

SWARM Report on Strategies

The following strategies and their action steps were identified by the SWARM local working as having been initiated or completed during 2010.

A. Strategies and Actions

Strategy: Improve age distribution of sagebrush-steppe communities by 2016.

1.1. **Action:** Identify and prioritize target areas needing improvement.

Each year, all projects are presented to Utah Partners for Conservation Development. Partners of SWARM present their projects to the group for approval before presenting them to UPCD. Thus all projects meet with the approval of SWARM and the southern region.

1.2. **Action:** Monitor the response of sage-grouse to changing habitat conditions.

The proposal to monitor greater sage-grouse in Hamlin Valley was funded by UDWR. The group is working toward a group project with BLM and USU EXT for this project in the future. A proposal to monitor grouse habitat use in anticipation of wind energy was granted by the BLM to USU EXT. This project was initiated in Spring 2010.

1.3. **Action:** Implement treatments to change age class distribution of sagebrush.

Over 445 acres of private lands were treated in Hamlin Valley. 1525 acres of land around Minersville, UT were treated to restore sagebrush community; a coordinated project among NRCS, UDWR, UDAF, BLM and private landowners.

1.4. **Action:** Assist agencies in assessing wildfires in focus areas and restoration needs for sagebrush seed in mixes.

NRCS, UDWR and BLM members of SWARM activity coordinate to address these issues each year.

Partners: UDWR, BLM, USU EXT, USFS, local county residents

Threats Addressed: Fire and vegetation management, communication among parties, invasive/alien vegetation species

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Lack of key habitat-type connectivity, poor condition of surrounding communities, degradation of winter habitat quality, loss of breeding habitat quality, loss of brood-rearing habitat quality, loss of riparian area quality, reduction of population size, reduction of population distribution

Strategy: Improve water availability in brood-rearing habitat by 2016.

2.1.

2.2.

2.3. **Action:** Consider new water developments that are multi-use and multi-purpose.

NRCS has addressed new water developments in the EQUIP and WHIP grants it has worked on this year. This includes installing new pipeline and modifying old lines to create wet meadows for grouse during the course of other vegetation treatment projects.

2.3.1. **Action step:** Construct guzzlers in areas identified as needing water.

2.4. **Action:** Coordinate with private landowners to protect current water availability that benefits brood-rearing habitat.

NRCS has addressed new water developments in the EQUIP and WHIP grants it has worked on this year. This includes installing new pipeline and modifying old lines to create wet meadows for grouse during the course of other vegetation treatment projects.

Partners:UDWR, BLM, NRCS, interest groups

Threats Addressed: Invasive/alien vegetation species, concentrated wildlife and/or livestock use

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Loss of brood-rearing habitat quality, loss of riparian area quality, reduction of population size, reduction of population distribution

Strategy: Improve wildlife and livestock distribution in winter and brood-rearing habitat throughout the next ten years.

3.1.

3.2. **Action:** Implement habitat improvements and direct management actions to improve distribution.

In Hamlin Valley and Pine Valley, the NRCS and BLM both worked with landowners and permittees to improve cattle and wildlife distribution, by installing new fences, adjusting permittee allowances, and modifying existing spring and well structures.

Partners: UDWR, BLM, FS, USU EXT, SITLA, NRCS

Threats Addressed: Concentrated wildlife and/or livestock use

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Degradation of winter habitat quality, loss of brood-rearing habitat quality, reduction of population size, reduction of population distribution

Strategy: Increase participation of local public and private landowners with SWARM over the next ten years.

4.1. **Action:** Develop partnerships with landowners and interest groups to increase visibility of sage-grouse management.

4.1.1. **Action step:** Develop fact sheet to distribute to special interest groups concerning sage-grouse natural history and threats to populations.

Using Dedicated Hunter support, the group was able to post 3 informational billboards at key trails and road intersection, to inform the local public about grouse and also SWARM.

4.1.2. **Action step:** Identify regional groups and their contact person to promote cooperation from these groups.

The mailing list and listserv were updated to ensure that current county commissioners and local leaders were receiving notices and meeting invitations to SWARM

4.2. **Action:** Support partnership efforts for special designations that promote sage-grouse habitat.

4.2.1. **A**

4.3. **Action:** Host open houses, field tours, and presentations.

IN 2009, SWARM hosted a field tour that highlighted habitat restoration projects focused in Minersville, as well as fire rehabilitation around the Bald Hills and Greenville Bench.

