From: Michael_Thabault@fws.gov
To: Noreen_Walsh@fws.gov; Jeff.Ver_Steeg@state.co.us
Subject: Re: Letter to DNR/CPW re: sage-grouse
Date: Tuesday, October 23, 2012 7:21:12 PM

I did discuss these issues w/ DNR and CPW when we last met. I have to think about how to structure a letter. Will probably need Pat to weigh in.

From: "Walsh, Noreen" [noreen_walsh@fws.gov]
Sent: 10/23/2012 07:12 PM CST
To: "Ver_Steeg, Jeff" <jeff.ver_steeg@state.co.us>
Cc: Michael Thabault
Subject: RE: Letter to DNR/CPW re: sage-grouse

Aha, Jeff, I am just now reading this so I have the context for the letter you were mentioning. I am looping in Mike and we will look forward to talking with you.

Noreen

Noreen Walsh

Deputy Regional Director

Mountain-Prairie Region

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

303 236 7920

From: Ver_Steeg, Jeff [mailto:jeff.ver_steeg@state.co.us]
Sent: Tuesday, October 23, 2012 4:50 PM
To: Walsh, Noreen
Subject: Letter to DNR/CPW re: sage-grouse

Noreen,

Our NW counties continue to believe that 1) the FWS does not have access to information on the most recent research from Colorado, 2) scientific information that is not peer reviewed is essentially ignored by the FWS, and 3) that lek counts are not information valued by the FWS in the listing decision process (they argue that despite increases in disturbance associated with energy development in NW Colorado, lek count trends are stable and thus demonstrate current development is compatible with sage-grouse). The counties are suggesting that the FWS should use lek count trends and not % disturbance as a measure of success (or at the very least a combination of the two). I realize that the BLM manages land and not populations and thus disturbance makes sense for them to focus on (and because the FWS focused on it too). I also realize that when lek counts drop, it may be too late to undo the cause(s).

We (DNR and CPW) would like to put to rest some of these assertions. We believe a one-page letter from the FWS to DNR/CPW briefly addressing these points would be extremely helpful. Ideally the letter would state that the 1) FWS reviews lek count information annually as part of the annual status review, so it is used to some extent (you can add your position on lek counts vs. % disturbance if you care to), and 2) that the FWS also annually reviews (again as part of the status review) updates on science (ongoing and recently completed research, regardless of whether it was peer reviewed at the time) and also conservation efforts (e.g., conservation easements, NRCS sign-ups, etc.), and other pertinent information provided to you. We have made the case that FWS is aware of on-going research in Colorado and that the FWS makes use of the *best available science*, and sometimes that science is not peer reviewed (although peer-reviewed science tends to carry the strongest weight). In other words, when I have asked FWS regional staff if they are aware of our current and ongoing research the response is affirmative. It would be nice if you could include that in the letter (perhaps even reference a project or two to make the point more finely).

Jeff