From: Wiechman, Lief
To: Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT
Cc: Pat Deibert; Matt Kales; Jim Lindstrom; Lowenfish, Martin - NRCS, Washington, DC; Hall, Galon - NRCS, Washington, DC
Subject: Re: GRSG NRCS FRPP Easement Data
Date: Saturday, March 28, 2015 10:08:34 AM

Thanks, Tim.
We'll be in touch as soon as we have the conifer data rolled up in Oregon.

LW

Lief Wiechman
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On Fri, Mar 27, 2015 at 9:01 PM, Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT <Tim.Griffiths@mt.usda.gov> wrote:

Lief,

Getting back to you on your questions this week-

I was able to touch base with the NRCS State Program lead in Wyoming today and can confirm that neither of the 2 specific FRPP easements identified in Management Zone 1 contain specific sod busting prohibitions in the easement language. Additionally, she informed me that both properties remain in native rangeland, contain no cropland and they are not even considered to be at risk of conversion to cropland.

Secondly, I can confirm that all GRP easements range wide contain specific prohibitions on conversion of native range as referenced on page 24 of the attached Departmental Manual 9500-012 which reads in part:

16. PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Prohibited activities on enrolled lands have been determined by USDA to be non-compatible with protecting, conserving and enhancing grassland resources. The prohibited activities identified in the GRP easement deed and rental contract include:

Production of crops, other than hay. Planting of non-perennial crops, fruit trees, vineyards or other agricultural commodities is inconsistent with maintaining grazing land. Harvesting crops, other than hay, for human or domestic animal consumption or any agricultural commodity is prohibited. Operation of the land, including planting and harvesting of crops, is under the control of the program participant until the GRP easement is recorded or the rental contract is approved. Any annual crops planted before the easement is recorded and rental contract or restoration agreement is approved can be harvested. Cropland contemplated for GRP must be restorable to grasslands or shrublands for sustainable grazing.

WRP is a little different in that it doesn't specifically include a prohibition on sod busting, however it would be highly unlikely that NRCS would ever allow native rangeland on a WRP to be sod busted. The General Manual for WRP is located at the following website http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?id=1840. Here you will find that:

The purpose of WRP is to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on eligible private or Tribal lands while maximizing wildlife habitat benefits.

The objectives of WRP are to protect, restore, and enhance the functions and values of wetland ecosystems to attain—

(i) Habitat for migratory birds and other wetland-dependent wildlife, including threatened and endangered species and species of concern.

(ii) Protection and improvement of water quality.

(iii) Attenuation of floodwater.

(iv) Recharge of ground water.

(v) Protection and enhancement of open space and aesthetic quality.

(vi) Protection of native flora and fauna contributing to the Nation's natural heritage.

(vii) Contribution to educational and scientific scholarship.

NRCS also has a requirement to partner with FWS on many aspects of WRP delivery as specified below:

FWS is identified in WRP statutory and regulatory provisions as an integral partner to WRP implementation. NRCS will include FWS in the following:

(i) Assisting NRCS with land eligibility determinations after applications have been received.

(ii) Assisting NRCS in restoration planning so that easement lands achieve maximum wildlife benefits and wetland values and functions, taking into consideration the cost of such restorations.

(iii) Incorporating consultation responsibilities under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with WRP consultation actions.

(iv) Providing recommendations for NRCS consideration regarding the timing, duration, and intensity of compatible uses so that these uses further the protection and enhancement of the wetlands and other associated ecological values of the easement lands.

(v) Providing recommendations for NRCS consideration for development of easement management plans, including grazing management plans developed under the Reserved Rights Pilot Program.

(vi) Providing assistance, through an appropriate agreement or other mechanism, in areas of WRP implementation where it is in the best interest of the program (e.g., efforts to deliver WRP restoration projects in cooperation with FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program efforts).

(vii) Reviewing easement modification proposals.

Therefore, unless FWS thought is was a good idea to sod bust the native range, I can't think of a situation in which it would be allowed.

Hopefully that helps.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Tim

Tim Griffiths- National Coordinator, Sage Grouse Initiative

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Bozeman, MT (406) 600-3908

Follow the partnership- www.sagegrouseinitiative.com

From: Wiechman, Lief [mailto:lief_wiechman@fws.gov]
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2015 8:23 AM
To: Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT
Cc: Pat Deibert; Matt Kales; Jim Lindstrom
Subject: Fwd: GRSG NRCS FRPP Easement Data

Hi Tim,

Please see the attached map and shapefile along with Jim's description in the email below. Looks like we've only got TWO FRPP in MZ-1.

