

Approved

Big Horn Basin Local Sage-grouse Working Group
Meeting Notes
January 19, 2007
Town Hall—Greybull

Working Group Members Present:

- Kathleen Jachowski, (Chair) Executive Director, Guardians of the Range, Cody
- Tom Easterly, Wildlife Biologist, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, Greybull
- Keith Hamilton, Rancher, Hyattville
- Rory Karhu, District Conservationist, Natural Resource Conservation District, Worland
- Tim Stephens, Wildlife Biologist, Bureau of Land Management, Worland
- Matt Call, Environmental Specialist, WyoBen (Bentonite), Greybull
- Chris Pfhister, Rancher/Falconer, Worland
- Lee Campbell, Hot Springs County Planner, Thermopolis
- Carl Meyer, Member at Large

Working Group Members Absent:

- Bill Alldredge, Rancher (Retired Professor-CSU), Thermopolis
- Marvin Blakesley, Adv. HES Professional, Marathon Oil Company, Cody

Facilitator: Dennie Hammer, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Note Taker: Dennie Hammer

Observers/Presenters:

- Tom Christiansen, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Larry Bentley, WY Department of Agriculture
- Lyle King
- Dennis Saville, Bureau of Land Management

Approval of Agenda and Previous Minutes-Dennie Hammer

- Dennie reviewed the day's agenda
 - o There was one correction: Cooperative Sagebrush Initiative.
 - o Minutes were approved.

Opening Remarks-Kathleen

- Stay focused today! We hope to have enough information at the end of the meeting for Tom to get 99% of the first draft of the conservation plan complete.
- Project proposals- Tom E.
 - o Are there any projects that we wanted to promote?
 - o Kathleen suggested we wait until we get through our agenda today before addressing projects. The group agreed.
- Lee passed out a map of the proposed OHV routes in the Worland area and stated that there did not seem to be a great deal of consideration given to sage-grouse. Tom had reviewed the map and had a copy with all of the sage-grouse lek locations on it. There was no action suggested.

Using Adaptive Management to Manage Vegetation for Sage-grouse-Kathleen, Rory, Keith

- Kathleen reviewed the text that she had written for this section of the plan
- Rory reviewed the flow-chart. He had revised the chart by inserting a loop to allow for new information as it might come into the process.
- Tom had also inserted a loop and created a revised flow-chart.
- Carl asked if the flow-chart took into account factors other than soil type? Rory felt that it did and gave a detailed explanation of the steps included in the chart.
- Tom stated that he took the text from Kathleen and the chart from Rory and put it into paragraph format. He handed out his revision for review.
- Dennie pointed out that BMP and RMP have been used to describe management practices and might be confusing to the reader. The group agreed to use RMP (Recommended Management Practices) throughout the conservation plan text.
- The group felt that a new box needs to be inserted at the beginning of the chart to show how/where the flow-chart process begins.
- Lee felt that the heading and highlighted text of Tom's revision were good. Rory agreed.
- Rory suggested that he revise the flow chart once again based upon today's comments. He and Tom will work together to come up with a final flow-chart for this section of the plan.

Bentonite RMP's- Matt

- Matt passed out a revised set of RMP's
- While reviewing the document, it was noted that several words used need to be included in the glossary of terms, notably, overburden, spoil, soil-live
- The group reviewed the RMP's and agreed to allow Tom and Matt to finalize the text. Tom will then email the RMP's out to everyone.
- Matt stated that he had discussed a possible gathering of bentonite producers and the working group to discuss the RMP'S and reclamation.
- It was suggested that a field trip might be good or a roundtable discussion as well.
- Kathleen suggested we discuss this later in the afternoon with the project proposal discussion. The group agreed.

Urban Development-Lee & Kathleen

- Because there were not enough handouts for everyone, Kathleen read aloud the Urban Development text written by Lee.
- Suggestions were made to eliminate the reference to the Westside Irrigation Project near Worland as it is mentioned in another section of the draft plan.
- Tom will work with Lee to edit the text a bit more.

Socio-Economic Considerations-Tom

- Kathleen read aloud the Socio-Economic Considerations text written by Lee.
- Carl asked whether the information in the text was necessary to a conservation plan, and pointed out that he was not at a previous meeting where this section was discussed. The group felt that it was important to include it.
- There was considerable discussion surrounding the sentence stating that Hot Springs and Washakie Counties were opposed to any recommendations that could negatively affect their

economies. Given that no other entities positions or opinions are used in the document, the group decided not to use the sentence, but to clearly articulate in the introductory text that they had give a great deal of thought to the socio-economic issue.

- Tom suggested incorporating the information into the area description as it does a good job of describing the status of the four counties. This will be done.

Morning Public Comment Period

- Larry Bentley
 - o Stated that he had reviewed the flow-chart regarding livestock grazing and desired plant communities to benefit sage-grouse and felt that the chart has many uses. He stated that the process and the product developed are very good.
- Tom Christiansen
 - o When does the group plan to present their conservation plan to the Game and Fish Commission?
 - The commission must have the document for review 30 days prior to their meeting.
 - July might be the earliest that representatives of the working group could get on the Commission agenda. In this case the document would need to be to them by June 1.
 - Dennie asked if the conservation plan could be out for public review while the commission was reviewing it. Tom indicated it must be completed and public comments incorporated into the plan prior to their review.
 - At a minimum, there needs to be a 30-day public review period with some scheduled open-house meetings.
 - Tom Easterly stated that the group has a self-imposed deadline for a relatively good draft to be ready by February 13.
 - This gives the later half of February and the month of March to finalize the plan by the working group.
 - This could leave the months of March and April for the public review and open houses.
 - o Upper Green River Working Group
 - There was an unexpected turn of events when the Upper Green's plan went out for review and public comment.
 - It appears that one of the working group members had not been forthcoming with his true feelings about what had been included in their plan and it has eroded the trust and violated the conditions of the group's charter.
 - Tom stated that the situation was very unfortunate and that he was sorry he even had to bring it up before the Bighorn Basin group. He encouraged everyone to review the group's charter and review what has been agreed to, to ensure that this type of disappointment does not happen again.
 - o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - The FWS will not be reviewing the final document...unless they are asked to do so by the working group. Two other groups have made this request thus far.
 - The only exception to this would be if the sage-grouse was to get listed as an endangered species.
 - In either the voluntary or involuntary review, the Service will be reviewing the actions taken/projects to see if they are PECE compliant.

- Pat Diebert would be the Service's contact on any review and she has stated that it could take as long as 30 days to complete a conservation plan review.

Review of the draft Big Horn Basin Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse- Tom

- Tom reviewed the "factors" text, beginning where the group left off in December.
- Tom used the laptop and power point projector to make the changes directly into his draft document. There was a great deal of discussion and wordsmithing on many of the factors.
- Tim agreed to develop some information and a map on cheatgrass and the Worland burn area to be included in the plan.
- The review took all of the remaining time during the afternoon session.

The next meeting will take place on February 9, 2007 at the Bureau of Land Management office in Worland.