

**WDARM
LOCAL WORKING
GROUP**

Date: Friday, December 1, 2006
Time: 9:00-11:00 AM
Place: USU Extension Building, Tooele, UT
Members Present:

Planning/scoping
meeting

Ashley Green (UDWR)
Kim Asmus (UDWR)
Tom Becker (UDWR)
Boyd White (Co-Chair, Citizen Science volunteer)
Mark Farmer (UDWR)
Lauren Wilson (Dugway Proving Grounds)
Robbie Knight (Dugway Proving Grounds)
Harvey Gates (BLM Fillmore)
Mark Pierce (BLM Fillmore)
Tyler Staggs (BLM Salt Lake)
Mark Gates (BLM Salt Lake)
Karen Hartman (USFS)
Jason Robinson (USU)

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

An update on ongoing and proposed habitat projects was given by the various agencies:

UDWR- Ashley Green and Mark Farmer

- Harrow project in Sage Valley is completed. It is a good-looking mosaic and they hope to see good growth in the spring.
- A chaining is occurring on Hal Winter's property. It got a late start and Spike is also being applied.
- A bullhog project on BLM land near Big Hollow and East Onaqui didn't get completed due to fires.
- DWR helped with chaining on the Deep Creek Goshute Reservation. 1000 acres were completed and a seed mix was applied. It is currently being back-chained.
- A 100 acre chaining occurred on the Mitchell property.
- New projects are proposed in Ibapah with the BLM and on the S. end of the Sheeprocks.

BLM

- In the Stockton Hills/Five-mile pass area satellite imagery is being used to decide on roads that should be closed. Seed would be needed from DWR for rehabilitation.
- A sagebrush treatment is proposed for Rush Valley. Need to look at the area in the spring to decide which areas would benefit the most. The proposal needs to be entered in the DWR database before the end of December if seed is needed.
- A pipeline extension near Aragonite should provide water for pronghorn.
- NRCS completed archeological clearance on the Indian Springs pipeline development. 16,000 of DWR money approved for the project needs to be used by the end of the fiscal

year or paperwork needs to be done to carry it over.

-A burned area near Ajax is in a focus area, and seed should be available from DWR.

-BLM is able to use Spike on its land, and a one-year rest period is advised following treatment.

USFS

-Up to 3,000 acres on the Diagonal and Electric pastures by Benmore will be treated in a couple years. Coordination is needed to ensure that the project does not negatively affect sage grouse that lek and nest in the area.

Group

-The importance of Mr. Vincent's land in the Sheeprocks for sage grouse was stressed on several occasions. Mr. Vincent is going to work with NRCS to develop an overall conservation plan for his property. It is hoped that it will allow cattle stocking to be delayed in critical sage grouse areas to help increase chick recruitment. It was mentioned the problem is not necessarily the number of cows, but the lack of forage. The overall problem of finding land for livestock during rest periods was mentioned.

Group reviewed comments and revisions on the draft plan. All mentions of Morgan/Summit Counties need to be changed as well as the caption on fig. 8.

The group conversed on various conservation issues and what is being done and what can be done in the future.

Oil and Gas

Mark Pierce outlined the current state of oil and gas exploration in the area. Three test wells are being drilled in the Little Sahara area. 84,000 acres of the Fillmore BLM district are leased for drilling, but it is unknown if development will ever occur. Tom wondered what happens to the water from drilling and had concerns that ponds could lead to the spread of West Nile Virus. The oil and gas projects are currently not a big issue, but could be a disturbance if oil or gas is found. The BLM is insisting that exploration around raptor nests and in sage grouse be deferred until after sensitive time periods. A jet fuel pipeline was proposed for the Cherry Creek drainage. The Fillmore BLM denied the request and moved the pipeline out of sage grouse and big game habitat in the Sheeprocks to along an existing roadway.

Boyd wondered how the working group can get involved in preventing disturbances on BLM lands. The BLM staff informed him that most projects can't be stopped, but WDARM can be helpful in commenting on projects and suggesting mitigation during the scoping process. BLM posts all projects on their website or individual and groups can be added to their mailing list to keep informed.

Excessive predation

Jason informed the group that localized raven control happens in the area and coyote control is ongoing. He raised concerns that red fox populations seem to be expanding and wondered if coyote control is leading to an increase in red fox. Jason also mentioned that he frequently sees weasels in the area and that they may be important nest predators. The Forest Service is removing all perching poles within 2 miles of leks.

Grazing issues

Jason said that he's seen sheep grazing among leking birds on the Simpson Mountains, but doesn't know if that is a disturbance to nesting grouse. It was stressed that grazing can be used as good lek management.

Research

The radio-collared sage grouse are being located at least once or twice a month throughout the winter. Jason is working to finish his masters, but will be in the field looking for leks in the spring and would like help to find leks and monitor birds. Almost all of the collared birds are using the Vincent and Jasperson properties, and the DWR is willing to invest to improve and protect those areas. Boyd expressed concerns about cattle in the Simpson/Erickson Knolls area and wondered who owned the property. It was decided that it was mostly private land.

Recreation

The BLM in Fillmore is taking steps to keep OHV races out of critical sage grouse areas. Although the BLM can place restrictions on permitted races, they do not currently have a travel plan and little can be done to reign in casual OHV use. The Little Sahara special use area was originally built with the intent to contain OHV use, but it is receiving more and more use and the Sheeprock/Tintic OHV area now contains over 100,000 acres. The issues with roads, OHVs, and R.S. 2477 were discussed.

Actions Taken

Meeting minutes from October 6, 2006 were approved.

Follow-up Needed

Boyd to make sure that everyone gets an updated version of the plan before next meeting. All should review and make any comments needed.

NEXT MEETING: The open house is scheduled for Friday, January 19th at 6:30 p.m. Everyone was encouraged to invite as many landowners as possible. It will most likely be held at the BLM fire station in Vernon. Agency updates will be presented.

The next meeting was scheduled for either February 9th or 16th, depending on Sarah's schedule.