

NNSG Sage-grouse Pod Meeting Minutes June 24th, 2010

Present: Caleb McAdoo, Connie Lee, Gar Abbas, Kyra Walton, Gary Back, Gerry Miller, Larry Hyslop, Donna Jewell, Chris Jasmine, Jaime Jasmine, Doug Clarke

Introductions:

Introductions were made by all the attendees.

Public comment and Addition of Agenda Items:

Donna Jewell led a discussion regarding the Ruby Pipeline funding potential. She stated that there was roughly 8.8 million coming to Northern Nevada for restoration work. Some of this money would be earmarked for pygmy rabbit work. The money would be administered by NDOW. There would potentially be funding available for Sage-grouse projects, and the NNSG Pod should be looking for project opportunities in the future.

There was some discussion again about the Stewardship Group Study Plots. Discussion was about the success of the different treatments. Gerry Miller stated that he received a grant to complete a "final report" on each of the treatment methods.

PMU/Watershed Assessment Progress:

Gary Back with Great Basin Ecology talked for about an hour on the progress of the North Fork PMU assessment. Currently Gary has two other individuals assisting him with the inventory, Gary Brackley and Jim Evans. Both Gary and Jim spent most of their career with NRCS and they have extensive backgrounds in large scale ecological assessments. All of the background GIS work has been completed and Gary and Jim are currently collecting field data. This data collection consist of spatial data, pictures, plant composition, plant production, and R values. Some discussion of R values followed and it was expressed by all in attendance that R values are a good starting point for assessing habitat but that they have their limitations. Gary finished up by saying that the inventory process will continue throughout the summer and fall. The plan is to have the inventory completed by the end of the year. Doug Clarke asked if it was possible for the Pod to review the inventory prior to it being finalized. Doug also asked if there was any possibility for volunteers to assist with the inventory work. Gary Back said that there is not any current plan for using volunteers to help with inventory work. Gary expressed that if NNSG wanted to use volunteers in the future to help with inventories, it would need to be set up properly to ensure that the volunteers did not make more work for the inventory crews.

Forest Service Sage-grouse Projects: discussion and input from the Pod:

Gar Abbas and Caleb McAdoo led a discussion about some proposed Pinion Juniper projects in the Ruby Mtns. and East Humboldt's. These

projects will be located on Forest Service land and are for the removal of encroached P/J trees. Caleb stated that he had found some historical photos and that the difference was dramatic. The group discussed different treatment methods for removing P/J and it was stressed that no matter what technique was used it needed to be implemented properly so that the treatment would last as long as possible. Overall the group seemed to be in support of the project ideas. At this point it was brought up that the P/J treatment areas could also extend onto BLM land. All in attendance thought that a treatment that extended across the BLM/FS boundary would be a great project and that each treatment might be more accepted by the public if the both agencies were completing the same project.

The group expressed that they enjoyed hearing about upcoming projects that other agencies are completing, and it was the general feeling that all the agency personnel should bring proposed projects to the Pod meetings for review and open discussion. A spot for these types of discussions will be included on future agendas.

CCAA for Sage-grouse: Idaho example and Nevada progress:

Once again Chris Jasmine discussed CCAA's and how they work. Some discussion was had on the Idaho CCAA progress. To date, Idaho has one CCAA almost ready to be signed and several others that are in the works. It has been a learning curve in Idaho and Nevada can learn from their success and failures. It was brought up that the USFWS now has personnel within Nevada working on CCAA's for sage-grouse. The Service has Laurie Averill-Murray starting down the CCAA road in Nevada. The group discussed the importance of picking the correct permit holder for a programmatic CCAA. It was stressed that the group that holds the permit must be trusted by landowners. CCAA's will stay on the upcoming agenda and we can have future discussion as we dive deeper into Sage-grouse conservation in Northeastern Nevada.

Database of Sage-grouse Projects in Elko County: follow up discussion from last meeting with examples of potential

databases: Chris Jasmine lead a discussion of potential databases for tracking sage-grouse projects. There were three different types of databases that were discussed. The first database would be a simple one that is similar to the one in the Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan. This type of database would be paper based and simply contain records in Word or Excel that have the details of the projects. The problem with this type of data-base would be the amount of time it would take participant to enter data, and worse yet is the amount of time it would then take to query the data or run reports. It was the group's opinion that this type of database would not be user friendly. The next type of database we discussed as one similar to The Conservation Registry database. This is a web based data base hosted by a non-profit that uses both spatial and tabular data to report conservation projects. The group expressed some concern about the security of these types of database as well as whether the information would be useful between agencies. The final database that was

discussed was the database that was used when the USFWS made their listing decision. This type of database was based in Access and was used by multiple agencies when the Service made its last data call for sage-grouse conservation projects, and it used some of the information in its listing decision. The group liked this type of database the best since any information put into this database could be used by the Service for future listing decisions for the sage-grouse. Additions that the group felt would be helpful would be the inclusion of GIS or spatial data, similar to the Fish Passage Database. There would obviously be some privacy issues that would need to be worked out if spatial data was included. Other ideas included filters for different user to be able to access different amounts of data, a grant to help fund the creation of the database, ways to validate information received, and most importantly that the Service would be able to use the data entered in future decisions regarding the grouse.

Future Direction of the Pod:

Participants expressed interest in continuing open dialogue regarding projects and other work that was being completed by the different agencies. The group felt that keeping communication between agencies open would help promote better habitat improvement projects in the future.

Possible future agenda items:

1. Discussion and presentation about the Governors Sage-grouse Team. (Where it came from, who is a member, what the team is currently doing)
2. Information about The Nature Conservancy Conservation Action Planning.
3. Agency projects that are in the works.
4. Follow up on the North Fork Inventory.
5. Follow up on a Sage-grouse Database.

Set next meeting date:

The next meeting date will be sometime in late August or early September. A Doodle poll will be emailed to interested parties to figure out the date.