



M E M O R A N D U M
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Date: February 27, 2017

To: Prineville Sage-Grouse Local Implementation Team

From: Lee Foster, Sage-Grouse Conservation Coordinator

Subject: February 21, 2017, Prineville LIT Meeting Minutes

Participants: Lee Foster (ODFW), Corey Heath (ODFW), Greg Jackle (ODFW), Chip Faver (BLM), Larry Ashton (BLM), Stephanie Mckinney (BLM), Emily Lent (BLM), Jeff Kitchens (BLM), Kassidy Kern (BLM), Jerry Cordova (USFWS), Keven Keown (USFS), Randy Weist (DSL), Sheena Miltenberger (DSL), Stu Garret (ECAS), Ann Beier (Crook County), Peter Gutowsky (Deschutes County), Chris Mundy (NRCS), Christina Santana (NRCS), Andy Gallagher (Crook SWCD), Debbie Wood (Crooked River CWMA), Tim Deboodt (OSU Extension), Stephen Roth (Rancher), Runinda McCormack (McCormack Ranch), Dave Baker (Rancher), Dan Morse (ONDA), Nathan Hovekamp (Central Oregon Landwatch)

Meeting Objectives

- Review history, objectives, and structure of LIT
- Discuss Prineville BLM ARMPA Implementation Plan
- Discuss role of LIT in BLM Causal Factor Analyses
- Discuss meeting schedule, LIT objectives, and group structure and governance

Review of LIT History, objectives, and structure

Lee Foster provided a brief summary of the presentation presented at the meeting on December 19th, 2016, including a review of: the history of LITs in Oregon; the goals of the LIT; the changes in sage-grouse conservation in Oregon since 2012; the role of the LIT in coordinating conservation effort between stakeholders, and in implementation of the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan; and the questions that still need answered in terms of group structure, meeting schedules, and facilitation.

Prineville BLM ARMPA Implementation Plan Review - Presentation

Larry Ashton provided a short presentation on the process for implementation planning of the ARMPA, and the role of the LIT in this process. That process was comprised of three steps: 1. Identify tasks, 2. Prioritize tasks, 3. Schedule tasks in out years. The LIT was sent information regarding discretionary tasks identified for the 2017 – 2018 period, the post-2018 period, and non-discretionary tasks. The BLM requested comments at the LIT meeting, and provided the opportunity to submit further comments by March 3rd, 2017. Larry emphasized that the Implementation Plan is a working document and will be updated annually, and as needed in the future.

ARMPA Implementation Plan – Discussion

Non-discretionary actions were defined as actions that the BLM is mandated by law to do. Examples include: mining review, right of way review, some grazing actions, etc.

Flexibility of the ARMPA was discussed, specifically in regards to the provisions of Objective Veg 2, which states that juniper cover will be reduced to < 5% within 4 miles of occupied and pending leks. Prineville BLM has committed to removing all non-old growth and culturally significant trees within 4 miles of occupied and pending leks. The Prineville BLM has a DNA (determination of NEPA adequacy) for 92,400 acres of juniper removal in the Paulina/12-Mile PAC, and projects that all acres will be treated by 2019. Following the completion of those projects, the Prineville BLM will obtain clearances to begin juniper removal in the Brothers PAC. The Prineville BLM now has more capacity to assess old growth and cultural clearances. BLM juniper projects are being conducted according to NRCS recommendations.

MD RE 2 was discussed, specifically why avoidance of wind and solar ROWs in GHMA was prioritized for the 2017 – 2018 period, while exclusion of the same in PHMA was prioritized for the 2019 and out period. There are currently no active projects on BLM lands in the district, although there are two inactive projects exist, and it seems that the number of proposed solar developments in the area is increasing.

A question was asked regarding conservation projects not related to juniper removal. The BLM will be conducting invasive annual grass treatments next year, and further playa restoration is planned for this fall. The ARMPA Implementation Plan focuses on juniper and invasive grass control due to the benefit of those treatments both to sage-grouse, and for the reduction of wildfire risk, which should increase the likelihood of project funding. Additionally, it was noted that this approach addresses the three major threats to sage-grouse in Oregon: juniper expansion, invasive annual grass, and wildfire.

The potential to explore mechanized and commercial juniper removal was discussed. It was noted that currently the BLM is currently only using cut, pile, and burn treatment methods, and more clearances would be needed to utilize other methods. The BLM was encouraged to analyze other possible treatment options. The BLM was supportive of the suggestion, but noted that markets for juniper are spotty.