Additionally, there's ONE FRPP in MZ 6 (outside occupied range) and about 28 across the rest of the range (excluding the ~10 that appear to be in GUSG range, and can be ignored). And of those 28, looks like a half dozen or more are also outside of occupied range or right on the edge. So when I said about 25 yesterday, looks like that's range wide FRPP.

Thanks again,

LW

Lief Wiechman

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---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Lindstrom, James** <james_lindstrom@fws.gov>
Date: Fri, Mar 20, 2015 at 8:02 AM
Subject: GRSG NRCS FRPP Easement Data
To: Lief Wiechman <lief_wiechman@fws.gov>

Attached is a shapefile of all NRCS FRPP Easements within the GRSG Mgmt Zones and an overview map of the FRPP Easement locations. I have added a field at the end of the attribute table called 'Mgmt_Zone' that identifies which GRSG Mgmt Zone each easement is in.

There are 2 FRPP Easements in Mgmt Zone 1. These two are FID 4 and 16 in the attribute table.

Jim

Jim Lindstrom

james_lindstrom@fws.gov

Cartographer

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wyoming Ecological Services Field Office

(307) 772-2374 (Ext 240)

Excellent.... All good stuff. I'm really excited to see the complete Oregon map (as I'm sure all of you are as well)!

Talk to you soon.

Tim

Tim Griffiths- National Coordinator, Sage Grouse Initiative

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Bozeman, MT (406) 600-3908

Follow the partnership- www.sagegrouseinitiative.com

From: Wiechman, Lief [mailto:lief_wiechman@fws.gov]
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2015 2:04 PM
To: Doherty, Kevin
Cc: Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT; Matt Kales; Pat Deibert
Subject: Re: Easement data, program descriptions

Hi Tim,

We'll get you the map of FRPP in MZ1 tomorrow. Our GIS guy had a previous commitment and isn't available this afternoon. Appreciate you looking at that stuff, helping resolve the issue, and finding the language on the GRP/WRP protections.

Also, as Kevin mentioned, we received permission from OWEB, ODFW, and BLM to share the spatial information for conifer removals in OR. Tomorrow after we get the easement map done, we'll begin to compile the layers for the conifer analysis in OR.

Talk with you soon,

LW

Lief Wiechman

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On Thu, Mar 19, 2015 at 1:03 PM, Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT <Tim.Griffiths@mt.usda.gov> wrote:

Lief,

Will call you in 10 minutes to discuss.

Tim

Tim Griffiths- National Coordinator, Sage Grouse Initiative

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Bozeman, MT (406) 600-3908

Follow the partnership- www.sagegrouseinitiative.com

From: Wiechman, Lief [mailto:lief_wiechman@fws.gov]
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2015 12:59 PM
To: Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT

Cc: Matt Kales; Pat Deibert; Kevin Doherty
Subject: Fwd: Easement data, program descriptions

Hi Tim,

Following up on the email I sent last week. See below, and give me a call at your earliest convenience.

I'm working remotely this afternoon and tomorrow - 307.214.8426 is my work cell.

Take care,

LW

Lief Wiechman

Sage-grouse Ecologist

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---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Wiechman, Lief** <lief_wiechman@fws.gov>
Date: Tue, Mar 10, 2015 at 4:31 PM
Subject: Easement data, program descriptions
To: "Griffiths, Tim - NRCS, Bozeman, MT" <Tim.Griffiths@mt.usda.gov>
Cc: Matt Kales <matt_kales@fws.gov>, Pat Deibert <pat_deibert@fws.gov>

Hi Tim,

I know you mentioned you'd be at the North American this week, but if you have some time, I'd like to touch base with you briefly and double check some of the program descriptions when we're evaluating the easement data we pulled from NRCS.

I've reviewed the farm bill (2014), and there's language that gives me pause as to which programs we should be including that would prevent agriculture conversion... specifically, language on page 211 *"(3) protect the agricultural use and future viability, and related conservation values, of eligible land by limiting nonagricultural uses of that land; ".* This would also help figure out some minor discrepancies between the NRCS data and the national easement dataset that we were using to supplement additional easements across the range. My assumption is/was, that all FRPP, GRP, and WRP would all prevent tillage/agriculture conversion. The language in the farm bill is somewhat broad/vague... so I'm looking for a clear understanding so that we can use this information to inform our modeling efforts and status review.

I'll be in and out of the office and my cell (307.214.8426) is the easiest way to get a hold of me.

Thanks in advance for your help on this,

LW

Lief Wiechman

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