From: Kenneth E Mayer
To: Noreen Walsh
Cc: San Stiver
Subject: Re: E&E story on Resilience and Resistance GTR!
Date: Tuesday, November 11, 2014 10:56:44 AM

Noreen--I wanted to give you an update on where we are. I'm going to be in SLC for the GSG International Workshop--we need to catch lunch or something while we are there. On November 19 Doug is coming to Reno to work with me to finish up the technical draft of the Fire Report and then submit to Theo for style editing. I hope to have a finished version to you by months end.

The Invasive Report is way more complicated. We did not expect 300 responses to the survey. I have asked the CIS at MT to analyze the survey by GSG MZ and PAC if the data are reliable at that level. I hope to be able to show what programs are in place, the successes we are seeing right now, where we have gaps and what needs to be done to improve our management of invasive species. We have been having a hard time keeping the plant folks "out of the weeds" :) and keep the assessment at the 30'000' level. It has become obvious that our report will set the stage for a more in-debth look--maybe this next year if you feel it is important. It is also clear that this is the weakest part of our work on the "GSG Threats". The agencies, the Administration and Congress are giving little focus on this. The invasive species problem is like smoking--we know its bad for you, but because it doesn't kill you right away you ignore it until you die of a heart attack. What we need is the same type of focus we have traditionally give fire and if we did our problems would be solved--but I know that is not reasonable to expect since us humans want to focus on an obvious crisis/emergency. Not until we recognized that smoking was costing us billions did we do something about it. Lets talk more about it when I see you this week.

KM

Ken Mayer
P.O. Box 9891
Reno, NV 89507
(775) 741-9942
K. E. Mayer, LLC

On Thu, Nov 6, 2014 at 5:45 AM, Noreen Walsh <noreen_walsh@fws.gov> wrote:

> Yes, nice! And the panel with Jeanne, Doug andJeremy was great! The best, actually.
> Do you mind if I give Janice Schneider a copy of the draft report - she is anxious to see it
>
> Noreen Walsh
> Regional Director
> Mountain-Prairie Region
> U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
>
> On Nov 5, 2014, at 9:39 PM, Ken Mayer <ken.e.mayer@gmail.com> wrote:
>
>> Have you seen this? Hope the conference is going well!

KM

Sent from my iPhone
Ken Mayer

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Maestas, Jeremy - NRCS, Redmond, OR" <Jeremy.Maestas@or.usda.gov>
Date: November 4, 2014 at 3:44:57 PM MST
To: "Chambers, Jeanne -FS" <jchambers@fs.fed.us>, "ken.e.mayer@gmail.com" <ken.e.mayer@gmail.com>
Cc: Deborah Richie <deborahwaite.richie@gmail.com>, "Naugle, Dave" <david.naugle@umontana.edu>, "Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT" <Tim.Griffiths@mt.usda.gov>
Subject: E&E story on Resilience and Resistance GTR!

Phil Taylor at E&E News just published this great article on the GTR. Jeanne, excellent job on the interview! The brand new Science to Solutions really helped as he used language right out of it to craft the article. Thanks to Deborah and Dave for lining us up with this outlet!

ENDANGERED SPECIES:
Agencies get new tool for protecting sage grouse from fire, invasives

Phil Taylor, E&E reporter
Published: Tuesday, November 4, 2014

http://www.eenews.net/pm

Scientists are rolling out a new strategy this week to fight wildfire and cheatgrass threatening the greater sage grouse.

The goal is to help the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service place firefighting assets, target vegetation treatments and launch rehabilitation projects for burned landscapes in the Great Basin.

"This is the first time we've developed a landscape-scale prioritization for addressing wildfire and invasive threats," said Jeanne Chambers, a research ecologist at the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station, who was the lead author of a report detailing the strategy. "We're really excited about the work being applied."

The strategy is seen as key to BLM's and the Forest Service's efforts to implement safeguards for sage grouse ahead of the Fish and Wildlife Service's court-mandated September 2015 deadline to decide whether it should be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The agencies are amending land-management plans across the West, but they have finite resources for preventing wildfires and performing treatments that benefit sage grouse.

Chambers and her colleagues are set to present the report at a conference in Boise, Idaho, to facilitate discussion between scientists and land-management officials on how to address wildfire and invasive species in sage grouse habitat.

Notable attendees at the three-day event include Interior Deputy Secretary Michael Connor, Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze, Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, and Interior Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Janice Schneider.

The Chambers report is among the first to bring together an interdisciplinary group of researchers and managers from the Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Agricultural Research Service, Bureau of Land Management, and state wildlife agencies.

While greater sage grouse face a panoply of threats across their 11-state Western range -- including oil and gas development, transmission lines, roads, and even ravens -- their primary threat in the Great Basin states of Nevada, Utah, Oregon and Idaho is wildfire and invasive cheatgrass, Chambers said.

Prior to European settlement of the Great Basin in the 1800s, wildfires burned sagebrush-dominated ecosystem once every century to once every few decades, according to the report.

But today, wildfires strike as frequently as once every 18 years and are generally larger, Chambers said. The wildfires offer a toehold for the invasion of cheatgrass, which dries out more quickly than other grasses and perpetuates the risk of more frequent and larger fires.

Since cheatgrass was introduced by Europeans in the late 1800s, it has dominated nearly 10 million acres in Nevada and Utah alone, according to the report. At the same time, the area of Great Basin lands covered by pinyon and juniper woodlands -- another threat to sage grouse -- has increased up to sixfold.

With wildfire and cheatgrass posing a one-two punch for the grouse, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies convened an interagency team of plant ecologists, wildlife biologists, fire specialists and land managers to look for solutions.

'Powerful decision tool'

The strategy being unveiled this week mapped lands that are most resilient to disturbances like fire and drought and most resistant to stressors like invasive species. Researchers found that resilience and resistance are closely tied to the land's capacity to grow native shrubs, perennial grasses and forbs -- a key food source for sage grouse.

They also found that cooler and moister soils produce more grasses and forbs, forcing cheatgrass to grow more slowly and produce fewer seeds.

Researchers used existing data to map the land's resistance and resilience to wildfire and invasive species. They layered the results onto maps showing the density of sagebrush cover, which is a key indicator of sage grouse. The strategy also considers factors such as the density of breeding birds in a given area.

"The result gives managers a powerful decision tool to identify priority areas, plan treatments and target investments," said a synopsis of the report prepared by the NRCS's Sage Grouse Initiative.

For example, areas that show low resilience and resistance that also have few native grasses and forbs and high risk of invasive cheatgrass would likely take a longer time to recover from a disturbance and may require more proactive and intensive management, the report said.

"Management actions will be more beneficial in some areas than others," Chambers said.

Sagebrush-dominated ecosystems with relatively low resilience and resistance may be top candidates for reseeding after a wildfire, the report notes. Prescribed fire may be a viable treatment on sites that have experienced pinyon and juniper encroachment, but which have relatively cool and moist soils that are believed to be more resilient to disturbance and resistant to invasives.

The new strategy will help BLM implement an instruction memorandum signed in July that ordered fire personnel to focus hazardous fuels reduction projects and pre-position firefighting resources in habitats of highest importance to sage grouse.

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