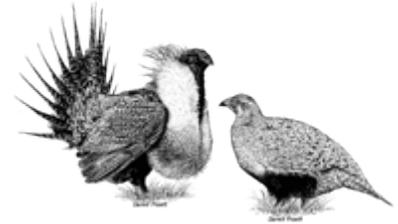


Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee December 17 And 18, 2012 Meeting



Final Meeting Summary

Meeting Participants

The following individuals attended all or portions of the two-day meeting: Jon Beals (OSC), Donna Bennett (Owyhee LWG), Jared Brackett (Jarbidge LWG), Lynn Burtenshaw (Upper Snake LWG), Jack Connelly (IDFG), Courtney Conway (University of Idaho), Neil Crescenti (IDL), Jack Depperschmidt (DOE), Brett Dumas (Idaho Power), Sam Eaton (OSC), Jennifer Forbey (Boise State University), Karen Fullen (NRCS), Steve Goddard (IWF), Bruce Greenhalgh (Owyhee Air Research), Tom Hemker (IDFG), Don Kemner (IDFG), Karen Launchbauch (University of Idaho), Jeff Lord (Mountain Home LWG), Paul Makela (BLM), Robb Mickelsen (USFS), Dustin Miller (OSC), Ken Miracle (TNC Volunteer), Ann Moser (IDFG), Rochelle Oxarango (IWGA), Wendy Pratt (Eastern Idaho Uplands LWG), Jason Pyron (USFWS), Brent Ralston (BLM), Mike Remming (South Magic Valley LWG), Mike Roach (Senator Risch), John Robison (ICL), John Romero (Public), Carl Rudeen (Mountain Home LWG), Richard Savage (ICA), Alison Squier (SAC facilitator), Art Talsma (TNC), Cally Younger (OSC), and Jim Unsworth (IDFG).

Monday December 17, 2012

1. Participant Updates

Meeting participants provided the following updates (those who were present but had no update are not listed):

- Steve Goddard (IWF) – The Mountain Home LWG has been meeting monthly and will provide an update on the 18th.
- John Robison (ICL) – Was part of the Governor’s Task Force. He is also working with transmission line issues.
- Donna Bennett (Owyhee LWG) – The Owyhee LWG discussed having fewer meetings at their January meeting but they agreed to continue with quarterly meetings. There are 43 different people attending the LWG meetings at this point. That represents a travel total of over 6,000 miles. Their next meeting is January 15. They had a field trip on Sept 17. Will have presentations on the Juniper mastication work and Jack’s Creek projects tomorrow. Donna noted that they have a really wonderful and interesting group. They are hoping to do more field trips in the future.
- Neil Crescenti (IDL) – From the state’s perspective they are in wait and watch mode pending the BLM alternative. Neil participated in the Governor’s Task Force. For now they are continuing to use the existing Idaho Conservation Plan to guide actions on state lands. They have been participating in a rehabilitation project with IDFG, providing funding for seeding.
- Gene Gray (West Central LWG) – The last LWG meeting was in March. Gene was also on the Governor’s Task Force. They brought the group together to talk about the Governor’s Task Force. Jason Pyron and Wendy also coordinated a field trip. They are now talking about

possibly writing a conservation plan for West Central but are waiting to see what happens with the Governor's alternative.

- Rochelle Oxarango (Big Desert LWG) – Also participated in the Governor's Task Force. She also participated in a tour of the Big Dessert.
- Rob Mickelsen (USFS) – The Forest Service is cooperating with BLM on the land use planning amendment process. Rob is the Forest Service liaison for Idaho. The Forest Service designated someone from each state to work on that. Last summer Rob participated on a panel for sage-grouse with Challis Experimental Stewardship.
- Karen Fullen (NRCS) – Karen is the NRCS liaison to BLM's sage-grouse EIS planning efforts. She provided a handout on the NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative. Major accomplishments to date (2010-2012) included improved grazing management on more than 360,000 acres, fences marked or removed on ~ 97 miles, juniper encroachment addressed on more than 18,000 acres, and 44,127 acres protected under permanent easements. So far they have funded every application that has come in to them. NRCS folks met with their partners last month to talk about where to go moving forward. In 2013, they are planning on using the Governor's Task Force Map to prioritize applications (priority 1 = core habitat, priority 2 = important habitat, priority 3 = general habitat, and priority 4 = non-habitat). They are trying to improve coordination with partners. This includes work related to conifer encroachment and wildlife in the Northern Great Basin population (Owyhee, Jarbidge, Shoshone Basin, S. Magic Valley and Curlew) and grazing management and easements in the Snake, Salmon and Beaverhead (Mountain Home, West Magic Valley, East Magic Valley, Big Desert, Upper Snake and Challis). In 2013, NRCS has \$2.5 million for EQIP, \$0 for WHIP. There are currently 9 known new EQIP applications (six in Owyhee County, and one each in Butte, Custer and Lemhi counties). Karen said there is a new payment schedule process for 2013. Landowners may notice changes in amount paid for various practices and should let Karen know if they are out of whack so she can pass that information on.
- Jared Brackett (Jarbidge LWG) – Their LWG only had a couple meetings this year. This was due to timing and lack of issues. They've had several projects to put up more fence markers, do Dixie harrow work, and a student field trip. The LWG is in the process of completing their annual review. They are also working on looking at fuel breaks next to major roads in Jarbidge. The next LWG meeting is March or February.
- Richard Savage (ICA) – The Idaho Cattle Association was involved in the Governor's Task Force. ICA is continuing working on various issues with agencies, working on the amendment process, and trying to get the Governor's alternative accepted as the preferred plan. Richard spent a lot of time with members explaining the process and going over things that operators can do to be proactive in the process, and encouraging members to be involved in LWGs. Richard said that maintaining the LWGs is one of the more important things to do as this process moves forward.
- Paul Makela (BLM) – Paul has been working since last spring on the sage-grouse strategy EIS. A few weeks ago Paul sent out direction to the field for folks to begin coordinating on the annual update to the key habitat map. For the time being, the key habitat map still provides the vegetation underpinnings to the current Preliminary Priority/Preliminary General Habitat (PPH/PGH) map. The deadline for folks to get field level edits done on the key habitat map is February 8. That will allow changes to be posted by March 1. Paul also spent time working with Tom Rinkes this fall building training modules for the habitat assessment framework. They put on a three-day training session in Colorado for the Colorado BLM and state agencies. They will be putting on another session in Oregon in March 2013. They will

also be putting on a program for BLM Idaho folks. They are regrouping on issues of consistency, so they will be ready for the field season when it kicks off. They received a final report from Jeff Yeo, who used to work with IDFG, looking at the use of a Lawson aerator and rangeland drill to improve the understory of Wyoming Big sage sites, by re-establishing native grasses,. Jeff completed a 10-year summary of that study this year. Paul will forward it to Alison to distribute to the SAC members. They had pretty good success getting bluebunch wheatgrass to return. The approach t looks like it could be a pretty good technique to restore grasses to the understory at least at smaller scales.

- John Romero (Public) – Having funds to do the juniper work in the Owyhee LWG has been critical and the results are really impressive. The whole mental transition to not being able to get rid of one juniper tree to a whole restoration program is a big transition. On a personal basis, John is having a great time going from the political side of things to biological side. He is currently doing about 20 sage-grouse projects across 4 western states. Doing wind turbine projects near Laramie, a dozen in Nevada and several in Idaho. Tomorrow his technician will give a presentation on the use of aerial thermal imaging to locate sage-grouse, its really neat stuff. They worked on four projects last year using this technique including one for sharptails in Idaho. With thermal imaging you can get to places that you couldn't get to on the ground in winter.
- Mike Remming (South Magic Valley LWG) – Mike has been attending meetings for the South Magic Valley LWG for about a year. The group lost their IDFG coordinator, Rob Longsinger, then they had Mike Pepper facilitate for 2 or 3 meetings. The last meeting was in June and now the funding is gone for Mike's work. Randy Smith and Kelton Hatch from IDFG attended a couple meetings. One thing Mike has noticed is that they're getting a lot more participation from ranchers in the group. That had been a problem in the past. The SGI helped out in that with the juniper mastication funding. Mike is working at the NRCS office in Burley and is overseeing about 120 NRCS projects. He's been able to bring his experience with IDFG over to NRCS, for instance, in using a Dixie Harrow on CRP to thin out heavy sagebrush.
- Ann Moser (IDFG) – Ann participates in the Mountain Home LWG group. She said that Neil Hillesland the usual representative is already on Christmas vacation. The Mountain Home LWG is meeting about once a month. They are the newest group and are still educating themselves. Paul gave presentation to the group recently, and the month before that Dustin Miller came from OSC. They also have a couple of projects underway. It is an interesting group with good landowner participation from part of planning area.
- Jim Unsworth (IDFG) – Jim said he wanted to stop in and see some presentations and also to thank everyone for showing up and for their continued commitment.
- Jason Pyron (USFWS) – Jason said he has been marginally involved in all the previously mentioned things. One thing USFWS is moving forward with is work with biocontrol of cheatgrass with WSU and a couple of LWGs. They are soliciting help for funding for fire and invasive species.
- Jack Depperschmidt (DOE) – The Department of Energy is a cooperator with BLM and is also responding to comments from USFWS on the DOE's draft conservation agreement.
- Brett Dumas (Idaho Power) – Brett was on the Governor's Task Force. He is also on a tall structures workgroup. Gateway West is moving farther towards final EIS. They came out with a sage-grouse supplement and alternative route. Boardman Hemmingway is moving towards a DEIS with BLM. Oregon has its own energy siting process so it's on a separate schedule. Idaho Power is working with BLM on a proposed rebuild of one of the lines going

into the Wood River valley. They are working with IDFG and OSC to talk about the process for rebuilding in place an existing line that goes through core sage-grouse habitat.

- Jon Beals (OSC) – OSC was engaged in the Governor’s Task Force. Jon introduced Cally Younger and Sam Eaton who are two new hires at OSC. Both are legal experts and will be helping with a range of activities especially in regard to NEPA and ESA.
- Wendy Pratt (East Idaho Uplands LWG) – Wendy said that the Bear Lake project field work is done. The report is supposed to be out in January. They did another lek search last spring but the LWG hasn’t seen the report. The LWG met two times last year and Wendy is the only landowner that shows up.
- Don Kemner (IDFG) – Jack Connelly and Don were technical assistants to the Governor’s Task Force. He has spent the majority of his time recently working on that. Also, Mike McDonald out of the Jerome field office and Don have been on the ID BLM team looking at a range of alternatives for amending their RMPs for sage-grouse conservation.

2. Presentation on Idaho Governor’s Sage-grouse Task Force and the Governor’s Alternative

Dustin Miller, the Administrator for the Governor’s Office of Species Conservation gave the following update on the Idaho Governor’s Sage-grouse Task Force and the Governor’s alternative.

