

Sage-grouse biologist conference call:

Participants:

Terry Ireland	Pat Deibert	Steve Abele	Jay Martini	Lynn Gemlo
Terry Quesinberry	Alex Schubert	Ron Baxter	Jesse D'Elia	
Jessie Gonzales	Jeff Berglund	Betsy Herrman	Kevin Shelley	

BLM/FS Planning efforts general discussion:

- SD – public draft was released last week; MT ES provided comments yesterday on the Lewistown amendment.
- Great Basin area – concerned with potential lack of tools in conducting effects analysis (specifically the VDDT)
- Still concerns with size of document to get a thorough review in the time allotted.
- Table used in MT and ND is useful – Helps with not only linking the COT to the document, but BLM's rationale and presentation. Several versions of the table (most similar with some tweaks). BLM is creating their version of the table, but have tied it to the COT.
 - Use a table that makes sense for your specific planning effort, but these tables are a great template to start with.
- Where there is room for improvement – doesn't take the BLM to the final point – still concerns with connecting to purpose and need – still lacking specificity regarding "the how". BLM argues that they can't get too specific because it precludes options.
- Adaptive management should not be the tool to achieving conservation, but only the step taken when the conservation doesn't work – concern with the reliance of some BLM offices on this approach
- Adaptive Management triggers should be designed to not tie hands of manager (still allow multiple options to address the problem)
 - Perhaps an option should be a decision tree for managers making determinations while considering sage-grouse conservation? This will help promote consistency in application of the adaptive management process within and across plans.
 - WY BLM has developed a framework that identifies triggers and then responses. Internal document for now, but Pat has provided comments. Will see if we can get that, or a sequel, to share.
- BLM concerns are also legal If have to do adaptive management – will BLM have to do a supplement NEPA effort if the adaptive management response takes them out of the realm of what has been covered in the original NEPA documents (which could take years, thereby making the adaptive management concept moot).
- We (FWS) need to be consistent in our approach to this issue.
- NPT call tomorrow (6/21) – covering monitoring and adaptive management – Pat will send out any appropriate information resulting from that call.
- Utah has areas that are mapped and occupied, but are other areas that are likely suitable, but have not been surveyed for occupancy. So the conservation value and need for these areas are unknown.
 - UT FWS is looking for a commitment in the EIS to ensure the surveys will happen in these areas and management adjusted appropriately and updating maps as new data are provided. This needs to be a part of the adaptive management component of this plan – if birds are found in new areas need to have the framework in place to allow for their incorporation into the planning efforts without going back through NEPA.
 - WA uses occupancy models (specific to WA) to outline potential areas and provide a basis now for describing to the public that these are areas that they may need to expand their management options to later if birds are discovered.

- NV – still working in PPH/PGH world – suggest that the document be written so that if new data on occupancy become available the provisions identified for PPH/PGH be extended to these areas.
- Where does the burden of proof lie? If a project is proposed, need to know if birds are present. Need to minimally have some criteria for assessing the potential of habitat to support birds prior to project implementation.

Fires are already affecting sage-grouse habitats – please advise Pat of any fires within habitat in your states so that she can keep a running tally in case of inquiries.

Please continue to update the state plan matrix on the sharepoint site.

There is a National Policy Team call on 6/21. The agenda includes the briefing papers we provided on adaptive management and monitoring, effects analyses in the NEPA documents, and Invasives and fire commitments in the draft planning documents. Pat will advise the group of the results.

There is a Task Force meeting in Denver on July 17 and 18. A primary issue will be how to we will be requesting submission of conservation and other efforts in preparation for the 2015 listing determination. We don't have to have all the fine details worked out, but do need to have a conceptual framework in place to present at this meeting. Jesse has started working on this with the group identified at the meeting in Boise. Stay tuned for opportunities to provide input!

On Wednesday June 26 there will be a meeting in the R6 RO to develop a timeline for the 2015 listing determination. **Pat will share when its completed.**

Round the lek:

- NV – Bi-state moving along, Governor's group moving forward with large part of effort including banking; Pete Coates being funded to do RSF modeling for the state (funded by the Governor's sagebrush council).
- ND – process of reviewing another draft – tentative thumbs up with caveats – going in the right direction
- CO – Term position will start July 1 – will pick up some of Terry's work so that he can focus more on sage-grouse issues.
- WY – 9 plan amendment reviewed – concerns with lack of commitment language and fire conservation measures; Bighorn Basin has moved forward, Lander – final EIS/ROD in Aug. Rest are due to release drafts later this summer. Species assessment for CNOR has gone through regional review and ES office is still resolving comments.
- MT – 3 EISs out, Miles City comments have been sent, others in review; MT government has requested an extension to Sally Jewel from 60 – 120 days for public comment on the BLM draft EISs.
- UT – Admin draft comments due 6/24 – admin draft improved over the preliminary draft
- WA – New SGI bio – Mike Brown – in Ephrata NRCS office; State has no budget, so WDFW is preparing to shut down July 1; meeting with DOD on Yakima to discuss projects there.

Next call is Thursday, July 25, 2013 at 2:00 Mountain (date change due to conflict with Sage-grouse Task Force meeting). Send any agenda items to Pat !