

Bi-State Sage-grouse Conservation Meeting

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

Smith Valley Library

6:00 – 9:00 PM

Minutes

Those in attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Group Affiliation</u>
John Alexander	Northern Pinenuts
John Axtell	BLM – Carson City
Tom Donham	NDOW Biologist - Tonopah
Rhen Etzelmilller	BLM - Tonopah
Jan Huggans	Private Landowner
Richard Huntsberger	Rancher – Smith Valley
Steve Lewis	UNCE, facilitator
James Linebaugh	N-3 Grazing Board
Walter Mandeville	NDOW – Retired
Ralph Mantz	Smith Valley
Leeann Murphy	USFS - Bridgeport
Steve Nelson	BLM – Bishop Field Office
Cory Overton	USGS
John L. Peterson	Hawthorne Army Depot
Jason Salisbury	NDOW Biologist - Fallon
Katie Simper	NDOW
Timothy Taylor	CA Fish & Game
Tracey Jean Wolfe	NRCS - Yerington
Gil Yanuck	CC Advisory Board

Introductions

Steve Lewis, facilitator, opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. with round-table introductions and affiliation.

Bi-State PMU Status Reports

Pine Nut – reported by Gil Yanuck, CC Advisory Board

We met with the Carson City BLM regarding 1000 acres of Pinyon/Juniper removal in Mills Canyon. Funds were available for the removal; unfortunately, \$40,000 was needed for the archeological study. Gil discussed the option of Q1 funds with Laura Richards (NDOW).

Met with Bently Agrowdynamics, they have offered to provide the equipment and the man power for fuels reduction and fuels management in the Pine Nut Range. BLM is looking at creating a stewardship, in order to take advantage of this offer by 2006. The Pine Nut group will help them designate areas most beneficial to sage-grouse and their habitat.

South Mono – reported by Timothy Taylor, CDFG – Mono County

The South Mono PMU group has had five meetings since the last Bi-State meeting. Next meeting scheduled for October 5th.

The group is working on prioritization of risks and developing conservation actions to address those risks. Priorities being: hunting, recreation activity, urbanization and changing land use. Recreation is a big concern of the group. Steve Nelson (BLM-Bishop) reported that they want to close five miles of road plus three miles of road seasonally in Long Valley.

Developed subcommittees:

1. Land use subcommittee: to deal with local land trust, urbanization, identify parcels for conservation actions, and contacting landowners to learn their intentions and develop conservation easements for sage-grouse if necessary (critical land in Long Valley).
2. Fire management subcommittee to develop a plan that addresses high priority areas.
3. Grazing subcommittee to pull information (grazing history) together.

The South Mono group is working with Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) in identifying private lands with sage-grouse values that can potentially be targeted for easements or outright acquisition. Private lands with known or potential grouse habitat then will be recommended to the County for easement, or acquisition, based on their overall importance to grouse and where they occur in relation to existing development. Many of the private parcels in the PMU are in prime grouse habitat. These parcels will be targeted for acquisition or easements if the land owner's ever decide to sell.

Bodie Hills - reported by Leeann Murphy, USFS - Bridgeport

Removal of 700 acres of pinyon south of Green Creek Road.

There is a planned study in relation to the pinyon removal project in Northern Mono Basin. This area has definite issues; however, all progress has stopped due to protest by Native Americans and several locals in Lee Vining, each having their own issues. Steve Nelson suggested that the Sage-grouse Conservation Team send a letter to the BLM State Director in California, supporting this project, and suggesting that the BLM does not drop the ball.

Field exam with Sierra Pacific for power line and pole removal: the power line is an inactive interstate power line. The power line runs from Bodie, across the Nevada line, to the substation in Fletcher. Removal is scheduled for 2006.

Desert Creek / Fales – reported by Tracey Jean Wolfe, USDA - NRCS

Group last met in February.

Sweetwater Pinyon removal project was stopped due to a lawsuit from the Bridgeport Indian Colony. We have a field trip scheduled with the tribe. The group is hoping to consult with them and ensure the importance of this project.

It was suggested that the Sage-grouse Conservation Team could help by getting tribes motivated and involved, also by providing the LACP groups with tribal contacts.

Tracey gave a west-wide training on Bi-State planning efforts. NRCS tech notes for private land owners regarding issues with sage-grouse in alfalfa; harvest times, escape cover, etc.

Mt. Grant – reported by Jason Salisbury, NDOW-Fallon

Flew in March, we had record high lek counts and brood surveys.

- Over 135 birds on PMU leks
- Lupine Meadows over 50 birds surveyed
- 9 Mile Ranch over 400 birds surveyed
- Rosaschi Meadows over 25 birds surveyed
- Aurora had 28 birds surveyed

John Peterson (Hawthorne Army Depot) informed the group that they were still waiting for two snow machines, which are due to arrive in October. Snow machines are critical for accessing the mountain during the fall and winter months.