- Listing History
 - Greater sage-grouse has a long history of listing petitions, federal actions, and litigation.
 - FWS March 2010- species warranted for listing across its entire range but precluded because of other higher priorities.
 - Thus the bird was added to the federal list of “candidate” species.
 - The FWS must reevaluate the status of greater sage-grouse by September 30, 2015.
- Threats to Greater Sage-Grouse- Identified by the FWS
 - Primary Threats- Habitat Fragmentation due to:
 - Wildfire/ Invasive species (i.e. cheatgrass)
 - Infrastructure/ energy development
 - Inadequate regulatory mechanisms
 - The FWS identified multiple secondary threats- many of them localized.
- National Efforts
 - BLM and USFS manage the majority of sage-grouse habitat across the species range.
 - Many current federal land-use plans (LUPs) were determined “inadequate” by FWS in 2010.
 - BLM/USFS undergoing process to update LUPs to address threats to the bird.
 - In the meantime, interim conservation measures apply to activities on federal land.

- Interior Secretary invited states to develop plans for sage-grouse conservation on federal lands.
- Idaho Sage-Grouse Task Force
 - March 2012, Governor Otter created the Idaho Sage-Grouse Task Force through Executive Order.
 - Diverse 15-member team.
 - Charged with providing the Governor with recommendations on policies and actions needed to preclude a listing of the species.
 - Work of the SAC, LWGs and 2006 plan served as the foundation for this work.
 - Recommendations used to develop Governor's alternative for incorporation into federal LUP revision process.
- Task Force Recommendations
 - Development of a sage-grouse management area with three distinct habitat zones: core, important and general.
 - Primary threats addressed: wildfire, invasive species, and large-scale infrastructure.
 - Secondary threats addressed: livestock grazing management and associated infrastructure, West Nile Virus, and recreation.
- Governor's Sage-Grouse Alternative
 - Habitat divided into three zones: Core, Important and General.
 - Threats addressed for each zone: invasive species, wildfire, large-scale infrastructure, and improper grazing.
 - The Alternative sets management objectives for these activities on federal land only.
 - Protects valid existing rights.
 - Goal- preclude the need to list the species.
 - Overall objective- conserve the species and its habitat while maintaining predictable uses of the land.
 - Objective 1: Implement regulatory mechanisms.
 - Objective 2: Stabilize habitats and populations.
 - Objective 3: Implement adaptive regulatory triggers and wildfire emergency clause.
- What's Next?
 - BLM's Draft EIS (ID/SW MT sub region) out for review in April or May 2013.
 - Final EIS Completed September 2014.
 - OSC and IDFG are cooperators.
 - Short term focus is to replace current interim management protocols with the Governor's Alternative.
- Additional information is on IDFG's web site at: www.fishandgame.idaho.gov

Figure 1. Show the sage-grouse management zones identified in the Governor's alternative.

Sage Grouse Management Zones

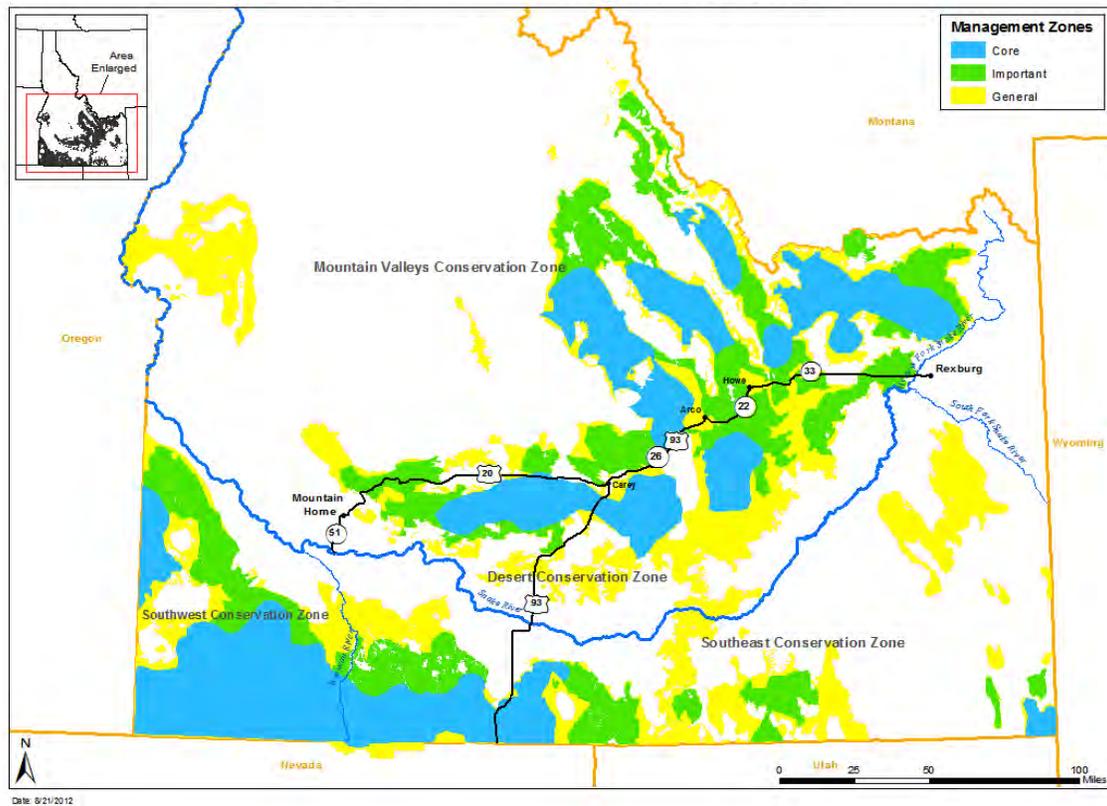


Figure 1. Sage Grouse Management Zones from Governor’s Alternative

Discussion and Q&A:

- Lynn B. – Was predation addressed?
 - Dustin – It was discussed but, predation is more localized in nature and the state plan is looking at larger scales. We feel the 2006 plan already adequately addressed the threat of predation. Predation will be a factor in the USFWS analysis, but it’s not a significant enough factor to trigger a listing. That’s best addressed by the LWGs at a local level.
- Gene G. – Congratulations to Dustin on his new position. From the standpoint of OSC where does OSC see the state plan, LWGs and SAC?
 - Dustin – All are still relevant and important. The Governor’s plan addresses the immediate threats. The foundation for the alternative is the 2006 state plan. The 2006 plan is voluntary by nature. The alternative develops a regulatory mechanism to make things enforceable from a primary threat standpoint through the BLM process and state plans (assuming alternative gets implemented). The SAC and LWG are needed to help implement this plan. It’s a 50,000-foot approach. The Governor’s alternative doesn’t get down into the weeds on what needs

to happen in each area. We still need the SAC and LWG to help implement at that scale.

- Steve G. – You listed 3 objectives. One was to stabilize the populations. How does the Governor’s plan address stabilizing the population?
 - Don K. – Explained that the majority of sage-grouse population is captured in the core area. This is meant to work so that if we maintain the baseline population, i.e., what’s in the core area the population will be protected. However we realize that we can’t just say we’re going to save everything in the core area. We know there are going to be changes to the landscape such as wildfire, and that we’ll have population changes. So the buffer is the important area. If everything is going well in the core we’re fine, if something happens to core we’ve got habitat and population triggers that were still trying to refine with USFWS. This structure will allow us to maintain an overall baseline population for the state.
- Steve – so using wildfire in Owyhee as an example, does this plan have specific measures that are taken like in the state plan? How specific is the task force plan at addressing that particular situation?
 - Don K. – It does from a programmatic level.
 - Dustin M. – So for the wildfire component there’s a whole host of things that need to take place on the ground to deal with the threat of wildfire e.g., fuel breaks, etc. contingent on sufficient federal funding. In Mountain Home folks created a wildfire protective district. What that would do is allow landowners and ranchers to provide additional attack resources. We’re not sure where things are with BLM right now but they’re working on allowing this group to play an active role on BLM land. It is all a programmatic approach, your involvement as SAC and LWG will be integral to implementing it.
- Brett D. – How is the status of Governor’s plan relative to the interim management plan for BLM? What are the criteria to have this take place of interim management plan?
 - Dustin M. – It is contingent on the USFWS approving and signing off on components of the state plan. That happened in Wyoming. That’s what we’re trying to do in Idaho. The Wyoming core area strategy was signed off on by USFWS. We’re in communication with USFWS right now to see where we’re at in engaging their comfort level. This summer Governor Otter sent a letter to USFWS to ask if we’re on the right track, e.g., did we get the map right? Brian Kelly the state USFWS director said yes, and we’ve gotten positive input.

- John Romero. – Something that concerns me is the map. The concern has two parts. There is a really large section of ground identified as core habitat. Nevada has small areas of core habitat on a political boundary. Maybe they addressed it differently than we did? Why is it so large in Idaho versus smaller areas in Nevada? There are areas within the core habitat that aren't actually sage-grouse habitat.
 - Dustin M. – The Governor's alternative is programmatic. Resource specialists on the ground will determine the exact boundaries. One reason why there's so much blue in Owyhee is that this is a stronghold for the bird, it is the second most important habitat throughout the range.
 - Richard S. – The way the core was developed was by the lek counts. We needed the vast majority of the birds in these areas.
 - Don K. – Following up on John's question on Nevada, they have six categories. When you lump those into larger categories of 2 to 3, our map lines up pretty well with Nevada. In addition to lek counts we used BLM's model that they used for PPH PGH model, including leks and persistence model, and also the connectivity component of the model that helped inform the core.
 - Jason P. – The Governor's Task Force also worked with USFWS from the get go and developed this on a biological basis. The state has done a good job.
 - Don K. – Nevada and Utah started after Idaho convened the task force. They started pursuing the same trail; I don't know where those two states are in that process. They are behind Idaho in the process. The six categories are what the Nevada Division of Wildlife created. The Nevada task force was going to take that and apply management criteria.
- Richard S. – Thank everyone in the room who put the work into this process. IDFG and OSC were really helpful. It's been a real hands-on process. For as quickly as it came together, it was impressive how everyone got heard in the process. Richard is on the executive committee of the Upper Snake LWG. A question that came up there was do we need the Upper Snake anymore? The answer is YES! The SAC and LWG were always seen as being an integral part of the process. You can talk about what you're going to do with fire and improperly applied grazing. The Governor's Alternative was intended to supply the regulatory mechanism. Another point is that when we started this in terms of the grazing, we were told that we were paying too much attention to grazing. Wyoming didn't initially address grazing but later needed to include it. I think this makes as much sense as anything I've seen in terms of management of the bird.

- Rochelle O. – I was shocked at how much we got done in such a short period of time. It was a good group. We discussed mapping a lot. It worked really well.
- Dustin M. – Also want to recognize Dr. Jack Connelly.
- Steve G. when you put this on the board you said one of the objectives was to get a population so the bird won't be listed. In the SAC the objective is not only to stabilize but also to increase the number of birds. My concern is that you're managing for the lowest number of sage-grouse to prevent listing as opposed to a lower population. Are you looking to increase the population as well?
 - Dustin M. – Yes.

3. Overview of BLM and USFS Plan Amendment Process

Brent Ralston with the BLM is the project lead for the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub Region planning effort. He gave a verbal update on the BLM and USFS plan amendment process.

