

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

Date: September 3, 2014
Place: Tooele Co. Health Building, Tooele, UT
Members Present:
Loralie Cox (UACD), Terri Pope (UDWR), Tom Becker (UDWR),
Boyd White (UDWR), Lans Stavast (USFS), Rachel Brown (Rocky
Mountain Power), Mark Farmer (UDWR), Elizabeth Mitchell
(rancher), Janet Larsen (Shambip CD), Robbie Knight (Dugway
P.G.), Karen Hartman (USFS), Alan Clark (UDWR), Casey Burns
(NRCS), Chris Bryan (BLM), and Lorien Belton (USU Extension
facilitator).

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

Quick updates

Several brief updates were discussed:

- Lorien reminded the group that the International (rangewide) Sage-grouse Forum will be held in Salt Lake in November. The dates have changed slightly, from the 12-13 to the 13-14 of November. Lorien will send an email out to the group with more information.
- Elizabeth asked for updates on how the red fox situation, which was brought up at the last meeting, is being addressed on the ground. Mike Tamlllos was not in attendance, and Tom Becker deferred questions to Mike for the future. Lorien will follow up with Mike and send any updates to the group via the listserv.
- Several people inquired about the current status of a land development issue in Morgan County that would affect sage-grouse. Some landowners in Morgan County have requested a general plan amendment in the hopes of eventually selling their land, near East Canyon Reservoir, to a developer who would create a development there in the future. Lorien, who had been to the Morgan County Council meeting the previous evening, explained the basic situation and reported that the Council had voted 3-3 (with no tie-breaker present), so the amendment was not approved.
- The group briefly discussed some recent radio ads by the Western Energy Alliance that were negative about the sage-grouse conservation planning efforts.

State updates

Lorien Belton introduced the baseline disturbance maps (as of April 1, 2013). These maps are intended to show existing disturbance in the SGMAs, and will be used in calculating the extent of any future disturbance to sage-grouse habitat in the SGMA. The group had a printed copy, where comments and updated information was recorded, and also looked at the electronic copy online, which allowed us to zoom in and turn layers on and off to see detail.

The maps show various disturbed areas within the SGMA, including agriculture, roads, power lines, oil and gas disturbance, past fires, etc. Additional areas, coded in blue, were places where

the developers of the map were unsure as to what a feature on the landscape was. Those areas were coded in blue polygons, and left for the local working group to identify. WDARM members spent about one hour of the meeting identifying those areas. Many were recreation sites, stock ponds, past fires, or pinyon-juniper removal projects. The group noted that the many areas defined as “urban” were definitely not, and the map will need further refinement to be accurate. Some areas were not identifiable and will just need someone on the ground to confirm what the feature is.

The hard copy baseline map was left with Mark Farmer so that additional work could be done before the next meeting. Lorien will send them the password to access the online version where more detail can be seen by turning layers off and zooming in and out. Anyone else interested can request the password from Lorien. Karen, Tom, and Boyd expressed interest at the meeting. Mark and others in the Springville DWR office will work on some of those areas, and then bring any as-yet unidentified spots back to WDARM at the next meeting to finish the map. Anyone wishing to view that hard copy may contact Mark. Long-term, Lorien and Eric Ellis will work together to make sure the changes and updates make it back into the final online version.

New pinyon-juniper map layer

NRCS released a new map layer that attempts to identify all conifer (PJ) areas within the SGMAs and other sage-grouse habitat designations. It is just getting rolled out on the ground, and different people are figuring out ways to use it. The accuracy of the map between 0 and 10% encroachment is not as good as the accuracy above 10%. The general consensus with those working with the maps is that lumping all the 0-10% categories is a more useful way of looking at the map. Someone noted that it was confusing to have that category, since the definition of Phase 1 encroachment is up to 20% cover.

Boyd White showed the group polygons of a proposed project in southern Utah where he is experimenting with using the layer. One hope is that having polygons based on the percent cover layers will provide a way for contractors to provide more accurate bids based on PJ densities. Boyd has not yet ground-truthed the area in question, but that is a next step.

At the state level, NRCS is working on a way to overlay the ReGAP layers that show sagebrush sites with the PJ map. Ideally, that will help show areas where the PJ is encroaching on sagebrush, and help focus planning efforts strategically. Casey Burns showed the group some early efforts, explaining that the green areas on the overlay would be potentially good projects, once ground-truthed. Lorien will circulate the pdfs of Casey’s maps to the LWG and solicit feedback. Anyone who would like more information on the NRCS efforts or would like to have input into the refinement of the tool should contact Casey Burns.

Lorien will send the link to the LWG for anyone who would like to download the full layer, which is extremely large. The link is: ftp://ftp.agrc.utah.gov/Imagery/NAIP2011_4-band/

Follow-up Needed

- Lorien will send an email out to the group with more information on the November 13-14 Forum.
- Lorien will follow up with Mike Tamellos [and Eric Ellis] about any red fox updates and send any information to the group via the listserv.
- Lorien will send them Mark, Karen, Boyd, Tom, and anyone else who requests it the password to view the disturbance map layer online.
- Mark and others in the Springville DWR office will work on identifying more of the blue polygons, and then bring any as-yet-unidentified spots back to WDARM at the next meeting to finish the map.
- Lorien and Eric Ellis are responsible long-term to make sure the changes and information recorded by the group make it back into the final online version.
- Lorien will circulate the pdfs of Casey's PJ and sage-brush map overlays to the LWG and solicit feedback. Anyone who would like more information on the NRCS efforts or would like to have input into the refinement of the tool should contact Casey Burns.
- Lorien will send the link to the LWG for anyone who would like to download the full PJ layer, which is extremely large. ftp://ftp.agrc.utah.gov/Imagery/NAIP2011_4-band/

Next Meetings

The next meeting will be in late fall, although the exact date will need to be determined based on working around the Forum on the 13th and 14th.