

Southwest Desert Sage Grouse Working Group
November 1, 2007
10:00 a.m.

Attending:

John Keeler
Jason Nichols
Becky Bonebrake
Nicki Frey – New cell phone 435-559-0360
Vicki Tyler
Mark Nelson
Kala Minkley

Kala Minkley was introduced from the Chicago Botanical Institute. She is an intern that will be working with the Cedar City BLM office on sage grouse and prairie dog projects.

Agency updates

DWR – Jason Nichols

- Circulated Summary of Sage grouse strutting ground counts for Beaver and Iron counties.
- He also has lek site maps and photos available. Jason will have these available for the group at the DWR office, as needed.
- Becky & Jason will get together to work out discrepancies in the lek names/locations so all data is consistent. Will try to get this done before the spring counts.

Farm Bureau Federation - John Keeler

- Recovery credit system meeting – Sandy, Utah. Approximately 35 attended. Presented the model used by Fort Hood, Texas. Model could be used for Prairie Dogs in southern Utah. May be a way to work with private landowners to recover prairie dogs, using a “free-market system.” Environmental Defense received a conservation innovation grant to help implement the credit system.
- Annual Farm Bureau Federation Meeting – November 15 & 16th, Marriott.
- Public Lands and Livestock Conference– January 28, 29, St. George at the Holiday Inn.

USU Extension Office – Mark Nelson

- Annual Watershed Tour and Pesticide Training – November 15, 10:00 – County Administration Meeting. Will look at some of the burned areas from Milford Fire, discussing cooperative weed management programs. A lot of the private land projects will be seeded to intermediate wheatgrass b/c that is what is available.

NRCS/RC&D – Vicki Tyler

- Contract is in place for the USU Extension person to utilize RC&D office and some NRCS equipment (vice Rhett). This contract will be in place over the next couple of years to assist in Sage Grouse Working Group projects.
- Safe Harbor Agreement for southwest Willow Flycatcher is pretty much completed. Work continues on Sheldon Johnson's property for the tamarisk removal work and willow farm along the Virgin River.
- UACD/RCD Convention is next week (see attachment). The RC&D portion will be held on Wednesday, with the UACD portion held on Thursday and Friday.
- New Executive Board for RC&D
 - Jim Sorenson, Chairman - Kanab
 - Jim Matson, vice-chair – Kanab
 - Gayle Rohde, Secretary - Enterprise

BLM – Becky Bonebrake

- BLM is moving back to a three-tier system – exact date TBA. Cedar City will go back to the “Color Country District” (Kanab, St. George, Cedar City, Richfield and Hanksville). There will be a District Manager and a Field Office Manager. For the most part, the resource structure will remain the same – Becky will have more details on this as they move forward.
- Update on Milford Flat Fire – Currently finishing up archaeology clearances and finished chaining. There will be an MOU/Agency Directive/Federal Register notification which will show designate roads as closed unless designated upon, due to the high amount of cross country travel.
- There are a couple of geothermal projects in the works in this same area. BLM drilling exploratory gas/oil well just north of Parowan Gap Road, along the ridgeline. Just completed over 100 mi. of seismic line in Beaver County (??).
- Update on grazing permits –The group would like to be updated on status of grazing permit renewals as the BLM moves to complete them. Becky will coordinate this.
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USU Extension – Nichole Frey

- Rhett Boswell has taken a position with DWR, working for Bruce Bonebrake as a Habitat Technician. Rhett has completed the reports, so please look them over. Nicki hopes to have someone to replace Rhett by next spring. She submitted a grant to Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife to do some telemetry work and continued research in Hamlin Valley. She will keep the group advised as to the status.
- Garfield County Habitat Conservation Plan – Nicki will be working with Garfield County to rewrite the Habitat Conservation Plan for Utah Prairie Dog. Color Country (CCARM) local working group will incorporate this into their working group objectives.
- Nicki has a couple of students completing sage grouse work in Alton.
 - Also has a student working on a predator study on Cedar Mountain. Condors on Cedar Mountain are scavenging at a very high rate – what does this mean for other predators? May be more research on this in the future.

- She has another student working on a GIS project re: deer-car collision and putting spacial data to a shape layer. He will correlate this data to migration corridor info from the Division. Eventually would like to get some “dynamic road signs” to warn of road hazards. John suggested that Nicki contact the Insurance Institute to sponsor research.
- There will be an article out in January on human-wildlife conflicts (deer collisions). This can be obtained at www.berrymaninstitute.org/hwc.
- John asked about training for ranchers and farmers for collecting point data that can be incorporated into GIS – Nicki offered to help John put something together with SUU and GIS shop.

BLM – Kala Minkley

- Habitat and vegetation monitoring was completed in 2007 (see attachment). Kayla will be leaving until January, and then will be available until May to help with research projects.

Research/Project Work

- Nicki explained the project work that Rhett completed this summer and passed out the draft annual reports. Each project involved a control and treatment site. Two studies were done – 1 for mechanical treatment (disking) and one for tebuthurion treatment. Another study will be done on the effects of fire (TBA). There is another project that involves mechanical treatment and then seeded/not seeded in the Panguitch area – Rhett will have a report to Nicki soon, and she will pass them on. All four projects involve collecting the same data, so some comparisons can be made over time.
- Becky has some data for projects showing seeded vs non-seeded. Nicki will get with Nicki if she needs this.

Updated Notebook Status

- Last meeting folks requested updated lek sites and maps. We have the lek data. Will continue to work on getting this.

Nominees for Chair

Chad Reid
Jason Nichols
Nile Sorenson

- Nicki will circulate a “voting” for to nominate for a new chair.
- Vicki will follow up on getting a person here from the Forest Service.
- Other groups/folks we would like to see involved?

Updates to Plan

- Plan has been out for about a year. The plan is dynamic. Nicki suggests updating annually, at a designated meeting. This will be put on the agenda for the January meeting.
- **Please keep in mind, that this is not an opportunity for people not previously involved to rewrite the plan and/or change the process, but is simply a chance to update what is already there (appendices for new research, etc.)**

Next meeting date

- Wednesday, January 23, 1:00 p.m. – Extension Office
- Nicki will reserve the room.

Adjourn at 12:00 noon.