The overall goal and objective is to incorporate adequate regulatory mechanisms into BLM and USFS land use plans, to conserve and restore the greater sage-grouse and its habitat on BLM and USFS administered lands on a range-wide basis over the long-term. The impetus for the current planning process was the USFWS 2010 Warranted but precluded finding. An important consideration in the USFWS finding was the lack of regulatory mechanisms.

The sage-grouse planning strategy incorporates all greater sage-grouse populations in contiguous habitat. The planning area includes two large regions, the Rocky Mountain region (primarily east of the Rockies) and the Great Basin region (everything west), which is further subdivided into four sub-regional efforts.

Last December BLM released interim management guidelines and the National Technical Team report, which is part of the guidance that needs to be included and incorporated in any land use plan. Those two pieces came out about a year ago, and a Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register to amend all land use plans, which includes about 68 land use plans -- a lot. It is a huge and unprecedented effort. BLM and the USFS have never done something at this scale and time frame before. They are trying to respond to USFWS' need to have those regulations in place by September 2014. This dovetails to their process to reassess the species and determine if listing is warranted. Between the BLM and USFS they are looking at amending just under 100 land use plans in less than two years.

Brent provided the following summary of the context for the effort and what has been accomplished to date:

1. USFWS published warranted but precluded finding for greater sage-grouse.
2. BLM initiated the National Greater Sage-grouse Planning Strategy.
3. BLM issued interim management guidance and National Technical Team Report

4. BLM published notice of intent to amend land use plans.
5. BLM and Forest Service conducted multiple public scoping meetings
6. Governor Otter established Sage-grouse Task Force for Idaho.
7. BLM and Forest Service released public scoping report.
8. Governor's Task Force completed draft alternative.
9. BLM and Forest Service conducted Social and Economic Profile Workshops.
10. Idaho Governor Submitted final alternative proposal to BLM.

Current work efforts:

1. Sub Regional Interdisciplinary Team is finalizing alternatives for effects analysis
2. Idaho and southwestern Montana Sub Region have developed 6 alternatives for detailed analysis (Alternatives A-F)
3. The Sub Regional Interdisciplinary Team is working on developing the effects analysis
4. BLM briefed the Regional Management Team on the range of alternatives for all Sub Regions in the Great Basin. The Idaho and southwestern Montana Alternatives were approved.

Brent reviewed the six different alternatives that have been developed. It is required to develop a no action alternative. The process of developing the alternatives involves going through each of the different planning documents and culling out all the management direction that impacts sage-grouse. A major piece of that is work being done by USGS to pull together a baseline environmental report.

Alternative A is the no action plan.

Alternative B is the National Technical Team report and applies it to the regional analysis. They are working with a third party contractor on that.

Alternative C is the first of two "citizen's conservation alternatives" and includes a no grazing alternative. This comes primarily from Western Watersheds.

Alternative D is the Sub Regional alternative looking at local conditions in Idaho. They have been working primarily with BLM and USFS folks on this since about mid June 2012.

Alternative E is the Governor's alternative for Idaho addressing federal lands within Idaho.

Alternative F is the second "citizen's conservation alternative". It was put forward by Wild Earth Guardians and 19 other signatories, but didn't include Western Watersheds. It includes a reduced grazing scenario. Alternatives D and B include a target grazing aspect that looks at additional grazing or other management activities to address fuels management.

What happens next?

1. Conduct analysis of alternatives
2. Compile the Draft EIS for public release in May 2013

3. Assess and respond to comments and develop Proposed Resource management Plan Amendments
4. Release Final EIS and Proposed Plans – likely in January 2014
5. Assess and respond to protests on proposed plan and develop final decision.
6. Release Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments – September 2014.

Discussion and Q&A:

- John Romero – You said you contracted out the social and economics piece. Do they use a model?
 - Brent R. – The contractor is trying to compile existing conditions and use in the IMPLAN model. When we do effects analysis like grazing the AUM will be an output, so those become inputs into the IMPLAN model.
 - John R. – Does that applied to every alternative? How much is that applied? Does that apply to 5% or 20% of total model?
 - Brent R. – there’s various assumptions that go into every model. We’ll describe what all the assumptions are. The important thing is that the same approach will be applied consistently to all the alternatives in the same way.
- Jared B. – Regarding the two “citizen alternatives”. The way they’re spelled out here sound like folks who went to the scoping meetings were in favor of those alternatives. That was not the case. Why does it look like that?
 - Brent R. – When we started we took the more conservative approach (i.e., more extensive) and put them in one alternative thinking that would give the outer bounds. One alternative with substantial restrictions in all program areas masks the resulting impacts from any one program area and poses a concern when responding to issues and associated effects analysis. With other considerations associated with grazing e.g., fire etc. keeping those separate it would allow us to better analyze the effects and respond to the specific issues raised during scoping.
- Dustin M. – Back to Governor’s alternative. Not sure if SAC understood that Governor’s alternative is written to apply to federal land only, not state or private land. The task force barely touched on the state and private lands. We need to see first what the BLM is going to do with federal land. The reason we’re only addressing the federal land in the alternative is because there’s a process. We may convene as a task force later on to talk about additional components. But first we really need to see what the BLM is going to do.
- Mike R. – Could that be problem by not addressing state and private lands?
 - Dustin M. – That depends on how USFWS views our plan. It’s a two part process. Working with BLM is one part. Working with USFWS to see how far off we may be with the Governor’s plan is the other part. It all depends what the USFWS thinks is sufficient.

- Gene G. – Seems like we should be preparing some kind of statement to private citizens telling them what’s going to happen to them. We should have some type of statement in the hopper.
 - Dustin M. – We tried focusing on private lands in the past but the feedback was that we want to see what the federal response is first.
 - Jason P. – there’s a lot going on here. A lot of different pieces of the puzzle. Dustin’s folks are trying to work closely with us and they don’t want to put something out until we’ve got clarity from the USFWS. We don’t want to get ahead of ourselves before we make a statement on that.
- Brett D. – Maybe other task force members can chime in – but we recommended that our recommendations apply across the board. The highest priority was to address federal lands to get into this BLM process and then meanwhile address state and private lands. Because state lands involved endowment lands that gets complicated, that’s why the Governor’s plan doesn’t go there.
- Neil C. – From the Services perspective it’s that regulatory component. The private lands were captured by the 2006 plan. You’re not going to have a regulatory component. The State is kind of straddling the middle. We’re less than 10% of the lands. On state lands where less than a quarter falls within BLM, our management defaults to BLM. In other areas we’re applying management direction from the 2006 plan.
- John Robison – Private and state lands need to be part of the discussion to acknowledge the positive things that are happening out there. It does need to be part of the eventual discussion, but the 2006 plan was without regulatory teeth. Recovery will involve increasing partnerships between federal and state land managers.

4. Update on Sage-grouse Funds

4a. OSC Managed Sage-grouse Funds

Jon Beals provided an update on the status of OSC managed sage-grouse funds. He also provided an updated accounting of funds after the SAC meeting. That information is included in these notes in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. State of Idaho Office of Species Conservation Sage-grouse Project Balances (numbers rounded).

Title	Amount	Start	End	Grant #	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	Total	Balance	PCA
Sage Grouse Conservation Fed.Grant ID #14420-A-G016-A	\$1,000,000	4/19/10	3/31/15	SAGEGR_11	\$490,275	\$227,262	\$102,869	\$0	\$820,406	\$179,593	05008

Table 2. State of Idaho Office of Species Conservation Sage-grouse Project Balances (numbers rounded)

Title	Amount	Start	End	Grant #	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	Total	Balance	PCA
Illustrated SG Guide	\$5,627	5/15/08	5/30/10	SG004	\$5,627	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,627	\$0	05008
SG CCAA Development	\$64,343	6/1/09	3/15/11	SG007	\$33,971	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$33,971	\$30,372	05008
IDFG SG Conservation	\$750,000	1/1/10	12/31/15	SG1001	\$362,340	\$181,249	\$98,806	\$0	\$642,397	\$107,602	05008
Sage Grouse Coordination	\$60,000	4/19/10	3/31/15	SG1002	\$11,725	\$44,124	\$4,062	\$0	\$59,912	\$87	05008
U of I Habitat Studies	\$76,000	5/3/10	12/30/10	SG1004	\$75,997	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$75,997	\$2	05008
Miscellaneous	\$5,000	4/19/10	3/31/15	n/a	\$612	\$1,887	\$0	\$0	\$2,500	\$2,499	05008
Totals	\$960,970				\$490,275	\$227,262	\$102,869	\$0	\$820,406	\$140,563	

Dustin M. said that in terms of getting future funding, he spoke with the Congressman’s office and there are simply no more earmarks, but they’ll be looking for up to \$2 million for on-the-ground sage-grouse conservation.

4b. Status of IDFG outstanding Funding Commitments

Don Kemner provided a status update on IDFG outstanding funding commitments (i.e., projects that have been previously approved for funding but funds haven't been invoiced or paid out yet).

Table 3. Local Working Group outstanding funding commitments.

Entity	Project	Amount
Owyhee LWG	West Nile Virus monitoring	\$6,600
NMV LWG	Reimbursing volunteer mileage for monitoring leks	\$3,800
Mt. Home LWG	Habitat evaluation	\$3,000
Challis LWG	Seasonal habitat mapping	\$5,100
BSU	Assessing dietary quality of sagebrush	\$28,000
East Idaho Uplands LWG	Population monitoring and aerial search	\$6,700
Upper Snake LWG	Planting sagebrush plugs in wildfire rehab area	\$6,600
Jarbidge LWG	Aslett Ranch	\$2,000
Total outstanding commitments:		\$61,800

Don K. explained that most of the expenses were from projects that were approved in the last RFP and a few from the one before that. The amounts are rounded off to nearest \$100. Owyhee LWG was able to get additional funding from Air Force. BSU will have a bill of about \$11,000 coming soon and Don doesn't know if that's the end of the project or not. The remainder might be de-obligated but don't know yet.

5. LWG Feedback: How is Facilitation Going so Far?

Alison S. asked the LWG members to report back on how the LWG facilitation is going so far now that the groups no longer have professional facilitators.

