



STATE OF NEVADA

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

1100 Valley Road • Reno, Nevada 89512
(775) 688-1500 Fax (775) 688-1595

MEMORANDUM

January 10, 2005

To: Local Working Groups

From: Sage-grouse Conservation Team (formerly Governor's Team)

Re: Objectives

Most all of you know by now that the US Fish and Wildlife Service's science team and management team charged with the petition review to list the Greater Sage-grouse across it's range has put forward a finding of "not warranted". That finding is now in the process of being printed in the Federal Register. A very important consideration in this decision was the conservation plans produced by the states. The Nevada/Eastern California conservation plan was a compilation of Local Working Group (LWG) efforts to produce local plans and those plans were also considered in this decision. The decision not to list was a close one and further listing petitions could develop and be considered at a future date if the Local Working Groups and agencies do not follow through on these plans.

The Sage-grouse Conservation Team (SCT) at their December 16 meeting discussed what the needs were at the local level to keep the momentum going. Many local group members are feeling a bit "worn down" and wondering if they aren't "done" because we have a first draft of a conservation plan. The Team would like all the local working groups to know how much we appreciate all the hard work you have put forward to date. We would also like to recognize your efforts as being instrumental in keeping the sage-grouse off of the endangered species list. However, the job of truly conserving sage-grouse in Nevada has only begun – and the SCT is very much in need of assistance from the local working groups through implementation of the recommendations from the Plan you worked so hard to complete. Therefore, we would like to solicit your continued participation and commitment to this long-term conservation strategy, and would like to "energize" you with the thought that the fun part begins with implementation!

As the editor of the Nevada Appeal put it in the Dec. 17 edition: "Clearly, more time spent working on the ground than arguing in courtrooms would help every threatened species". The Local Working Groups are still critical to the ultimate success of the Conservation Strategy, and in asking for continued assistance and commitment from the local working groups, the SCT determined that some clarity was needed as to what assistance was specifically required from the LWG's to ensure success. This memo

represents our request for specific assistance, thereby clarifying the mission of the Local Working Groups into the future.

- 1) There are some people who have served on a LWG for the past four years or so and whose commitment to the process was, in their minds, only to come to this stage in the planning process. That's all right! If you are no longer willing to serve on a LWG, we thank you for all your hard work to this date and we do not begrudge you handing over the reins to someone else. All we on the SCT ask of you at this point is that you suggest a replacement for yourself as we move forward into implementation. For those of you excited about continuing into implementation, thank you for your continued commitment.
- 2) To date we have received 21 Population Management Unit (PMU) plans representing about a third of the PMU's. Completing PMU plans is important, but in priority order as determined by the LWG. For Elko, who is taking a watershed assessment approach, the task will be to complete those assessments as they were prioritized. For the LWG's who are not doing individual PMU plans, make sure your plans address actions that cover your entire PMU range. Remember to think in terms of what it is going to take to protect your significant sage-grouse population first (R-0 habitats) and then consider treating habitats (R-2, R-3 habitats) that won't require intensive manipulation to correct. We would encourage those LWG's responsible for small PMU's and small sage-grouse populations to combine recommendations for those PMU's into one short PMU plan for the short term. In most cases, these PMU's will not be the priority PMU's and simply determining if sage-grouse still inhabit these areas and where would be the most significant task at hand. Although planning will always be ongoing with the adaptive management principle incorporated into our efforts, we must finish up the initial planning phase.
- 3) The SCT has formed an adhoc Implementation Team that is working on prioritizing projects from the local plans from a statewide perspective. Agencies and partners will fund this prioritized list as money becomes available through the myriad of programs that can be utilized for these purposes. Projects will be ranked based on statewide priorities and criteria developed by the Implementation Subcommittee with some pilot type work being funded that will lead to analyses of project effectiveness. This statewide perspective in no way diminishes the local focus that local groups need to maintain. If a LWG can find alternative funding for local priorities, then we highly encourage you to do so. Even if a LWG does not contain the largest, most concentrated populations of sage-grouse, there are still many things that can be done on a local level. What we would request is communication with the SCT in regards to ongoing local projects funded this way, to keep track of all that is being done for sage-grouse in Nevada. Shawn Espinosa with NDOW will act as the contact person for this purpose. Shawn will also be keeping the LWGs apprised of project status, ranking criteria and providing that very important feedback loop between the SCT and local teams.
- 4) We have committed to using an adaptive management approach, whereby, as we learn more about sage-grouse and the effectiveness of projects we will modify our plans. As we finish up PMU and watershed plans, this process is

going to be overlapping with adapting current plans in this adaptive management scenario. While the SCT does not want to dictate to the local groups that they must update their local plans every year, the quicker information is incorporated into the plans, the more effective implementation will be. The SCT would like to recommend the LWG's address updating of their local plans on some schedule not to exceed a five year time frame. This does not mean an entire rewrite of your plans, but an update on a timely basis to demonstrate accomplishments that were outlined in the original plans.