

**UINTAH BASIN
LOCAL
WORKING
GROUP**

Date: 8/25/14

Place: County Building in Vernal, Utah

Present: Brian Maxfield (UDWR), Bob Christensen (USFS), Scott Chamberlain (SITLA), Pat Rainbolt (UDWR), Boyd Kitchen (USU Extension), Natasha Gruber (NRCS/Mule Deer Fdn), Emily Spencer (Dinosaur NM), Terrell Thayne (GIP), LDee Curtis (Deseret Power), Jim Brown (Conservation District), Dixie Sadlier (BLM), Kirk Wood (Duchesne County), Scott Chew (co-chair, rancher/landowner), Stephanie Tomkinson (QEP Energy), Eric Ellis (UDWR), Evan Guymon (Duchesne Co. Conservation District), Lorien Belton (USU Extension facilitator)

Information Presented/Discussion Highlights

Utah State Plan: Disturbance maps layer review

Eric Ellis introduced the baseline disturbance maps (as of April 1, 2013). These maps are intended to show existing disturbance in the SGMAs, and will be used in calculating the extent of any future disturbance to sage-grouse habitat in the SGMA. The group had a printed copy, where comments and updated information was recorded, and also looked at the electronic copy online, which allowed us to zoom in and turn layers on and off to see detail.

The maps show various disturbed areas within the SGMA, including agriculture, roads, powerlines, oil and gas disturbance, etc. There were additional areas, coded in blue, where the developers of the map were unsure as to what a feature on the landscape was. Those areas were coded in blue polygons, and left for the local working group to identify. The majority of the meeting was spent identifying what the previously uncoded (blue) areas were. Gravel pits and previous range or pinyon-juniper treatments accounted for the vast majority of the polygons. The group got more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the map. The baseline map will be left with Brian Maxfield so that additional changes can be recorded locally. Anyone wishing to view that hard copy may contact Brian. Eric Ellis will ensure that the changes and updates make it back into the final online version.

Population and Lek Count Updates

Brian Maxfield provided updates on the GPS collar data from the Colorado collars on Blue Mountain sage-grouse. One collared female came into Utah. Although she was only located by GPS, we do not know if she had a brood. However, the timing of her movements makes it likely that she did nest and hatch chicks. It appears that she flew approximately 19 kilometers into Utah from a lek in Colorado, then gradually made her way back, walking at least half way.

Brian noted that getting GPS collars on in Utah has proved difficult, just due to difficulties in the field during trapping efforts. The birds are using a guzzler but are difficult to catch in the area. The efforts will continue, however.

Pinyon-Juniper mapping results

The Utah-wide Pinyon-juniper mapping conducted by NRCS contractors is complete. The files are very large. After some ground truthing, it appears that the accuracy of the 0-10% PJ cover categories are not very accurate, and not useful for site specific project planning. Big picture, however, they may be very handy. They have not been out long enough for anyone to use them on a project. Brian Maxfield noted that he has shrunk the files somewhat and was using different (fewer) categories. The maps seem to have picked up wet areas, and some serviceberry and even occasionally very tall dense sagebrush, and labeled it as PJ. This was likely because of the reflectivity of the vegetation in the landsat images that were used to make the map.

Brian noted that the phosphate mine has done its own PJ mapping work on Phase I and Phase II, which may be more accurate at a small scale. That was only done for areas relevant to them, as a way of thinking ahead to potential mitigation needs.

Upcoming National Sage-grouse Forum

Lorien reminded everyone about the International Sage-Grouse Forum to be held in Salt Lake City on November 13-14, 2014. **Note the minor date change!** She will send out an email with additional information.

Follow-up Needed

- The baseline map will be left with Brian Maxfield so that additional changes can be recorded locally. Anyone wishing to view that hard copy may contact Brian.
- Eric Ellis will ensure that the changes and updates make it back into the final online version.
- Lorien will email more information on the November sage-grouse Forum.

Next Meeting:

The fall meeting will coincide with a UBPCD meeting, which was scheduled in the meeting immediately following this one (and after lunch). That date will likely be November 18th. The group discussed possibly meeting at another building in Vernal, which will be determined closer to the time.