

# Bi-State Sage-grouse Executive Meeting July 9, 2012

## Introductions

Reno: Steven Siegel – NDOW  
Sandra Brewer – BLM  
Selena Werdon – USFWS  
Joe Tague – BLM  
Stephanie Phillips – Forest Service  
Amy Lueders – BLM  
Doug Busselman – Nevada Farm Bureau  
Shawn Espinosa – NDOW  
Ken Mayer – NDOW  
Raul Morales – BLM  
Steve Nelson – BLM  
Bernadette Lovato – BLM  
Bruce Petersen – NRCS  
Todd Hopkins – GBLCC  
Ted Koch - USFWS

Phone: Leann Murphy – Inyo National Forest  
Lily Douglas – BLM CA State Office  
Steve Schwarzbach – USGS  
Scott Gardner – CDFG  
Mike Ozato – USGS  
Corey Hunt

---

### **1. Introduction and Agenda Review – Stephanie Phillips**

- Amend the Agenda to add Shawn Espinosa's talk on Bi-State Lek Survey

### **2. Approval of last meeting minutes – Steven Siegel**

- **Motion to approve the minutes – Raul Morales**
- **Second**
- **Motion passes unanimously**

### **3. Bi-State Lek Survey – Shawn Espinosa (handout passed around)**

Approved minutes will be posted on NDOW Webpage

- All should have received the Findings Part 3 of the Survey Plan that Craig Mortimore put together. It summarizes the entire survey effort. We had 12 different survey sites that were identified across the survey area. There was 6 in Nevada and 6 in California. We actually conducted 7 aerial surveys in Nevada from March 26 through April 5, 2012 and we did an additional survey on April 13, 2012 to follow up on some suspected unidentified leks that were found during the initial surveys. I will comment on the Nevada side. We discovered 5 previously

unknown leks on the Nevada side. We found one of those leks on the east side of Highway 338 across from the known Desert Creek leks. Two were along the East Fork of the Walker River, actually in the Mount Grant PMU, two were down in the White Mountains PMU on the Nevada side in Esmeralda County. There were 73 birds observed on those 5 leks. I should mention that one of those leks by the Elbow of the East Walker River was actually discovered by on the ground personnel with BLM, Boyd lek is what we are calling it for right now anyway. It was a fairly decent size lek there was 27 males on it when counted from the ground. On both sides there was 246 documented birds at random site locations. A good majority of those were found in the Bodie Hills area and another decent portion was in the West White Mountains in the Chiatovich Flats area.

- In addition to those unknown observations or unknown lek sightings we also were able to survey our known lek locations that are in pretty difficult to get to areas. The 2012 data does exhibit a positive trend in population size of leks surveyed since 2000. It appears that there is a positive population trend for the Bi-State. Throughout the survey there was about 18 hours conducted in the air as well as some on the ground follow up time.
- Budget (Ken Mayer): We collected about \$54,000.00 from non-profits, industry, sportmen's clubs etc. We also had a contribution of \$25,000.00 from California Department of Fish & Game. Fish and Wildlife Service contributed \$10,000.00 and a rough estimate NDOW put about \$40,000.00 into it with our helicopter work. We spent all but about \$23,000.00 of the private money, so that is still remaining in a dedicated fund within Nevada Bighorns Unlimited. We just finished editing a letter from Gil and I to the people that contributed giving them a copy of the report and thanking them for their efforts and a request that we are able to keep that money in the account and that next year we will use it for additional helicopter time to keep the effort going.
- Update on California by Steve Nelson – In Bodie two sites were confirmed that they weren't counting that were suspected, most of it was confirmation of sites that show up off and on and are satellite leks. They did find a couple in the Sweetwaters. Scott Gardner: Trends were up to the highest ever recorded. There were over 500 males counted in Bodie and 400 in Long Valley. It shows what good quality habitat can do in terms of producing birds with favorable conditions. It has been a positive trend for the past 4 years now in the heart of the well connected populations with the same leks monitored over a period of several years.
- Shawn Espinosa: Where we suspect there to be activity and where there is appropriate habitat I think we did a decent job of getting to it. There are other areas where we have suitable sagebrush habitat but there may be no water for miles or that has been encroached by Pinyon Juniper. We have seen that transition to a Phase 2 or Phase 3 at this point. Overall, we have a fair coverage of the entire Bi-State. There is always some in the White Mountains where you want to do more because it is such a large area. There may have been one area that we surveyed a bit early.

- Steve Nelson: At the same time we did not have long term average weather. It was dry and all of our counts that we have done for years we were about 10 days to 14 days ahead of peak. Peak was easy 10-14 days earlier this year than it was last year. Scott Gardner: I think we were on the early end of the window but certainly in a good window for surveying.
- Shawn Espinosa: There were areas where birds were flushed and were not strutting, which would not consider them to be leks. These need to be looked at further next year.

Discussion:

- What is the value of the information and how is the population information best given to you?
  - The up side to this information is it helps to better tell the story.
  - The more data the more accurately FWS can make a decision.

**4. Submittal of Items to FWS – Raul Morales – See attachment**

EOC members to discuss what will be the information that both the EOC and individual Agencies should submit to FWS for their considerations in development of Proposed Rule.

