From:	Terry Messmer
To:	Stein, Theodore
Cc:	Noreen Walsh
Subject:	RE: International Sage-Grouse Forum
Date:	Friday, October 31, 2014 9:34:01 AM
Attachments:	CommunicatorOct2014.pdf

Theo

I left a message for you

Attached is the newsletter we send out to our partners

And a link to our state web site

www.utahcbcp.org

From my perspective, as one who has been involved in sage-grouse conservation, research, and working with LWGs since the 1990s'

Here are my thoughts, which reflect in many ways the pulse of the state stakeholders

There is a lot of uncertainty among the partners regarding the use of the term certainty. A question, I keep getting asked is how much is enough? How will we know we have gotten there? I do think, as do most folks who have actually studied sage-grouse that, given the wide spread distribution, and amount of contiguous habitats that remain, conservation of sage-grouse or certainty is achievable. Although the states may differ as how their plans approach certainty, as one who has worked with hundreds of landowners, well before any listing petitions were filed, there is a commitment and resolve I have not seen in my 40 years of working in conservation.

Thus the states are looking to the COT report as the mechanism to provide a template. As you look at the state plans, each contains references to the COT report as a validation of the actions they are implementing are on target. However, because of the differences in the landscapes, both biological and political, the state plans differ in approach. There is nothing wrong with these approaches, as long as they remain focused on mitigating the conservation threats using a combination of tools – protection, habitat enhancement, and management. In the case of sage-grouse, just locking up habitat without some type of subsequent management will not equal conservation. The bottom-line must remain – sage-grouse need sagebrush habitat. How we get there is the art of wildlife management.

For now, what the states and their partners have come the see as certainty as the combination of the COT report and the management and scientific process that the states and their federal partners are engaged into implement that strategies that reflect state and landscapes differences.

What folks want to hear, is the USFWS through the COT report embraces this process and that the Service recognizes this.

These is a long history and tradition in the role of voluntary conservation in wildlife conservation and management. If we ever are truly to achieve conservation, it will not be achieved through regulation, but awareness, and appreciation of the importance of the species role in our environments.

At least in Utah, the folks we have been working with for the last two decades now see sage-grouse as "their sage-grouse." In several areas this process now includes other species. I assume that same transition is and has happened in other states.

Terry

From: Stein, Theodore [mailto:theodore_stein@fws.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 30, 2014 12:39 PM
To: Terry Messmer
Subject: International Sage-Grouse Forum

Hi Terry

Noreen has asked me to help her put together some thoughts for her presentation, Empowering States through the COT report, on Nov. 13 in Salt Lake City

Wondering if you would have a little time today to discuss what you think the participants would be interested in?

Also, should she prepare to speak for the full half-hour, or will there be a Q&A?

Thanks Terry!

Theo Stein
Public Affairs Specialist Region 6
US Fish and Wildlife Service
134 Union St.
Lakewood CO 80228
(303) 236-4336 o
(303) 859-4930 - c

Theodore_Stein@fws.gov

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

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EXTENSION
UtahStateUniversity

October 2014 Volume 10, Issue 4

INTERNATIONAL SAGE-GROUSE FORUM: TRULY INTERNATIONAL, TRULY ABOUT CONSERVATION

By Terry Messmer, Utah State University

In less than a month, hundreds of stakeholders from 11 western states and 2 Canadian provinces who have been working over the past decades on sage-grouse conservation at the landscape scale will converge on Salt Lake City, Utah, to attend the International Sage-grouse Forum (ISGF). At no time in the recorded annals of wildlife management, have so many devoted so much to the management and conservation of a single species – the greater sage-grouse. This iconic species is indicative of the health of the sagebrush ecosystem on which many other species depend. The ISGF will highlight the magnitude and resolve of on-going range wide partnerships, and identify opportunities to further advance species conservation through science, management, and local community involvement.

The states and provinces are working to implement sage-grouse conservation plans that address the threats to the species identified by both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in its 2010 listing decision and by Environment Canada under the Species at Risk Act. Prior to these most recent plans, state and provincial wildlife management agencies and their partners had a long history of developing and implementing conservation strategies that integrated science and management experiences. Thus, although the plans may differ due to dissimilar ecoregions, the focus on conservation does not.