- South Magic Valley – Mike Remming said there hasn't been a facilitator since they lost Rob L. Randy comes sometimes. It would be nice to have a dedicated IDFG person for the SMV. Mike R. doesn't have time to do that.
- East Idaho Uplands – Wendy P. said there's just IDFG and sometimes 2 or 3 other agency folks who come to the meeting. They do okay but the group really misses Wendy because she cared on another level. It is hard to think it would be worth it for any private land manager to come. They don't have that many birds. Jack Connelly sometimes comes. Another thing that has been going on is graduate student sometimes comes to meetings and answers questions about her project near Bear Lake.
- Upper Snake – Richard S. said the executive committee decided to come up with some funding and hire Wendy. They saw her as being really valuable to the

- group. Some of the agency folks thought they might be able to come up with some funding, maybe some of the conservation groups too.
- Jarbidge – Jared B. said they miss having Mike Pepper at their meetings. Brad has done a good job and they can communicate a lot through email. If you can't make a meeting you can still get input. Mike Pepper was really unbiased and that was good. You put Brad in a bad spot if he's got a project he wants to see done or not.
 - Big Desert – Rochelle O. said she hasn't been to a meeting in awhile. Don't think they're meeting regularly and everyone misses Wendy.
 - West Central – Gene G. said their last meeting was in March. They had 23 people there, one person from IDFG. A big question with their group was do you want to continue to have a group, on what basis? Now they can't pay a facilitator. Wendy Green has been willing to volunteer, but when you can't pay her for gas, paper, etc. you're not going far. If IDFG, OSC, and the State of Idaho wants to have local working groups you're going to have to pay for it. Someone will have to pay to continue with LWGs. The West Central group wants to put together a plan and there needs to be someone who can help write that up and do the work.
 - Owyhee – Donna B. said their group kicked their facilitator out years ago. John Romero was doing it for a long time and now it is Donna. They have a great secretary and record keeper and the County pays her. Lots of good volunteers. One reason they have such action is that they've had a problem with the juniper trees and people have tried to deal with them before without much luck, and now they can see there's a way to get rid of part of them, they're getting involved.
 - Mountain home – Steve said they elected a chairman and that's Jeff Lord. He got reelected and didn't have any opposition running for the post. He's pretty good about providing an agenda. Meetings are run pretty well, with a good interchange. So far it is working pretty well. Jeff is good about providing education stuff for people to read. Ann M. added that they have two chairmen. One is the chairman of the landowners and the other is the chairman of other members. Neil Hilleslandl is the chairman for other members. Because the group got a late start and didn't know anything about the birds they didn't start by putting together a plan. They don't know if they need a plan, right now the state plan is pretty good. Don't want to get sidetracked writing a plan until we know more about the birds.
 - Shoshone Basin – Don K. said that the Shoshone LWG has operated from the beginning starting in 1994 without a facilitator. They had a BLM a person that facilitated the meetings for a long time.
 - North Magic Valley – Don K. said that Regan Berkley from IDFG has been facilitating those meetings. They were in the process of finishing their plan and wrapping it up when their facilitator lost funding. They've finished their plan and have been doing a lot on the ground.

- Curlew – The Curlew group has an IDFG representative.

Discussion:

- Lynn B. – Dustin M. is saying that when it comes to implementation we need you. But we don't have the funding to keep meeting regularly much less put stuff on the ground. We're told our local plan isn't going to do it. How are you going to keep groups functioning when you don't have a facilitator?
- John Romero – From 1997 to 2010 it was ground up effort. It seems like now it has totally flip flopped and now its top down.

6. Discussion Regarding LWG and SAC Future Meetings and/or Other Approaches

Meeting participants split into five breakout groups to discuss their recommendations regarding the near-term for the SAC and LWGs. Specifically, breakout groups were asked to develop recommendations for what the SAC should do in 2013 (e.g., should the SAC meet again, should the SAC identify a project to fund with the small amount of available funding, etc.) Participants were also asked to think about recommendations for the LWGs for 2013.

Each breakout group spent about 30 minutes discussing options and at the end of this period each group reported back on their discussion to all the meeting participants. Following is the report back from each group:

Group 1. Rochelle O., Richard S. and Don K.

Recommend having a meeting in 2013 if there is a need. They talked about what would constitute a need? One idea is that once the BLM EIS is out for public comment the SAC might be interested in reviewing and providing comment on that as a group. In past when there has been discussion about the SAC commenting on a planning document, the LWGs said no, that should be up to the LWGs. However, the BLM EIS is a statewide document so maybe that's different.

The Governor's alternative is open for comment too and is an evolving alternative, the subgroup wondered if there is an interest in writing something specific to the Governor's alternative through that public scoping period.

The group didn't get into other potential needs. They touched on the value of information exchange, and talked about the SAC pursuing funding for projects, LWG facilitation, etc. That is something the SAC could pursue through the legislature, through grants, etc. Donna's Owyhee County providing support for their group is an example. Maybe it makes sense to talk to counties, conservation groups, and industry to seek additional sources of funding.

Group 2 – Steve G., Lynn B., Paul M., and Jon B.

They talked about what is the status of the SAC and LWGs? Are we just going to be there and perform no meaningful purpose? An important part of the SAC is sharing information from throughout the state, sharing technical information, and using local

knowledge to inform state activities too. The SAC should have a clear understanding of what our status is and where we can be beneficial.

We need a certain source of funding for projects and facilitation. The group talked about writing grants, but to do that effectively you need a trained grant writer.

It is still not clear what the role of the SAC is versus the Governor's Task Force. If it is difficult to fund one, how do we fund both? It's confusing. Also related to funding, the burden of paying for facilitation of the LWG and SAC was through the OSC grant and IDFG and BLM. The group is not aware of any other agencies or NGOs who were contributing toward that. (Jason P. noted that USFWS provided some funding for LWG facilitation from recovery dollars). Wondered if we've explored other opportunities for funding through private foundations, TNC, joint venture capacity grant, etc., that could support facilitation funding.

The reason we're in this top down situation is because of the possibility of listing that came as result of 2010 finding. That's why BLM and the USFS are amending plans, and the service specifically singled out the BLM. Maybe the role for LWG is evolving based on the Governor's strategy. Maybe the focus of all LWGs should have more to do with implementation, i.e., making the 50,000-foot alternative happen on the ground. That could also include filling in the data gaps like Mountain Home is doing.

Group 3 – Donna B., Wendy P., Robb M., Brett D.

The group mostly talked about the East Idaho Upland LWG and lack of participation. They don't have that many birds in the planning area and there's not that much interest. Maybe the group should move towards the core area in Bear Lake. Don't have any compelling issues there. The extreme southwest area is the core area around Bear Lake. Wendy's group is closer to the Big Desert and fire is a big issue. There is not a lot of private land, but there are grazers there.

There are different issues for different LWGs. They're important and ought to be funded. Maybe different issues can help guide how you fund them. In the past a primary purpose of the LWGs and SAC was to provide plans. But that's now different. There's a great value in people getting together and talking about sage-grouse, i.e., information sharing, information about the BLM and FS planning process, an avenue for people to come and learn about that and provide input. Planning is difficult. Information sharing and relationship building is valuable.

Think there's an opportunity for the top down and bottom up to meet and find some synergy between the two. The Idaho plan will find a lot that needs to be done but it can't be done at the 50,000-foot level. What can we do on the ground? We've got concerns about reseeding understory, or fire rehabilitation, etc. It is important to keep the SAC and LWG going particularly as we move into the next couple years.

Group 4 – John Romero, Jack D., Karen F., Neil C.

The group jokingly suggested that we use the remaining \$40,000 to hire an attorney to file Chapter 11.

Understand the federal role at the 50,000-foot role; people understand that. The idea of bringing together the top down and bottom up approach is good. But without the bucks we don't have any Buck Rogers. If there is no money, no one's going to do anything.

John Romero said he was on a IDFG legislative committee, they handled depredation issues. About \$100,000 came out of IDFG funds and went to the depredation committee. Then had a pool of funding and the committee could use the interest off that money. John suggested creating some legislative statues. Make the SAC a legislatively recognized organization. Get some mandatory funds from IDFG and OSC. Whether it is \$50,000 or \$100,000 from each agency.

The other thing that this state hasn't done well is accessing and distributing mitigation funds. There are millions of dollars to spend in mitigation. Nevada gets funding from power companies. There was \$8 million from the Ruby Pipeline project. Suggest getting the mitigation committee up and running. Funding has to go to LWGs and/or the SAC.

Need funding to implement plans, plans are just plans until it is possible to implement them.

Brett D. said that the SAC got a good reception on the mitigation plan. It is part of the Governor's alternative. We need the mechanisms to have someone actually form it. Brett reminded the SAC that at a meeting about four years ago when the group was talking about accessing mitigation dollars, Brett asked what are the projects that that money is going to be spent on? We're no closer today to identifying projects that we'd like to implement with that funding if it were available. This is the group that ought to be saying if we had X million dollars these are the projects that we'd like to see happen. Who's to say what Gateway West will come up with for mitigation, it will come out of whatever the BLM picks. This group should put together projects that are ready to fill that need. Projects like the fire rehabilitation project in Mountain Home are they types of things that need to happen. If we're going to spend money we ought to spend it well.

Gene G. added that we need to think about what constitutes mitigation from the sage-grouse;s perspective. It ought to be on a landscape scale not postage stamp scale. The whole idea of the core areas is for those to be able to blend and move to keep expanding the core area. Jack Connelly pointed out that there's habitat in the core areas that is less than optimal and targeting those areas for improvement is really important.

Group 5. Ann M., Jared B., Mike R., Jason P. and Gene G.

The group talked about whether there's an obligation of the Governor's Task Force to keep LWGs active. They only covered the top threats. In order for the whole thing to work the bottom part still needs to be working on those local issues. That felt like an obligation. The group talked about how to meet that obligation. One idea was to revise the SAC funding subcommittee, maybe add some people who might have creative ideas from other NGOs or agencies. An example is the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission fence marking project. We need a reason to keep people coming to meetings. Projects

are what keeps people coming back. People want to talk about what they can actually do on the ground.

They talked some about the SGI funding since and how we might be able to use that; however, the challenge is that with the SGI funding the producer has to jump through lots of additional and other disincentives to participate.

Jared B. noted that as a land user, they already have IDFG, BLM and USFS putting various restrictions and requirements on their operations. They don't want to add one more entity with more strings attached. That's where the LWG money was good because you could just put things on the ground without having to change all these other things.

Karen F. noted that this is an issue that we need to resolve to implement any of the alternatives. We have to be able to plan how to implement projects across ownership boundaries. It is difficult when their permit limits them to certain dates and AUMs etc. That's exactly the type of thing we want to be able to change. It is something that we need to work on if we're going to be able to implement any of the alternatives.

Jason P. said that we shouldn't lose sight of the Task Force's reliance on what the LWG and SAC do. They can't function and do what was promised to do without funding. The large-scale approach can't move forward without the nuts and bolts.

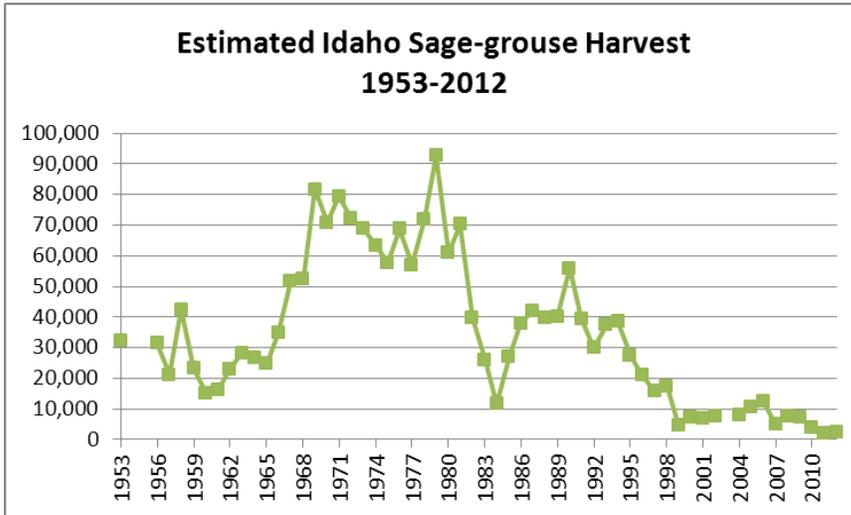
Alison explained that the SAC would follow-up on the discussion on day-two of the meeting and identify some specific actions to move forward based on the discussion. She encouraged participants to continue thinking about how to best move forward in 2013 and come prepared to continue the discussion.

