From: Dreher, Robert
To: Noreen Walsh
Subject: Re: GRSG: RE: Buffers
Date: Wednesday, January 07, 2015 8:58:28 AM

Very tactful message.

On Wed, Jan 7, 2015 at 9:54 AM, Noreen Walsh <noreen_walsh@fws.gov> wrote:

> Good morning all,
>
> A buffer status update from FWS' perspective to respond to Sarah's question below:
>
> On December 23, in discussion amongst all of us, it seemed we were narrowing in on a response to the buffer report that involved required design features (RDFs) in **PHMA**s at the lower end of the USGS interpreted range. Both agencies appeared to agree this was sound for PHMA. I proposed that in **GHMA**, RDFs also be linked to the lower end of the USGS interpreted range with provisions for local exceptions where best available science indicated a different approach was warranted. We did not reach agreement on GHMA at that point and BLM indicated they would have further conversations about the approach.
>
> We understood that in the construct under discussion, these RDFs would be layered on top of the already determined land use allocations (LUA). That would mean that in some cases in additional buffer would not be necessary because the LUA already ensured disturbance would not occur (e.g., NSO for fluid minerals in PHMA) and, in other cases, buffers would be applied to allow a project to proceed under the LUA and at a protective distance from any lek.
>
> We supported the overall approach because it is based on the scientific literature review articulated and summarized in the USGS report, and, through specifications of the buffers as RDFs, it provides a fair amount of certainty about the outcome for sage-grouse into the future.
>
> The approach we received on Monday, January 5 is new, and involves a screening process for all projects whereby one factor used to assess impacts from a project in PHMA or PGMA is the buffer distances at the lower end of the USGS interpreted range. Based on my understanding, those buffers may be applied, or may not, and any resulting impacts may be mitigated, and proposed actions that cannot be mitigated to provide a conservation gain may be deferred or denied.

We are much less comfortable to recommend this approach because, as we understand it, it provides less certainty of outcome for GRSG for any particular future decision.

I have been in dialogue with Ed this morning, and I understand active discussion and edits are still occurring.

Thank you,

Noreen

From: Greenberger, Sarah [mailto:sarah_greenberger@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, January 06, 2015 2:27 PM
To: Michael J. Bean; James Lyons; Dan Ashe; Robert Dreher; Noreen Walsh; Ted Boling; Bret Birdsong; Neil G Kornze; Edwin Roberson; Steven Ellis; Gary D Frazer
Subject: Buffers

Happy New Year all - when we spoke last week we aimed to reach resolution this week on the issue of buffers. I understand that Ed, Chris Iverson and Noreen have spoken today about BLM's proposed approach. Unless BLM is working on further changes, it would be great if they could circulate that proposal to this group.

I have reserved time on Mike and Tommy's calendars for 4-5 tomorrow. I would like to move forward with that meeting and reach resolution unless BLM or FWS believe that a smaller meeting first with this group is warranted. I will ask Gareth to extend the invite. Please let me know tonight if there are concerns.

Thanks all. Sarah

--
Bob Dreher
Associate Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

(202) 208-4070