- BLM Instructional Memorandum & The USFS Interim Directive
  - Examples of their use
  - Implementation of existing planning decisions
  - What steps can be taken in the future to ensure that either a good track record was obtained or developed
- Activities of the local working group Telemetry work – migration corridor winter use area – data gap
  - Telemetry work – on migration corridor winter use area – sense there is a data gap
  - Supplement existing information based on surveys done this year
  - Genetic sample collections done within the last year or so
  - Showing success in any possible way from on the ground projects
    - Cause and effect
- NRCS to write a letter to FWS regarding private lands
  - How many partners working within the Bi-State area, potentially conserving X number of acres this year, Y number of acres the following year.
- USFWS working on process to identify Bishop Field Office RMP as an adequate regulatory mechanism.
- All data to the FWS by September 1, 2012
  - Technical Team will get together to discuss format going over Bi-State Action Plan and Project Table
  - Period of time for data – minimum to the date of the listing – if there is anything before that time that is felt was not considered by the Service that should be included in correspondence.
  - Need a formal data call from FWS but each agency should not wait for the call but start pulling information together now

- Steve Siegel will update list that was handed out and provide names/agencies of who should be supplying that information on the list.

## **5. Coordination between EOC and Bi-State Working Group – Stephanie Phillips / Steve Lewis**

Open Discussion

- Doug Busselman - There needs to be a clearer understanding of the role that the local working groups have in the process and how everybody fits together.
- Original committee came to conclusion that in order to have an impact had to touch the ground – at that there wasn't a feeling that they could do that. Part of the emphasis of creating the local groups was to be able to touch the ground and to get information back from the ground on conditions of habitat, situations with the birds, what were the threats based on different areas.
- Working groups give people the opportunity to be involved and had a place to make a difference – sense of equality
  - Bi-State group continuing to meet on a continual basis
  - Bi-State group is a coalition of PMU groups from both Nevada & California
    - Action Plan – the local PMU groups had an opportunity to provide input, which was the basis for what her report was created from
      - Opportunity for local PMU Groups to identify what threats that needed attention on the ground both for the sake of the birds as well as the habitat
      - Report reflects what those involved in the local groups considered to be their best perspectives on meaningful conservation efforts to do in the areas.
    - What was unique about the Bi-State group, what motivated this group to stay engaged?
      - There was a core of folks who continued to put it back together and facilitate the next meeting. Some meetings were updates some meetings were rally type to get certain things done, variety of things.
      - Implementation phase is going to be the most difficult – ongoing process
- Better define link with Local Working Group (LWG) – best way to meet with the Local Working Group
  - LWG should be considered in the data call from FWS – they will have knowledge that is important to get to FWS
  - LWG report that was sent forward – having a report back to the LWG stating we got your report
  - LWG not having a clear understanding of how agencies look at projects or activities.
    - Representative from LWG to EOC meetings or an EOC member attend the LWG meetings – July 13, 2012 field tour or September
- Letters from the EOC to the LWG to be written stating information was received and here is our thoughts and input of how we can work together to implement it and request any information they (LWG) has that would be valuable for the data

call – Discussions of the next steps forward – clarify communication etc. – Steve Lewis – Contact for the LWG for distribution.

## **6. Bi-State Web Page – Steven Siegel**

What presence should the Bi-State web page have and what information should be included.

- Within the NDOW webpage there is a sage-grouse conservation page with several columns – one of the columns is Bi-State – you will find the minutes from this year – link to the Bi-State Action Plan – Maps will be included as well to identify the priority habitat.
  - <http://ndow.org/wild/conservation/sg/index.shtm>
  - Links available to the Governor's sage-grouse page
  - Link to the BLM interim guidance when signed

## **7. Information Sharing – All**

Update by Agency including survey results, projects, etc.

- Amy Lueders (BLM) – signing interim guidance this week for Bi-State
- Stephanie Phillips (Forest Service Humboldt-Toiyabe) – Fire in Ely (North Schell) prescribed burn that got away and burned onto BLM land that was Greater sage-grouse habitat. There was also a couple hundred acres at higher elevations that were Juniper Pinyon – big sagebrush that it also burned. It was much cooler on the higher elevation so it didn't totally consume it. On the BLM land roughly about 2000 acres. Burned to about 12,000 acres – most at the higher elevations.
- Bruce Petersen (NRCS) – Busy getting contracts obligated. Extra money in sage-grouse that doesn't have a contract tied to it around \$350,000. In the last year of the Farm Bill, there are some contract limits for participant. I am hopeful that we will spend the money that we have but to engage other folks at this time and try to put more contracts together is difficult and probably not going to happen.
- Selena Werdon (FWS) – Next internal listing team meeting next week – meeting about once a month – provide weekly updates to the regional office.
- Bernadette Lovato (Bishop BLM) – Formalizing more of their fire prevention control efforts. Started documenting in an excel spreadsheet all of the contact they are making. The one for Bodie Hills they made 76 contacts (spreading the prevention message about fire). From the end of May to the Middle of June we had 5 lightening strikes. Patrol went out and immediately patrolled the area and watched for any potential lightening strikes. As lightening kicks up here the end of this week I am sure he will be a lot busier. It is our attempt to document all of those contacts that we are making. We will have a summary that we will try to provide back to this group and others.
- Ken Mayer (NDOW) – Trying to put something together for July 17, 2012 to pull funders in.
- Mike Ozata (USGS) – Pete has been working hard with the Technical Committee and Scott from California. He did get a final draft of priority and general habitat, they were sent on to Randy to distribute to the group. Brief points on the maps,

the recent addition/change from the previous version are that they include about a 3.2 mile buffer around the leks as recommended by the Technical Committee. Pete incorporated a recreational index to represent land use by the public. The latest version was developed into a priority and a general map, so there are two versions. In general, they encompass both sides (California & Nevada) so it is a single map. Pete provided the maps to the FWS through Pat's office for the rangewide data call, primarily for the California side.

#### **8. Wrap-up, Assignments, Next meeting – Steven Siegel**

- Randy Sharp to get the EOC the maps from USGS
- EOC needs to get the recommendation from the Technical Team on which map they want us to use
- Next meeting August 17, 2012 – 9:00-12:00 at BLM office