summer habitat
 5. Grouse are already using this area; could help open up these corridors.
7. Mud Spring Canyon Lop and Scatter
 1. Mastication 834 acres, but a little far from the birds
 2. Mud Springs lop and scatter 1700 acres. Includes some state lands
 3. Phase 1 PJ with a grass understory. There have been treatments in the washes for UPDs.
 4. Holds water well.
 5. About 5 miles to the south of the lek.
 6. Potentially some private lands that would want to join this proposal
 7. Wouldn't need to seed mud springs, but would need to seed the upper horse hollow section
8. S Pine Valley Lop and Scatter
 1. 3256 acres in an old chaining; in a stage 1 condition right now
 2. Won't really change the habitat, but will actually stabilize the current conditions
 3. Permitted taking on the risk to sign on to NRCS, \$ should be there by the time WRI comes in to play.

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4. Part is in occupied habitat; grouse have been seen on the private lands in that area.
 5. Within the Hamlin Valley NEPA
9. Benson
1. West of the salt lake near Parowan; just south of Parowan stake
 2. Connects 2 sage grouse habitat priority 3 areas (potential habitat rather than occupied habitat)
 3. 480 acres of lop and scatter, do a small section of chain harrow (60 acres), 980 acres of a bullhog.
 4. All except for lop and scatter would be seeded.
 5. Would have NRCS funding as a partnership; so no grazing for 2 years.
 6. GBRC has experimented with a bitterbrush planter to see how it would work; they work better than the actual seeders but they are smaller.
 7. The lower elevation has cheatgrass, so the project area shifted up in elevation to avoid that.
10. Parowan Stake
1. Mastication to the east of jackrabbit mountain
 2. Main focus is mule deer habitat, but it could provide grouse habitat as a bonus.
 3. There are springs in the area, should it is definitely potential habitat
 4. Phase 3 PJ right now; there is quite a bit of bitterbrush
 5. The permittees are aware that they will need to rest for 2 years and is prepared to do so.
11. Paragonah Cattle
1. Permittees have committed to a 2-year rest with NRCS funding
 2. Mastication followed by seeding. Phase 2-3 pinyon and juniper
 3. Willow springs project is occurring right next to it.
 4. Objective to restore the sagebrush steppe habitat on the top of the Bald Hills.

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5. Phase one of a several phase project.
6. There is a private landowner that is interested and looking to be a part in 2020.
7. Grouse are in the area, close to leks, and could also be a staging area to cross over to east side of I-15

12. Spanish George Chaining

1. 2000 acres; has really good understory already but the trees need to come out.
2. Adjacent to the work that has already been done
3. More work going on in the future to the east.
4. All of it in occupied habitat; the grouse have been using the area to the west all fall.
5. This treatment was originally done in the 60s. Any concerns with cheatgrass with the disturbance? Nope.
6. Could use a letter of support in January

13. Indian Peak East

1. Within the Hamlin Valley NEPA
2. Stage 2-3 pinyon juniper; will try to focus on areas that still have some sagebrush understory.
3. Creating a hopscotch to go around the pine valley horn and connect Hamlin Valley to the north
4. There will be seeding on top of the mastication; this area currently looks like a gravel field
5. There could be a significant amount of money coming from NRCS. Will know by December 21.
6. The most recently active leks are close to this proposed treatment area
7. Will tie into lop and scatter conducted a few years ago

II. Revised Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Utah; Ben Nadolski

Ben provided a presentation outlining the changes to the state Greater sage-grouse plan. Dr. Frey attempted to take notes as the information was printed on the presentation or expressly stated by Mr. Nadolski, as follows

1. Focus is on planning participation, litigation, policy coordination
2. Coordinating the implementation among state and federal partners
3. The BLM and the FS are both updating their plans during this time
4. State plan approved in 2013; FS and BLM plans approved in 2015; USFWS not warranted determination
 - State of Utah filed suit against USFS and BLM
 - Zinke issued SO 3353 in 2017 mandating USFS and BLM to coordinate with the states to make plans better
 - BLM and FS made recommendations, DWR and PLPCO represented the Governor at the WGA task force
 - Zinke ordered a NEPA process for BLM; USFS followed suit
 - SO, state, USFS, and BLM are simultaneously re-writing their plans
5. PIC met in August 2017 to review; held 24 stakeholder meetings to get public input.
 - All local working groups are considered stakeholders
 - About 12 other groups also considered stakeholders
 - About 12 NGOs special interest groups involved
 - About 15 state and federal agencies involved
6. the plan was broadly supported by a lot of people, but lacks clarity and doesn't communicate the full suite of Utah's conservation efforts. All the partnerships should be mentioned to highlight the level of work that is actually going on in the state.
7. By 2017, the plan created in 2013 was outdated. We had more data, more knowledge, and more adaptive management to lead us.
 - Things that didn't change

1. Plan remains voluntary
 2. Still uses SGMAs
 3. Still have seasonal habitat classifications, but have a small tweak
 4. Emphasis on habitat protection and creation
- Things that did change
 1. Structural, specific, adaptive
 2. Structural: reorganize, clarify, and consolidate, including an executive summary
 - Revised conservation goals and objectives to link directly to the threats and strategies
 - Conservation strategies will be linked directly to threats clearly
 - Categorized threats as statewide or local
 3. Specific: Updated science throughout (e.g. don't map the opportunity areas because they were getting misused)
 - Make it clear that this is a 5 year plan
 - Focus on mesic habitat restoration
 - Transition vs. 'other' habitats - clarify the definition of what this actually is. Will be using the term "transition" habitat.
 - Clarify the roles of the LWGs explicitly
 4. Adaptive Revisions
 - Put the appendices online and reference these in the document
 - Disturbance cap monitoring - we have to change the way we are doing that, in that we aren't actually doing it yet. Will align with the federal plans for monitoring
 - Proposed MOU with federal partners - commitment to help each other with implementing their plans. We need each other to make our plans work.

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- Incorporate new compensatory mitigation program
- Emphasis on controlling invasive weeds
- Describe duties and membership of Plan Implementation Council
- Incorporate implementation authorities
- Adaptive management framework to evaluate statewide and local population trends. Works with a 20 year rolling average; the hope is to have triggers that help us identify problem areas before they draw the attention of federal triggers.
- Using telemetry data to identify, model and map seasonal habitats. This map should be used simultaneously by state and federal groups.
- Habitat guidelines developed by USU will be used by state and FS plan.

8. Final Steps and Timeline

- BLM DEIS is on the register and open for comments until the 9th of January
- Governor's signature is hopeful for next week so that we can have it ready to roll on January 1, 2018
- USFS DEIS is on the register and open for comments until the 4th? Of January

Questions: What happens after 5 years? We'll revisit the plan again and go through the process again. See what works and what didn't. The federal agencies will be revising their plans too.

The meeting was concluded after questions to Mr. Nadolski

Next Meeting: March 12, 2019. 10am -12pm. Iron County Extension Office Conference Room, Cedar City, Utah.

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