Sage-grouse in Utah: an overview
Presented to County Commissions/Councils
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Basic sage-grouse biology/ecology
  - What is a sage-grouse?
  - What it needs, where it lives, history

2009 Utah sage-grouse state wide plan
  - State level actions стрategies

History and listing decision 2010
  - Candidate species decision
  - What this means for Utah and the counties

Local working group plans
  - What we do, actions strategies
What is a sage-grouse?

'cock'

'chick'

'hen'

nest/eggs

lek
Sage-grouse Leks

- A *lek* is a gathering of males, of certain animal species, for the purposes of competitive mating display.
- Utah’s sage-grouse lek mid March through early May.
- Leks are very traditional -- some leks in Utah have been monitored/counted for over 50 years.
- Center point for population, population estimates and trends, hunting permit allocation

12 hens 4 males at Deseret Land and Livestock, 2010
Number of male sage-grouse counted in Utah

Increased counts in the past 10 years probably reflect increased searching effort, new leks, and increases in populations.
Core Areas

[Image of a bird]

[Map showing core areas in Utah]
Nesting Habits

- Most hens nest within 4 miles of a lek
- Most nest under sagebrush
- ‘Clutch’ average ~8/nest
- ‘Nest success’ ~50%
Survival

- Adult survival rates are 50-70% but much lower for chicks
- For stable populations, need 2.25 juveniles/hen
- Rain and snow influence survival
- Many things directly kill grouse: predation (raptors, corvids, canids, badgers), hunting, and disease.
- Combinations of factors can decrease survival
Sage-grouse need sagebrush

- Large unfragmented tracts
- Eat sagebrush Oct -- March
- Grocery stores: a variety of grasses/forbs = insects for chicks
- Cover in winter
- Not all sagebrush is good habitat
  - Season of use
  - Black sage vs. big sage
Historical distribution is based on the distribution of sagebrush habitat in Utah, as well as observations by early settlers and explorers. Utah’s sage-grouse populations were likely connected through these large tracts of sagebrush which have been lost to fires, habitat conversion, development, and invasive species such as cheat grass and pinion/juniper encroachment. Presently, sage-grouse populations are highly fragmented across Utah.
Sage-grouse Declines

- Declining throughout western U.S
  - Occupy 56% of pre-settlement habitat (Schroeder et al. 2004)
- Utah has suffered loss of habitat and populations
2009 Utah Sage-grouse state wide plan

- 2 Species of sage-grouse in Utah
  - Greater sage-grouse
  - Gunnison sage-grouse (San Juan County)

- This plan addresses Greater Sage-grouse
  - An update/revision of the first Utah plan from 2002
  - Assistance from a specially chartered Sage-grouse Plan Advisory Committee
<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tr>
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History and listing decision 2010

- Sage-grouse is an upland game species
- Utah State Sensitive Species
- Petitioned for listing under the ESA
- Jan. 2005, listing was “not warranted”
- 2007: Jan. 2005 finding was in error, issued a second 12-month review
- 12-month status review was up in December 2008—fast forward to...
- March 5th 2010:

  The USFWS announced that a “protected status for the greater sage-grouse is warranted but precluded.” This means that the species could be listed, but because there are currently so many candidate species, the USFWS is unable to do so at this time.
What does the listing decision mean for Utah?
- Business as usual
- Data collection and monitoring
- Continue current management and implementation of the state plan

Going forward...
- Reviewed annually by USFWS
- UDWR still manages sage-grouse
- USU Extension facilitates the Local Working Groups
What does the listing decision mean for the county?

- Be aware of sage-grouse and its habitat requirements
- Consider sage-grouse in all types of developments
  - urban, rural
  - oil, gas, mines
  - transmission lines, trails, etc
- Know your resources
  - Local working group
  - UDWR website and personnel
  - USU extension
- Support implementation of the state plan and the local working group plan to keep sage-grouse from declining further
Local working groups

- 2002 State Sage-grouse Plan:
  - *Sage-grouse management must be a cooperative effort* between federal and state land management agencies, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Tribal governments, private landowners, grazing and livestock interests, and other interested groups.

- 10 Greater-sage-grouse groups in Utah

- USU Extension administers working groups: “Community-Based Conservation Program”

- UDWR has management authority
USU Extension role in working groups

- Facilitate local working groups
- Help implement a local sage-grouse conservation plan.
- Work with local stakeholders to identify, design, implement, and monitor management projects.
- Assist in monitoring and research
- Be a resource for all partners

Utah’s Community-Based Conservation Program:
“If it’s not good for the community, it’s not good for wildlife”
http://utahcbcp.org
Local working groups

- 10 Local Working Groups for greater sage-grouse
- Every group has a plan
  - Current situation/threats
  - Strategies to improve
Local working group plans

Each plan identifies local threats to sage-grouse, like:

- Loss of quality habitat
- Drought and weather
- Development and fragmentation
- Disease (West Nile)
- Invasive weeds
- Recreation
- Excessive predation
- Improper grazing
- Poaching
Local working groups

- All groups have completed plans.
- Groups meet at least 3 times/year, with a field tour
- Plans are modified as new information is learned or the threats change
- USU Extension tracks progress annually
Local working group website

- USU Extension has a website for the Community Based Conservation Program (CBCP)
  - Local working group information
    - Local conservation plan
    - Meeting times
    - Research projects
  - Research publications
  - Annual progress reports
  - Useful references and links

http://utahcbcp.org/
Morgan-Summit Adaptive Resource Management Group

- **Actions/strategies**
  - Learn about local populations
  - Habitat improvement
    - Lek conditions
    - Breeding & winter habitat
    - Control noxious weeds
  - Address threats
    - Development pressure
    - Fragmentation
    - Direct mortality like roads & predation
  - Work with private landowners
Your local working group: MSARM

- Basic Research:
  - Ongoing at Promontory
  - Proposed for Henefer-Divide

- Current Projects/Issues
  - Development pressure at lek sites
  - Road mortalities
    - Signage
    - Local awareness
  - Address information needs
  - Keep everyone informed
Next MSARM Meeting: NEXT WEEK!

Wednesday, March 30th
6:10 am meet at Henefer Fairgrounds (for lek viewing)
8:00 am meet at Morgan Courthouse (meeting)

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