



M E M O R A N D U M
OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Hines District Office

DATE: December 13, 2011
TO: Baker Sage Grouse Local Implementation Team
FROM: Autumn Larkins
SUBJ: **Minutes Baker Sage-Grouse LIT Meeting December 13, 2011**

Participants: Autumn Larkins (ODFW), Rex Nelson (Rancher), Travis Bloomer (NRCS), Hanley Jenkins, II (Union County), Bert White (Rancher), Craig Martell (BLM), Melissa Yzquierdo (BLM), Brian Ratliff (ODFW), Christian Hagen (OSU), Greg Jackle (ODFW), Kathleen Rapley (USFWS-ID), Dick Fleming (Landowner), Time Heater (Landowner, SWCD), Mitch Thomas (BLM), Mike Woods (BLM), Dorothy Mason (retired BLM), John Raemacher (BLM), Jason Simmons (BLM), John McLaughlin (ODFW), James Rebholz (USFWS), Marisa Meyer (USFWS)

Topics of discussion: Agency Updates

ODFW: Ongoing population monitoring, assisting with various energy mitigation plans, coordinating LIT meetings

Mackenzie Ranch: Implementing sage-grouse related improvements on ranch, fence marking around leks, rest and rotate around nesting areas as part of grazing plan, etc

Nelson Ranch: Same as above, sage-grouse is part of ranch management plan, rehabilitated 2 old leks

NRCS: Discussed SGI, targeting the expansion of juniper near leks (Upper Burnt River, Castle Rock 15,000 acres of phase 1 and phase 2)

NRCS/SWCD/ODFW/USFS: Grass roots efforts in Virtue Flats area, 60,000 acres to address medusahead (almost 100% private landowner participation)

Union County: Representing the land use side, evaluating Goal 5 resource (efforts to pursue process among all 7 counties that have sage-grouse, involved in Antelope Ridge Wind Project (mediated procedure with ODFW and applicant, sage-grouse was part of the conservation)

BLM: Baker Habitat Restoration Project (lots of juniper treatment), revision of range management program (changes to monitoring protocol, grazing plans; leaving adequate stubble height, rest and rotate), proposed critical area of concern (42,000 acre of BLM), may focus management needs, restrict seasonal use of Virtue Flat (draft is out now for review), CCPI (70,000 acres of Burnt River watershed focused on phase 1 juniper removal)

B2H: Potential impacts to sage-grouse

Overall: Baker County has excellent interagency cooperation and may be the lead among Local Implementation Teams

Discussed the updated version of ODFW's Sage-Grouse Plan

- Not much change
- Core Area Approach
- Focus where work occurs
- Conservation triage

Discussed the responsibilities, vision and goal of LIT (handout, also attached)

- Clarification of definition of prioritized
 - More issue based (juniper, weeds, etc.) not geographic
 - We are not prioritizing between area

Identified 3 areas of priority (digitized maps will be sent later-probably January)

BAKER

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-19: Baker Valley)
- Issue are noxious weeds and invasive species, transmission lines, energy development, human impacts (motorized recreation at Virtue Flat), lack of understory in moderately deep rooted and deep rooted perennial grasses, lack of forb diversity, altered sage brush habitat due to fire, mining, juniper encroachment at higher elevations, crested wheat seeding throughout

COW VALLEY

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-16: Bully Creek Area)
- Same issues as the Vale LIT identified: juniper invasion at higher elevations, mining and renewable energy, noxious weeds and invasive species at lower elevations, connectivity for the birds, sagebrush canopy closure (>17%), transmission lines

UNITY

- Within Low Density
- Issues are human impacts (OHV recreation), juniper encroachment, isolated population and connectivity issues

Other topics of discussion:

- Residual grass heights and sagebrush densities
- Canopy closure
- Percent utilization to be benefit sage-grouse
- ODFW Conservation Strategy revision may include more sage-grouse (COAs) in the northern portion of the Vale district

Future meetings

- Would like to meet quarterly but will only meet when action needed
- Next meeting probably late January, early February