The group adjourned for the day.

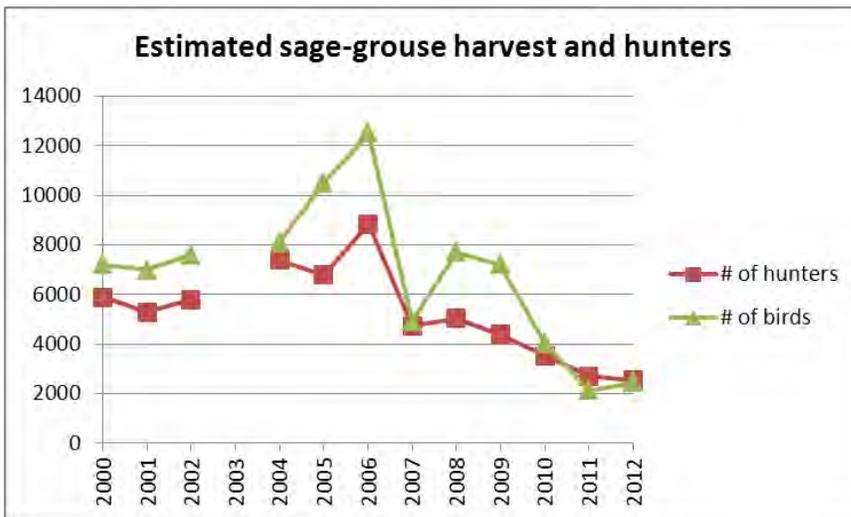
Tuesday December 18, 2012

1. 2012 Hunting Season Update

Ann Moser provided the following presentation:

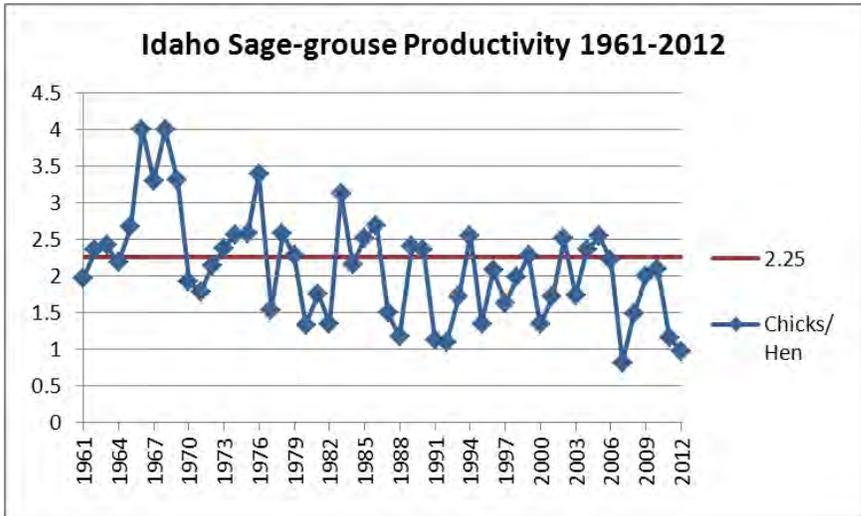


Ann noted that the graph shows lots of ups and downs. Populations were down in the 1950s. In 2000 and 2001 IDFG changed the way they surveyed sage-grouse hunters. Before 2001 it was a general survey of all hunters. They didn't target sage-grouse hunters. In 2007 they started following the guidelines in the Idaho state plan for seasons and bag limits.

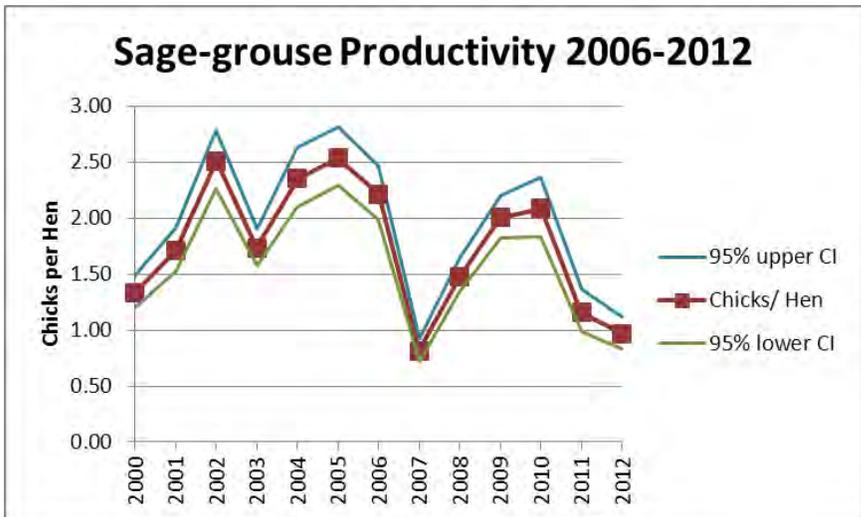


There are usually more birds harvested than the number of hunters. 2011 was the only year where the number of hunters was higher than the number of birds harvested. The season structure changes every year. In 2010-2012 the season was only one week statewide. So the hunting season was shorter than in previous years. In 2012, IDFG also

closed all of Elmore County, due to recent fires, and lack of data in that area, including no known active leks.



IDFG has collected wings every year since 1961. It is a good long-term data set; the best long-term data set we have. There is a general downward trend. Both populations and productivity are declining. The red line (2.25) is the target that is needed for increasing the population; 2.0 is a stable population.



Looking at productivity in the period from 2006-2012, we haven't been above 2.0 very often in the last few years. We also had the 3 lowest productivities ever recorded in the last few years. In 2007, we had the lowest recorded productivity (0.82). This year was the second lowest. Last year was the 5th lowest recorded (1.16). In general, Ann said that other surrounding states are showing the same trends.

Discussion and Q&A:

- Do this year's populations show the same trends?

- Ann – Yes, the long term trend is still generally going down. Overall the trend is downward.
- Why do you think this is happening?
 - Ann – I don't know. Drought could be a factor. Is it just bad luck that we had drought years the last few years?
- Did the 2007-2009 WNV have anything to do with it?
 - Ann – 2006 was the bad WNV year, so we had a lower number of birds going into 2007 and then the birds that survived got hit with drought.
- Paul M. – Is this in a report that you could send?
 - Ann – yes. Ann will send it to Alison to distribute to the SAC.
- Brett D. – Have you looked at correlating spring weather patterns?
 - Ann – I'm going to do that.
- Brett D. – Do you see much regional variability?
 - Ann – By time you try to break it up into smaller areas, the sample size is smaller, so the estimates aren't as good.
- John R. – This seems like a better chart than the hunter success chart, i.e., productivity.
- Mike R. – Looking at hunting season, what was going on in 1977?
 - Lynn – In Eastern Idaho the numbers were phenomenal that year. You could go out with 10 hunters and everyone bagged 6. A year later the birds had all these worms and you couldn't eat them. Then the population plummeted.
- Donna B. – The drought started in the mid 1970s. In 1983 it rained like crazy. Up until the mid 1970s in our periods of wet to dry we had more wet than dry, after the mid 1970s it went to more dry than wet. We're still in that pattern.
- Lynn B. – In the 1970s, in our country we had jack rabbit infestations, then the jack rabbit numbers dropped off because worms were a problem. In 1983-1984 Green Peace sued us over the rabbit drives. The rabbits were eating the farmer's haystacks. The same thing happened again with the worms and the jack rabbit population dropped. We started to see a climb in 2004-2007 with the rabbits again.
- Ann – rabbits would be another food source for predators.

2. Fires on BLM Lands and Fire Rehabilitation Update

Paul Makela gave the following presentation on fires on BLM lands and fire rehabilitation efforts.

2012 Wildfires and Sage-grouse

Paul Makela
Wildlife Biologist
Idaho BLM State Office

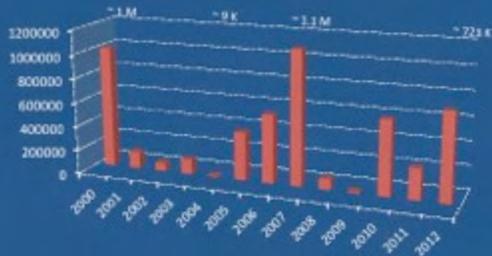
December 2012 SAC Meeting



Number of Idaho Fires 2000-2012 Involving BLM Protection



Total Acres of Idaho Fires 2000-2012 Involving BLM Protection



2012 Idaho Fires Involving BLM Protection

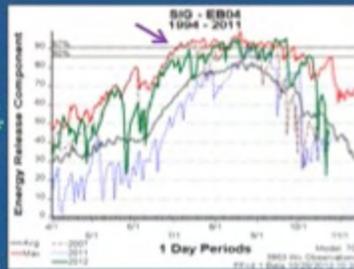
Lightning Caused: 33% of number of fires and ~ 90% of acres
Twin Falls dispatch area had most fire acreage

Number	Fires on BLM Lands			Fires within all BLM Protection		
	Human	Lightning	Total	Human	Lightning	Total
Boise	64	30	94	102	39	141
Coeur d'Alene	3	2	5	0	0	0
Idaho Falls	35	25	37	64	33	97
Twin Falls	36	46	85	80	51	131
Total	122	95	216	246	125	371

Acres	Acres on BLM Lands			Acres Suppressed by BLM		
	Human	Lightning	Total	Human	Lightning	Total
Boise	99395	25022	124417	38059	116173	154232
Coeur d'Alene	2	5042	5044	2	5042	5044
Idaho Falls	2399	33448	35843.75	12348	62949	75297
Twin Falls	13040	41488	427529	16113	472530	488643
Totals	114836	477994	592833.8	66322	616694	723216

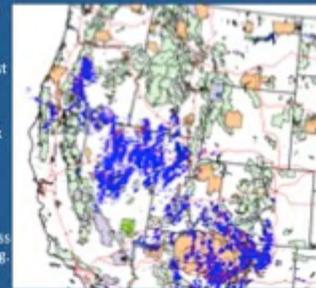
2012 Idaho Fires Important Factors

- 2012 Fire Season Started Earlier than "normal".
- Record High Energy Release Components. *Index of fire behavior in heavier fuels; fires more difficult to control.*
- Record Low Fuel Moistures.
- 2012 Fire Season continued well into fall.



