From: Thabault, Michael
To: Noreen Walsh
Subject: Re: per our conversation - process I"ve been working out with R1 and 8 RD office
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2013 2:11:02 PM

See some edits below. One grammar and one substantive thought.

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On Tue, Oct 22, 2013 at 1:49 PM, Noreen Walsh <noreen_walsh@fws.gov> wrote:

> DRAFT Memo
>
> To: Regional Directors, Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest Regions
>
> From: Regional Director, Mountain Prairie Region
>
> Subject: Coordination on comments to BLM/USFS RMP/LMP Revisions
>
> Our staffs have been working diligently to provide support and advice to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U. S. Forest Service (USFS) Resource Management Plans (RMP) and Land Management Plan (LMP) revisions and amendments for the purpose of conservation of greater sage-grouse. This RMP/LMP effort is large in scope and scale, involving 11 states, our field offices, and regional office personnel. Our staff and field and regional leaders have been working hard and have done a good job addressing this challenge, and I extend my sincere thanks to all who have contributed. As we start to approach the completion phase of this planning process, internal coordination becomes even more important and will help ensure a successful outcome for greater sage-grouse conservation.
>
> We are at a point in the planning process where we have already begun and will be continuing to submit formal comments during the public comment periods on the draft plans. BLM and USFS may need to make difficult decisions [will need to be made (strike)] during this planning process, and our comments may highlight the need for some of those difficult decisions. I want to ensure that our project leaders have the full knowledge, support, and backing of our agency as they deliver their comments. In addition, we have

committed to the BLM and USFS that we will continue robust and timely dialogue with them to inform our comments, which will ensure that we fully understand the draft proposals and they fully understand our thoughts. In keeping with our existing practice of project leaders working very closely with their BLM and FS counterparts, we have committed to a "no surprises" approach. This means we will continue our practice of sharing our comments in discussion before our comment letters are provided. In our recent "Federal Family" meeting, they reaffirmed to us how important it is that we continue the dialogue before sharing written comments.

Therefore, to ensure our continued close coordination and consistency and to help our staff, I ask that we use the following process:

1. Biologists participating on the "sub-regional interdisciplinary teams" will continue to participate as full members, sharing questions and comments about the plans, and having robust dialogue with our BLM/USFS colleagues, to inform our formal comments or perhaps negate the need to comment.

2. When written comments are needed, our biologists will work in close coordination with Jesse D'elia (Great Basin Regional Management Team) or Pat Deibert (Rocky Mountains Regional Management Team) as they draft comments on the draft RMP or LMP.

3. Comments resulting from the biologist and regional team leader collaboration will be discussed by our FWS rangewide Field Management Team (FMT). This will ensure our project leaders and biologists continue to have the benefit of understanding and comparing planning issues across state and RMP boundaries.

4. Once the FMT has reviewed comments, the draft will follow a surname process within the region, from project leader to ARD to DRD and/or RD, to ensure all levels are aware of the comments.

I understand what is trying to be accomplished here but to have a formal surname process that includes 2-3 levels above the signature authority at least from an optics point of view is odd. Not sure I have a fix other than to do what we do for listing packages which is to require a relevant Regional Leadership briefing before a letter is sent. Alternatively, since this is not the normal surnaming process we develop a short SOP explaining what the various surname levels mean for the record.

Once the draft comments have completed the regional surname process, if needed, a briefing should be scheduled to address all remaining questions. Region 6 would appreciate it if you include us in those briefings. The final comments will be conveyed from the relevant ES Field Supervisor to the relevant BLM or FS office at the conclusion of the review and surname process. Please also ensure that Region 6 receives a copy of any formal comment

letters and that they are posted on our sage-grouse Sharepoint site.

Please let me know if you see ways to improve this process. Conservation of the greater sage grouse and the habitat is too great of an opportunity to miss. Please make sure all of your staff that are working so hard know how appreciative I am of their efforts.

Cc:

Ecological Services Field Supervisors in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Nevada.

Assistant Regional Directors for Ecological Services, Regions 1, 6, 8

Director

Assistant Director Ecological Services

Noreen Walsh

Regional Director

Mountain-Prairie Region

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The Mountain-Prairie Region of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service: *We provide conservation stewardship of some of America's most scenic lands, to ensure healthy fish and wildlife for the enjoyment and benefit of all people.*