

**Upper Snake River Sage Grouse Local Working Group**

January 19th, 2007

Wyoming Game and Fish Conference Room, Jackson 8:30 - 11:30am

Members Present: Joe Bohne, Sue Wolff, Bert Raynes

Absent: Paul Bruun, Doug Johnston, Larry Jorgensen, Franz Camenzind, Eric Cole,  
Doug Wachob, Lance Koch, Randy Williams

Guests: Bryan Bedrosian, Beringia South; Mark Gocke, WGF

Facilitator: Barbara Hauge, Center for Resolution

**Administrative Matters**

The draft minutes of the December 18th meeting were approved.

Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, from 1 - 5pm was set for the next meeting with a backup date of Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1 - 5pm if that date produced better attendance.

The group discussed steps to reach out to stakeholders who have not been active participants in the group: the airport and the Star Valley ag community. Barbara will contact Doug Johnston to ask how the plan will be shared with airport management. The LWG would like early comments from the airport, before going to the public. Sue will contact Sam Crowe to find out what his observations to date have been. If he can't present them at our next meeting, she will present whatever he can tell her. Joe asked to sit in on any meeting Sue has with Sam.

Sue will contact the Teton County commissioners to let them know that the LWG is finishing the plan and that would like to know which commissioner will replace Larry in the group. She also will ask which commissioner took Larry's position on the airport board, as he might be a good group member.

Mark gave a brief overview of the public meeting process in the Upper Green River group, in which a major stakeholder group appeared to come out against the draft plan. Discussion covered the responsibility of representatives to share the draft and bring concerns to the LWG to work through.

**Funding for lek search flights**

Joe reported that he received \$2,500 to fly 4-5 hours. He will do it the same way as last year—at the end of the big game surveys in February. Doug Brimeyer said they would make a point of documenting any sage-grouse seen during big game surveys.

**Beringia South research project**

Bryan met with Matt Holloran and Bret Walker to discuss how to get a methodology that is similar from one study to the other.

The Pinedale LWG officially approached Beringia South to start a raven study concerning their interaction with sage-grouse. They are open to tweaking the sage-grouse study design to mirror our study. Joe would like to see design of the studies done so we end up with comparable data, regardless of who does study. Bryan will get more details.

Bryan has the project contract finalized with Tom Christiansen. Sue is presenting the project to the Park's resource council to get their permission to go to bat for the project. She will ask for a letter from the LWG if necessary.

Sue will apply for the AMK grant for \$5,000 for the Beringia project.

Bryan asked to be notified of the LWG meeting schedule so he could attend and report on his project.

### **Grazing BMPs**

Joe updated the group on the issue of grazing BMP's. BLM and agencies are almost done with the synthesis of the literature review. The livestock industry is concerned as to whether technical guidelines should be developed. The NRCS, Game and Fish, BLM and Dept of Ag have come up with a group of technical experts to develop technical guidelines that could be adopted on a voluntary basis. The LWG can incorporate them as a suggested list in an appendix to our plan or can ignore them. (The Big Horn Basin group is working on their own BMP's.) Most groups will be done before the technical guidelines are developed. The agencies will recommend them if they are good. WGF has pretty much committed to use them as their agency's recommendations. One of the sage-grouse experts is on the committee. Matt Holloran might be asked to participate. Bob Budd will facilitate. They will be science-based practices. Joe will let us know who the technical group will be.

Some LWG's asked this group to give their feedback on the LWG's grazing BMP's.

### **Rangewide Strategy**

Joe told the group that the Western Association of Wildlife Agencies has produced a rangewide conservation strategy and given it to the FWS. WAFWA is in the process of putting out an executive summary, which will soon be downloadable from the WAFWA website.

One component has to do with whether the LWG's are following through on their tasks. One has to do with BLM's habitat assessment. Joe suggested that the LWG reference in our plan that we will be consistent with this strategy.

There will be a list of priority projects and a funding mechanism (ball-parked at \$90 million per year for 5 years) to implement the strategy. There's a real need to come up with the money to do this because some states don't have the funding.

There is also a proposal for legislation.

### **Commitments Table**

Sue will get with fire people to make sure they are OK with the table.

She said the Park can't manage for one species, but could support a multi-species approach.

Sensitive species can't be managed to extinction, so management can't cause further damage.

Sue, Lance and Eric have to say this is a priority.

Sue cautioned that if the LWG looks at the issue project by project, none of this may occur. She asked if there is a way to look at it collectively. Impacts are collective. During yearly fire meetings with all agencies, they could discuss recommendations to improve sage-grouse habitat. They aren't required to. Joe will add this.

Sue and Joe agreed to restate upfront in the plan as well as in the table that management actions can change with new information. Range and wildlife people are struggling with managing habitat over time. The plan should be clear that it is based only on what appears to be the best ideas today.

Joe will add goal statements to the table and send it out to the LWG for review (since so many members were absent), asking that

all commitments be included, and

if anything conflicts with laws or management philosophy that should be noted.

Joe suggested that once the commitments table is approved, that the WLG should determine whether there are some specific things they want to do.

Sue will contact Diane for the fire history overlay of prescribed fires and wildfires.

Bert will offer to assist Franz with the historical section.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 am . The next regular meeting is planned for February 9th from 1-5pm at the WGF conference room.