

**WEST DESERT  
(WDARM)  
LOCAL WORKING  
GROUP**      **Date: July 18, 2018**  
**Place: Tooele County Health Building**  
**Individuals Present:** Jared Reese (BLM), Quincy Bahr (BLM), Evan Glenn (BLM), Tyler Nelson (BLM), Karen Hartman (USFS), Boyd White (NRCS/UDWR), Shane Hill (UDWR), Jimi Gragg (UDWR), and Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator).

### **Information Presented/Discussion Highlights**

*BLM draft EIS in open comment period*

The focus of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for anyone interested in the draft BLM EIS to participate in a public meeting to learn about the draft EIS and ask questions prior to the comment deadline. Quincy Bahr presented about the draft EIS and answered questions. Printed maps and other information summaries were available at the meeting.

Key points during presentation and discussion are summarized below.

- Public comments on this plan are due August 2, 2018. Comments can be submitted on the website or sent to the BLM's Utah State Office. Questions about the plan can be sent to Quincy Bahr by email.
- The target date for a final EIS is October 11, 2018. That starts a 30-day protest period and a 60-day governor's review, allowing for a new Record of Decision (RoD) in mid-December.
- Regarding the area covered by the plan: about 50% of Utah is BLM or Forest Service and another 10% is subsurface mineral with other surface ownership. All those areas are covered by this plan since BLM administers the mineral estate of National Forest System and split-estate lands, as well as BLM surface.
- The main focus of these changes is improving coordination with the state plan.
- This EIS is just adjusting, not replacing the 2015 plan amendments.
- Alternatives include a no action (keeping all the 2015 amendments as is) and a management alignment alternative, which involves changing some of the actions from the 2015 amendments. Included in the options are alternatives analyzed in the 2015 EIS. This is because aside from a few specific issues, such as grass height, very little has changed in what we know about sage-grouse from the science. Therefore, a literature review of science since 2015 concluded that it was acceptable to use the 2015 analysis results to inform this EIS.
- A major element of the proposed changes is to drop the GHMA (general habitat). That would mean that any management changes that happened as a result of the 2015 amendments in those areas would revert back to what the management was before those changes. There are still sage-grouse conversation measures in those areas that are akin to a management goal of no net loss of sage-grouse.
- The 2015 amendments added triggers for population declines, but no 'untriggers' if the

population or habitat recovers. This draft EIS considers untriggers. A conversation following this discussed the fact that in the Sheeprocks, a trigger was already hit that changed GHMA to PHMA. It would be beneficial to have specific language that explained what an untrigger in the Sheeprocks would return management to, if GHMA is no longer defined in the plans. Lorien will make a formal comment to that effect on behalf of the WDARM group.

- Causal factor analysis was already included in the 2015 plan, but without a specific timeline for implementation. The new EIS proposes a timeline whereby management changes put in place to address concerns need to be validated using a causal factor analysis within 6 months.
- The state's mitigation plan will be incorporated into the BLM's plan.
- All plans will be updated with red-line version once the changes are final so it is easier to identify what changed and what did not.

Much of the discussion focused on how recreation is viewed as a potential impact to sage-grouse. Key explanations and clarifications about recreation and sage-grouse are below.

- As part of the 2015 amendments, all of the GHMA in Sheeprocks area was changed to "limited to existing routes," away from "open to cross-country travel." This was based on the assumption that all the "open" allocation was a legacy allocation from having no travel management planning, when in fact some of the areas had actually been intentionally designated as "open." This was an oversight, and the current plan amendment returns the intentionally open areas to their original intended allocation. Many of these are dune areas where designated routes are logistically impossible. There was some confusion among some people who believed that the areas had been closed to travel, which was never the case. Maps were provided for detail at this meeting.
- Some of the concern about recreation and sage-grouse relates to unauthorized routes being made across sage-grouse habitat areas by off-road enthusiasts. Two-track routes of that nature, however, are not included in the formal definition of "disturbance" in the plan. Therefore, concerns relating to the impact of ATV traffic or new routes on sage-grouse would refer instead to habitat quality measures. Any concerns with sage-grouse habitat would be described in terms of habitat quality, not percentage of an areas that is disturbed by the trails. To effectively addressing that type of concern would require substantial partnership efforts between county, state, federal and user groups.

### **Follow-up Needed**

- Lorien will make a comment through the BLM website that the groups discussed the need for a specific un-trigger management response for the Sheeprocks

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be the regular fall meeting, still to be scheduled.