

## NNSG Sage Grouse Pod Minutes 10-21-09

Attending: Russell Woolstenhulme NDOW biologist, Gerald Miller, DaKa Doiyabe, RC&D, Leta Collord, NNSG Wendy Fuell, BLM, Ken Wilkinson, BLM, Larry Gilbertson, NDOW, Chris Jasmine, FWS, and Kira Walton F.S.

Russell presented the data from NDOW's 24 major trend leks (strutting or breeding grounds) representing 10 years of collection across the northeastern Nevada region. Woolstenhulme remarked that the pattern seemed to indicate higher counts on leks in 2004 with tapering off over the next few years. His sense is that the wetter springs – less droughty years – are more favorable to chick production. He mentioned that the seasonal wing-count taken from harvested birds for 2009 will take place over the next few weeks. Wing counts he explains, give biologists information on the production and level of nesting success. This contributes to the sense of the population/production for the year.

Russell spoke to tracking brood data by working specific routes in early summer to observe presence/non presence of sage grouse broods.

NDOW and BLM conduct flights over obscure leks seasonally when funding is available, with seasonal flyovers scheduled yearly. Lek sites sometimes become vacated, or shift slightly, resulting in questioning of lek site integrity.

Larry Gilbertson, NDOW pointed out that in the East Valley PMU, the lek activity is minimal, and it is a no-hunt area. The SWIP line was mentioned (transmission line connecting Idaho to Las Vegas) in the eastern side of the county, could impact sage grouse lek activity. The transmission line is undergoing its second market testing by L.S. Power; this is needed in order to ascertain the integrity of the project.

Wendy Fuell, BLM noted that their state office was calling for an update on the R Values for the districts. R values, or restoration values, are related to a matrix describing the habitats on the landscape necessary to supporting the life cycle of the sage grouse. The degree the habitat varies from the "ideal", determines the state of health of a PMU area, and gives guidance for restoration measures. The R value scale is: R0, R1 plus A & B sub categories, R2 plus A, and (Russell, please fill in the current scale)

Leta Collord stated that NNSG was interested in applying for one more PMU Habitat Conservation Assessment under the state Question-1 program. The Sage Grouse Pod should select the location of that study area. The Tuscarora PMU is completed, and the North Fork is underway with the report due in the spring of 2011. The group discussed the remaining PMU's being Ruby Valley, Snake, Gollaher, O'Neil and the South Fork. It was suggested combining the Snake and Gollaher as one study area. Ruby Valley would cover south of 1-80, from ridge top in the Ruby Mountains to the ridge of the Pequops. The pod members will ask their colleagues to ponder the various aspects of each PMU, with the idea of making a selection by the end of 2009. A preliminary proposal is due in March of 2010. (PMU map attached) Referencing the matrix in the Elko County Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation Strategy,

Submitted: Leta Collord Acting Pod chair