

Bi-State Sage-grouse Executive Meeting  
October 29, 2012

**Introductions**

Reno: Stephanie Phillips – USFS  
Becky Nourse – USFS  
Raul Morales - BLM  
Amy Lueders – BLM NV  
Erik Blomberg – USGS  
Tara Vogel – NDOW/NRCS  
Shawn Espinosa – NDOW  
Katrina Krause – NRCS/USFWS  
John Wilson – BLM  
Jason Perock – NDOT  
Rachel Mazur – USFS  
Doug Busselman – Nevada Farm Bureau  
Bob Pohlman – Wildlife Advisory Board Douglas County  
Randy Sharp – Consultant USFS  
Bruce Petersen – NRCS  
Steve Abele – USFWS  
Todd Hopkins – GBLCC  
Jeanne Higgins – USFS  
Ken Mayer – NDOW  
John L. Peterson – HWAD  
Martina Barnes – USFS  
Leon Thomas - BLM

Phone: Bernadette Lovato – BLM - Bishop  
Lily Douglas – BLM CA  
Tom Kimball – USGS  
Scott Gardner – CDFG  
Pete Coates – USGS  
Mike Crawley – Bridgeport District Ranger  
Leann Murphy – Inyo National Forest  
Pilar Ziegler

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**1. Introduction and Agenda Review – Randy Sharp**

**2. Approval of last meeting minutes – Randy Sharp**

Approved minutes will be posted on NDOW webpage – <http://ndow.org/wild/conservation/sg>

- Comments – Bernadette was to be the contact for the EOC to the local working groups working with Mike Crawley to coordinate
- Minutes approved and will be posted to the website.

### **3. Update on Bi-State Local Working Group efforts and EOC coordination – Tara Vogel / Bernadette Lovato / Mike Crawley**

- There have not been any new meetings
- Tara Vogel will make sure that Bernadette is copied on information regarding the local working group.
- The next meeting of the Bi-State Local Working Group is December 3, 2012.
- Local working group members present feel it was helpful to have representatives from the EOC at the last meeting to share their perspective on what is going on.
  - Kept us apprised and demonstrated the willingness to reach out and interact with the local working group.

### **4. Discussion of Inyo NF Interim Direction – Ed Armenta / Raul Morales**

BLM has some specific questions regarding use of PPH.

- Questions on verbiage used on page 4 under livestock grazing
  - Recommended versus must implement
    - Correction noted and will be corrected.
    - Pete Coates' map is being used.
- Status of BLM Interim IM
  - Reviewed by the Governor's staff
  - Reviewed by solicitors in the Washington office
    - Received comments and made adjustments to the IM
  - In the process of doing outreach presently – talking to various stakeholders as well as the Tonopah Field Manager is also talking to county commissioners and stakeholders there.
    - Goal to have it released sometime in November 2012.
- Humboldt-Toiyabe update
  - Not going to have an IM – going to do a Forest Plan Amendment (EIS)
    - Will be completed December 2013
      - To file notice of intent with two weeks.
      - Contracted out with group of Forest Service Employees to do the analysis.
        - Bi-State Action Plan is the framework for it.
        - The habitat is identified from Pete Coates and the Technical Team

### **5. Habitat Mapping – Pete Coates / Scott Gardner / Shawn Espinosa**

Follow-up discussion of last meeting's presentation of Priority Habitat for Bi-State Sage-grouse

- Distinguishing between the two methods so it doesn't look as though it is a mapping artifact but it is actually two different products coming together.
  - Buffers at leks and account for indirect effects
  - Associations with habitat, which helps identify corridors
- If reshape "crop circles" it would reduce the effectiveness of what that is actually designed for, which is account for indirect effects that are within some distance based on the utilization distributions to that lek.

- To explain to the public why there are areas where there are circles and don't seem to blend in with the rest of the habitat.
  - Define better in the legend as to what that is.
- No areas in the map were treated differently - need to communicate the process.
  - Buffer – taking into account the indirect effects – maybe use better terminology
    - Because the buffers are derived from the data itself we calculated utilization distributions around the leks and then maximized the volume where the trade off was on area to volume ratio. It is really a utilization distribution zone or grouse space use zone.
- Map available for public viewing?
  - It is available as a product of the Technical Advisory Committee.
  - Has not been published at this point but is in peer review/review process.
    - Hoping to have an actual published manuscript out of a journal, at least portions of it.
  - Shawn Espinosa to have a PDF draft version of map posted to the NDOW website.
    - Once all corrected - shape files would be available.
    - Shawn will work with Pete and take the abstract from the metadata file and attach that with the map.
    - Shawn will send out an email with link on website.
    - Scott Gardner will have posted in California.
- Update on Mt Grant
  - Working cooperatively with BLM putting transmitters out
  - Began putting out transmitters last spring
    - 15-20 Radio transmitters put out
    - GPS transmitters on order which are slated to go in that area
    - 30 transmitters were put out in the Pine Nuts.

## **6. Status of EOC Priority Projects – EOC Members**

Support material – June 15, 2012 EOC meeting notes - see notes on priority projects.

