



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

DATE: December 8, 2011

TO: Prineville Sage-Grouse LIT

FROM: Autumn Larkins

SUBJ: **Minutes Prineville Sage-Grouse LIT Meeting December 8, 2011**

Participants: Autumn Larkins (ODFW), Dede Steele (USFS), Monte Kuk (BLM), Emily Lent (BLM), Jon Jinnings (DLCD), Phil Stenbeck (Crook County), Mike McCabe (Crook County), Tim Deboodt (OSU), Runinda McCormack (Rancher), Matt Smith (Rancher), Andy Gallagher (NRCS), Chris Mundy (NRCS), Jeremy Maestas (NRCS), Crystal Strobl (ODFW), Steve George (ODFW), Angela Sitz (USFWS), Corey Heath (ODFW), Randy Weist (DSL), Doc Hatfield (Rancher), Travis Hatfield (Rancher), Bob Hooton (ODFW)

Topics of discussion: Agency Updates

USFS: Working on state group revision plan, juniper cuts in sagebrush habitat (2009-2011 about 1600 acres)

BLM: Reviewing state strategy, new policy statement, revision of land management plans, scoping letter for national strategy coming out soon, deciding on how BLM will respond to ODFW's Sage-Grouse plan, working on 100,000 acre EA in High Desert steppe first year thinning juniper, finished 2500 acres of juniper thinning around playa habitats, focusing in core habitats

DLCD: Here to learn more about Sage-Grouse plan and how it intersects with land use planning, energy development, Goal 5 (some plans out of date and may not include sage-grouse)

Crook County: Here to look out for private landowners, help out with issues, and identify when regulations are applicable, review process of plan

OSU: Providing technical assistance and financial support, involved with 15,000 acres of thinning around Prineville Reservoir (BLM and USFS) and 12-15,000 acres on private land (Horse Heaven) areas close to active leks, also interested in utilizing LIT recommendations for funding opportunities with OWEB since it is challenging to get them to look at upland habitat projects, sage-grouse should help with that

McCormick Ranch: Improving ranch land in a holistic approach

GI Ranch: Recently completed a 7,000 acre juniper cut

NRCS: Discussed Sage Grouse Initiative, intensive juniper cutting projects (27,000 acre juniper treatments within sage-grouse habitat), lots of private land owners signing up, interested in keeping large intact areas as working ranches, core area approach is best possible way to affect best habitat

ODFW: Working on multiple juniper cutting and sagebrush reestablishment projects (between Mule Deer Initiative and cost share with other agencies), ongoing population monitoring, assisting with various energy mitigation plans, coordinating LIT meetings

USFWS: Working on OCA CCA, DSL CCAA, Harney County CCAA,

DSL: Pending negotiations with USFWS for CCAA, in this area some juniper cuts, agriculture development in the Hampton area, noxious weed control (approx 800 acres/yr)

Hatfield: Significant changes on ranch with sage-grouse in mind, although prefer to look at the entire watershed, all wildlife, and work in a holistic approach, involved in both sage-grouse and mule deer habitat improvement.

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

Some areas still need to be revisited by neighboring LIT groups

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)

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)

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

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

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

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

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

Other topics of discussion:

- Residual grass heights and sagebrush densities
- Canopy closure
- Percent utilization to benefit sage-grouse

Future meetings

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