From: Matt Kales
To: Noreen Walsh
Subject: RE: Sage-grouse update
Date: Thursday, May 02, 2013 9:27:57 AM
Attachments: Greater Sage Grouse UPDATE (May 2013).mk revised.docx

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Hi,

I edited the subject doc per your below and made a few other minor changes. Please let me know if it is good to go or you need me to make further changes. It now fits neatly into 2 pages. I can work w/someone at NCTC if you want hard copies printed. Thanks. mk

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From: Noreen Walsh [mailto:noreen_walsh@fws.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, May 01, 2013 9:08 PM
To: Matt Kales
Subject: Re: Sage-grouse update

Thank you Matt. I would like to make some edits. Some things leadership is already well aware of (e.g. COT) and others (e.g. Research papers) are too high a level of detail for this audience). Upcoming meetings also not necessary unless it is task force meeting.
Noreen

Noreen Walsh
Regional Director
Mountain-Prairie Region
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

On May 1, 2013, at 5:38 PM, Matt Kales <matt_kales@fws.gov> wrote:

> Noreen,
>
> Please see attached the subject doc. It is a bit longer than the standard update but it has been some time since we produced an update so there's a fair amount to cover. Please let me know if you have any feedback or changes you need made before you provide it to the Directorate tomorrow morning. Thanks to Pat, Jesse and Nicole for their time on this product. Matt
>
> Matt Kales, Acting
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>
> <Greater Sage Grouse UPDATE (May 2013).mk revised.docx>

Sage-grouse UPDATE May 1, 2013

National Updates

- The Fish and Wildlife Service convened a Greater Sage-grouse Tri-Regional Summit at Salt Lake City, UT, from 2/12-14/13 to identify the Service's needs, roles, and responsibilities and communication strategies for the Greater sage-grouse long-term conservation including preparing for the 2015 listing determination. Specific objectives of the meeting included the following:
    - Establish a common understanding of sage-grouse conservation goals
    - Clarify FWS roles and responsibilities, lines of communication and expectations
    - Develop an action plan for external coordination and communication of sage-grouse conservation goals
    - Identify vision for and coordination with energy industry regarding conservation efforts and consistent guidance from the Service and identify mechanisms for compiling all conservation efforts

- The Service has committed to working with each State within the range of the species to develop a comprehensive conservation plan to address threats to greater sage-grouse. Several states are close to completing their plans and are seeking the Service's concurrence or approval of their plans as they begin implementation. At the most recent Sage-Grouse Task Force meeting, held at Boise on April 9-10, state representatives raised this issue and expressed concerns about the "approval" process. (An interim SGTF meeting to discuss this call will be held later this month; see below.)

  While there is no mechanism in the Endangered Species Act or regulations to "approve" state conservation efforts, we need to recognize the efforts of the states and encourage their implementation of conservation efforts especially on State and private land. Of particular concern to the States is recognition of their conservation efforts and have some support for implementation from the Service in order to gain support for conservation efforts in their state and leverage funding. In addition, a track record of implementation of regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms will be an important component to our 2015 analysis.

Fire

Seasonal Outlook: Average fire season conditions are currently forecast across most SG habitat, with above average conditions forecast for CA, S CO, S UT, SE OR and Central/SW ID (generally above average drought conditions and below average fuel loading across SG habitat). Keep in mind that long term forecasts have a wide margin of error, and heavy lightning and/or winds can result in very large range fires in otherwise average fire season conditions.

The detailed outlook is updated on the 1st of each month and can be found at: *http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf*

BLM/Forest Service Planning Process

BLM convened a federal family meeting at Boise, ID, on 3/5-6/13. The purpose of this meeting, which was timed in anticipation of the forthcoming draft revisions to range management and forest plans, and associated draft NEPA documents, was to promote enhanced coordination among and between the BLM, Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service to "obtain regulatory certainty for protecting the greater sage-grouse" and identify and address critical issues affecting the above efforts. National and Service leadership participated in this meeting, as did leadership for the two action agencies.

Currently, the federal agencies are coordinating responses to internal (agency) and public comments received on the draft plan revisions and NEPA documents, including the comments developed by the Service. The next step in BLM's plan revision timeline is making changes to the drafts based on the above comments. BLM has committed to delivering the final plans and NEPA documents by end of calendar year 2013, which will enable the Service to conduct a review of the revisions as part of our analysis leading to our final listing determination due December, 2015.

BLM is in the process of updating its websites and planning schedule. For more information, please visit: *http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html*

State Updates

Highlights

Utah: The State of Utah issued its final greater sage-grouse conservation plan on April 23rd 2013. The Service's UT ES FO is preparing a response letter that details areas of agreement and areas we would like to continue discussion on as they refine and implement the plan. Significant concerns still exist over several parts of the plan but the Service and State have agreed to move forward with conservation efforts recognizing that we are not in complete agreement with several regulatory mechanisms proposed for federal lands and the lack of any regulatory mechanisms coupled to the land owner incentive approach for non-federal lands. Although communication with the State is good we do not expect significant changes in the State's plan in response to Service concerns. The State does not believe it can successfully implement regulatory mechanisms on private lands and believes landowner incentives will be successful.

For the latest summary and status of state plan efforts, including the Service's engagement in those efforts, please visit the Service's sage-grouse SharePoint Site at: *https://fishnet.fws.doi.net/projects/home/NSGC/State%20Conservation%20Plans/Forms/AllItems.aspx*

[Also see BLM's State-by-State fact sheets: *http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/newsroom/sage_grouse_conservation/fact_sheets.html]*

Upcoming Calls/Meetings

- Sage-Grouse Task Force interim call scheduled for 5/17/13.
- Sage-Grouse Task Force meeting scheduled for 7/18-19/13; location TBD (likely Denver, CO)

National Sage Grouse SharePoint Site (provides latest meeting notes, updates and documents)

https://fishnet.fws.doi.net/projects/home/NSGC/SitePages/Home.aspx