The Prineville BLM currently has a programmatic EA (Environmental Assessment) in place for the use of 14 herbicides. Infestations are mapped, and while DNAs may be needed for individual projects the BLM is currently well positioned to begin herbicide treatments across the district.

Travel management was discussed, which will be completed by 2020. This effort will include an inventory of existing routes in order to comply with the 3% disturbance cap in PACs. This effort will not necessarily preclude the creation of new routes, but existing and alternate routes will be carefully analyzed with an objective of exchanging existing routes for alternate routes if alternate routes are determined to be necessary.

The Prineville BLM is currently working to create fine scale maps of sage-grouse habitat condition across the district on BLM managed lands, and this effort will be completed within 1 – 3 years. The potential to extrapolate this mapping effort to private, or other public lands was discussed. Privacy concerns when considering private lands were raised, however coordination is already ongoing between BLM and NRCS on several fronts.

The potential to utilize novel methods for the treatment of annual grass was brought up, several bacterial control options are currently being developed but are not yet approved for use in Oregon. It was noted that annual grass treatments need follow up monitoring and potentially additional treatment to maintain a site.

Cooperation between the Prineville BLM and local RFPAs (Rural Fire Protection Areas) was discussed, especially in terms of coordinating protection of priority suppression areas. The BLM and local RFPAs have a good relationship and coordination is currently ongoing. Retardant and dozer line are approved in sage-grouse habitat to suppress fires. RFPA coordination is outlined in Appendix C of the ARMPA.

Invasive annual grass treatment will be prioritized for fires > 100 acres in size. A dedicated ESR (Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation) coordinator has been hired for the district.

The Prineville BLM is currently inventorying fences on the district for inclusion in the SGI (Sage-Grouse Initiative) fence collision model, and is currently marking fences. ECAS is making flight diverters for use on BLM lands. Currently only 2.6 miles of fence have been marked on BLM lands. BLM and DSL will coordinate fence marking on shared fences. DSL has 79 miles of fence to mark statewide.

The Prineville BLM is closely monitoring the Liggett Table Wild horse and Burro HMA (Herd Management Area). There is not yet an EA (Environmental Assessment) completed for this HMA to authorize management of the population. Horses outside of the HMA can only be gathered and put back in it, which will not be effective unless enough forage for the population exists within the HMA. ODFW will share horse observations in the area with the BLM, and the BLM will provide a shapefile of the HMA to ODFW.

Causal Factor Analysis – Discussion

The Prineville BLM will be conducting CFAs (Causal Factor Analyses) for the Paulina/12 Mile and Brothers PACs this spring, as both have tripped soft triggers under the ARMPA for population. These analyses will attempt to identify potential factors causing poor population performance in these areas. The LIT determined that there should be two points for input into the process by the LIT: after the initial description of potential causes was completed, and data was collected documenting these factors, so that the LIT could act to check the accuracy of this information; and following the completion of a draft CFA. Potentially during the first point of input only a technical subcommittee of the LIT would be involved. Following the announcement of the soft triggers an LIT meeting will be scheduled 1 – 2 months out to review the initial CFA information.

LIT Structure – Discussion

The meeting schedule of the LIT was discussed. It was determined that the LIT should meet only when a task was at hand, however in order to simplify facilitation of the group, a standing schedule of three meetings per year was agreed upon. These meetings would occur in January, to discuss project planning and coordination for the following year, April or May to discuss BLM CFAs which need to be completed in a particular year, and in October to discuss that year's population estimate. Other issues requiring meetings would be addressed as needed.

There was little interest in transitioning to a chairperson or executive council form of LIT governance at this point. For the time being Lee Foster from ODFW will continue to facilitate and schedule meetings, and will alert the group if additional capacity for meeting facilitation is acquired.

The BLM alerted the group that out-year planning for projects in the Brothers PAC is on-going and requested comment from the LIT on these plans.

Action Items

- Return additional comments on the ARMPA Implementation Plan to Lee Foster to be forwarded to BLM by March 3rd; *LIT*
- DSL and BLM will coordinate fence marking activities and share maps on the location of marked and prioritized fences; *BLM, DSL*
- BLM will send ODFW a shapefile depicting the Ligget Table HMA, and ODFW will share observations of horses in the district; *BLM, ODFW*
- The BLM will email maps of planned Brothers PAC treatments to the LIT, to facilitate coordination between agencies; *BLM*
- Schedule the next LIT meeting to discuss CFA review, 1 – 2 months following beginning of CFA process; *Lee Foster*