

Sage-Grouse Conservation Team

Nevada Department of Wildlife
Reno Office
Conference Room B
1100 Valley Road
Reno, Nevada
April 26, 2007
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Those in attendance were:

Mike Atamian - UNR
John Axtell - BLM, Carson City
Dawn Carter - NDOW
Ali Chaney - Natural Heritage
Shawn Espinosa - NDOW
John Heal - Foothill Association
Hugh Judd -
Don Klebenow - UNR, Retired
Eric Kolada - UNR/USGS
Elroy Masters - BLM, NVSO
Melissa Nelson - BLM, Susanville
Cory Overton - USGS
Robin Powell - Audubon
Rose Strickland - Sierra Club
Sherman Swanson - UNR
Gil Yanuk - Carson City ABMW

Agenda Item #1: Welcome - Introductions/Announcements

Shawn Espinosa (NDOW) opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. All attendees were asked to introduce themselves and their affiliation. Shawn had several announcements and they are listed below.

- The National Framework Team has completed the Comprehensive Conservation Strategy and it is available on the internet at <http://wafwa.org>. Each attendee was provided with a CD enclosed in a brochure explaining the strategy.
- The Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO), received \$246,000 through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Question 1 money was used as match. The funds will be used to monitor the response of songbirds, sage-grouse and pinyon juniper jays to pinyon/juniper removal projects. Different treatment methods will be utilized and some vegetative monitoring will be conducted.

- The Lincoln County Pinyon/Juniper project is mostly complete. Funds totaling \$40,000 were obtained from Upland Game Stamp monies.
- The Nature Conservancy completed a mosaic treatment trial in Steptoe Valley. The preliminary results show an increase in forbs but no difference in grasses.
- Proposed SB189 will award NDOW \$200,800 for sagebrush enhancements. The bill is still alive in the Legislature; however no further meetings have been scheduled for it. If approved, enhancements will be completed where the BLM has already completed environmental assessments.
- Proposals for Joint Venture are due by June 15th, and the maximum amount that can be applied for any one project is \$100,000.
- Kevin Kritz with the USFWS will be moving to Colorado.

Agenda Item #2: Review Agenda Items/Changes

The agenda was reviewed and the only change was that Item #7 the “Falcon to Gondor Transmission Line Study Update” would not be presented as Mike Atamian was not prepared for today’s meeting.

Agenda Item #3: Review and Approve Letter to the Governor Seeking Support

The group decided that we needed to select one person to act as the secretary for our team who would sign the final letter and send it. Don Klebenow was selected.

Several options for a new name for this group was discussed and if we are still a Governors Team. A copy of the draft letter was passed out and discussed with several changes made. The final draft will be re-written with changes, signed by Dr. Klebenow, and sent to the Governor’s office. (A copy of the final letter is available by request to NDOW).

Agenda Item #4: Lassen and Mono County Sage-grouse Habitat Relationships Study

Melissa Nelson (BLM, Susanville), reported that Dawn Davis is working on this study. Dawn is currently trapping 30 sage-grouse to place collars on them, and she will move on to pit tagging soon. Dawn is focusing on natal dispersal nesting, and monitoring the birds throughout their life cycle, to try and determine where the “fall out” is occurring.

Agenda Item #5: Healthy Lands Initiative - BLM

Elroy Masters began this item by showing the group a large map of the Owyhee Desert Portion of Humboldt and Elko County, including some surrounding areas, and presenting a power-point slide video. Elroy stated that the main focus of the initiative is to get projects on the ground and form partnerships at the same time. Elements in the initiative include:

1. Building relationships to expand the habitat area.
2. Success on a landscape level as opposed to lots of little projects.
3. Restoration of burned areas.
4. Sagebrush and Riparian habitat restoration, but primarily sagebrush.
5. If initiative is successful funding can be continued.
6. Monitoring is included for sage-grouse but not vegetative. Hopefully the USGS will assist in monitoring as they have received funding.
7. FY 2008 budget is 1.9 million.

Sherm Swanson stated that he would like UNR to hire someone to dedicate their time to monitoring statewide. Sherm also discussed how to monitor sage-grouse and vegetation around the entire west.

Sherm suggested that team members might like to read a copy of the book "Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook". The book has had a lot of internal and external review done, and it is focused on objectives. There are no specific monitoring methods described in the book.

Agenda Item #6: "New" Threats to Sage-grouse Habitats

Shawn described some new threats that may have an impact on sage-grouse habitats.

1. Table Mountain & Wilson Mountain Wind Energy - Met with proponents and a letter has been sent, with no response as yet. Strong opposition.
2. Telegraph Basin in the Egan Range - A significant number of birds have been monitored in the area. A significant number of towers (>100) are projected to be placed on the top of the mountain.
3. Pond Peak Wind Energy - This is a brood rearing area and there is one lek at Cottonwood Creek.
4. Hot Sulphur Springs Geothermal Project - Drilling was done during breeding season. Private land, and DOE funds were used.

Agenda Item #7: Falcon to Gonder Transmission Line Study

Item cancelled.

Agenda Item #8: Review Bin Items/Adjourn

The next meeting of the Nevada Sage Grouse Conservation Team will be held the third Thursday in July, at the Department of Wildlife Office in Reno. All team members will be advised closer to the meeting date.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Dawn Carter
Recording Secretary