

**WEST DESERT
(WDARM)
LOCAL WORKING
GROUP**

Date: March 8, 2018

Place: Tooele County Health Building

Individuals Present: Janet Larsen (Shambip CD), Loralie Cox (UDAF), Terri Pope (UDWR), Boyd White (UDWR), Alan Clark (DNR), Jared Reese (BLM), Matt Philippi (NRCS), Keeli Marvel (Dugway Proving Ground), Ben Muhlestein (USU), Tom Becker (UDWR), Robby Edgel (UDWR), Jason Robinson (UDWR), Adrienne Pilmanis (BLM), Jesse Adams (Logan Simpson), Whitney May (Logan Simpson), Cassie Mellon (BLM), Jim Priest (BLM), Nancy Williams (BLM), Evan Glenn (BLM), Ray Kelsey (BLM), Randy Kyes (BLM), Michel Kohl (USU), Katie Potter (UDAF/NRCS), Bruce Pavlik (Red Butte Gardens), Cole Hambleton (Rocky Mountain Power), Alan Mitchell (Bennion Ranch), Scott Chamberlain (SITLA), and Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator).

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

Field Tour Plan

In mid- May, Hugh Hurlow will take the group to see the research project set up in the Tintics. Jim Priest will look for additional possible projects that could easily be visited in the same area. No one was aware of particular dates to work around so Lorien will contact Hugh to finalize the date. It will be in the second or third week of May.

Recreation Survey

Ben Muhlstein, a graduate student in the Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at USU, will be implementing a grant from Yamaha to get basic information on recreation usage in the Sheeprocks area this year. The group viewed the draft questions on the survey and provided some suggestions, such as adding geocaching, horseback riding, and looking at wild horses as possible activities. They also suggested that it might be interesting to know if people are aware of the Prospector Trail system or not. Other key suggestions for implementation included making sure that Forest Service and BLM staff are fully apprised, as well as the Tooele and Juab sheriffs' offices, in case they get people calling with questions, and to make sure that the researchers are able to provide a simple "so-what" message to explain to people what the value of filling out the survey would be to them.

The survey will start over Easter weekend, at the end of March, and go until September or so. Ben will plan to come to the Nov/Dec meeting to present preliminary results and learning. Lorien will get that onto that agenda.

Pollinator Presentation

Bruce Pavlik, from Red Butte Gardens, presented their research on pollinators and forbs in sage-grouse brooding areas. They were asking how healthy sites sustain themselves, focused on insects (flies, bees, and butterflies, primarily) that are associated with forbs that chicks eat. Bruce described the results of their plant/pollinator surveys, and described the techniques for photographing the pollinators. Youtube videos of the pollinators from these researchers can be found by searching on Youtube for "Sara Barlow, rana."

Among the interesting notes is that black sage communities in the study had the highest forb diversity. Visitation rates of different pollinators is a measure that can be used to extrapolate about other aspects of the system, such as pollinator abundance and what the plants are able to provide. This research may be helpful in creating seed mixes that are more likely to be successful or locally appropriate.

Research updates

Michel Kohl, a post-doctoral fellow at USU working with Terry Messmer and Dave Dahlgren, presented to the group about the work that he is doing. He oversees research there about 3rd-order HAF (Habitat Assessment Framework) for BLM. He is working with BLM, USFS, and DWR that will result in a map all of those agencies can use for sage-grouse habitat. It will be detailed and based on probabilities. Those maps will be available in 2019. In the interim, a "heat map" is available. Michel explained how to read those maps, and can produce them for specific areas as needed with some advance notice. Someone commented that it would be helpful to know if there are differences in how the translocated versus local birds use habitat, if that can be separated out.

If anyone is interested in being on a list that gets more detailed info on this, Michel is planning on putting that together. Inform Lorien or Michel if you would like to get more information and updates.

Translocations update

This will likely be the last year of translocations, but the decision about whether to add a 4th year will be made based on information in October or November. They are currently planned for March 15-16 (from Box Elder) and March 19-20 (from Parker); weather depending. Anyone interested in participating can contact Avery. 30 females and 10 males will be brought from elsewhere in the state.

BLM Updates

Jared provided state and national-scale BLM updates. Several Instructional Memoranda (IMs)

related to sage-grouse have been recently updated or superseded:

- 2016-140 has been updated by 2018-022, with a strong new emphasis on casual factors
- 2016-142 has been updated by 2018-023
- 2016-143 has been updated by 2018-026
- 2016-144 has been updated by 2018-021
- 2016-141 has been superseded by 2018-024, where grazing authorizations have backed off a focus on sage-grouse and moved to more general concerns about range health priorities

Two IMs were not changed: 2016-139 on monitoring plan effectiveness, and 2016-145 on tracking surface disturbance. SFAs (Sagebrush focal areas) have been removed from directions.

The scoping period for the Programmatic EISs (on fire and vegetation projects) is over. There will probably be one EIS done for both of the topics, worked on over the next two years.

The Plan Amendments scoping period is also over, and the comment report document is out. The primary outcome for us is that there will be a plan amendment done in Utah, which will need to cover between 18 and 20 different issues. This is more than most states. The direction is that a final EIS is to be out by February 2019: an aggressive timetable that will likely be a challenging deadline to meet.

Other updates

The State of Utah's sage-grouse mitigation system will likely be finalized by the end of March. Once it is ready to roll out, we will provide information to the LWG and discuss ways to let local landowners know.

Follow-up Needed

- Lorien will work with Hugh and Jim to finalize and announce a field tour in May
- Lorien will make sure that Ben's project has space on future LWG meeting agendas
- Lorien will send out the mitigation rule once it is finalized and we will work on getting the information out to those who may be interested
- Anyone interested in getting information directly from Michel on the status of the mapping can contact Michel or Lorien to sign up for that

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a May field tour to the water impacts study area in the Tintics; date still to be finalized.