From: Matt Kales
To: Theo Stein
Subject: RE: GRSG TPs
Date: Tuesday, October 21, 2014 9:04:45 AM
Attachments: FWS GrSG Reso memo and maps TPs short.revised.docx

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Thanks, Theo, for the quick response and good revisions. I made some additional changes, attached here. I corrected a couple of technical items that are germane to our ongoing conversations with leadership about these maps, and added some further rationale at the end. By way of this message I ask you and the folks copied here, review again, make additional revisions as necessary, and then I'll send to Noreen for consideration for use as informal/internal TPs (at this time; I drafted this content with an eye toward potential application for Congressional and media inquiries, since it is quite possible these maps will get distributed broadly.

From: Theo Stein [mailto:theoestein@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, October 21, 2014 8:05 AM
To: Matt Kales
Subject: GRSG TPs

Matt
Here's my first attempt at paring them down.
I tried to keep on a straight line from our role, our recommendations, restating our recommendations.
There's still some jargon in there we might want to consider restating.

Theo Stein

"Dogs, like men, lose their range and enthusiasm for life from having the wildness in them questioned. "

~ Guy De La Valdene

US Fish and Wildlife Service
Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation
Internal Talking Points: FWS Recommendations to BLM and FS re: federal planning effort
Draft, 10/20/14

- Greater sage-grouse conservation is a complex conservation issue, unprecedented in scope and scale. The Service has been and remains an active partner in a broad~~-based~~ and historic campaign to protect this bird and the 350 other species that depend on heathy sagebrush.
- The Service has invested significantly in the ongoing sage-grouse conservation effort ~~campaign~~ to ~~try and~~ secure adequate ~~enough sage-grouse conservation~~ on ~~-~~the ~~-~~ground protections to make an ESA listing ~~protection~~ unnecessary. Our role has been to provide the best available technical and scientific information to help our federal, state and other partners understand what the bird needs to persist into the future and what measures can help secure those needs in a meaningful way and ~~and~~ provide certainty ~~way~~.
- Greater sage-grouse need large, unbroken expanses of sagebrush to survive. Habitat loss and fragmentation, coupled with a lack of regulatory protection, are the primary threats facing greater sage-grouse. To avoid a listing, our federal and state partners must establish ~~we will need to see~~ effective and consistent measures to address these threats ~~implemented~~ across the bird's 11-state range.
- Working with state and federal partners, we developed the 2013 Conservation Objectives Team Final Report, which provides a road map of objective, science-based approaches ~~objectives~~ for how to address those threats and conserve the species and its habitat.
- The COT report mapped~~-~~ those places on the landscape most important for sage-grouse conservation, which the team termed Priority Areas for Conservation~~the remaining strongholds of sage-grouse~~. Our number one recommendation to our partners has been to avoid further disturbance in PACs ~~in these strongholds, which have been designated Priority Areas for Conservation~~.
- Throughout the federal planning process, we have worked closely with BLM and Forest Service at all levels of our respective organizations to ~~In March, 2014, we met with the BLM to evaluate~~ to evaluate how well their draft management plans addressed threats identified in the COT report. In March, 2014 we provided our federal partners with a comprehensive summary of our outstanding concerns. ~~We clearly~~ In particularly, we advised ~~stated at that time that~~ the plans should, to the maximum extent, be consistent and work in concert to create a comprehensive, rangewide conservation strategy that adequately protects greater sage-grouse.
- That feedback ~~meeting~~ resulted in the development of the National Policy Team guidance, which is~~was~~ intended to further help the BLM and Forest Service develop consistent and~~,~~ effective land use plans. BLM and the Forest Service adopted the NPT guidance in May, 2014.
- Since then, we have continued to work closely with BLM and Forest Service as they finalize their proposed plans.
- As we await final land use allocation and other important planning decisions from BLM and Forest Service, we have provided our federal partners with two related products:

- A series of landscape-scale ~~refined PAC~~ maps identifying highly important areas for sage-grouse conservation for BLM and Forest Service to consider for the most conservative approach to land use allocations, including – where applicable – withdrawal of locatable minerals (e.g., gold, uranium) and closure of fluid minerals (e.g., oil and natural gas) to development potential. These maps, which are not intended to supersede or otherwise alter the PACs, simply highlight those places on the landscape that contain the following criteria:
  - Existing high-quality sagebrush habitat for sage-grouse;
  - Highest breeding densities of sage-grouse;
  - Areas identified in the literature as essential to conservation and persistence of the species
  - (Knick and Hanser 2011); and,
  - A preponderance of current federal ownership, and in some cases, adjacent protected areas that serve to anchor the conservation importance of the landscape.
- A memo that revisits our March 14 recommendations for the federal plans and identifies remaining issues that need resolution, including adaptive management, mitigation and the delivery of final plans in time to allow full consideration prior to our decision deadline.

- Our intent in providing our federal partners with these products is to continue to refine and focus the ongoing conversation about sage-grouse conservation planning on the federal estate on those places and issues where we believe strong, durable protections for the bird and the places it lives will make a significant contribution to the long-term persistence of the species. We feel it is important for the Service to provide this advice now, as our federal partners work to finalize their plans and culminate the multi-year federal planning process.
  - ~~o~~ As the nation's principal conservation agency, our job - whether for sage-grouse or any other fish, wildlife and plant species – is to work with others to find the most effective ways to protect the nation's natural heritage. We will always advocate a conservative approach that helps ensures threats to a species, in this case sage-grouse, are fully addressed, now and into the future. Given the complexities and unknowns surrounding sage-grouse, which include climate change, fire, and other variables we are hard-pressed to control, we are recommending our federal partners embrace a conservative approach to managing these highly important landscape and remove any potential for development and additional disturbance, whether that potential is imminent or distant, and add a significant degree of certainty to the protections afforded these landscapes into the future.

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