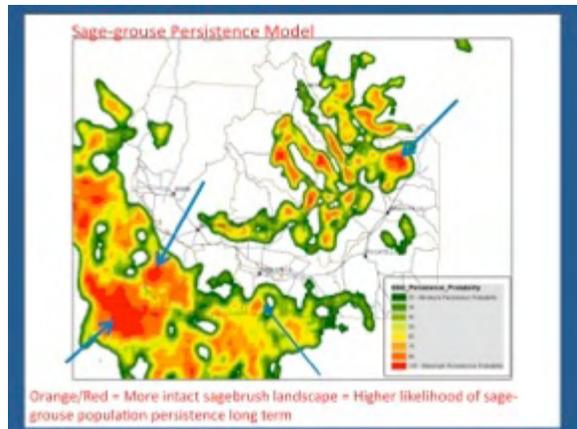
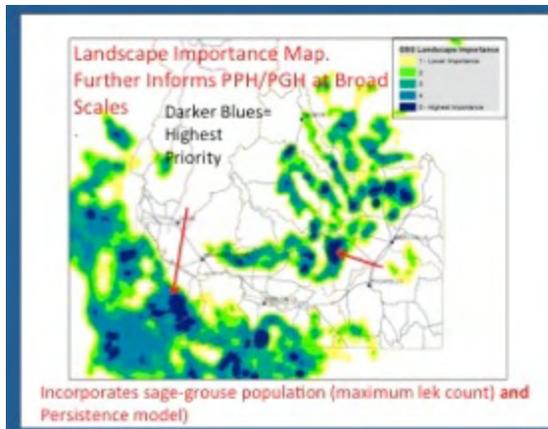
2012 IDAHO BLM Fires: Factors Continued

- Regular initial attack activity by mid-May...before regular staffing and seasonal training complete.
- 1000+ Acre fires consistent by first week of June.
- July 7 to July 9 Heavy initial attack due to lightning across Utah and Idaho. Heavy competition for resources.
- August 5 Heavy initial attack across entire Great Basin due to lightning.



Blue-Negatively charged strikes
Red-Positively charged strikes (more fire risk)
Larger blue areas / polygons often indicate rain.

August 5 Lightning

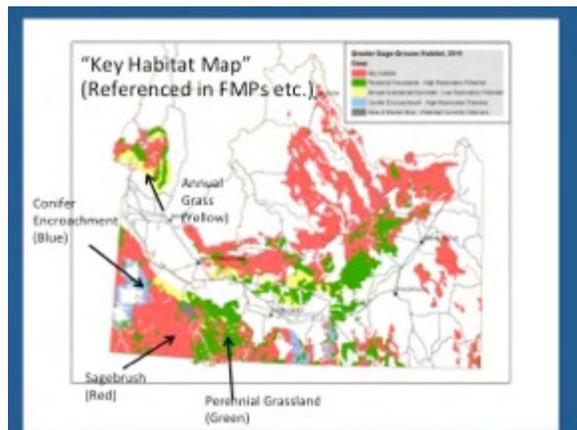


Draft Sage-grouse Seasonal Habitats:

- 2009 draft; Plus updated w/recent map from NMV LWG
- Used to augment PPH/PGH, other information
- Seasonal mapping/modeling = a work in progress

Breeding (partial)

Winter



Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation (ES/BAR)

- Issues
 - Large fires in ID, NV, OR, CA
 - Long Draw (OR) 557,648 ac
 - Large demand limited availability of Wyoming big sagebrush seed
 - Mountain, Basin, low sage seed availability ok
 - Prioritized distribution of sagebrush seed within Idaho Districts

Idaho Fires and Sagebrush Seed

- Sagebrush seed allocated to 11 priority fires; ~384,000 acres for aerial seeding
- Fires receiving sagebrush seed:
 - Jacks, Stout, Tindall, Benwalk, East Rock, Mustang, Laidlaw, Kinyon Road, Flat Top 2, Cave Canyon, Hot Well
 - Wyoming big sage:
 - Initially planned for 182,080 lbs. bulk
 - Secured 69,120 lbs. or ~38% due to low availability
 - Mountain big sage: 11,360 lbs.
 - Basin big sage: 9,000 lbs.
 - Low sage: 10,460

3. LWG Progress: Mountain Home Presentation on Preliminary Efforts to Identify Occupied Sage-grouse Habitat at the Fine-Scale

Jeff Lord and Carl Rudeen gave a presentation on the preliminary efforts to identify occupied sage-grouse habitat in the Mountain Home LWG planning area.

Carl explained that the Mountain Home LWG was the last LWG to form. There was very little data available for their planning area. The biologists were making the best

decisions they could based on no information. The group didn't want to speculate so they are focusing on collecting more information.

To date the group has focused on educating their group members using best available science, supported a telemetry project in their management area, supported a habitat assessment project within the LWG management area, and are analyzing the data that has been collected. They also spent some time reviewing the boundary of the management area.

They radio-collared 21 birds in 2011 and 2012. Volunteers are doing almost all of the bird tracking and lek counts. They compared seasonal habitat to the 2011 sage-grouse habitat model. What stands out is the boundary. They have been discussing this and identifying important areas within the planning boundary and outside of the boundary. Some birds are migratory and some non-migratory. They are also aware that they are sharing birds with adjacent LWGs.

Private land is used during the breeding season (62%) and then the birds shift to public land, especially in winter. They are focusing on areas that telemetry has shown is important; doing a habitat assessment with funding from SAC. The goal of this effort is to help with future habitat projects.

Jeff Lord said they struggled with how to do a habitat assessment over this area of 370K acres. At first they got hung up on the LWG boundary but then started looking at strong habitat and looking out from there.

4. LWG Progress: Owyhee Update on Juniper Mastication and Wet Meadow Restoration at Jacks Creek (Art Talsma, Ken Miricle and Jason Pyron)

Art Talsma gave the following presentation on the Owyhee LWG juniper mastication project and the wet meadow restoration at Jacks Creek. Art began his talk by talking about the three P's – people, projects and partnerships. People make conservation happen. You keep them at the table and coming back if you have projects; and partnerships are critical.

- The primary objectives of the restoration work were to:
 - Assist landowners in restoring habitat for nesting and brood rearing
 - Reduce mortality resulting from fence collisions
 - Remove juniper to increase open meadows with an abundance of native forbs, grasses and sagebrush
 - Measure impact and cost effectiveness
 - Share our results and techniques – export
 - Prioritize the best sites for restoration
- Proven working relationships
 - Sage-grouse working group, ranchers and agency partners
 - Leadership in significant projects including Jacks Creek, Cow Creek, Reynolds Creek and Crab Creek.

- Add more dikes to increase the size of the wet meadow complex
- Seeding after wildfire has some success; providing nesting habitat for sage-grouse at 4 sites on over 12,000 acres
- Jacks Creek 2012 partnership with John Urquidí, TNC and USFWS.
 - There is plenty of sagebrush, but the missing component is nesting habitat.
 - The idea was to back water up in high meadows in an area with a lot of birds but nesting and brood rearing habitat beat up. Restore wet meadows.
 - Bring in forbs, rest the cattle off it. Control grazing with improved fencing
- Forbs and grasses were restored.
 - Native plants do well in seeded wildfire sites
 - Brood success increases
 - Birds find nesting sites
- Wildlife Benefits
 - Sage-grouse
 - Shorebirds and ducks
 - Neotropical songbirds
 - Deer and Elk
 - Pronghorn and Bighorn sheep
 - Raptors
 - Spotted frogs
- Conifer encroachment is a significant and growing threat in Owyhee
 - Used innovative site selection using satellite imagery and current lek surveys
 - Draw circle and use science to identify where you want to work on the land.
 - Science plus working with ranchers because they can tell you where they find birds.
 - Haven't had much success with prescribed fire. So honed in on juniper mastication:
 - 2010, 6 contracts = 978 acres
 - 2011, 7 contracts = 2,347 acres
 - 2012, 8 contracts = 2,780 acres
 - Total Through SGI (NRCS) = 6,105 acres
 - Juniper mastication projects were conducted at 5 sites using SAC-TNC-USFWS funding
 - Reynolds Creek Juniper Cutting with SGI funding. Cheatgrass and medusahead treated successfully using SAC/TNC funds
 - Innovative Monitoring Using Paired IR and Natural Light Cameras by TNC in the Owyhees
 - At Bull Basin birds looking for wet meadow habitat that needs to be expanded out. Bull Basin mastication opened the entire meadow area for successful brood rearing.

- Josephine Creek, huge ranch encroached by juniper but birds still coming in. Opened up 200 acre meadow and made it 300 acre meadow.
 - Mastication equipment is cost effective at 5 sites @ \$145/hour = \$186/acre treated
- Benefits of large-scale collaborative restoration efforts
 - Large, juniper free meadows near leks
 - Native bunchgrass and abundant forbs
 - Wet meadows = increased insects
 - Nesting success
 - Sagebrush cover
 - Increased recruitment
 - Increased Population

Discussion and Q&A:

- Brett D. – Are you seeing any birds in areas where you’re doing juniper work, and are you seeing any recruitment into those areas?
 - Donna B. – Yes, we’re seeing birds we’ve never seen before in Bull Basin area.
 - Art T. – The response to the habitat restoration is phenomenal, juniper is an invasive. There is 5 times as much juniper now as 50 years ago. It causes trouble with cattle operations as well.
 - Karen F. – We’re seeing a response to the work that has been done in Oregon already too. What they’ve done in Oregon is over 300,000 acres in last few years on BLM land.
- Jason P – We need to get the landscape level EA completed for that area so we can cross multiple jurisdictions. It is not impossible, the people are there and the funding is there. This can have a huge impact.
- Wendy P. – Are you seeing an increase of birds year round.
 - Donna B. – Yes. This year we flushed 50-60 birds at all ages; it scared the horse. We’ve made great progress!

5. Use of Aerial Thermal Imaging for Identifying and Counting Sage-grouse Leks

Bruce Greenhalgh with John Romero’s Owyhee Air Research gave a presentation on use of aerial thermal imaging for identifying and counting sage-grouse leks.

He explained that they are using state of the art infrared FLIR cameras. They are internally cooled which allows for a great level of sensitivity. They’ve mounted the cameras on gyroscopic mounts like those used in the movie industry. They have a 1-foot square viewing port.

The resolution is very good. You can stop at any frame and count, etc. All the video is time coded. Unlike normal infrared, which is all in grey scale, you can choose any color pallet. You can average out temperatures and to run a cursor over any image to

determine what the temperature is. The video is shot at a half mile distance so it doesn't disturb the wildlife. All the video is geo-referenced and time coded. Videos are standard movie files that can be easily shared.



