

SWARM Meeting Minutes

January 7, 2020

WRI Project Review and Support

M. Mendenhal. **Blawn Wash Mtn Lop and Scatter.** 1262 acres

Jockey Road, Beaver County. Pine Valley is just to the west

Was chained many years ago. Last year the stewardship project did a tree thinning. Currently sagebrush, previously chained, and stage 1 thinning. Beginning to lose understory. Areas of thick stands will be treated some other time.

NEPA has been completed; NRCS money is involved. Permittee is committed to help. Just to the east, 2 state sections were chained. These will be lop and scattered in the near future.

May be the only Pine Valley project this year.

Benefits to Grouse: more habitat, creating openings

M. Mendenhal. East side of Hamlin SGMA, but in Pine Valley. **East Slope Indian Peaks**

Proposed mastication project –stage 2 with pockets of sagebrush. In future want to tie into what Stan Gurley is doing to the north. 725 acres. Seed sagebrush post mastication. Used by deer, elk, and horses. 2 leks are adjacent but not used in a while. There have been grouse sightings there.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat close to leks, increase connectivity.

M. Mendenhal. **South Pine Valley lop and Scatter.** Has been treated in the past, in the 1960s.

4758 acres. In two different grazing allotments. Not treating the understory but removing the trees. Want to break it up and create some islands of trees. Have been sighting of grouse in the private lands foothills to the east. Lop and Scatter was done on the SITLA in 2016-2017. So a lot of work in the area that it will tie into.

Benefits to Grouse: restoring habitat, increase connectivity,

D. Fletcher. **Indian Peak North 744 acres.**

Bullhog Phase 2 condition. Good sagebrush but very little perennial grass. Arch clearance is good to go. NEPA is working on. Has been through the solicitors, need 30-day public comment period. Ties into work done in 2017, which was really successful. We do have record of grouse use in this area.

Benefits to Grouse: restoring habitat, connecting past treatments, increase connectivity.

Mitch. **Arrowhead Pass** 2253 acres. Continuation of work that has been done in Spanish George area. Finishing up chaining the west side of the allotment. Ties into the Pipe springs green-stripping and work to be completed to the north. It is about ¼ mile from lek. So part of the work being proposed has been cleared, some waiting on it. Phase 2 and 3 encroachment. Leks are active there, grouse telemetry data has shown that grouse are using the area to the west that was previously treated. The state piece east of the area has work planned on it for the near future.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat close to leks, removing trees near leks, increase connectivity to previous treatments.

S. Petersen. Indian Peak WMA Mule deer habitat improvement project.

Stan Gurley. **Spanish George Allotment** follow up treatment. (4) Previous Chaining now needs to be lop and scattered. Need to cut down anything over 4ft high. 1750 acres. Waiting for the decision to be signed. Just south of Arrowhead Pass treatment; grouse telemetry located in this area. This project is critical to maintaining partnerships with landowners.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat close to leks, removing trees near leks, increase connectivity to previous treatments, increase lifespan of treatment

BALD HILLS

Derek. **Minersville 3/Penny Hollow**. Prairie Dog enhancement project. Was treated with spike in 2017 to kill of some shrubs. Want to remove the sagebrush skeletons, reduce cover to <10% for prairie dogs. This will maintain the mosaic and increase grass and forb component. Will decrease fire frequency. 60 acres to be chained and seeded. About 170 acres don't need the seeding because the grasses look great. Will open it up and create some connectivity up the elevation to the north-east. Grouse often use the area, this shouldn't impact them negatively and will probably support them.

Benefits to Grouse: maintaining brood rearing habitat.

Paragonah Cattle Bull-hog. Chipman Peak. mostly phase 2-3 juniper, perennial grass and shrubs are lacking so seeding will be needed. Reduce fuel loads. Greater sage-grouse leks to the north and south. So taking out trees near the lek is critical. NRCs has landowners interested. Removing trees within 4 miles of the lek is critical necessary and a primary objective.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat close to leks, removing trees near leks,

Lost Spring Bullhog and Lizzie's Hill Bullhog. Chipman Peak. 3460 acres between the two projects. Both will be bullhog projects. NRCS is involved in Lost Springs project; has been in contact with Jason to ensure that islands of habitat are maintained for wildlife. . mostly phase 2-3 juniper, perennial grass and shrubs are lacking so seeding will be needed. Reduce fuel loads.

Lizzies hill was funded last year, bullhogged. There are leks to the south, used as brood-rearing and winter.

Lost Springs

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat connectivity, maintain mosaic of habitat types

D. Fletcher. **South Beaver Little Valley bullhog.** West of I-15 north of highway 20. The area was chained and reseeded but there are a lot of skeletons out there. This is approved as a UPD relocation site. 415 acres. Once the skeletons are removed, it is pretty open and well established. Along the corridor that we know grouse use to move across I-15.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat connectivity, increase travel corridors

D. Fletcher. Highway 20. **Buckhorn Flats/Swayback Knoll.** Proposing chain and aerial seeding. Aggressive seed mix to address invasive species. This will be phase one. They will strip in the seeding to make sure that it works before doing the rest. This area is adjacent to recent projects. Also, grouse may be using this area to jump across I-15.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat connectivity, increase travel corridors

Erica Parowan **Front/Cottonwood Creek Phase 1.** Lop and scatter, seeding primarily for mule deer. Stage 2 and 3 P-J in about 200 acres. This is just south of the Buckhorn Flats area, and would work to open this area up and increase connectivity. No grouse exactly in this area, but would increase the potential for movement. Potential 500 acre plateau/aggressive seed mix.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat connectivity, increase travel corridors

Stan Gurely. **Greater Freemont Phase 3.** Proposed lop and scatter. Sagebrush is intact, so it is Phase 1-2 stuff. Primarily brood-rearing habitat. 20 acres of aspen regeneration will be included, dozer style. Will be addressing a small acreage of rabbitbrush that is about 50% cover. Will put in some z-dyke structures to address the headcuts. Mix of private, state and BLM ground, also involves FWS Partners (3 funding partners in addition to private landowners). Some of the mastication is on an old treatment, so the understory is still very much intact.

Benefits to Grouse: create habitat connectivity, increase travel corridors, create mosaic of habitat types.

2. Jared Reese BLM Planning Update

Under a preliminary injunction, via Judge Windmill. Working to address some of the findings. IN the meantime, DC is moving forward with Supplemental EIS, hopefully to be out for comments in February.

Cumulative impacts

Removal of the GHMA

Compensatory Mitigation – problem is that it is voluntary in the new plan.

Working forward right now with using the 2015 federal plan. Focusing on net conservation gain.

Habitat Assessment Framework

Would like to come a present about what HAF is. For the spring meeting?

Can also do a report out on Adaptive Management triggers

3. How did the fire in the Bald Hills 2019 impact sage-grouse?

The whole thing has been aerial seeding; chaining out the dead stuff.

4. Next Meeting:

Tuesday April 7th, 10 am at the NRCS office.

Agenda Ideas: HAF updates, Project reports from 2018 WRI projects.