Need funding for telemetry on Mt. Grant. We had \$16,000 earmarked, but now there is only \$6,000 available.

Cory Overton added that they had 14 new transmitters available for Mt. Grant.

New guzzlers were installed on Powell Mountain.

White Mountain – reported by Tom Donham, NDOW and Alisa Ellsworth, CDFG (by email)

Several actions have been accomplished such as:

- Collared hens on California side, lek not verified – USGS project. Saw 5-6 males on Nevada side, but were unable to collar any.
- Seasonal employees did some R-class work by Silver Peak (classified R rating).
- 90% of the group's efforts have been towards data gathering.
- The removal of 48 wild horses in Fish Lake Valley.
- Completion of a sage-grouse habitat map by BLM for Fish Lake Valley.
- The second field season of a radio telemetry project is underway in the Crooked Creek area of the White Mountains.
- Several habitat improvement projects have been proposed by BLM-Nevada and are awaiting approval and funding.
- BLM mapped all spring sources on BLM lands.
- Forest Service mapped sagebrush habitat in Trail Canyon in the northern White Mountains.
- Worked with Deep Springs College to modify grazing levels.
- A Rangeland Health Assessment (RHA) and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan have been recently completed and will be implemented in the near future.
- A pinyon tree removal project has been identified along the foothills of the White Mountains in the area around Chiatovich Creek. This area is known occupied, brood rearing habitat. Pinyon trees are encroaching into the habitat, and removal of the trees will allow for the recovery of the habitat from "R-3" to R-0" habitat. The project is in the early stages of development and will be considered for funding in FY06.
- In the process of developing the Fish Lake Valley Rangeland Health Assessment, it was concluded that the livestock permittees in the area must repair their existing range improvements and make beneficial use or the range improvements would be cancelled. Letters to that degree have been sent to the permittees and they have already begun to repair the spring developments.
- The group is working on updating various sections of the White Mountain portion of the Bi-State Plan and filling out risk assessments.
- Updates and the Project/Conservation Action Worksheets were due back to Alisa Ellsworth (CDFG) by August 15th.

Genetic Research – reported by Cory Overton, USGS

Sarah Oyler' McCance has our samples. Also, Cory went with Shawn Espinosa to the Yerington High School to pick up their samples. Cory took these samples to the Western Ecological Research Center in Dixon California; a subset of the Yerington HS samples was also sent to Sarah Oyler' McCance. There were 100 samples combined from both groups.

Gil informed the group that Carson High School is interested in taking over where the Yerington High School left off. Their science instructor was looking for projects and approached the Carson City Advisory Board with the idea.

Bi-State Plan Update Process and Timeline

It was decided that December would be a good time to get input from all the PMU groups. The Project/Conservation Worksheets are also due December 31,2005. These worksheets will be a great tool in updating the Bi-State Plan.

Preparing for the next Sage-grouse Conference

Some concerns of the group were:

- When and where will the conference be held?
- Will we be responsible for doing some of the breakout sessions?
- Can we use some of our project success stories as examples at the conference?

The following topics were suggested for breakout sessions:

- Habitat Manipulation
- Telemetry
- Genetics
- Urbanization
- Land Use
- Conservation Easements and Funding Sources
- Implementation Process – how do we get started?
- Field Demonstrations
- Project Shortcuts
- Native American Presentation / Consultation / Communication
- Alternative Energy Issues

Nevada Sage-grouse Conservation Team Update - Reported by Gil Yanuck

Some of the topics discussed in the last two Conservation Team meetings were:

- Adding obligate species to the plan.
- Leta Collord, Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group, gave an update on the progress and direction the Elko Stewardship is moving in.
- Jose Noriega, USFS, did a presentation and overview on the Santa Rosa Prescribed Burn Project.
- National Framework Team Update.
- 2005 Sage-grouse Capture Report

For more details and supporting documents on the Sage-grouse Conservation Team meetings please go to the NDOW web site.

<http://www.ndow.org/wild/sg/region.shtm>

Status of Fund Availability for Private Landowners

LIP Brochure and quarterly update developed by Connie Lee, NDOW - Landowner Incentive Program Coordinator. See attachment

Next Meeting Date

Next meeting set for – January 10th, Smith Valley Library Conference Room, starting at 3:00 p.m.

Bin Items

Status of funding requests - do projects need to be resubmitted annually?

How many dollars are available currently to fund sage-grouse projects and what sources are they from?

Does the state (NDOW) align available dollars to plan projects?

What happened to the Sage-grouse Conservation Team – Funding Subcommittee?

Develop a (county specific) Power point presentation to present at various County Commission Meetings.

Meeting Adjourned