Discussion and Q&A:

- How do you know they are sage-grouse and not ravens, etc.?
 - John Romero – We had people go out on the ground and check it out. The images were shot in the morning when the ground is colder and birds are warmer.
- Mike R – can you differentiate between male and females?
 - Bruce G. – You can see the grouse displaying.
 - John R. – You might be able to tell hens too. When you look at video closely there are four spots that are lighter.
- Paul M. – Have you used this to try to identify winter concentrations?
 - John R. – We'll be trying that this winter. Most of what we're doing is using the sage-grouse counting protocol. Winter will be easier.
- Mike R. – Have you come up with a price range per hour for doing those flights?
 - John R. – It's less than helicopters. The rate is project by project. About \$200-300 less per hour for helicopters. Plus time to do the survey is quicker. We average 10 leks per hour.
- Ann M. – How would you tell a sage-grouse from a sharp tail?
 - John R. – Don't know, maybe from the size of the image.
 - Ann M. – You might need on the ground verification?
 - John R. - No, not necessarily, if you had a question you could fly over and flush them.
- Mike R. – You've done flights looking for new leks?
 - John R. – Yes. It is relatively easy to find new leks.

6. Fence Marking Update

Jason P. explained that USFWS partnered with IDFG, local FFA chapters, and Boise Supply Company to come up with material for fence marking that will be distributed by Rangeland Resource Commission to local FFA chapters to get them on the ground.

They just purchased 2500 sticks of material that will give about 25,000 fence markers. The cost for the markers will be about 25 cents each if private landowners want to purchase from the local FFA chapters. The goal is within a couple years will try to have all of the high probability fence strike sites marked across the landscape. Short-term the goal is to prioritize marking fences with highest likelihood of fence strikes. USFWS wants to solicit LWG involvement. There are some LWGs that are already involved. The LWG role is to liaise between USFWS and the local FFA chapters.

Discussion and Q&A:

- Paul M. – Does 25 cents include putting on reflective tape?
 - Jason P. – We'll have the students assemble them with non orange reflective tape marker. Since Boise Supply provided it at cost and delivering it to our warehouse we can afford to do that. It's a great way to get local kids involved and get something done on the ground.
- Art T. – TNC and USFWS has put together a 9 part video series on sage-grouse. Megan and Lisa TNCs new communication director are looking at a joint press release to further solicit more involvement with the high school lek field trip program.
- Jack C. – We developed a model that will allow us to focus our efforts on fences that are most likely to cause problems. The short-term goal is to mark the high priority ones.
- Karen F. – All of the NRCS field offices have the model too.
- Lynn B. – You might want to update the model and LWGs to address if it's a core area or important area.
- Jason P. – We will try to focus distribution of materials to those areas that have a number of acres of high priority fence strikes and interest from FFA chapters.
- Jared B. – How many do you need for mile of fence?
 - Paul M. – It costs about \$250 for a mile of fence for just the markers, not including labor. It takes about 1,000 per fence.
- Don K. – Jarbidge and NMV have marked a lot of fence in the last year. There were some IDFG seasonal technicians that were coming to end of the pay period and IDFG had them in the SE region and Magic valley cutting up markers, so there are some supplies on hand right now. We would like any LWG that have done fence marking to be able to capture that spatially in their annual reports so that that is an additional piece of information we provide to USFWS in their annual data call.

- Paul M. – A number of fence markers designs coming out. Paul sent an email with fence flag marker that comes with a hanger. There have been problems with cattle ripping them off the fences. Haven't heard any problem with these other markers we're talking about (constructed of vinyl sill material).
- Art T. – We used fence flags on several of TNC properties. But also there's an opportunity beyond what the sage-grouse groups see to mark fence managed by conservation groups e.g., Wood River Land Trust. We need to collect a statewide picture of what's being done.

Ann M. said that if anyone is interested in talking more about fence markers the SAC TAT will be talking about it directly after the SAC meeting and everyone is welcome.

7. Grouse and Grazing: How Does Spring Livestock Grazing Influence Sage-grouse Populations? (Courtney Conway, Karen Launchbauch, and Jack Connelly)

Courtney Conway gave an update on a new research initiative. Karen Launchbauch and Jack Connelly were also present to answer questions. Courtney moved to Idaho about a year-and-a-half ago. He is the new Director of the Coop Research Unit, which is supported by IDFG, USGS, and the University of Idaho. Mike Scott was his predecessor. Courtney moved here from the University of Arizona where he served for the previous 11 years as Assistant Director of same type of research unit. He is a wildlife biologist/ecologist and has worked with a variety of taxonomic groups. He worked in Eastern Washington for three years before going to Arizona. His expertise is as an experimental field ecologist. He has done lots of work to evaluate the effects of different land uses.

Courtney explained that the project is in its infancy. They want to introduce this potential research initiative and to spend time getting SAC feedback and insight. They sent a two-page white paper to about 250 people throughout the state about a week ago. The goal is to examine potential relationship between spring grazing and a suite of sage-grouse demographic traits, spring grazing, and fire.

At present have a planning team of 9 people talking about this. That group includes: Kerry Reese, Jack Connelly, Courtney Conway, Karen Launchbaugh, Tom Rinke, Don Kemner, Eva Strand, and Wendy Pratt. The only thing they've produced so far is the white paper. The next step is to develop a study plan. The goal is to apply rigorous science to the relationship between spring grazing and fire behavior. They are trying to have a balanced team and provide transparency throughout the process.

The justification for the effort is that if sage-grouse are listed in 2015 there are likely to be changes in grazing restrictions. Other listed species have buffer areas around them where no adverse activities can occur. Those kinds of things might be put in place. If there's no science to inform that decision it is left up to opinions. There are a diversity of opinions regarding the effects of spring grazing on sage-grouse.

There was a paper about 10 years ago that attempted to summarize studies on effects. All of the references cited in that paper are not published in the peer review literature.

Some of the conclusions are based on pretty non-rigorous study designs, so it will be hard to use any of that literature to inform decisions. Through this effort they are attempting to fill that void with rigorous science in preparation for a potential listing in 2015. If sage-grouse are not listed the work will still be vital since most of previous decisions have been litigated. For the benefit of good stewardship we need science to inform the debate on the science of grazing.

They are proposing a 10-year effort throughout southern Idaho with replicated studies throughout sage-grouse range. It is a major research initiative that will require substantial funding, so no one organization is going to be able to fund the research they're envisioning.

Discussion and Q&A:

- Mike R. – I assume this will be on native grass range, or are we talking crested wheat grass in spring?
 - Courtney – We haven't gotten to those details yet.
 - Karen – We're thinking native but haven't gotten to the specifics yet.
- Mike R. – how many acres?
 - Courtney – We haven't identified that yet. We're looking at a tentative plan to work at the allotment level where we remove spring grazing for three successive years and remove parameters three years after removal. The size of plots would vary but be based on the size of the allotment.
 - Mike – I would be interested in seeing how an NRCS grazing plan would relate to these experiments.
- Steve G. – One thing that concerns me, when you look at sage-grouse habitat over the state there's quite a difference between the eastern part of the state and western Owyhees, for example. Are you planning on setting up studies in representative types of habitat throughout the state?
 - Courtney – We're going to focus on Wyoming sagebrush as a vegetative community. Beyond that we haven't done anything further to restrict that variation. There are many challenges with addressing this question - there's variation by elevation, longitude, etc. We'll try to account for that but also inform at the state level rather than the very local level.
- Steve – When looking at allotments or pastures, there's huge difference in size. How will you take that into considerations?
 - Courtney – We'll probably have to put some minimum and maximum boundaries on the allotments we work with. Sage-grouse are using a big landscape. The spatial size of the experiment will be much less likely to have any impact on local sage-grouse population. We didn't want to present folks throughout the state with this is our study plan until we've involved people in what parameters and constraints we'll put in the plan.
- Steve G. – The distance that the hen goes from the next to lek depends on the quality of the habitat.

- Courtney – In addition to the size of the allotment we will also include some landscape level parameters in the landscape around the allotment. We can include covariates but the extent that we put constraints on boundaries will help.
- Jared B. – There’s a huge difference between allotments and pastures.
 - Karen – When we apply grazing we’ll work at pasture levels. In order to apply grazing at levels that make sense we’ll have to work at pasture levels.
- Jared B. – There will have to be some source of funding. Everyone can’t just leave pasture idle for number of years.
 - Courtney – That’s why we want to work with the ranching community to come up with a fair study.
- Gene G. – I noticed the white paper mentioned fuel loads and small wildfires several times. Hope you don’t limit yourself to grasses and forbs. Include medusa head, etc. Do you have a socioeconomist involved yet?
 - Courtney – Not yet.
- Gene G. – That’s a big piece, you need that included. That might be an element that needs to be dealt with. It would be good to have someone on your group.
 - Courtney – Good suggestion. This is not exclusive, we’re really trying to get small enough group to make progress, but we don’t want to cap it either.
- Richard S. – Curious if you talked with rangers at the station at Dubois.
 - Karen – Yes, but they have sheep and we were trying to restrict to cattle.
 - Richard – They probably do more cattle than sheep AUMs. Might be worth talking with them.
- Rochelle O. – Are you planning on focusing study in the core areas or throughout?
 - Courtney – We haven’t gotten to that depth of discussion. We’re meeting after this to talk more. We’re starting to get to details of sampling design. One of the challenges is that we need willing operators to do this experiment. Our replicates that we’re going to use have to be near a sage-grouse lek. We haven’t decided how near. We have to start making these kind of constraint decisions soon. It makes sense to have many in the core areas but there will be compromises in finding folks who will work with us.
 - Jack C. – If we have a great area in non core habitat we’d considered that too.
- Jason P. – NRCS has an ongoing study in cooperation with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. What are you envisioning in terms of questions that will help that or be different from what they’ve already got a lead on.
 - Courtney – I haven’t seen anything in writing on that study. I don’t have a copy of their study plan. They have draft manuscripts but nothing has been published.

- Jack – From the grouse standpoint they’ve been quiet about what they’re doing. I know Dave Naugle well, but don’t have a good feel for what they’re doing. Their work is focused on private lands; ours would be on public lands.
 - Karen – They’re focused on private lands in a really different ecosystem.
 - Courtney – The effect of grazing is in the details, duration, intensity, etc. It would be fluke if their study design ended up same as ours.
 - Jack – We hope our work will apply throughout southern Idaho, WY and NV.
- Lynn B. – Do you need a double blind pasture. I’m willing to volunteer. Might be something you might want to look at.
 - Jack – That might be a real opportunity. A bunch of habitat isn’t grazed and maybe folks would be willing partners.
 - Courtney – We do need a baseline. A potential criticism is that all of the different grazing levels that we evaluate have already been equally affected. Having that baseline would be helpful.
 - Lynn – That’s what came up as I was reading this. Hope they’re not just planning on doing this in eastern Idaho.
- Courtney – The other question we’ve received is why are we saying a 10-year study. We feel that that’s a minimum. Pre-treatment, to allow for variation throughout the site. By having a before and after study design we’re able to control for individual variation. We also talked about having a crossover design, if grazing comes back on you’d have grazing, no grazing, and grazing which allows you to look at effects of treatments. We picked three years because we thought we could get that from operators. We also talked about having a staggered design, talked about effects of weather on fire behavior. Staggered entry means we’re stopping grazing at different times.
- Art T. – There’s a central Idaho grazing network we’re quite involved in. I would be happy to put you on to those 20 plus ranchers that are involved in that. They are working ranches.
- Brett D. – A comment on spring weather, it is a critical factor in sage habitat year to year. Jim Sedinger’s work in NV is showing that annual spring precipitation has had the greatest year-to-year effect. You’ve got that going on and grazing going on. So good luck.
 - Courtney - This is a complicated question, that’s why it hasn’t been addressed. The things that we will do to try to address that include staggered entry, crossover design, and measures.
- Courtney – This is the “coming out party” for this study. We wanted to come out all at once so there weren’t rumors about what was going on or people feeling left out. We will work with the planning team on a semi regular basis. We discussed setting up a web page now that word is out.
- Jack – We encourage folks that have thoughts, ideas or questions to get hold of us. There will be lots of great give and take – this is just the start. We’re starting

slow on purpose. No one has wanted to take this up. But as Art said earlier – you could do nothing and eventually we get bound up in the court and lawsuits. Biology by litigation doesn't work very well.

