

Sage-Grouse Working Group



Original photograph by Greg Bergquist

Bates Hole/Shirley Basin

Kristie Brown, Sarah Bucklin-Comiskey, Dean Dick, Barbara Dobos,
Pete Garrett, Daryl Lutz, Ron Heward, Jerry Jasmer, Alison Lyon,
Stacey Scott, Donna Wichers, Justin Binfet

February 13, 2007 working group meeting

Present by teleconference: Jerry Jasmer, Ron Heward, Pete Garrett, Barbara Dobos, Stacey Scott, Dean Dick, Justin Binfet, Tom Christiansen, Robin Kepple

Tom C. opened the meeting with a brief discussion on perceived conflict of interest with group members receiving funding for projects. He said this issue has come up in other regions and there is a potential for it. There is an oversight group for approval to cover group members. Tom asked for the group's comments.

Tom said it should not be unexpected because we picked people who were forward thinking and willing to do things to help sage grouse. Need to find a middle ground and not have a cloud of conflict of interest.

Barbara D. stated that the group has discussed this matter in the past and there did not seem to be a problem.

Martin Ranch project proposal was approved in a previous meeting.

Escape ramp project proposal has changed. Now asking for only \$1,000 from the Bates Hole group instead of \$5,000. The Wildlife & Natural Resources Trust Account will purchase all the ramps instead of a 50/50 split with the working groups. The \$1,000 will go toward shipping/distribution/advertising costs. The ramps will go on private or state lands. The group agreed that the project was worthwhile and would benefit grouse. The group approved the project for \$1,000. Tom C. will write the letter of support for the escape ramp proposal.

Schnoor/Flat Top project proposal – the group discussed application process for Plateau herbicide. This part of the project is designed to remove cheatgrass. Keith Schoup joined the group for the discussion and said the application would be done by hand. The group questioned when Keith would hear back from the other potential funding partners and he said by May for most of them. Justin indicated that the site is a poor site for sagebrush production and that this will most likely be an experimental project. He said it will never be the most productive sagebrush stand but sage grouse are still doing well in the area. The group approved the Schnoor/Flat Top project for \$13,000.

Three Man Ranch project proposal – Have LIP money to spend on this also. Project is on Sage Creek/borders onto lake. All work is on private land. NRCS is designing a grazing plan. Jerry questioned whether the grazing plan would provide benefits for grouse. There are a lot of contingencies with the LIP money. The landowner has agreed to sign a 15-year grazing contract if the project is approved. There is also a substantial monitoring process on this project. The landowner is ambitious and eager to cooperate. The group approved the Three Man Ranch proposal for \$13,944.

M&D Land (Dennis Sun) Wildlife Inventory Project

Is there a conflict of interest here? Why is Lockman no longer on the project? Will use the data to do habitat work.

Correlate presence of grouse to ranch management techniques. Then determine how/if those practices benefit grouse. Dr. Roy Roath will synthesize the data. The group approved the M&D Land (Dennis Sun) project for \$10,500.

L3 Cattle Company

Group likes that the project is in a different area. Stacey said it meets the criteria of the flow chart. If they get the full amount and then get WHIP funds, they only get the amount they need. How to do this? If WHIP is approved, they only need \$5,297.50.

The group agreed to approve the \$5297.50, however if WHIP fails to materialize the additional money will be approved.

Stacey will send a letter to the project coordinators letting them know the status of their requests.

Group discussed what to do with other projects they may receive. Suggested holding a mid-summer meeting to look at any other proposals. Have spent about one-half the available funds so there is still money to work with. Stacey recommends mid-July to look at other projects.

Should there be a deadline for new project proposals? Stacey will talk to Tom C. to see how this is being handled in other working groups.

Need to develop a spreadsheet for the money going into projects. Tom is tracking group expenditures. Group wants to be accountable. Robin and Justin will work on this.

Next meeting date: Monday, May 21 at 8:30 a.m.

Robin will e-mail group on commission meeting date that the sage grouse plan will be heard.