From: Frazer, Gary
To: Noreen Walsh
Subject: Re: GSG: update on GSG NPT deliberations
Date: Friday, April 25, 2014 10:02:26 AM

Great stuff. Thanks.

BTW, thought you rocked the house on yesterday's call. Perfect balance. -- GDF

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On Fri, Apr 25, 2014 at 8:37 AM, Noreen Walsh <noreen_walsh@fws.gov> wrote:

> FYI, the latest. Call if questions.
>
> - **Land Use Allocation Decisions**: We appear to have reached agreement with BLM/FS on a framing doc that would guide land use allocation decisions that are more uniform, clear, and that would allow the plans to contribute to the objectives outlined in the COT report. We have agreed upon an overall strategy of:
> - avoidance of new impacts to **PACs/priority habitat** (notwithstanding valid existing rights and allowing for limited, justified exceptions, and a max of 3% disturbance)
> - minimizing impacts to **general habitat**,
> - focusing development **outside of all GSG habitat**.
> - **Adaptive management**: We appear to have reached agreement on the general approach and the "sideboards" to be given to field managers to guide the specifics in each plan.
> - **Mitigation**: I anticipate we will finalize the remaining wording today. FWS has been encouraging that: "BLM/FS should ensure no net loss to greater sage-grouse habitat from anthropogenic activities by implementing coordinated mitigation strategies with net conservation gain goals and objectives. The mitigation hierarchy should be consistently applied to all anthropogenic impacts in all habitat. A higher proportional offset would be required if disturbance/development actions occur in highly valuable habitat like PACs, and that the higher proportional offset would preemptively discourage those disturbance/development actions."
> - **Monitoring**: I anticipate we will finalize the remaining wording today.
> - **Fire/invasive species**: No change from last update

From: Noreen Walsh [mailto:noreen_walsh@fws.gov]
Sent: Sunday, April 20, 2014 9:03 PM
To: Paul Souza; Gary Frazer; Dan Ashe
Subject: sage-grouse on Monday

I hear the Monday meeting with Sarah may have been postponed, but just in case, here's a brief status of land management planning issues we have been discussing. By Thursday we should have further resolution. Call if questions.

Noreen

- **Land Use Allocation Decisions**: FWS believes we have made good progress together with BLM/FS in agreeing on land use allocation decisions that are more uniform, clear, and that would allow the plans to contribute to the objectives outlined in the COT report. We have advocated a strategy of avoidance of new impacts to PACs/priority habitat (as maintaining the integrity of PACs is the highest objective in the COT report), minimizing impacts to general habitat outside of PACs, incentivizing development outside of all GSG habitat, and mitigating for all impacts to GSG habitat (see mitigation below). A revised table explaining the allocations in priority habitat and also general habitat, as well as potential for exceptions, should be in final review this week. Thus, allocation and disturbance issues are close to final resolution.

- **Adaptive management**: General policy direction was agreed to months ago, and the remaining issues have revolved around more specific "sideboards" to give the planning teams to ensure some degree of consistency in the approach to developing soft and hard triggers. We do not have significant differences here and should be able to move forward. However, adaptive management is integrally tied to monitoring. What is monitored should translate directly to decision metrics for adaptive management. Given federal agency concerns about their ability to commit to resource intensive monitoring, we have recommended that the most efficient approach would ensure that any numerical soft triggers be informed by data gleaned from proposed broad and mid-scale monitoring, so as to avoid the need for expensive or labor intensive site- or fine-scale monitoring to know if a soft trigger is tripped.

- **Mitigation**: still under productive discussion. The FWS position can be summed up as: "BLM/FS should ensure no net loss to greater sage-grouse habitat from anthropogenic activities by implementing coordinated mitigation strategies with net conservation gain goals and objectives. The mitigation hierarchy should be consistently applied to all anthropogenic impacts in all habitat. A higher proportional offset would be required if disturbance/development actions occur in highly valuable habitat like PACs, and that the higher proportional offset would preemptively discourage those disturbance/development actions."

- **Monitoring**: still under discussion.
- **Fire/invasive species**: Progress continues; BLM and Forest Service confirmed their intentions to include the "resiliency matrix" developed by Mayer, et al., in each Great Basin plan as an overarching framework, and provide assurances that the matrix will be stepped down to the operational level through appropriate mechanisms. The Fire and Invasives Assessment Team (FIAT) presented a webinar on April 4, describing a landscape prioritization for fire and invasive species management in the Great Basin. The prioritization was based on resilience and resistance of the landscape to fire and invasive species. As this approach is finalized, we recommend strongly that the prioritization focus first on areas with high density GSG and low resilience and resistance AND also high density GSG with medium resilience and resistance. In other words, all high density GSG areas are important and should receive high priority for management attention both pre- and post-fire. This will help us conclude that efforts are reasonably certain to be effective at addressing the threat. Lastly, FWS is still looking for a schedule of when the step-down assessments would be completed. Again, this helps provide additional certainty about how this threat is being addressed.

In summary, we urged BLM and Forest Service to apply maximum consistency to planning efforts, wherever and whenever practicable. Consistent application of approaches and mechanisms, we believe, will better enable the Service to accurately interpret with clarity the full effect of the final plans which, in turn, will inform our analysis and evaluation of the species' status. We have made progress and we are working on the remaining issues daily.