

Southwest Desert Sage-grouse Local Working Group Meeting Minutes from March 5, 2012

Attendees: Nicki Frey, Nile Sorenson, Jason Nicholes, Randy Marshall, Clint Werrick, Mike Worthen, Chad Reid, Nate Yorgensen, Mark Nelson, John Keeler, Alma Adams, and Christine Pontarolo

Open House: Recommendations were put out to the group on venues for the open house. Landowners are the target. It was recommended that the open house be at SUU, and then it was recommended that it be held in conjunction with another gathering. It was proposed to hold the event in conjunction with the Cattleman's Meeting and BBQ. The Open House will be around October 9 (End of September/early October). May have Mike Linnell come down, invite both county groups.

Action Items:

- Nicki will look into possibilities of the Rural Summit and Chad/Mark will look into the Cattleman's Meeting and holding a joint meeting in Minersville.
- Start working on a display booth.

Booth presentation at Biomass Field Day and Livestock Festival.

Threats Table: Nicki will submit the threats table to the group for comment, as to whether threats have reduced, increased, or no change. Each member is to provide their updates by **March 23rd** so Nicki can compile and we will go over changes at the April 17th meeting.

Action Items:

- Group to review the threats table and provide comments to Nicki within next two weeks.

BLM Instruction Memorandums: An update was provided regarding the two BLM IM's. The IM's allow the BLM to move forward on projects but with caution and requires coordination with cooperators (UDWR), The NTT report provides guidance and recommendations but are not being considered requirements at this point and are being used in LUP revision process. There are 13 Land Use Plans within BLM Utah, and 4 Forest Service Plans. The National plan is on track to be completed by September 2014 and the CCFO Plan is on a similar track. These IM's are available at: http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/documents_and_resources.html

UDNR State Sage Grouse Management Plan Appendix 5- a group has been formed and tasked with revising Appendix 5 of the state's management plan and developing a strategy. This will go to USFWS for comments.

Reset Calendar Dates:

April 17th at 10:30
June 12th Field Tour
August 14th at 10:00
October 9th Open House (evening)
December 11th at 10:00

Group Updates:

Mike Worthen: Iron County is a cooperating agency on the National Sage Grouse Planning Strategy.

Nile Sorensen: Working with Kelly Evans in Bear Valley (80 acre PJ lop and scatter, fence marking). New application period for NRCS sage grouse funds closes March 20th. Hamlin Valley projects are complete on Halls, Spiers, and Flinschpahs. Shrubs (sagebrush and kochia) were flown on. Approximately 250 acres of lop and scatter and drill seeding in bottoms on Speirs.

Randy Marshall: 2013 project deadline is March 20th. Looking at 20 total projects, 10 of which are in Beaver and Iron Counties. Mostly consist of water projects/pipelines. Randy will provide an update at the next meeting as to which projects were approved.

Chad Reid: Rabbitbrush control tour to be held in June. Field sites will likely be the College Farm and Wild Pea.

Nate Yorgensen: NEPA team for the National Sage Grouse Planning effort has been identified. The team's role is to ensure the process meets the USFS needs. Chris Colt is the USFS biologist on the team. The FS has been tasked with going in to each plan to flag what might affect sage grouse. National Planning Rule to be signed in April. Available at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule>. Nate mentioned the Objection Process rather than Appeal Process.

Projects within sage grouse habitat: John's Valley has been delayed due to its impact on sage grouse. NE Hills PJ removal (Garfield) will have a name change. Oil and gas leasing has gone through the paperwork. Once it is signed, FS will offer areas up for leasing, BLM will manage these leases. Ron Rodriguez will be on a detail, Bear Valley project had issues/concerns.

Nicky Frey: Graduate students will begin trapping this month. Heather will be using a drop net method and will start on March 9. Cheyenne will start on March 14th. Heather and Cheyenne will be here next week to started grouse trapping for the spring season. Both have been getting some great data; Heather on the fence uses by raptors, and Cheyenne on grouse use of the Bald Hills area. The Bald Hills data has been used by Christine to help plan the Sigurd-Red Butte line. Will be going to present information to the Utah Greater sage-grouse task force next week regarding the Local Working group efforts. Will present the information regarding our threats to the population. Will discuss ravens as a continued and possibly increasing threat.

Jason Nicholes: Conducting lek counts on lower elevation (below 7,000 ft) leks. So far numbers are low, but it is still early. Once survey completed, will be starting second round. Potential new lek in Little Horse Valley on BLM lands. New leks are incorporated into an occupied lek if grouse are present two consecutive years. Heavy raven harassment in Hamlin Valley was noted. Discussed possibilities on raven control and use of Wildlife Services and DWR's Southwest Desert Predator Control Management Plan. SWARM group feels strongly about increasing support for predator control within sage grouse habitats and need to document, especially during lek counts.

Mark Nelson: Biomass Tour is September 18-20. Kickoff at the Civic Center followed by an evening BBQ on September 18th. Field tours to be held near mile marker 100 on state lands and South Creek.

John Keeler: Legislature ends Friday. Budget of \$750,000 on predator control- maybe ask for some to control ravens in sage grouse habitat. Five dollar increase on hunting licenses.

Christine Pontarolo: Hamlin Valley public comment period ends on March 6. Anticipate addressing public comments and then submitting a FONSI/DR this spring. Provided a proposal for Utah prairie dog translocations at the Horse Valley site. Group looked over the map and no concerns were brought up during the meeting, please provide questions or concerns to Becky Bonebrake.

Action Items:

- Threats table

Next Meeting: April 17th at 10:30 a.m. at the Extension Office.