

**WDARM
LOCAL WORKING
GROUP**

Date: Friday, August 19, 2005

Time: 1:00 PM

Place: Tooele County Extension Office, Tooele, UT

Planning/scoping
meeting

Members Present: Alan Mitchell (landowner/Chair), Carlos Garcia (UACD), Jim Lawrence (Tooele County/GSL RC&D), Kim Asmus (UDWR), Ashley Green (UDWR), Linden Greenhalgh (USU EXT), Tom Becker (UDWR), Curtis Warrick (BLM), Marlon Winger (NRCS), Darrell Johnson (Shambip SCD/landowner), Ken Mills (UACD), Jay Sagens (Shambip SCD/landowner), Jon Stookey (Shambip SCD/landowner), Renae Bragoyne (USFS).

Information Presented

Jason gave an update on the sage-grouse project. There are 19 radio-collared hens in Vernon. Of those, 10 initiated nests. Of the 10, 2 nests were predated before they hatched, 1 was predated while hatching, and 7 hatched successfully. Chicks can fly at 14 days and at 50 days, chicks are considered juveniles and broods are considered to be successful. Of the 7 successful nests, only 2 hens had successful broods, with 3 and 5 chicks respectively. However, this figure may not be as active as it could be because there is evidence that chicks switch between hens. On Parker Mountain, chicks were fitted with radio-transmitters and observations of broods there supports this theory. Canada geese also exhibit this behavior. In Jason's opinion, there was no shortage of chicks, however, flushes have shown that there are higher densities than what the radio-collar data indicate. In Ibapah, 8 hens were fitted with radio-transmitters. Of those, 4 initiated nests (4-9 eggs per clutch) and all hatched successfully (few eggs that did not hatch). There were 2 successful broods with 3 juveniles in each. Overall, there were only 4 deaths of radio-collared birds. Mortalities happened early in the season and may have been due to golden eagle predation. In Little Valley, canid predation was suspected in the mortality of a radio-collared hen. Coyotes and red foxes are known to occur in the area. Recently, a radio-collared hen was killed but little evidence was left and no cause was determined. McIntyre birds have not moved more than ½ mile from capture spot. Little Valley birds have moved outside the area where they were captured. Some moved to McIntyre. Ben Moore Flats birds moved to higher elevation, starting in July. Males moved all over without much discernable pattern or trend. However, there is an overall trend of birds moving up in elevation as the weather gets hotter and drier. The Ibapah birds have moved quite a bit. One male moved 13 miles to over 9,000 feet in elevation. 2 more moved into Nevada. Some have moved into the Deep Creeks, about 6,500 feet in elevation. Ibapah birds seem to move more than Vernon birds. One hen in Ibapah moved her

brood 1.5 miles before they could walk.

Jason would like WDARM to inform the public that sage-grouse hunting is NOT ALLOWED in Vernon or Ibapah!! He suggested that more signage, more law enforcement presence, etc. might help curb poaching. USFS kiosk at Ben Moore corner, Pony Express Road, at Reservoir, and at Forest boundary would make good locations for signage. Inexpensive, laminated signs might be most applicable.

Lindon gave an update on the cricket situation. Some Mormon crickets were observed in the Simpson Mountains but they have been few and far between this year. The rainy spring is likely to have been beneficial to parasites that attack the crickets; they are known to be more effective in wet years.

Sarah spoke about some of the publicity WDARM has been receiving on the web and in print. She told the group about another group, RedLodgeClearinghouse.org that is interested in doing a feature article on WDARM, focusing on the partnerships created, accomplishments of the group, and challenges the group faces. The address for this group is:

www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org

Sarah also told the group about the BLM article written by Erin Darboven that was picked up by the BLM in Washington D.C. and has generated positive press for WDARM, the BLM, and the entire community-based conservation movement in Utah.

Sarah informed the group that meeting minutes and other information about WDARM and all local working groups in Utah can be found at the new Community-based Conservation Program web site:

www.cnr.usu.edu/cbc

Sarah discussed Chapter 1 and 2 with the group.

Renee handed out the scoping statement for sagebrush and juniper treatments on the Benyon allotment. Renee suggested that the group respond to the scoping with a statement of support. There seemed to be agreement to this idea. Renee also asked that individuals respond on their own or on behalf of their organization with comments on the project. The scoping letter has gone to the Tribes, the DWR, State DNR, and environmental groups. It is likely that the Utah Environmental Congress will protest the project. It is likely that the project will go in through a categorical exclusion but this may be thwarted.

Discussion Highlights

Group discussed sage-grouse poaching. Potential signage locations were discussed. Correlations between small-game and blue grouse hunting and sage-grouse poaching were discussed.

Group discussed Jason's research. A question was asked about how 1-year old females compared to older hens with nest and brood success. Jason is not sure about his own birds but in

other places, 1-year olds have similar success with adult birds. The fox den in Little Valley was also discussed. It was suggested that Jason contact USDA-WS to have them “smoked”. Raven sightings were discussed. Jason has been conducting raven surveys and saw an increase in July and August. Fortunately, this is after nesting season.

The Group discussed publicity. On the positive side, the group has a lot of positive things to show for including cooperation, etc. On the negative side, there were concerns that it might attract environmental activist groups. The group discussed who might speak with a writer looking to do an article. It was agreed that the partnership should be the focus of the interviews and should be praised and highlighted.

The group discussed several sections of the Conservation Plan where information is needed specific to the WDARM area. Several members of the group provided information during the meeting regarding land use history and other sections.

The group discussed the scoping letter. Renee was made aware of breeding bird surveys done by the DWR in the area that may be helpful for planning or analysis of the area. The group discussed how to resolve the water problems on the Ranch through this project. A group visited the area recently, likely doing arch. surveys. The proposed fence has been through NEPA already but they are visiting the area again to reconfirm.

Ashley Green brought up the idea of doing some habitat maintenance in some areas based on where sage-grouse are going. The local Soil Conservation District (Shambip) owns land in one of these areas (about 1/2 section). Carlos suggested that the group approach the SCD about doing habitat improvement projects out there. Tom confirmed that sage-grouse use the SCD land. Perhaps some juniper removal/thinning could be done there. The group reviewed maps and discussed potential for projects in this area.

Actions Taken

Follow-up Needed

UDWR to look into signage for Vernon area from in-house, sportsmens groups, etc. to help prevent sage-grouse poaching. Tom Becker to speak with C.O. and sportsmen’s group, Ashley to speak with Dean Mitchell.

The GROUP will review Section 2 and return comments and information where they can to Sarah.

Sarah, Boyd, and Alan to write a letter of support in response to the USFS scoping letter.

Curtis to look into using the BLM cabin for the dinner meeting.

Assignments are due at the end of November.

NEXT MEETING: October 13th, 6:30 PM Dinner Meeting