

**UINTAH BASIN
LOCAL WORKING
GROUP**

Date: 6/19/12

Place: County Building in Vernal, Utah

Present: Jean Dickinson (Vermillion Ranch), Diane Coltharp (Uintah County Public Lands), Susan White (Office of Energy Development), Rachel Garrison (Ute Energy), Eric Sunberg (Newfield Exploration), JC Brewer (landowner), Kirk Wood (Duchesne County), Dan Cloward (Kleinfeld), Scott Chew (ranch landowner, UBARM co-chair), Benna Muth (QEP), Valyn Davis (QEP), Paul Betts (Moon Lake Electric Association), Gary Aho (Enefit American Oil), LDee Curtis (Deseret Power), Mark Ewell (NRCS), Bob Christensen (USFS), Kirby Carroll (Newfield Exploration), David Allison (private consultant; UBARM co-chair), Scott Chamberlain (SITLA), Jordan Merrill (Uintah County), Jon Stearmer (Uintah County), Boyd Kitchen (USU Extension), Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator)

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

Lorien explained briefly how the state and federal planning processes, currently occurring in parallel, are designed to fit together.

This meeting was called to provide additional opportunities for the UBARM group to provide feedback and ask questions regarding the proposed State of Utah sage-grouse plan. Map boundaries recommendations were provided at the May meeting, and passed along to individuals in the Governor's office with our questions.

The following key points were discussed:

- It is unclear locally how the Flaming Gorge population will be managed: Jean recommended that the Utah plan include this population.
- State-to-state coordination will be very important, particularly for populations that cross state borders. Management will be easier if stipulations and maps are consistent across borders.
- Uintah County is working on its own sage-grouse plan.
- Non-habitat should be officially designated on the maps. It would be very useful to have enough categories, so that areas that are non-habitat are split into two: those that can be turned into sage-grouse habitat, and those which cannot. That may, potential mitigation sites could be identified in advance.
- It would be helpful if every location was mapped in advance so one could always find out whether or not you were in sage-grouse habitat, without calling in a biologist for every single question.
- It was suggested that work done by the Northwest sage-grouse group in Colorado might help with this planning process.
- Industry is concerned that BLM will not be able to read flexibility into the plans they

- need to implement. The state plan should be specific about where flexibility is allowed.
- Regarding the 5% disturbance limit, the group had many questions about whether the 5% applies to all the acreage in a section or only the habitat.
 - The group was curious to know how existing disturbance would factor in to the disturbance calculations.
 - The group suggested that Berry Petroleum's efforts would also be a good model.
 - Not all disturbance (as defined for NEPA, etc.) is bad for sage-grouse, and that should be made clear in the plan. In addition, the US FWS technical team report (NTT) has a much more specific definition of disturbance. These terms needs to be clarified and carefully thought out.
 - It was suggested that sage-grouse be incorporated into fire management districts so sage-grouse habitat needs were incorporated into fire plans.
 - It would be helpful to have a list that spells out "tools" that are allowed to be used.
 - Reclamation and restoration are currently confused. These are different concepts and should be addressed separately.
 - Buffers can play a critical role. Suggestions for where to look for models for handling buffers included the draft Appendix 5 of the 2009 state sage-grouse plan, the Berry EIS, Wyoming's sage-grouse plan, and the LWG plans.
 - When new pipelines go through, make sure they stick within existing routes.
 - Once the map boundaries are set, the process for revising them needs to be transparent and involve as much ground-level efforts and input as possible. It would be useful if the LWGs could take part in the process because they are familiar with the local areas.

A volunteer subgroup, consisting of Scott, Bob, Kirby, Rachel, and Jean, offered to meet within the next few days and suggest a structure for a more detailed way to handle the 5% disturbance limits, as the current text in the plan is extremely vague. That sub-group will provide information to Mike McKee by Friday so he can pass it along to the task force team.

The group pointed out that new maps need to be made available so that those who commented can see whether their suggestions were applied as intended.

Follow-up Needed

- Lorien will compile feedback and questions and pass it along to the team at the Governor's office and others working on the state plan.
- The disturbance ratio team will meet in the upcoming days and develop a structure for how the 5% disturbance ratio might be handled.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be scheduled when we know more about the state sage-grouse plan progress and can meet at an appropriate time to provide comments.

This meeting was recorded by Uintah County Public Lands office.