The ISGF steering committee strived to build the Forum program to emphasize the strength and resolve of this long-term conservation blueprint that focuses on priority areas of conservation and science to guide sage-grouse conservation and management. Although the USFWS and Environment Canada have authored reports that identify conservation strategies, the reports do not tell the partners exactly how to achieve certainty. There has developed a belief that achieving certainty may be equally about process and outcomes. This process engages the states, the USFWS, Environment Canada and all the partners in learning together not only about what conservation actions are most important, and where they need to be applied, but how can they best be integrated in the context of state, provin-

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Gary R. Herbert
Governor of Utah

Jason Weller
Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service

Tom Tidwell
Chief of the U.S. Forest Service

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Noreen Walsh
Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Edwin L. Roberson
Assistant Director of Renewable Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land Management

Virgil Moore
Director of the Idaho Fish and Game Department

Greg Sheehan
Director of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

cial, private, and a federal partnership that embraces science, laws, the communities, and the local custom and culture.

Please join us at the Forum in order to learn about the many efforts underway already, and also about how to further provide for the conservation of this important species!

Please check out more information and register at http://sage-grouseforum.org. Registration fees increase Nov. 1st so be sure to register early.

ISGF Highlights include:

The Honorable Gary R. Herbert, Governor, State of Utah, will present the Perspectives of the Western Governors' Association.

Chief Jason Weller, Natural Resources Conservation Service, will highlight the NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative and Partnerships in Action.

Chief Tom Tidwell, U.S. Forest Service, will discuss The Role and Status USFS Plan Revisions in Sagebrush Country.

Regional Director Noreen Walsh, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will talk about Seeking Collective Solutions: Empowering States through the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) Report.

Assistant Director Edwin Roberson, Renewable Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land Management, will discuss The Role and Status of BLM Plan Revisions in Sagebrush Country.

Director Virgil Moore, Idaho Fish and Game Department and Chair of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Sage-grouse Executive Oversight Committee, will provide Forum summary comments entitled Sage-grouse Conservation for the Future: Setting the Tone.

Director Greg Sheehan, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, will deliver the Forum opening remarks to set the stage for the event.

The Workshops

At the heart of Forum are series of workshops that will highlight the role of science in the partnerships that are charting sage-grouse conservation and management policy. Below are brief descriptions of the workshops.

Basic Sage-grouse Biology and Management

This workshop will provide basic information on sage-grouse biology and ecology for those attending the conference that need this background information to understand other topics being discussed during this Forum. Life cycle, seasonal habitat use, habitat characteristics and requirements, population dynamics, and threats to sage-grouse populations will be discussed.

Sagebrush and Sage-grouse Landscape Management – Minimums and Maximums

The workshop will uncover the science regarding the management of the sagebrush ecosystem for sage-grouse at the landscape level. This session will highlight aspects of the research completed and on-going as part of the SageSTEP, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Brigham Young University (BYU), and Utah State University (USU) on-going research efforts. SageSTEP is a long-term multidisciplinary experiment evaluating methods of sagebrush steppe restoration in the Great Basin. Sagebrush communities have been identified as one of the most threatened land types in North America, and as much as half of this

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land type has already been lost in the Great Basin. SageSTEP, USGS, USFS, USU, and BYU scientists are studying the effects of land management options to provide resource managers with improved information to make restoration management decisions with reduced risk and uncertainty.

Drawing Courtesy of Brian Maxfield.

SGI Science to Solutions: Sage-grouse Conservation through Sustainable Ranching

This workshop seeks to engage partners in NRCS SGI conservation practices and show new producers how to get involved. The workshop familiarizes the audience with SGI approach, conservation practices, supporting science and resulting outcomes.

Approaches to Mitigation

Mitigation is often called on as a critical tool for managing habitat issues. However, the complexity of different approaches can be overwhelming. This session is designed to approach the topic of mitigation by exploring different models for implementing mitigation systems, including how success is measured and how different approaches fit into the recently changing federal regulatory policy framework. After an initial presentation on basic mitigation concepts, we will hear updates on the current federal policy surrounding sage-grouse mitigation. Then several case studies from active mitigation projects will be presented, followed by facilitated Q&A and discussion time on focused topics.

Predation and Hunting: Lightning Rods and Silver Bullets

Speakers will present and discuss the role of predation and its management, as well as hunting in sage-grouse conservation. We will discuss predation's natural role within sage-grouse populations and when it may become a limiting factor. We will also discuss the information and knowledge gaps we currently have with this issue. The issue of hunting a species of conservation concern is widely debated. We will consider the history, hunt management, and some of the human-dimensions issues related to hunting sage-grouse.

