

**UINTAH BASIN  
LOCAL  
WORKING  
GROUP**

**Date:** 3/17/20

**Place:** Virtual meeting via WebEx

**Present:** Natasha Hadden (BLM), Mellissa Wood (BLM), Terrell Thayne (UDAF GIP), Chris Perkins (BLM), Joe Moore (USFWS), Brian Maxfield (UDWR), Ethan Hallows (SITLA), April Abate (DOGM), Robert Hamilton (Rocky Mountain Power), Scott Edmisten (RMP), Tyson Todd (SITLA), and Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator).

**Information Presented/Discussion Highlights**

*BLM planning updates*

Mellissa Wood updated the group on the planning efforts done in response to the October court injunction. The Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement document (SEIS) is now out for comment. It explains about the range of alternatives considered, looks at environmental impacts of changes such as removal of GHMA, reviews cumulative impacts, and is an opportunity to comment on the compensatory mitigation changes from net conservation gain to no net loss. It also includes information on how GHMA is connected to other states. Mellissa noted that much of the 2015 analysis was included by reference originally, but has now been added as text into the SEIS. It is quite long. She noted that it would be helpful if anyone has idea about cumulative impacts that were not included in the SEIS, to send in a comment.

*Raven updates*

The USFWS is requesting information from the public about raven populations, control efforts, damage/impacts, etc. There is an online form and the deadline is soon but may be extended. There is a regional interagency team looking at raven impacts across many species and industries. They will use the data from the form, in addition to other data they have within agencies, to try to understand the scope of the problem and recommend changes to help address it. Lorien will keep the group updated about developments from that team.

*Sage-grouse population topics*

Brian Maxfield gave updates on the local tracking of collared birds. There are 4-5 birds out on collars right now; he hopes to buy more and get them out this spring. BLM is funding them. There are also several collars on birds funded by Simplot, on the west rim of Diamond Mountain.

Brian shared the movements of a particular male caught on Taylor Mountain in 2018 who has now taken a similar journey to Colorado for the second year, and is now on his way back.

Is terms of population trends, last year was hopefully the bottom of the trough. In 2018, there was very poor chick survival (2 summers ago). In 2019, fall, all but one of the birds that were

harvested in the hunts were chicks from that year, a good sign that production was up. Hopefully that is reflected in the numbers this spring.

Lorien Belton showed a presentation provided in August 2019 to the state Plan Implementation Council with 20-year trends. Several people asked for the slides; Lorien will send those out to those who requested them. Avery is working on getting lek data available online.

Brian noted that COVID-19 is not currently affecting their field work too much, although it does restrict having other people in the truck to help do lek counts, for example.

### *Round robin*

- The railroad DEIS is still anticipated in June. They have met with Tyler about mitigation credits, and are looking for projects potentially as well.
- Charlie Holtz has transitioned to a new position at Pheasant s Forever. He will still be in the area, but no longer working for NRCS in the partnership position. Jim Spencer and Mark Ewell are the contacts for any SGI projects.
- Mellissa Wood will be moving out of state this summer, so leaving her position, but until then is still totally involved in the SEIS and other BLM sage-grouse work.
- Terrell Thayne is working on ranking the water development projects, which have been taken out of the WRI ranking team process.

### Future meeting topics:

- Raven core team updates
- Sagebrush treatments/landscape level
- Revisiting the local plan

### **Follow-up Needed**

- Lorien will send the presentation slides to those who requested them.
- Lorien will keep the group updated with any news from the raven core team.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting was not set due to the uncertainty with coronavirus. If field tours are not possible we will continue to meet virtually and discuss updates.