



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

DATE: July 26, 2012

TO: Prineville Sage-Grouse LIT

FROM: Autumn Larkins

SUBJ: **Minutes Prineville Sage-Grouse LIT Meeting July 26, 2012**

Participants: Autumn Larkins (ODFW), Emily Lent (BLM), Christopher Anthony (BLM), Tim Deboodt (OSU), Runinda McCormack (Rancher), Andy Gallagher (NRCS), Jeremy Maestas (NRCS), Angela Sitz (USFWS), Steve Niemela (ODFW), Glen Ardt (ODFW), Jerry Cordova (USFWS), Larry Pacenka (ODFW), Casey Thomas (Rancher)

General Discussion:

We reviewed the Vale/Jordan Valley meeting topics revolving around the Long Draw Fire (prevention, suppression and restoration ideas), and we also reviewed the Lakeview meeting topics regarding prioritization and scorecard criteria. Members of the Prineville team voiced concern about the mapping request and scorecard tables being too species specific and potentially underestimating the projects. There is a need to account for all habitat improvements. The USFWS requires sage-grouse specific habitat improvement projects identified separately but we will also identify the other completed projects that may also benefit sage-grouse (i.e., MDI juniper removal).

We briefly discussed the Buck Creek Fire that burned about 5500 acres within the 12 Mile Action Area. BLM updated the group on the Playa Project within the Brothers Action Area (2,000 acres of juniper removal since 2008 to actively restore playas, including filling in of dugout, reseeding, exclosures for cattle, etc.). The group also discussed concerns about potential wilderness designations which might be detrimental to sage-grouse habitat because we may not be able to manipulate juniper appropriately.

Project Discussion:

We reviewed the map of "Action Areas" identified during the last meeting. Text in italics is the justification of why the area was chosen and the issues and threats identified during last round of meetings. Agencies provided sage-grouse specific habitat improvement projects that were added to the Action Area maps. We discussed projects not mapped and identified areas that still need work. Also listed in red is if an Action Area was affected by a summer 2012 fire. The teams developed a list of prioritization guidelines to help streamline grant applications and project proposals as they may arise.

LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION TEAM'S PRIORITIZATION GUIDELINES:

- 1) Is the project within an Action Area?**

- 2) **Does the project address an identified threat in that Action Area?**
- 3) **Is the project adjacent to a completed or planned project that benefits sage-grouse?**
- 4) **What is the level of positive impacts to sage-grouse related to all threats?**

BROTHERS

- *Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-1: Squaw Ridge area playas and sagebrush) and Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-02: Badlands)*
- *Issues are human disturbance (Millican OHV recreation) in the northwest corner, roads, transmission lines, fire, juniper encroachment, cheat grass, sagebrush canopy closure and wind energy threats (West Butte and Pine Mountain)*

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (3,344 acres)
- Continuation of cost share weed work on private lands
- Supportive of ongoing changes to grazing management plans on private ranches that address sage-grouse life history needs
- Support capturing this type of management on public lands via the OCA/CCA
- Potentially create better grazing management through private land CCAAs
 - Need prescribed grazing standards (balance supply and demand)
- Revisit the Sage-Grouse Habitat Objective Project Implementation
 - The LIT group worked on this back in 2008
- Continuation of the Pine Mtn Service First Project (BLM/USFS/USFWS)
- Promote mosaic sagebrush canopy manipulation (mowing, roller, aerator) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory
- Continuation of the Playa Restoration Project (BLM)
- Wind energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core

MISERY FLAT

- *Within Core and Low Density*
- *Issues are human impact (roads, transmission lines, and year round recreation, i.e., OHV), rabbit brush conversion due to disturbance, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead), lack of nesting habitat, crested wheat seedings at lower elevations, fires, raven predation and geothermal/wind energy threats in the south (Glass Butte)*

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Geothermal and wind energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core
- Potential ARS precision restoration test site
 - Need successful seeding techniques
- Utilize appropriate grazing management techniques to keep areas rested for sage-grouse nesting habitat
- Support BLM plan amendments and comment on road designations
- BLM needs authorization to utilize appropriate chemicals for weed treatments
 - Provide letter of support

NORTH WAGONTIRE

- *Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)*

- *Issues are sagebrush conversion to agricultural/dry land and fires, cheat grass, and wind energy potential*
- *Added during Round Two Lakeview Meeting: Raven Predation*

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions
- Promote mosaic brush mowing (tall) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory
- Continued juniper removal projects on public land
- Address OHV issues and lack of enforcement

PAULINA

- *Within Core and Low Density*
- *Issues are juniper (phase 1), invasive weeds on the west side (medusahead, whitetop, knapweed, scotch thistle), fragmentation (highways and transmission lines), raven predation, potential feral horses*

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Allowing BLM to utilize the appropriate chemicals to treat invasive weeds (injunction)
 - Provide letter of support
- Continuation of Crooked River Weed Management and private landowners efforts
- Support the Wolf Creek Collaborative (USFS/USFWS) juniper thinning projects on scabland flats
 - Potential to work on private lands in the future
 - Support the connection of federal land and private land projects
- Potential ARS precision restoration test site
- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (14,065 acres)
- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA

POST

- *Within Low Density*
- *Issues are fragmentation (urbanization, human development, subdivisions), connectivity (isolated area), juniper encroachment (phase 2 and 3), invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed, russian knapweed, whitetop, mediterranean sage), fire threats, feral horses, and research needs*

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of SWCD juniper and weed control projects on private land
- Continuation of Mule Deer Initiative juniper removal

- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (100 acres)
- Propose potential opportunities to expand juniper removal projects to treat phase II and phase III juniper
- Need to treat existing slash pile (fire threat)
 - Jackpot burning during winter months
 - Concerned about firewood cutting and spread of invasive weeds
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA

TACKMAN

- *Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-06: South Fork Crooked River Area)*
- *Issues are loss of sagebrush habitat, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed, russian knapweed, whitetop), research needs*

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (276 acres)
- Continuation of cost sharing projects between the local weed board and private landowners
- Support the High Desert Shrub Steppe Programmatic EA
 - Continuation of juniper removal and reseeding of native species

TWELVE MILE

- *Within Core and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-06: South Fork Crooked River Area)*
- *Issues are juniper encroachment, low density of sagebrush on the north end, wind energy potential on the south end, feral horses, and raven predation*
- **Within the Buck Creek Fire boundary**

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (17,396 acres)
- Continuation of whitetop invasive weed cost share on the north end
- Wind Energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA
- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions

Future meetings

- Will only meet when action needed
- Need to get another landowner representative on the team (suggestions)
 - Becky: Doc's daughter
 - Mark Williams: ZX Ranch
 - Chuck Jones
 - Steven Roth
- Need more shapefiles or acreages of habitat improvement projects from agencies (sage-grouse specific and others) to help create the most accurate scorecard table for USFWS