



MEMORANDUM

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Hines District Office

DATE: December 6, 2011

TO: Burns Sage-Grouse Local Implementation Team

FROM: Autumn Larkins

SUBJ: **Minutes Burns Sage-Grouse LIT Meeting December 6, 2011**

Participants: Autumn Larkins (ODFW), Angela Sitz (USFWS), Bob Hooton (ODFW), Tom Segal (ODFW), Jay Kerby (TNC), Matt Obradovich (BLM), Chris Redmond (Tree Top Ranch), Sheena Miltenberger (DSL), Theresa Dodson (DSL), Julie Weikel (Local), Zola Ryan (NRCS), Chad Karges (Malheur NWR), Mark Doverspike (Rancher), Steve Grasty (Harney County), John O'Conner (Local), Joan Suther (BLM), Bill Pieratt (BLM), Rod Klus (ODFW)

Topics of discussion: Agency Updates

Harney County: Very involved in update of ODFW's Sage-Grouse Plan, ensuring economic and community considerations be incorporated, involved in the Echanis Wind Energy Project mitigation plan for private and assisting with mitigation plan for public

Doverspike: Involved with CCA with Oregon Cattlemen's Association

NRCS: Discussed Sage Grouse Initiative, intensive juniper cutting projects

SWCD (via Zola): SWCD agreed to act as the permit holder for the Harney County CCAA

DSL: Pending negotiations with USFWS for CCAA, active riparian juniper cuts, spraying for medusahead in the Stockade block

BLM: Working on the North Steens Transmission Line EIS, North Steens Ecosystem Restoration Project litigation (judge affirmed all things sage-grouse, moving forward on a few projects, awaiting court order to proceed with full project), continuing work from Five Creeks project (moving south), still involved with the Cooperative Weed Management Plan (a lot of work in sage-grouse habitat), monitoring post treatment

TNC: Very interested in LIT effectiveness, utilizing public and private coordination, would like to see the group interacting with science @ ARS, create better tools, working on ½ million dollar grant for the advancement of sagebrush restoration science

ODFW: Working on multiple juniper cutting and sagebrush reestablishment projects, assisting with various energy mitigation plans, coordinating LIT meetings, involved with the development of local CCAA

USFWS: Working on OCA CCA, DSL CCAA, Harney County CCAA, involved with sagebrush metrics

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 8 areas of priority (digitized maps will be sent later-probably January)
Some areas still need to finished by neighboring LIT groups

BURNS

- Within Core and Low Density
- Issues are connectivity, fragmentation from urbanization, transmission lines, and juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, dalmatian toadflax, spotted knapweed, whitetop), and lack of sagebrush habitat in the lower elevations

DREWSEY

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-15: North Fork Malheur-Monument Rock area and BM-16: Bully Creek Area)
- Issues are juniper and pine encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead), mining development, and fires

DRY VALLEY/JACK MOUNTAIN

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-5: Hart Mountain Area)
- Issues are altered sagebrush habitat from fires, juniper encroachment (eastside), wind energy threats, and “wild” horses
- Lakeview LIT identified issues on the westside of DRY VALLEY to be noxious weeds, fire and sagebrush canopy closure

FOLLY FARM

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)
- Issues are wind energy threats, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed), fires, sagebrush conversion to crested wheat seeding monocultures, West Nile Virus, and “wild” horses

GLASS BUTTE

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-08: Silver Creek-Emigrant Creek) and Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-01: Squaw Ridge area playas and sagebrush)
- Issues are geothermal and wind energy threats, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed), and potential seasonal human impact (OHV)

NORTH STEENS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)
- Issues are altered sagebrush habitat from fires, crested wheat seedings at lower elevations (north and west side), juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (thistle), and “wild” horses

PUEBLOS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin and NBR-06: Basque Hills-Hawk Mountain area plains)
- Issues are fire and wind energy threats

SOUTH STEENS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)
- Issues are wind energy threats, fire, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, ventanata), and “wild” horses

Additional Agenda Item

Judge Grasty requested the Local Implementation Team (LIT) members also act as the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the Harney County Court with regards to mitigation issues.

- All agencies are already present
- The group is already familiar with the process
- They would make wildlife habitat mitigation recommendations to the court
- The court would then adopt and incorporate into the Conditional Use Permit
 - Which then could be imposed as a regulatory mechanism
- This would require a few additional meetings to work on the plan
 - We will utilize this contact list to deliver more specifics and set up a separate meeting date and time

Future meetings

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