

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

Date: March 27, 2012

Time: 9:00 am (after lek viewing trip)

Place: BLM field station, Vernon UT

Members Present:

Jason Robinson (DWR), Lans Stavast (USFS), Scott Chamberlain (SITLA), Scott Pehrson (landowner), Dylan Tucker (BLM), Brad Leigh (local archaeologist), Mark Farmer (DWR), Karen Hartman (USFS), Boyd White (co-chair, landowner), Robbie Knight (Dugway), Tom Becker (DWR), Keeli Marvel (Dugway), Lindsey Brooker (UACD), Elizabeth Mitchell (landowner/rancher), and Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator).

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

Updates

Lorien provided the group with updates on:

- the BLM planning process (in the process of compiling the scoping comments – Lorien sent in comments from the LWGs, including from members of WDARM),
- the USFS role (they will take part in the BLM process, and some forest plans will be amended, but other details are still emerging)
- State of Utah planning efforts (the Governor has formed a team to write a comprehensive plan for sage-grouse in Utah; Lorien will keep the group updated as opportunities to participate or comment arise)

NRCS Sage-Grouse Initiative: Tammy Koldyke, the new SGI biologist, is the contact for project planning for sage-grouse work on private land. Anyone with project ideas or who is interested in participating should contact Tammy or their local NRCS office. One SGI project has recently been completed that involved mowing for a lek, water improvements, fencing, and spike strips.

Lek Counting

Lek counts this morning before the meeting netted the following information:

- Nothing on Lookout Pass – no pellets where the lek should be.
- Didn't see anything on Diagonal Electric
- Benmore had 8 males and 2 hens
- Government Wash had 8 birds at most
- McIntyre lek: 15 males, at least 5 females, grouped up tightly
- Willow Valley lek: hawk flying, two birds flushed off the lek.
- Not many ravens were seen.

Kim is putting together a calendar to coordinate lek counting so we can limit visits and reduce

disturbance to the lks from lek count trips. All lek counts need to be coordinated with Kim, and then will go to Jason Robinson's master database. Once a week is probably as frequently as any one lek should be counted. The protocol calls for three times per season per lek.

Trails/recreation:

The group discussed exactly how recreation was creating problems for sage-grouse. It was pointed out that harassing wildlife is a level of poaching, so anyone intentionally disturbing the grouse is probably doing something illegal. Beyond that, the disturbance from noise and dust and activity is a particular concern on any trails that go into the Sheeprocks.

Boyd will get shape files from the DWR GIS site to the county mapper so the county is aware of sage-grouse activity areas.

The next step with the trails group is to see if they have a management plan. Overlaying sage-grouse shape files on planned trails or other plans, on a map, would help WDARM provide useful comments and help strategize about kiosks. The primary contact for the trails group has been out of touch for medical reasons; hopefully he will be back soon.

Research Planning

Mark Farmer noted that Randy Larsen is taking the lead on proposal development for a project to collar birds in several areas, and observe their response to treatment areas, and see if it can be correlated to brood success, on projects that are designed to improve brood-rearing habitat.

Robbie Knight is working on a plan to document sage-grouse presence or absence on Dugway. This may involve walking transects and/or UAV tracking. He will coordinate with Randy as needed. This may give us a better idea of where birds are seasonally.

Project Updates

We will soon know if some of the UPCD projects through BLM will be funded – lop and scatter, and bullhog projects were proposed for this round.

Someone asked if landowners are responsible for retreating pinyon juniper areas that were originally treated by NRCS. Landowners need better guidance on when and how to do maintenance.

The possibility was raised of talking to the water ski developer about riparian restoration. Tom Becker will follow-up.

Actions Taken

No formal actions were taken.

Follow-up Needed

- Boyd will get sage-grouse shape files to the Tooele County folks
- Lorien will follow up with the trails committee and see if they have a plan or how best to continue coordination
- Anyone planning to do lek counts needs to coordinate with Kim Hersey.
- Lorien will pass along to Tammy that landowners would benefit from information on how to follow-up and maintain pinyon juniper projects.
- Tom Becker will approach the ski area developer about riparian work.

Next Meetings

The next meeting will be either a summer field tour or a regular meeting, depending on what feedback the state planning team needs, and when.