Strategic Conservation Planning for Private Lands

Sage-grouse conservation on private lands presents a host of challenges and opportunities. Through cases studies and discussion of available resources, this workshop will explore many of the issues for private lands conservation. We will hear from private landowners from Utah, Washington State, and Saskatchewan. Then, workshop participants will have the opportunity to more interactively discuss several key challenges in small groups. The workshop ends with presentations from two organizations focused on helping landowners overcome many of these challenges and connect them with resources.

New Breakthroughs in Fire and Invasive Weed Management

The science and transfer of new knowledge regarding fire and invasive weed management in sagebrush ecosystems to benefit sage-grouse at the landscape level will be discussed. This session will highlight aspects of the fire ecology and invasive weed management research completed and on-going as part regional research efforts in the Great Basin and Wyoming Basin. Sagebrush communities have been identified as one of the most threatened land types in North America, and as much as half of this land type has already been lost in the Great Basin. The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is coordinating range wide efforts to engage scientists who are studying land management and policy options in developing better information to make restoration and management decisions to reduce risk and uncertainty for greater sage-grouse.

Defining Development, Disturbance, Fragmentation, and Habitat Loss: Understanding and Mitigating the Effects of the Anthropogenic Activities on Sage-grouse

Review and discuss the terminology and assumptions used to describe and quantify the potential effects of anthropogenic activities on sage-grouse populations and habitat use. Specifically speakers will discuss what is known regarding the effects of energy development, power lines, and ancillary roads on sage-grouse populations and the effectiveness of mitigation measures and changes in technology to ameliorate potential effects.

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Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program
4900 Old Main Hill
Utah State University
Logan, UT 84322-4900

If it's not good for communities, it's not good for wildlife.

Forum Highlights, cont.

State and Province Plans Digested: In-depth Discussion

These workshops will feature in-depth exploration of state and provincial plan implementation challenges, successes, lessons learned, and future coordination/communication needs across jurisdictional boundaries.

Facilitators Coordination Event

This casual get-together on the first evening of the conference will provide an opportunity for those involved in coordinating, facilitating, chairing, or playing other key roles in Local Working Groups to meet each other and share experiences. The intent of the event is to connect across state boundaries at the local level, provide an opportunity to share suggestions for handling common challenges or opportunities for collaboration. We have made an effort to invite all relevant individuals, but if you are interested in attending and have not been contacted, please email lorien.belton@usu.edu.

USU Extension Releases New Sage-grouse App

By Julene Reese, Utah State University Extension

The Utah State University Extension Community-based Conservation Program recently released a new app, "Sage-grouse Habitat in Utah: A Guide for Landowners and Managers."

The app is the first of its kind, and although developed in Utah, is applicable throughout the sage-grouse range, which includes 11 western states and two Canadian provinces. The app provides managers and landowners with immediate and pertinent information about sagebrush management and sage-grouse habitat needs and can be accessed from anywhere in the field. It can assist in planning management actions to help conserve the sage-grouse population.

According to Terry Messmer, USU Extension wildlife specialist and director of the Utah Community-based Conservation Program which developed the app, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated the greater sage-grouse as a candidate species for listing for protection under the Endangered Species Act. Federal, state and private partners are implementing conservation actions to avert the need for a listing. Having an understanding of the habitat associations of a species and how habitats are used by wildlife across landscapes and seasons is a basic tenet of wildlife management.

"Greater sage-grouse populations have declined because of habitat loss, and it is estimated that they currently occupy only half their original range," he said. "They depend on sagebrush landscapes that often overlap jurisdictional boundaries, land ownerships and land uses. Sage-grouse management efforts focused on protecting and enhancing the best habitats remain an essential part of an integrated range-wide species conservation strategy." Messmer said the app will help landowners, federal and state partners better recognize characteristics of favorable sage-grouse habitat and assist them in developing projects to benefit species conservation across its range.

"Sage-grouse Habitat in Utah" is free of charge and is available in Android and iOS formats. The Android version is available at Google Play (playgoogle.com) and the iOS version can be accessed through the iTunes App Store.

Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program Mission

Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program is dedicated to promoting natural resource management education and facilitating cooperation between local communities and natural resource management organizations and agencies.

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

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