4.4. **Action:** Distribute annual reports to local management agencies, county commissioners,

and other interested parties.

4.5. **Action:** Develop incentives for landowners and interest groups.

4.5.1. **Action step:** Host educational field trips and provide interpretive areas.

In 2009, SWARM created 3 displays for hiking trailheads and driving pullouts around key grouse habitat areas.

Partners: USU EXT, NRCS, RC&D, BLM, UDWR Dedicated Hunter program.

Threats Addressed: Lack of communication among public parties, alternative land uses (mining, wind power, water development), development of roads or utilities, recreational use

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Lack of key habitat type connectivity, poor condition of surrounding communities, degradation of winter habitat quality, loss of breeding habitat quality, loss of brood-rearing habitat quality, loss of riparian area quality, reduction of population size, reduction of population distribution

Strategy: Locate and monitor new active lek sites over the next ten years.

5.1. **Action:** Survey landowners and land users to determine sage-grouse distributions.

5.2. **Action:** Investigate possible new lek sites based on local reports.

5.3. **Action:** Survey for new lek sites during lek counts and survey historic sites for new activity.

The SWARM group, through UDWR and volunteers investigates potential new leks each spring.

Partners: UDWR, USFS, BLM, USU EXT, interest groups

Threats Addressed: Enhanced native and domestic predators, recreational use, concentrated wildlife and/or livestock use, fire and vegetation management, development of roads or utilities, alternative land uses (mining, wind power, water development), dramatic weather events

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Loss of breeding quality (leks and nesting) habitat

Strategy: Maintain or increase sage-grouse populations through direct management.

6.1. **Action:** Evaluate potential of translocation to supplement local populations.

6.2. **Action:** Work with enforcement agencies to prevent illegal harvest of sage-grouse.

6.3. **Action:** Monitor the presence of West Nile Virus or other diseases in sage-grouse populations.

6.4. **Action:** Identify and implement steps to reduce presence of West Nile Virus.

Partners: UDWR, USU EXT, BLM, SITLA

Threats Addressed: Diseases and parasites

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Loss of breeding quality (leks and nesting) habitat, reduction of population size, reduction of population distribution

Strategy: Manage unwanted plant species in sage-brush steppe habitat by 2016.

7.1. **Action:** Remove juniper and pinyon pines from brood-rearing habitat.

7.2. **Action:** Reduce abundance of unwanted and/or invasive plant species.

7.2.1. **Action step:** Re-seed area after land disturbances such as mechanical treatments, fire, and human development.

7.2.2. **Action step:** Utilize dedicated hunters to help with re-seeding and rehabilitation efforts.

- 7.3. **Action:** Evaluate and utilize chemical applications where appropriate to restore habitat dominated by cheatgrass and/or noxious weeds.
- 7.4. **Action:** Evaluate the use of fire as a tool in areas where cheatgrass has been established or is prone to establish.

These are routine actions that are performed within each agency, and coordinated and discussed through SWARM.

Partners: UDWR, BLM, USFS, NRCS, RC&D, USU EXT, interest groups

Threats Addressed: Invasive/alien vegetation species, fire and vegetation management

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Loss of brood-rearing habitat quality, reduction of population size, reduction of population distribution, lack of key habitat type connectivity, poor condition of surrounding communities, degradation of winter habitat quality, loss of breeding quality (leks and nesting) habitat

Strategy: Minimize impacts of new land developments and/or recreational uses on sage-grouse populations during the next ten years.

- 8.1. **Action:** Provide consultations and recommendations for new land developments and/or recreational uses.
- 8.2. **Action:** Regularly discuss new developments and alternative land uses to management agencies at local working group meetings.
- 8.3. **Action:** Identify and maintain list of contact people involved in land and recreational developments.
- 8.4. **Action:** Involve local county and city planning commissions in SWARM meetings.
- 8.5. **Action:** Provide input into management plans for federal, state, and local agencies.

These are routine actions that are performed within each agency, and coordinated and discussed through SWARM.

Partners: USU EXT, UDWR, SITLA, NRCS, USFS, BLM, interest groups

Threats Addressed: Alternative land uses (mining, wind power, water development), development of roads or utilities, lack of communication among public parties, recreational uses

Aspects of Sage-grouse Ecology Addressed: Reduction of population size, lack of key habitat type connectivity, poor condition of surrounding communities, reduction of population distribution, loss of breeding quality (leks and nesting) habitat, loss of brood-rearing habitat quality, loss of riparian area quality