

**Monticello/Dove Creek Gunnison Sage-grouse LWG
Meeting Minutes
2:00 PM, October 8, 2009
County Building, Monticello, Utah**

Present

Terry Messmer, USU Extension
Phoebe Prather, USU
Guy Wallace, UDWR
Tammy Wallace, BLM
Jim Keyes, USU Extension
Chris Kloster, CDOW
Kathy Nickell, BLM

Information – Presented/Discussed

Review of previous minutes

Minutes were approved as distributed and will be posted on the web site

Gunnison Sage-grouse Status Review

Guy Wallace discussed the status review. The USFWS is looking for habitat projects, research, or any other projects that have been completed since the last review to benefit Gunnison sage-grouse. Amy Seglund is doing it for Colorado.

Chris suggested that Amy could put this together or Utah could do it separately. Chris asked the BLM what they wanted to do. BLM is doing a separate report.

Guy stated we are just going as far back as the previous review. Chris said this was from 2005. CDOW was going to use the same format as previous. Guy stated we are pretty much up to date except for Phoebe's work. Chris has a copy of the last data call.

Action Item: Chris stated he would send out the report to Guy and Terry to review and update. Chris will send to Guy and Terry by 9 October 2009. This information will be submitted to Amy by 23 October, 2009.

Farm Bill Update

Doug Christensen was not able to attend the meeting. At the time of the meeting the final rules for CRP had not been written. Terry Messmer followed up with Ron Davidson, Assistant State Conservationist for Utah to set up a meeting in early November to discuss a strategy for San Juan County to be identified as a high priority area for CRP re-enrollment.

Conservation Easement

Sue Bellagamba was not able to attend the meeting. She provided Guy Wallace with an update of the status of the proposed conservation easement. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) had received a commitment of \$40,000 from the Leland McAlister Fund to apply toward the easement. The landowners have expressed an interest in retaining mineral development rights. If this cannot be negotiated, TNC will not participate in the conservation easement. The funds would be provided to the UDWR should they choose to proceed. At this point no property appraisal has been conducted.

2009-2010 Plan of Work

Terry Messmer presented the 2009-2010 plan of work to the group. This plan of work highlighted the major priorities the group would work on in the upcoming year. Several of the actions items identified in the plan of work are part of the regular agency operations. The plan of work identified some specific objectives for the next year that the group would work toward accomplishing. The plan of work was approved and will be posted on the web site under the Monticello-Dove Creek LWG. The web site address is www.utahcbcp.org.

NFWF Grant

Chris Kloster and Kathy Nickell discussed the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grant. The pre-proposal was accepted by the NFWF. The NFWF has now asked for the LWGs to develop a business plan that focused on benefitting the smaller Gunnison sage-grouse populations. This grant could provide up to \$1 million a year to implement conservation actions to benefit the species outside the Gunnison Basin. The NFWF is looking to support actions that result in measurable improvement to the smaller populations.

The business plan will be developed for 10 years with measurable objectives identified for 3, 5, and 10 years. Funding for future conservation actions would be tied to the local working groups being able to achieve stated objectives.

Chris and Kathy discussed some possible mechanisms regarding how the money would be distributed. One suggestion was to have the funds placed in a non-profit foundation such as the Umcompahgre Plateau Foundation. The Foundation would be the primary applicant and would then distribute the money on a project basis.

The full proposal is due 1 December 2009. Chris will coordinate with the LWG to ensure Monticello-Dove Creek proposals are included in the full proposal.

Research

Phoebe Prather presented the final results of her work on evaluating perch deterrents as a means of reducing raptor perching on power poles. Power poles have been identified as potential perches that could be used by raptors and corvids to prey on sage-grouse adults, chicks and nests. Phoebe evaluated 5 perch deterrents. All of the perch deterrents evaluated were not effective. The potential effectiveness was compromised by placement on the poles.

Phoebe also reviewed preliminary results of a CRP and native rangeland irrigation and grazing experiment. In CRP the grazing and irrigation resulted in increased vigor of crested wheatgrass. In native rangeland she observed an increase in forb response. Both irrigated sites also remained greener longer in the growing season. Phoebe used sprinkler irrigation systems to water her plots because she needed to document application rates. She recommended that if soil saturation was to be used to increase soil moisture and forb response that flood irrigation be used.

Terry reviewed the NFWF draft research proposal. This proposal was designed to evaluate large scale management of CRP to increase forb and shrub cover.

San Juan County Commission

Jim Keyes was identified by the San Juan County Commission to be the official commission representative on the LWG. Jim expressed concerns of the Commission regarding the effect of predators on the smaller populations. Guy and Chris shared the concerns of the UDWR and CDOW. Both agencies are concerned about the effects of predation on smaller populations. This concern was heightened with the recent observations of red fox south of the conservation area.

Predation management has been identified by the Monticello-Dove Creek LWG as a priority conservation strategy. Jim suggested that Guy and Chris work with him to get on the Commission agenda in the future to discuss this issue. Given recent cutbacks in funding in both states, the priority conservation actions that involve working with landowners to implement conservation easements and habitat enhancement have taken higher priority.

Landowner Meeting

Jim Keyes discussed the arrangement for the landowner meeting. The landowner meeting was held at the Lamplighter restaurant in Monticello. The meeting was attended by landowners who have leks on their property or own lands that are considered important habitats. Guy, Terry, and Phoebe summarized the past research.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held January 6, 2010 in the Dove Creek Community Center.