- Courtney – We want to be rigorous but transparent.

8. Sagebrush Nutrition Research

Jennifer Forbey gave the following presentation on her sagebrush nutrition research. She explained that this is a project that was partially funded by the SAC OSC funds. She is an assistant professor at Boise State University. The investment and support for this project is building an approach to looking at quality of habitat in different light. She is also doing similar work on pygmy rabbits.

- Conservation of Wildlife: The general approach
 - Locate animals and measure reproductive success
 - Determine which habitat features are associated with location and success
 - Manage those habitat features
 - Predation risk: maximize cover, minimize predators
 - Disturbance: minimize in high use areas
 - Food: maximize presence
- The Gap in Conservation of Wildlife
 - Need functional quality of habitat features e.g., cover concealment versus visibility
 - Food quantity versus quality
- Research Objectives
 - SAC funded project component: measure the functional quality of winter food for sage-grouse – completed
 - Did the majority of work at Brown's Bench area; also four other sites in year two to look at quality of habitat at different sites around range.
 - Used collared birds, looked at browsed or un-browsed plants
 - Expand understanding of functional quality of food – in progress
 - Propose a plan to measure and conserve functional quality – future
- Not all sagebrush is created equal
 - Dietary quality matters at several spatial scales
 - Looked at Wyoming sage and black sage. Within habitat types there were patch sites. Patches were used to help identify why sage-grouse using some patches but not others.
 - Sage-grouse avoid toxins at multiple spatial scales
- Used a hierarchical information-theoretical approach to model selection (Burnham & Anderson 2002, sensu Doherty et al. 2008)
 - Habitat Scale: Sage-grouse selected habitats with black sagebrush to avoid toxins

- Monoterpene is what gives sagebrush its smell. Black sagebrush is a low growth species with fewer chemical defenses than other sagebrushes. Black sagebrush had lower crude protein, lower height.
 - Patch Scale: Sage-grouse **avoid toxins** and select for protein
 - Patches are areas where we flush birds rather than random sites. As monoterpene concentrations increased use of site decreased. If crude protein increased, use increased.
 - Sage-grouse avoid toxins at multiple spatial scales
 - Toxins limit habitat use by sage-grouse
 - They are selecting at all levels to find plants with the lowest chemicals and highest protein. For the most part people focus on big sage; this may not be the most preferred source. They are selecting for black sage. They are restricted in that they are trying to find certain species, patch size, etc.
 - The functional quality of sagebrush influences sage-grouse
 - Grouse are spending winters trying to maximize weight in order to show up for leking, nesting, etc. in the best quality they can.
- Objectives for next year's study
 - Sage-grouse may have thresholds to functional quality of food
 - What factors could increase toxin concentrations, e.g., effect of fire, removal of juniper, etc. Effects of drought e.g., decreased precipitation, can increase toxicity of chemicals used for defense by the plant.
 - Measure functional quality across landscape: foodscapes
 - Mapping foodscapes: Remotely sense diet quality using Near Infrared sensors
 - Map foodscapes – dietary hotspots for wintering sage-grouse
- Conclusions
 - Know diet quality is functionally important to sage-grouse
 - Have methods to measure these features within and across habitats and seasons
 - Using collaborative approach to map and predict food quality
 - IDFG: tracking and population ecology of sage-grouse
 - BSU, UI, WSU, ISU, UF: students and techniques for measuring features
 - USGS, USFS, BLM: GIS, controlled manipulations

Discussion and Q&A:

- John Romero – I can see how grouse can detect chemicals, do you think they can select for protein levels?
 - Jennifer – In terms of plants there may be correlation with compounds we're not looking at that are indicators of how much protein is in the

plant. In terms of detection at patch scale, animals can see in near infrared. Birds also have very good senses of smell.

- Gene G. – This research is totally awesome!
- Donna B. – Now that we're talking about drought years, maybe the drought and lack of water could cause a different chemical balance in the plant.
 - Jennifer – We'll have samples from INL of the effects of drought coming soon. Lots of studies in other species that have seen this. I'd predict that sagebrush will become less palatable in the future and pockets of edible sagebrush will be at higher elevations.
- John Robison – Regarding other species, what's the sense if they have a similar palate.
 - Jennifer – Pygmy rabbits are almost the same. They don't have as much choice because they don't move around much. The individual compounds probably differ, but whatever the species or subspecies you're looking at are doing a good job of deterring and influencing selection.
- John Robison – At what point are the differences triggered, e.g., when does the sage-grouse think I'd rather to go to this plant, or if there were no choice would they still eat the sagebrush with higher levels of toxic compounds.
 - Jennifer – Based on lab studies, there is threshold where they say I just can't eat it. As the concentration increases they have to regulate, i.e., only eat so much and then wait and eat again. At some point they can't take small enough meals and there's too much damage.
- Art T. – Should we be looking at black sage in our mixtures a little more carefully? And what other invasive species might sage-grouse adapt to.
 - Jennifer – BLM is helping fund some preference trials for black sage for rabbits. We're trying to get at that. Based on five sites, grouse are mixing. We can tell based on plants that they're eating different types of sagebrush. So when we reseed with one type that might not be the best for the sage-grouse. What we put out in the mixtures is important. But it is a challenge, who wants to collect seed form a dwarf species? Generalists can switch but switching a specialist to something else is difficult.
- Brett D. – So in terms of variability between stands, are you seeing changes in cohort, age?
 - Jennifer – Within those patches, there is no telling especially with the age categories. We can't age them very well. It seems to be some level of hybridization with some of the low sage. We're trying to be grouse centric.
- Richard S. – Brett asked what I was going to. In a lot of crops age can make a huge amount of difference.
 - Jennifer – Fire moves just the same through one site, we'll be able to use that as a tool to track the age of plants better.

- Ken M. – I’ve been in those places you took pictures. They’ve always selected for that, they’ll move wherever the wind has cleared the snow off. Never seen them move off unless the wind completely covers it.
 - Jennifer – There is evidence they like those wind swept hillsides. I have another project where we’re looking at how often they are moving to search for plants. When we see a browse plant there are at least 15 bites but usually more.
- Paul M. – From a restoration perspective it seems like the next step is to get seed from high protein plants and start growing those out.

9. Reminder on LWG Annual Report Due Date (Ann Moser)

Ann Moser reminded the participants that the LWG annual reports are due at the end of January.

10. SAC and LWG Future Meetings and/or Other Approaches: Next Steps

Alison reviewed the key issues raised by SAC members and technical advisors during the previous day’s discussion about what the SAC should do in 2013 and the future of the SAC and LWGs in the near terms. Participants then discussed and reached agreement on a suite of next steps. The following section presents the outcomes of that discussion.

1. Summary of key issues/context

Governor’s Task Force was temporary group developed to address need for alternative. Their product is the 50,000 foot view for the whole state



Information flow and implementation needs to be both top down and bottom up

The SAC and LWGs are critical to implement the Governor’s alternative and translate that 50,000-foot plan to the fine scale. The Governor’s alternative is predicated on the ability of the SAC, LWGs and others to implement on the ground projects (which means that funding is needed).

Success (i.e., participation, interest, effectiveness) of the SAC and LWGs is driven by on the ground actions (projects), people being actively involved, and diversity of participation.

2. Recommended short and long term activities and needs for LWGs

LWG activities (Short-term - 2013)

- Annual report
- Fence marking coordination
- Information sharing

- Investigate NRCS SGI funding options (where interested)

LWG activities (Longer-term)

- Once funding is available – develop and implement on the ground projects (large scale and smaller)
- Some groups still working on plans and/or investigation of local populations/habitats

LWG facilitation and coordination needs

- IDFG or other no cost facilitation in short term
- Identify other funding for facilitation/coordination
- Address concern about lack of participation in East Idaho Uplands LWG
 - Split group?
 - Move group?
 - Other?
- Consider possibility of combining with Weed Management Groups in some areas as mechanism to provide additional coordination support

3. Recommended short-term SAC activities

- Hold SAC meeting in 2013
 - EIS review, possible SAC and/or LWG comments
 - Grazing proposal update
 - Continue information sharing (i.e., LWG projects, funding opportunities, other studies/research)
- Letter to IDFG Director and OSC Administrator (draft distributed and reviewed by SAC; submitted to IDFG/OSC December 28, 2012)
 - Request clarification on whether IDFG and OSC believe objectives/goals of SAC/LWG have changed since Gov. Task Force and in current environment
 - If role is coordination and implementation, need funding for coordination and most importantly for project implementation
 - Request response from IDFG/OSC

4. Recommended longer-term SAC initiatives

- Group agreed on need to develop landscape scale project(s) that could be proposed for grant funding, or be shelf ready if mitigation funding becomes available. Key components of the landscape scale projects are that it focuses on core habitat (builds on core habitat), could maybe be implemented all at once or broken into smaller pieces that could be implemented in stages by LWGs and/or other partners.
 - SAC up subcommittee that will work on development of draft project(s) by **November/December 2013**. Subcommittee members are (others are welcome to join):
 - Don Kemner (IDFG)
 - Brett Dumas (Idaho Power)
 - John Robison (ILC)
 - Steve Goddard (IWF)
 - Jason Pyron (USFWS)

- Jon Beals (OSC)
 - Karen Fullen (NRCS)
 - Gene Gray (West Central LWG)
 - Will Whelan (TNC, was not at the meeting but was volunteered by participants due to his participation in the mitigation subcommittee)
- In near-term maintain ~\$44K funding (approximate amount of OSC sage-grouse funds remaining) and make available as needed for:
 - Critical time sensitive projects/opportunities identified by LWG or SAC
 - Could be used as potential cost share for landscape scale project proposal
- Grant development (locate sources and processes; write grants and/or secure grant writer) (note: Conservation Innovation Grants are on scale of \$1 million)
 - Project grants and alternative funding sources
 - Facilitation grants and alternative funding sources
- Continue to support mitigation framework
 - It is currently a component of the Governor's alternative
 - Currently there are ongoing internal discussions with IDFG and Service
 - Keep watch on what happened to mitigation framework as it moves through amendment process
- Explore possible legislative avenues

Don Kemner thanked the SAC members and technical advisors for their ongoing commitment and work and adjourned the meeting.