- Sweetwater – (Forest Service)
  - Started in 2006 and concluded in 2009
- 300 acres still to clean up at some point – removing more pinion
- Long Doctor – (Forest Service)
  - In progress
  - Total of approximately 1750 acres
    - Less than 1 stem per acre – good thinning around the base of Round Mountain and then up against the hills to the west
  - Should be completed this week or next – progress has been monitored daily.
  - Looking for new funding or adding onto an existing contract for FY13
- China Camp – (Forest Service)

- Working this Fall and all last Winter – some firefighters outside of their regular tour were brought back and worked through the winter due to the favorable weather
- 90+/- acres were done over the winter
- Work is continuing intermittently
- Additional funding approved through the Lyon/Mineral County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) that will also go into expanding acreage accomplishment in both Long Doctor and China Camp for this next year.
- What does priority project mean for the EOC as an agency goes forward when doing a project
  - The three priority projects above were funded with a mix of money from NDOW grant moneys, mix of RAC funding with sustainable rural schools money that came to the counties and appropriated dollars.
- More important to make sure that in doing the projects that there is proper reporting that goes forward to the USFWS to identify that they were priority areas and dealt with and taken care of.
  - Priority designation may have more of an effect on identifying the agency commitment.
    - Now that we are in a new fiscal year – we need to be more strategic as we tackle the priority projects.
  - The December working group meeting has an agenda item to update the priority projects list.
  - Effectiveness monitoring – starts with the resource selection/function modeling/conservation planning tool all rolls into how we conduct the effectiveness monitoring for the projects. Needs to be at the top of the list. Not fully funded. Coming along but pieced together.
  - Need to develop standard protocol for monitoring
    - Invite the people that are developing monitoring techniques
    - Working group can assist with monitoring as a hands on activity
  - Technical Team – Steve Nielsen/ Scott Gardner/ Shawn Espinosa
    - Inventory of how much data is available
    - Develop a framework that everybody is comfortable with that allows for individuality within the framework
    - Make a recommendation to the EOC to implement
    - Thought needs to be given to how we keep track – individually or rolled up to the local working group to organize
    - Quarterly reporting to EOC regarding monitoring
- Science Advisor
  - Money from every agency was provided to USGS for Pete Coates
    - Renewal of money to USGS for this year
      - Buying into an established set of scientists that can inform the EOC and the Bi-State planning process and a wealth of information at hand and understands the development of the priority habitat and the conservation planning tool – to take that to the next phase

makes sense that agencies that have ownership continue to collaborate.

- Conservation planning tool – surface has been scratched the surface on what that tool is capable of – more analysis needed to include PMU by PMU and include in fitness aspects – nice tool on the landscape to plan projects.
- High resolution imagery and being able to do remote sensing in specific areas – will become that much more effective.

## **7. Status of FWS data call – Ted Koch**

- In the process of going through – in general a good response
  - Land Health Assessments – important – piece that is generally lacking from peoples responses.
  - LCC map – getting up and running
- Interest in tapping into the Tech Team with regards to truly affording opportunity to get involved with the Service business.
- Process of FWS
  - Putting out products
    - People are looking at things – asking questions
    - Not at a level of managers at this point – Ted or Ren have not seen it
    - Follow with the listing team presenting the facts (the science) to a decision making body team that will say under our understanding of the ESA we think this applies or we think this is precedent etc.
  - This is all in the proposed rule – there is still a final to come in another year.
  - Interested in seeing grazing assessments
  - Reaching out as best as possible to agencies to fine tune information although there are timelines
  - Summary of information is most helpful
  - Working Group Conservation Plan – has not been submitted
  - Drought monitoring will be turned in within the next week from BLM

## **8. Great Basin LCC potential funding for Data Collection – Todd Hopkins**

- FWS office of the science advisor held back money last year
  - Now has money available for the Landscape Conservation Management Assessment Portal – which is a geospatial database that is meant to do exactly what we are talking about.
  - Each cooperative has about \$130,000-\$150,000 this year and next year to facilitate the process for data aggregation, data compilation, and standardization – for Greater sage-grouse but have permission to use this money for the Bi-state Group.
    - Could facilitate a workshop on monitoring methods and everybody get aligned

- Need to know from the team what is needed.
  - Service would like through the cooperative to find a way to help solve some problems
  - Could be for temporary people to scan or enter data, aggregate some of the monitoring ideas that have been discussed
- Money is coming through WAFWA
  - Administered out of Denver – hiring a sage-grouse coordinator for the carrier program that is going to be working with all of this data
- Need to come up with a couple of pages of justification and a rough budget - there are no rules, there are no protocols or forms
- Information has been sent to the Technical Team
- If we can show that this works and functions we may have a model that we can try and expand on for the rest of the system – not that everything is the same everywhere.

## 9. Discussion

- Governor's Sage-grouse Committee
  - Set of recommendations – working with BLM to try to take their report, which was not a plan and try to turn it into a plan that can be turned into alternatives – very close to submitting something to BLM
  - Part of the report was to do two things
    - Create a Sagebrush Council with the understanding that sage-grouse is a symptom of the loss of sagebrush habitat in the state of Nevada.
      - Council is appointed by the Governor
    - Technical Team that would be patterned after the Bi-State
  - They have asked for \$300,000 through the Interim Finance Committee (IFC)
    - Unclear how much will be general fund money
    - Sportsmen will contribute
    - FWS contributed \$40,000 for it
  - Will include Bi-State but will not be put together before a decision is made
  - Leo will attend the next EOC meeting to discuss

## 10. Wrap-up, Assignments, Next meeting – Randy Sharp

- Assignments:
  - Shawn, Scott and Pete will work on getting the map posted
  - Local working group will meet on 12/3/12 to discuss priority projects
  - Technical Team will discuss monitoring and make recommendations
  - Small Group established to look at what are some of the need of Science Advisory
  - Each agency to look at FWS submissions and FWS will notify if information is needed
  - Get request together for FWS money
- Next meeting
  - December 11, 2012 – 10:00-12:30 – NRCS Building