

**UINTAH BASIN
SAGE-GROUSE
LOCAL WORKING
GROUP**

Planning/update
meeting

Date: Wednesday, March 31, 2004

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Place: County Building North Conference Room

Members Present;

Todd Black (USU CCES) – Meeting Facilitator
David Allison (Consultant-UBAG Uintah Co.)
Stephanie Tomkinson (Questar)
Scott Chamberlain (SITLA)
John Busch (Oil & Gas)
Scott Chew (Rancher)
Boyd Kitchen (USU Ext.)
Jim Spencer (NRCS)
Clayton Chidester (UBAOG)
Laura Romin (USFWS)
Mike McKee (Uintah County)
Steve Strong (BLM)

Count: 12

Information Presented

Conservation Plan

1. Goals and Objectives
2. Planning Issues
3. Habitat
4. Population
5. Social/Economic
6. Other issues

Discussion Highlights

Range wide Sage grouse Listing: 90 day finding concluded March 26. Results of findings should be announced in about 1 week.

Discussion on conservation plan:

Q: Can our plan be flexible or will we be locked into a plan dictated to us by the USFWS?

A: Our plan can be flexible; hence the reason for this group, to create a local plan specific to our area. However, our plan must meet the PECE Standards and we should be consistent with the state and county plans.

Some of the issues that we want to elaborate on in our plan are:

1. Population Management Issues
 - a. Monitoring
 - b. Predation
 - c. Hunting
 - d. West Nile Virus
 - e. 40 year history
 - f. Accurate lek and brood surveys

2. Habitat
 - a. Monitoring
 - b. Decadent sagebrush
 - c. Invasive weeds and understory issues
 - d. Quality of vegetation
 - e. Pinyon Juniper encroachment
 - f. Fire management
 - g. Drought and effects on sagebrush
 - h. Identification of Sage grouse habitat
 - i. Fragmentation
 - j. Educating private land owners on how to increase grasses and forbs

3. Planning Issues
 - a. Monitoring
 - b. County development plans

4. Economic and Social
 - a. Monitoring
 - b. Funding of the plan
 - c. Grazing and livestock concerns
 - d. Education/communication with public
 - e. Oil and gas development

5. Other Issues
 - a. Monitoring
 - b. Brochure for public education
 - c. Solicit reporting from field operators in Deadman Bench area.
 - d. What habitat data exists, how current is it, how complete?
 - e. Recreation and off-road vehicles on Blue Mountain and the impacts from hunting.
 - f. Insect control and abatement
 - g. Create lek viewing opportunities

The group volunteered to help UDWR with lek counting this year. Todd gave a brief tutorial on what data needed to be collected and how often. Interested parties will contact Brian Maxfield, UDWR.

The group will also volunteer for brood surveys in August/September of this year; coordinate with Brian.

John Busch stated he will have the Questar field operators report any sage grouse sightings. They will be told what to look for and what information to record should they see a Sage grouse.

Monitoring is the key issue and topic of our conversation. Monitoring is critical from this point forward and is needed in all phases of the plan. Documenting the effects of artificial perches, level of activity, predation, habitat, etc. is a must in order for us to track our progress. This will also insure data accuracy and eliminate gaps in data.

It was suggested that the UDWR keep all of the data for the monitoring that will be done with this plan.

The 40 year history of Sage grouse and habitat needs to be pulled together, gaps filled in, and summarized for our plan.

It was suggested that the group put together a brochure that could be distributed to the public to solicit their help in data collection. We do not want the public going out on organized searches but they should know who to call and report information to in case of incidental sightings. Perhaps a sage grouse conference for the community? Need to be very careful to be respectful of private land owners. It is not our intention to promote trespassing.

It was suggested our working group meeting be extended to 3 hours to better accommodate individuals coming from Salt Lake City and Denver. We would like to get more accomplished while they are here. We should also try to schedule our meetings close to other meetings that bring in participants from Salt Lake and Denver (ie: Mitigation Bank meetings, Oil & Gas Collaborative Working Groups, etc.)

Actions Taken

Issues and plan discussed.

Volunteers stepped forward to assist in lek surveys.

**Next meeting: Wednesday, April 21, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
City-County Building on Main Street in Vernal, UT, North
Conference Room.**

Follow-up Needed

- Read the skeleton Conservation Plan (All)
- Reschedule with Renee Chi for presentation on Parker Mtn. Group Plan. (Todd Back)
- Contact Brian Maxfield, UDWR to coordinate immediate lek surveys. (Stephanie Tomkinson)
- What was to the decision on the petition to list the Greater Sage grouse? (Laura Romin or USFWS rep.)